

University of Groningen

## The good, the bad, and the ugly

Coster, Johanna Marije

**IMPORTANT NOTE: You are advised to consult the publisher's version (publisher's PDF) if you wish to cite from it. Please check the document version below.**

*Document Version*

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

*Publication date:*

2019

[Link to publication in University of Groningen/UMCG research database](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Coster, J. M. (2019). *The good, the bad, and the ugly: Allegiance and authority in the poetical discourse of Muḥammad's lifetime*. Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.

**Copyright**

Other than for strictly personal use, it is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

The publication may also be distributed here under the terms of Article 25fa of the Dutch Copyright Act, indicated by the "Taverne" license. More information can be found on the University of Groningen website: <https://www.rug.nl/library/open-access/self-archiving-pure/taverne-amendment>.

**Take-down policy**

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

*Downloaded from the University of Groningen/UMCG research database (Pure): <http://www.rug.nl/research/portal>. For technical reasons the number of authors shown on this cover page is limited to 10 maximum.*

# **The good, the bad, and the ugly**

Allegiance and authority in the poetical  
discourse of Muḥammad's lifetime



Marije Coster



**The good, the bad, and the ugly**

© Marije Coster, 2018  
All rights reserved

ISBN: 978-94-034-1384-6 (printed version)  
ISBN: 978-94-034-1385-3 (electronic version)

Picture on the cover: Manuel Gallardo, Cuba, 2018  
Printed by: ProefschriftMaken



rijksuniversiteit  
 groningen

# **The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly**

Allegiance and Authority in the Poetical Discourse of  
Muhammad's Lifetime

## **Proefschrift**

ter verkrijging van de graad van doctor aan de  
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen  
op gezag van de  
rector magnificus prof. dr. E. Sterken  
en volgens besluit van het College voor Promoties.

De openbare verdediging zal plaatsvinden op  
donderdag 18 april 2019 om 16:15 uur

door

**Johanna Marije Coster**

geboren op 15 oktober 1987  
te Zwolle

**Promotor**

Prof. Dr. C.K.M. von Stuckrad

**Copromotores**

Dr. N.A. Boekhoff-van der Voort

Dr. G.J.A. Borg

**Beoordelingscommissie**

Prof. dr. W.J. van Bekkum

Prof. dr. M.L.M. van Berkel

Em. Prof. dr. G.J.H. van Gelder

## CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	6
1.1 Voices from the past .....	6
1.1.1 The silenced voices .....	13
The study of ancient Arabic poetry .....	14
Poetry and historiography .....	22
Poetry in the <i>sīra</i> books.....	26
1.2 Method of research.....	27
1.2.1 Research question.....	27
1.2.2 Research method.....	29
The selected corpus .....	34
A note on the translation and interpretation of poetry .....	36
Part 1 – Historical outline.....	39
2. The tribe and the <i>umma</i> .....	42
2.1 The ‘Arabs’ and the ‘tribe’ – the problem of a definition .....	43
2.2 Allegiance .....	47
2.2.1 Allegiance in pre-Islamic Arabia.....	47
Alliances and protection .....	50
Intertribal conflicts .....	52
Fratricidal conflicts .....	54
2.2.2 The nomads and the town dwellers in tribal Arabia .....	55
The case of Mecca .....	57
Allegiance in Mecca .....	58
Alliances and protection in Mecca .....	62
2.2.3 Allegiance in the <i>umma</i> .....	65
Genealogies and the <i>umma</i> .....	66
Alliances and protection in the <i>umma</i> .....	68
The <i>umma</i> and blood vengeance .....	70
2.3 Authority.....	72
2.3.1 Authority in pre-Islamic Arabia .....	72
<i>Sunna</i> and <i>murawwa</i> .....	77
2.3.2 Authority in the <i>umma</i> .....	78
Part 2 – Poetical analysis.....	83
3. ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri .....	86
The poems of ʿDirār .....	87
Themes in ʿDirār’s poetry.....	89
3.1 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s poems.....	90
3.1.1 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his clan .....	90
3.1.2 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his tribe .....	97
ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the Yawm ‘Ukāz.....	99
The Quraysh and the affair of the Banū Jadhīma .....	103
The Quraysh and the affair of the Banū Daws.....	110
3.1.3 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the <i>umma</i> .....	114
ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s poetical response to the pledge at ‘Aqaba .....	115
ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the battle of Badr (2/624) .....	119



Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the battle of Uḥud (3/625).....	132
Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627) .....	151
Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb's conversion.....	160
Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the Muslim conquests .....	164
3.2 Recapitulation.....	168
3.2.1 Allegiance in the poems of Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb.....	168
3.2.2 Authority in the poems of Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb .....	171
4. Ibn al-Ziba'ra.....	176
The poems of Ibn al-Ziba'ra.....	177
Themes in Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poetry.....	179
4.1 Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poems .....	180
4.1.1 Ibn al-Ziba'ra and his tribe.....	180
Ibn al-Ziba'ra and his clan.....	185
Ibn al-Ziba'ra in praise of Qurashī relatives of the Banū Sahn .....	189
Ibn al-Ziba'ra and the power division within the Quraysh.....	197
4.1.2 Ibn al-Ziba'ra and the <i>umma</i> .....	201
Ibn al-Ziba'ra and Muḥammad – the first confrontations.....	202
Ibn al-Ziba'ra on the battle of Badr (2/624) .....	212
Ibn al-Ziba'ra on the battle of Uḥud (3/625).....	216
Ibn al-Ziba'ra on the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627) .....	230
Ibn al-Ziba'ra in defence of his kinsmen against the attack of an outsider.....	237
Ibn al-Ziba'ra and the conquest of Mecca (8/630).....	241
Ibn al-Ziba'ra's conversion.....	248
4.2 Recapitulation.....	258
4.2.1 Allegiance in the poems of Ibn al-Ziba'ra .....	258
4.2.3 Authority in the poems of Ibn al-Ziba'ra .....	261
5. Al-Ḥuṭay'a .....	266
The poems of Al-Ḥuṭay'a .....	269
Themes in Al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems.....	270
5.1 Al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems.....	272
5.1.1 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and his close relatives.....	272
5.1.2 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and his kin .....	279
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the Dhuhl .....	280
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the 'Abs.....	284
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the 'Abs in an intratribal conflict.....	295
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the war of Dāḥis.....	304
5.1.3 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and individuals and groups from other tribes .....	308
5.1.4 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the <i>umma</i> .....	315
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the <i>Ridda</i> .....	316
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and prominent Muslims of his time .....	326
Al-Ḥuṭay'a and al-Zibriqān b. Badr.....	329
Al-Ḥuṭay'a on his deathbed .....	334
5.2 Recapitulation.....	338
5.2.1 Allegiance in the poems of al-Ḥuṭay'a.....	338
5.2.2 Authority in the poems of al-Ḥuṭay'a .....	340

Conclusions .....	344
The poetical discourse.....	344
The three poets before Islam – the individual and the group.....	346
The clan and tribe before Islam – allegiance and authority .....	347
The poets and the <i>umma</i> .....	351
The poets and their conversion .....	356
A transformed society – a changed discourse? .....	358
Excursus – The ‘ <i>ajam</i> and the ‘ <i>arab</i> .....	366
Bibliography .....	372
Tables and figures .....	394
Poems .....	394
Nederlandse samenvatting.....	400
Dankwoord .....	404
Curriculum vitae .....	408



# Introduction

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Voices from the past

Islam did not emerge suddenly, well-crystallised and out of nothing, in a religiously barren Arabian peninsula at the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Neither did Muḥammad's prophetic career and message represent an absolute and immediate break with his environment and with the existing traditions. These two statements might seem self-evident and redundant, but in classical and modern scholarship nascent Islam has often been studied as an entirely new phenomenon in the historical context of the Arabian peninsula of the late 6<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> century. In Muslim historiography, this notion is still perceptible in the conception of Islam as a neat break with the idolatrous and rebellious past, the so-called *jāhiliyya*.<sup>1</sup> The term *jāhiliyya*, commonly glossed as “time of ignorance”, is contrasted to the period in which the right attitude towards the one God has been revealed, which consists in submission (*islām*) to him.<sup>2</sup> As put in the mouth of the Muslim Ja'far b. Abī Ṭālib, a contemporary and kinsman of the prophet Muḥammad, reflecting upon the past: “We were a tribe, a people of ignorance (*ahl jāhiliyya*), we worshipped idols, we ate corpses, we carried out atrocities [...] until God sent a messenger from among us”.<sup>3</sup> In more recent times Yaḥyā al-Jubūri described the era preceding Islam as an era of “heedlessness, insolence, and error”, a “brutal age” characterised by moral and ethical misconduct that was profoundly changed by the advent of Islam.<sup>4</sup>

In Muslim tradition Muḥammad is presented as a full member of his society, a true Arab, from the noble ranks of the Quraysh tribe in Mecca: “So the apostle of God was the noblest of his

---

<sup>1</sup> In spite of the negative function of the *jāhiliyya* in the dichotomy *jāhiliyya/islām*, the pre-Islamic period sometimes also had a function of idealised past, a time of great literature and heroic deeds; Rina Drory, “The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya. Cultural Authority in the Making”, *Studia Islamica*, 1996, 33–49.

<sup>2</sup> According to Goldziher, the terms *jahl* and *jāhiliyya* were used not so much in opposition to *ilm* (knowledge), but in opposition to *ḥilm* (forbearance, clemency). As such, *jāhiliyya* speaks of an attitude of wildness, savagery. I. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, ed. S.M. Stern and C.R. Barber, vol. 1 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1967), 201ff.; Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, McGill Islamic Studies 1 (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University Press, 1966), 28ff.; Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an: Semantics of the Qur'anic Weltanschauung*, 2 repr. (Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2008), 208ff.

<sup>3</sup> 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), *al-Kāmil fī l-Tārīkh*, ed. 'Amr 'Abd al-Salām Tadramī, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1997), 677.

<sup>4</sup> Yaḥyā Wahib al-Jubūri, *Shī'r al-Mukhaḍramīn wa-Āthār al-Islām fīhi*, 1981, 19, 22–23.

people in birth and the greatest in honour both on his father's and his mother's side".<sup>5</sup> In the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām we are told that Muḥammad used to tell his companions: "I am the most Arab of you all. I am of Quraysh, and I was suckled among the Banū Sa'd b. Bakr".<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it is through the revelation brought by him that the break between *jāhiliyya* and *islām* is introduced: Muḥammad is put in the line of previous prophets sent to their peoples (Q 4: 163-164),<sup>7</sup> whose revelation he completes and clears of alterations and changes introduced over time (Q 2: 75, 79; 5: 13).

The earliest Muslim historiographical writings on nascent Islam focus on the raids and battle accounts from Muḥammad's lifetime (a genre later known as *maghāzī*) and on the life of Muḥammad in general (a genre which would come to be indicated as *sīra* pl. *siyar*).<sup>8</sup> Especially the *maghāzī* are quite similar to the *ayyām al-'arab* lore of pre-Islamic times, the oral tradition about the "Days of the Arabs", that is, their raids and battles.<sup>9</sup> Besides *siyar* and *maghāzī*, early works from the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century deal with minor and major aspects of history and society: the idols and places of worship of pre-Islamic tribes, the customs and lore of pre-Islamic times, and specific tribes, individuals, or categories of contemporary individuals such as poets or theologians. The latter works, known as *ṭabaqāt* (categories), offer biographical information as well as insights into the social networks of the individuals. These are seldom chronological, unified narratives, as we see for example in the case of *Kitāb Ansāb al-Ashraf* by al-Balādhurī (d. 279/893), which is a compilation of events and accounts of prominent individuals and groups in Muslim society. Other works are attempts at such a unified historical narrative; the *Tārīkh* of al-Ya'qūbī (d. 283/897), for example, is a universal history that aims at presenting a chronological account until the time of the

<sup>5</sup> Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833), *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz Shalabī, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat wa-Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 157. Trans. A. Guillaume, ed., *The Life of Muhammad by Ibn Ishāq* (Karachi etc.: Oxford University Press, 1978), 69.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1168. Trans. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 72. The Quraysh was the tribe of Muḥammad, the main tribe of Mecca. The Banū Sa'd b. Bakr were a small tribe generally considered to be part of the Hawāzin confederation. Muḥammad is said to have had a wet-nurse from this tribe; W. Montgomery Watt, 'Sa'd b. Bakr', *EL2*, 8:--.

<sup>7</sup> G.R. Hawting, 'Were There Prophets in the Jahiliyya?', in *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017), 186.

<sup>8</sup> On the use and evolution of these terms, see Pavel Pavlovitch, 'The Sira', in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg (New York: Routledge, 2017), 65.

<sup>9</sup> Pavlovitch, 'The Sira'.

author, while the monumental work of al-Ṭabarī (d. 310/923), *Kitāb Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*, covers the timespan from the creation of the world until the time of the author.<sup>10</sup>

Such works by Muslim authors at times show a *shīʿī* or *sunnī* inclination, and in general the past, present, and future are understood—implicitly or explicitly—in the light of the contrast between *jāhiliyya* and *islām*. Because of their religious tendencies we might be tempted to consider them as spurious sources on the history of Islam and favour instead sources by their contemporary non-Muslim authors,<sup>11</sup> but we must not forget that non-Muslim sources may also be subject to presuppositions, assumptions, and biases.<sup>12</sup>

Non-Muslim historiography also has been influenced by the notion of a break between the age of *jāhiliyya* and the age of Islam. As Peter Webb criticises, all too often pre-Islamic times are still simplified and taken as a unity, a “static phenomenon”. In this conception of history “*all of al-Jāhiliyya* devolves into disorderly, violent ‘pagandom’ devoid of meaningful development, which simply ended with the establishment of Islam”.<sup>13</sup> Over the past decades, this one-sided view of pre-Islamic Arabia has been submitted to revision: the growing list of publications on the subject evinces an increasing interest in Arabia in Late Antiquity and on the eve of Islam.<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> For an overview of the development of Muslim historiography, see the article F.C. De Blois et al., ‘Taʿrīkh’, *El2*, 10:258–302. Rosenthal has written a monograph on Muslim historiography in which he pays attention to the place of history in Muslim thought and scholarship; Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Brill Archive, 1968).

<sup>11</sup> Bo Holmberg, ‘Hagarism Revisited’, *Studia Orientalia* 99 (2004): 53–64. See below.

<sup>12</sup> I speak of “(traditional) Muslim sources” to refer to works such as the biographies of Muḥammad as well as works on the history, genealogies, and literature of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times by early Muslim authors. In this research on nascent Islam, my use of the term “Muslim sources” in contrast with “non-Muslim sources” certainly must not be understood as a distinction between, on the one hand, biased, subjective sources and, on the other, non-biased, objective ones. For an overview of sources on nascent Islam by early Muslim and non-Muslim authors, see John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), especially ch. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Webb, ‘al-Jāhiliyya: Uncertain Times of Uncertain Meanings’, *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014): 71. Italics: in original.

<sup>14</sup> Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook, eds., *Islam and Its Past: Jāhiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qurʾān* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017); A.M. Cameron, ed., *Late Antiquity on the Eve of Islam, The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 1* (Farnham etc.: Ashgate Variorum, 2013); Greg Fisher, ‘Arabia and the Late Antique East: Current Research, New Problems’ (Early Islam: The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?, Milan, 15 June 2015); Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London: Routledge, 2001); Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, eds., *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011); Gabriel S. Reynolds, ed., *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context 1*, Routledge Studies in the Qurʾān (London: Routledge, 2008); Gabriel S. Reynolds, ed., *New Perspectives on the Qurʾān: The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context 2*, Routledge Studies in the Qurʾān (London: Routledge, 2011); Francis E. Peters, ‘Introduction’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of*

As for the approach to Muslim sources, we can distinguish different approaches in non-Muslim scholarship on Islamic origins.<sup>15</sup> A first approach is what we can call the polemical—and often apologetic—tradition. The earliest polemical sources which criticise Islam can be traced back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century; these early writings sometimes refer to nascent Islam in an incidental way, while other times they target it deliberately in the form of apocalyptic, polemical, apologetic, or historical writings.<sup>16</sup> The Muslim rule on (parts of) the Iberian peninsula from 711 until 1492, and the Ottoman army reaching Vienna in 1529, turned Islam and the Orient into a subject of interest and of concern in Medieval Europe and resulted in a surge of polemical religious writings on Islam by Jews and Christians.<sup>17</sup> Rooted in this polemical tradition are the works that attempt to trace the influences and the impact of Judaism and Christianity on Islam, seeing the latter as barely anything more than an amalgamation of influences of the former two, frequently with a focus on its “misunderstanding” of Jewish and Christian doctrine and writings.<sup>18</sup>

---

*Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters, *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 3* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), xi–xlix; Jan Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads* (London etc.: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003); Peter Webb, *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> See Holmberg, ‘Hagarism Revisited’. For more detailed surveys of the Western approaches to the origins of Islam, see, among others: Fred M. Donner, ‘Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History’, in *The New Cambridge History of Islam. The Formation of the Islamic World: Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson, vol. 1 (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 625–47; Trygve Kronholm, ‘Dependence and Prophetic Originality in the Koran’, *Orientalia Suecana* 31–32, no. 83 (1983): 47–70; Andrew Rippin, ‘Western Scholarship and the Qur’an’, in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur’an*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 235–51; Devin Stewart, ‘Reflections on the State of the Art in Western Qur’anic Studies’, in *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur’an*, ed. Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017), 4–68, as well as the introductions to Reynolds, *The Qur’an in Its Historical Context*; Reynolds, *New Perspectives on the Qur’an*; Neuwirth, Sinai, and Marx, *The Qur’an in Context*, and Part III (Modern and contemporary reinterpretation of early Islam) of Herbert Berg, ed., *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997), 257ff. On early incidental references to Islam, see Hoyland, 53ff.

<sup>17</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*, Edinburgh University Publications, Language and Literature 12 (Edinburgh: University Press, 1962); Richard William Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge MA, 1978); Zachary Lockman, *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*, *The Contemporary Middle East 3* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>18</sup> An important exponent of this attitude is Abraham Geiger (1810–1874) who in his dissertation traces the influences of the Old Testament and post-biblical Jewish tradition on Muḥammad and his message. Abraham Geiger, *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1971). This same line was pursued by scholars like Hirschfeld, Wensinck, Rudolph, and Torrey; Hartwig Hirschfeld, *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Korân* (Leipzig, 1886); Hartwig Hirschfeld, *New Researches into the Composition*



A second approach towards Muslim tradition would be the so-called “traditionalist” or descriptive approach. Generally speaking, adherents of this approach accept and use Muslim tradition as a credible source for the history of Islam and follow closely the Muslim dogma.<sup>19</sup> In 1961 the German scholar Rudi Paret could still confidently state that “[a] new and systematic interpretation of the Qur’an hardly leads to new and exciting discoveries”, and “that the picture of Muhammad that has so far been worked out by European Orientalists is well-founded and can be modified and rounded out merely in matters of detail”.<sup>20</sup>

However, in the 1970s a series of works were published in which the authors took a radically different approach towards Muslim tradition and challenged the historical framework of early Islam. This so-called “revisionist” or sceptic approach would fall in the category of rejection of Muslim sources. As with the other approaches, the sceptic approach does not refer to a coherent school of thought and method: distinctive theories and methods have led to a diverse range of conclusions. What the sceptic scholars share, however, is the assumption that traditional accounts of Islamic origins are to be dismissed—partially or entirely—for the writing of history and that they are to be substituted by non-Muslim sources and archaeological findings.<sup>21</sup> One of the most prominent revisionists is the British scholar John Wansbrough. With the publication of his book *Quranic studies* in 1977 Wansbrough re-initiated the debate concerning the emergence of Islam. In

---

*and Exegesis of the Quran*, 1902; Arent Jan Wensinck, ‘Mohammed en de Joden te Medina’ (Leiden, 1908); Wilhelm Rudolph, *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum*, 1922; Charles C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York, 1933). A reductionist attitude, considering the whole content and development of early and later Islam merely as a result of the impact and adaptation of external phenomena, is perceivable in the works of Karl Ahrens and, more recently, in those of Lüling, for example. K. Ahrens, ‘Christliches im Qoran. Eine Nachlese’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* N.F.9, no. 1930 (1930): 15–68, 148–90; K. Ahrens, *Muhammed als Religionsstifter*, 1935; Günter Lüling, *Über den Urkoran: Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion der vorislamisch-christlichen Strophenlieder im Koran*, vol. 2 (Erlangen: Verlagsbuchhandlung H. Lüling, 1993).

<sup>19</sup> For example: Gustav Weil, *Mohammed der Prophet, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre*, 1843; Gustav Weil, *Historisch-Kritische Einleitung in Den Koran*, 2nd ed. (Bielefeld, 1878). This approach is still prevalent in many general introductions to the history of early Islam. Criticising such an approach, Patricia Crone characterised such works as “Muslim chronicles in modern languages and graced with modern titles”; Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 13.

<sup>20</sup> Rudi Paret, ‘Der Koran als Geschichtsquelle’, *Der Islam* 37 (1961): 26–27. Cited and translated in Nicolai Sinai and Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Introduction’, in *The Qur’an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur’anic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 2.

<sup>21</sup> Gabriel S. Reynolds, ‘Introduction’, in *The Qur’an in Its Historical Context 1*, ed. Gabriel S. Reynolds, Routledge Studies in the Qur’an (London: Routledge, 2008), 8–19.

this book, he studied the Qurʾān as a literary work and as a product of the later Muslim community, and applied form-critical analysis to the Qurʾān and traditions.<sup>22</sup> While Wansbrough withheld himself from presenting alternative theories to the emergence of Islam, arguing that it is impossible to know “what really happened”, other sceptic scholars did in fact try to “reconstruct” the history of the emergence of Islam.<sup>23</sup> Generally speaking, revisionist scholars question or deny the historicity of the person of Muḥammad, arguing that the Qurʾān was compiled over an extensive period of time and that Islam did not crystallise until the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

Sometimes confused with the revisionist approach is the more polemical approach of scholars like Luxenberg and Ibn Warraq, whose contributions are certain to draw media attention.<sup>24</sup> Their theories have found their way to the popular debate, voiced, for example, in a

<sup>22</sup> John Wansbrough, *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*, London Oriental Series 31 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). See also: John Wansbrough, *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Before Wansbrough, Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) had promoted a “Source-Critical Approach”, analysing for example the informants and transmitters of Muslim traditions (the chain of narrators, *isnād*) in order to distinguish and dismiss narrations of “weak” transmitters and inauthentic accounts. Examples of scholars following this “Source-Critical Approach” are: Tor Andrae, *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben Seiner Gemeinde* (Stockholm: Norstedt, 1918); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1953); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, Repr (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977). Ignaz Goldziher (1850-1921) and Joseph Schacht (1902-1969) questioned the authenticity of legal Muslim traditions, arguing that they are to be considered as literary creations fabricated in later phases in response to the needs of the Muslim community of those times. This “Tradition-Critical Approach” argues for great caution in accepting Islamic tradition as reliable sources for the past, for they have undergone a process of oral transmission of which it is impossible to reconstruct what has been lost, altered, or added to them. It did not, however, dismiss the traditional historical framework for the origins of Islam, as Wansbrough would do. This tradition has been followed by many in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See for example: Albrecht Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien Zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen Frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*, Bonner Orientalistische Studien 25 (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität, 1973).

<sup>23</sup> Michael Cook and Patricia Crone, as well as Yehuda Nevo and Judith Koren, argued that the emerging movement crystallised as a religious, monotheistic movement not in the context of Arabia but in Palestine, while Gerald Hawting places its origins in a still unknown region outside of Arabia. Patricia Crone and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren, *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State*, Negev Archeological Project for Study of Ancient Arab Desert Culture (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003); G.R. Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). In later times, both Crone and Cook have distanced themselves from their more radical and sceptic ideas on emerging Islam; Patricia Crone, ‘What Do We Actually Know about Mohammed?’, openDemocracy, 3 September 2014, [https://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe\\_islam/mohammed\\_3866.jsp](https://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/mohammed_3866.jsp). Accessed: 09-01-2015.

<sup>24</sup> Christoph Luxenberg (pseud.), *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache* (Schiler, 2015); Ibn Warraq (pseud.), *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad* (Amherst:

book (*In the Shadow of the Sword*, 2013) and TV documentary (*Islam: The Untold Story*, 2012) by the British historian Tom Holland. Reflecting on his research on Islam, Holland states: “Questions fundamental to Islam’s traditional understanding of itself turned out to defy consensus. Might the Arab conquerors not actually have been Muslim at all? Did the Quran, the supposed corpus of Muhammad’s revelations, in fact derive from a whole multiplicity of pre-existing sources? Was it possible that Muhammad himself, rather than coming from Mecca, had lived far to the north, in the deserts beyond Roman Palestine? The answer to all these questions, I gradually came to conclude, was yes”.<sup>25</sup>

Understandably, the revisionist or sceptic theories as they were developed in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century caused heated scholarly debates. Especially the attempts to “reconstruct” the history of the emergence of Islam have been rejected by many academics as “unconvincing” and “fantastic”.<sup>26</sup> New discoveries in the fields of archaeology and manuscripts, as well as the on-going research in the fields of pre-Islamic history and society, Qur’ānic studies, etc., disprove for example the theories that date the emergence of the Qur’ān to the 8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> centuries or that place it in a completely different geographical environment.<sup>27</sup>

---

Prometheus Books, 2000); Ibn Warraq (pseud.), *Koranic Allusions: The Biblical, Qumranian, and Pre-Islamic Background to the Koran* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2013).

<sup>25</sup> Tom Holland, ‘When I Questioned the History of Muhammad’, *Wall Street Journal*, 9 January 2015, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/when-i-questioned-the-history-of-muhammad-1420821462>. Accessed: 28-09-2016. See the critical review of the film and the writings by Holland, as well as the larger tendencies of ignoring Muslim sources and new findings and research, in: Nebil Ahmed Husayn, ‘Scepticism and Uncontested History: A Review Article’, *Journal of Shi’a Islamic Studies* 7, no. 4 (2014): 385–409. The theories of Luxenberg and others can also be found in the essays—a compilation of articles previously published as a series in the Dutch newspaper *Trouw*—in E. H. Mulder and Thomas Milo, *De Omstreden Bronnen van de Islam* (Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Angelika Neuwirth, ‘Qur’an and History — a Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur’anic History and History in the Qur’an’, *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 5, no. 1 (1 January 2003): 1–18; Gabriel Said Reynolds, ‘Review: Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State by Yehuda D. Nevo; Judith Koren’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 3 (1 July 2005): 453–57; J. Wansbrough, ‘Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World by Patricia Crone; Michael Cook. Review’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41, no. 1 (1 January 1978): 155–56.

<sup>27</sup> Husayn, ‘Scepticism and Uncontested History’; Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, ‘Šan‘ā’ 1 and the Origins of the Qur’ān’, *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients*, no. 87 (2012): 1–129; Gregor Schoeler, ‘The Codification of the Qur’ān: A Comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough’, in *The Qur’ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur’anic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Brill, 2010), 779–94; Nicolai Sinai, ‘When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure? Part I’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 273–92; Nicolai Sinai, ‘When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure? Part II’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2014): 509–21.

At the same time, and in spite of the radical, divergent, and often questionable views on the history of Islam as presented by revisionist scholars, their approach has contributed to the study of early Islam by raising important questions regarding the reliability of the sources of early Islamic history. The methodological challenges posed by the counter-narratives have led to an open debate and resulted in critical and sound publications dealing with different aspects of early Islamic history.<sup>28</sup>

### 1.1.1 The silenced voices

Over the last decades new discoveries and interpretations have undermined an important argument of sceptics and revisionists, namely, the supposed lack of contemporary sources that could corroborate or at least contextualise Muslim tradition. In addition, besides archaeological findings, epigraphical sources, and documents of different sorts that we have at our disposal, there is an extensive body of source material that may have been overlooked for too long: sources in which contemporaries of Muḥammad voice their experiences, values, and worldview, and even react to Muḥammad, to his message, and to the emergence of a group of followers around him. These sources are compositions found in collections of poems (*dīwān* pl. *dawāwīn*) or scattered in historiographical, genealogical, or lexicographical works, for example. These poets who lived on the “threshold” of Islam, having been born before and died after its emergence, are indicated as *mukhaḍram*.<sup>29</sup> Only to a small degree has this corpus of compositions by *mukhaḍram* poets been used for the contextualisation of early Islam.

It might seem counterintuitive to point to poems as sources on the history of early Islam, but we should note that in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, the discourse of the poets was an

<sup>28</sup> See, for example: Andreas Görke, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler, ‘First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate’, *Der Islam*, 2012, 2–59. The literature on Arabia in Late Antiquity and the eve of Islam is extensive. See, among others: Cameron, *Late Antiquity on the Eve of Islam*; Greg Fisher, ed., *Arabs and Empires Before Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It*; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*; Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*.

<sup>29</sup> The indications pre-Islamic, *mukhaḍram*, and Islamic poetry will be used in accordance with the historical chronology and do not necessarily correspond to literary shifts. A poet born and deceased before the emergence of Islam will be referred to as *pre-Islamic* even though his compositions might already reflect a transition in style, form, and morals. In the same vein a poet born before and deceased after the emergence of Islam will be indicated as *mukhaḍram* even though his poetry might be still in accordance with “pre-Islamic” poetic customs. Ewald Wagner, *Grundzüge der Klassischen Arabischen Dichtung. Die Altarabische Dichtung*, vol. 1, Grundzüge 68 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987), 9.

authoritative discourse in society. The poets occupied a position of authority within their tribe: they stored the oral wisdom and inherited traditions and thus acted as the oral register of the tribe's history and genealogy.<sup>30</sup> For the analysis of the poetical discourse of contemporaries of Muḥammad in the following chapters it is important to keep in mind that the poetical compositions were more than simply anecdotal and internal, personal, reflections on the dynamics of their time.<sup>31</sup> The voices of the poets, as “knowers” and spokespeople of their kin, carried a special weight.<sup>32</sup>

### *The study of ancient Arabic poetry*

While the focus of early traditional Muslim sources is on Muḥammad and on the events related to nascent Islam, the events which are not directly related to him tend to fall in the shadows. In *mukhaḍram* poetry, poetry by the contemporaries of Muḥammad, we find a tool to further contextualise Muḥammad and nascent Islam. The point of this research is not to turn the spotlights away from Muḥammad but rather to balance the light so that contemporaries and events not directly related to the emergence of Islam might be visible too.

In these poems we hear contemporaries who experienced first-hand Muḥammad's preaching and teaching, and interpreted his message in light of their own worldview. They knew who Muḥammad was, not only as an individual but as a member of their society. They could place

---

<sup>30</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>31</sup> The power and prevalence of the poetical discourse in present-day Arabic society has been studied from different angles by scholars and has been discussed in the media, especially over the last two decades: the role of poetry in the street protests against the government in Yemen, but also the use of poetry by *jihādī* individuals and groups. Robyn Creswell and Bernard Haykel, 'Why Jihadists Write Poetry', *The New Yorker*, 1 June 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/08/battle-lines-jihad-creswell-and-haykel>. Accessed: 06-10-2017; Elisabeth Kendall, 'Yemen's al-Qa'ida and Poetry as a Weapon of Jihad', in *Twenty-First Century Jihad*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ewan Stein (London: Tauris, 2014), 247–69; Elisabeth Kendall, 'Jihadist Propaganda and Its Exploitation of the Arab Poetic Tradition', in *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition. Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, ed. Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), 223–46; Joanna Paraszczuk, 'The Poems of Jihadists', *The Atlantic*, 18 September 2015, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/jihadist-poetry-syria-chechnya-syria/405790/> Accessed: 06-10-2017.

<sup>32</sup> Gottfried Müller, *Ich bin Labid und das ist mein Ziel: Zum Problem der Selbstbehauptung in der altarabischen Qaside*, *Berliner Islamstudien* 1 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981), 3–5; Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:32–33. In this light we may understand the struggle over authority between Muḥammad and the poets, which we hear in some Qur'anic passages and other early Islamic sources: Muḥammad had to prove that his source of inspiration was different and higher than that of the poets (for example: Q 37: 36; 69: 38–41). A more in depth study of the relationship and tensions between Muḥammad and the poets falls outside of the scope of the present book.

him and his followers in their context through the ties of tribal relationships; they generally understood his speech and his references and allusions to past events and traditions, and even his calling to the belief in one God was not something completely new.<sup>33</sup> Also when they do not refer explicitly or implicitly to Muḥammad and to the nascent community the *mukhaḍram* poems are interesting for the contextualisation of early Islam, since they may help us understand how broad Muḥammad's range of influence was and how widespread the knowledge of—or interest in—Muḥammad in his immediate context. Therefore, it is in these poems by Muḥammad's contemporaries that we find traces of how they viewed their society and themselves in it, how they understood Muḥammad's message and his position, and how they related or not to the group that gradually formed around him, all this rather unpolished by later doctrine.

In the corpus of poetry from before and after the emergence of Islam we find a large amount of what we could call “circumstantial poems”; more or less immediate reactions to a certain situation with which the poet was confronted. These circumstantial poems usually are quite short and in the form of a piece (*qit'a*). Besides these short compositions we find longer, polythematic odes (*qaṣīda* pl. *qaṣā'id*) with a certain structure and recurrent *topoi* and themes.<sup>34</sup> Among the poets were both males and females. More poems and collections of poetry by men have reached us, but among some of the most celebrated are females. The pre-Islamic female poetess al-Khansā', from the tribe of the Sulaym, for example, is remembered as “the greatest early Arabic elegiac poet”.<sup>35</sup>

Ancient Arabic poetry was an oral tradition.<sup>36</sup> The poet recited his composition to an audience and if, for whatever reason, it struck a chord, the poem was “kept alive by continual

<sup>33</sup> In Arabia before Islam, a predominantly polytheistic society, Allāh was already recognized as god and occupied the position of a supreme divinity not only in Mecca but beyond, although he seems to have played “a limited role in the actual religious cult.” J. Henninger, ‘Pre-Islamic Bedouin Religion’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 118. Cf. M.J. Kister, ‘Labbayka, Allāhumma, Labbayka. On a Monotheistic Aspect of a Jāhiliyya Practice’, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 38–39. In addition, monotheism was—partially—known through contacts with Jews and Christians, as well as with *ḥunafā'* (sg. *ḥanīf*), god-fearing men. Ilkka Lindstedt, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia and Early Islam’, in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg (New York: Routledge, 2017), 164–69.

<sup>34</sup> R. Jacobi, ‘Qaṣīda’, ed. J.S. Meisami and P. Starkey, *EAL* (London: Routledge, 1998), 630–33; J.S. Meisami, ‘Qit'a', *EAL*, 638–39.

<sup>35</sup> W. Walther, ‘al-Khansā', *EAL*, 435.

<sup>36</sup> Not ‘oral’ in the sense of the Parry-Lord theory of oral poetry; see below; Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:27.

recitation<sup>37</sup> by the poet, by the audience and through the formal institution of the *rāwī* (pl. *ruwāt*), the transmitter or reciter. A professional poet had one or more transmitters to whom he committed his poems for their further recitation and preservation. The transmitter's function was also to explain possible difficulties of the poem and the circumstances of its composition.<sup>38</sup> Some transmitters were also poets themselves.<sup>39</sup> It was not until the 8<sup>th</sup> century that in the cities of Baṣra and Kūfa, in modern-day Iraq, philologists started to compile the oral compositions of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times.<sup>40</sup> This corpus has come down in a *dīwān* (pl. *dawāwīn*, collections of poems) of one poet or of the poets of a single tribe,<sup>41</sup> or scattered throughout a vast array of sources, sometimes fragmentary and difficult to date and to attribute to a certain poet.

In the West, pre-Islamic and Islamic Arabic poetry has been studied profusely since interest and enthusiasm for these compositions arose in the age of Romanticism. The great German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), for example, was influenced by Arabic and Urdu poetry.<sup>42</sup> Romanticists such as William Jones (1746-1794) and Friedrich Rückert (1788-1866) were captivated by the beauty and exotic character of the tradition and sought to imitate that beauty in their editions and translations of Arabic poetry collections.<sup>43</sup> However, around the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century a shift took place and the attention was centred on the exact rendering and explanation of the compositions, resulting in more technical translations and extensive commentaries. As Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918) expressed in his introduction to the

---

<sup>37</sup> Charles Lyall, *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic* (Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press, 1981), xxxv.

<sup>38</sup> Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe des Origines à la Fin du XVIe Siècle de J.-C.*, vol. 2 (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1964), 335–36.

<sup>39</sup> Gregor Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*, ed. James E. Montgomery, trans. Uwe Vagelpohl (Routledge, 2006), 102–3.

<sup>40</sup> Lyall, *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic*, xxxv–xxxix; R. Jacobi, 'Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik der Arabischen Dichtung', in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. H. Gätje, vol. 2, 1987, 10–13.

<sup>41</sup> Some collections of one poet or tribe have come down to us in different editions, which sometimes have been brought together and commented upon by editors of modern editions.

<sup>42</sup> J.W. Goethe and J.H.J. Düntzer, *Goethes Westöstlicher Divan*, Erläuterungen Zu Den Deutschen Klassikern. 1. Abt., Erläuterungen Zu Goethes Werken 33 (Leipzig: Wartig, 1878).

<sup>43</sup> William Jones, *The Moallakāt: Or Seven Arabian Poems, Which Were Suspended on the Temple at Mecca; with a Translation, a Preliminary Discourse, and Notes Critical, Philological, Explanatory*, Reproduction of original from the British Library (Electronic ed.) (London: Thomson Gale, 2003); J.M.F. Rückert, trans., *Hamāsa, Oder Die Ältesten Arabischen Volkslieder, Gesammelt von Abu Temmām*, 2 vols (Stuttgart: Liesching, 1846).

edition of the *dīwān* of poets from the Hudhayl tribe, “Our interest in the old Bedouin songs is not poetical, but linguistic and historical”.<sup>44</sup>

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the focus shifted again, this time from philological and historical research to literary studies and theory. An example is the monumental work of Carl Brockelmann (1868-1956), *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, followed by books by Reynold A. Nicholson (1868-1945) and Hamilton A.R. Gibb (1895-1971),<sup>45</sup> all mainly biographical-chronological studies. Régis Blachère (1900-1973) deals with literary questions in his unfinished work *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*.<sup>46</sup> He discards the classification of authors and compositions in categories corresponding to socio-historical periods and transitions (grouping authors and works as pre-Islamic, early Islamic, Umayyad, ‘Abbāsīd, etc.), and identifies instead turning points in literary history itself, points or periods that do not always correspond to socio-historical events and transitions.<sup>47</sup>

Pre-Islamic poetry presented and still presents specific problems for researchers. The often fragmentary nature of the transmitted poems, the doubtful attributions to specific poets or even their anonymity, occasional errors in metre and rhyme, the obscurity of the vocabulary and images, and references to particular events, persons, or places of which we lack any further information, all hinder the researcher attempting to interpret them and to distinguish between early poems and later attributions, between genuine errors and conscious alterations or forgeries. According to Blachère, we cannot access the poetical corpus in its “original state”: “all that we can aspire to is to recreate the ‘climate’ in which they appeared”.<sup>48</sup> Such cautionary remarks did not go far enough for some. In the 1920s two works were published in which the corpus of ancient Arabic poetry as a whole was dismissed as unsuitable for any historical, cultural, and linguistic research on the background of early Islam. According to the Egyptian scholar Ṭāhā Ḥusayn (1889-1973),

<sup>44</sup> “Das Interesse, das wir an den alten Beduinenliedern nehmen, ist kein poetisches, sondern ein sprachliches und historisches”; Julius Wellhausen, *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten. Prolegomena Zur Ältesten Geschichte Des Islams*, vol. 6 (Berlin: Reimer, 1899). Cited in Jacobi, ‘Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik’, 7.

<sup>45</sup> Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*, 2 vols (E. Felber, 1898); R.A. Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1966); H.A.R. Gibb, *Arabic Literature: An Introduction*, The World’s Manuals (London etc.: Oxford University Press, 1926).

<sup>46</sup> Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe des Origines à la Fin du XVIe Siècle de J.-C.*, 3 vols (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1952).

<sup>47</sup> Blachère and Wagner point out that these turning points frequently coincide with historical periods or phases. These coincidences are not surprising, for “die gleichen sozialen Entwicklungen, die zu politischen Umwälzungen führten [...] auch auf die Poesie gewirkt”; Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:9.

<sup>48</sup> Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe des Origines à la Fin du XVIe Siècle de J.-C.*, vol. 1 (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1952), 85.



author of one of the two books, the vast majority of what is wrongly called “pre-Islamic” poetry is in fact a post-Islamic forgery, and therefore merely a reflection of ideas and concepts of Muslims in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century. Slightly less definitive, but in a similar vein, the British scholar David S. Margoliouth (1858-1940) stated in the second book that we cannot be sure whether the poems indeed predate the emergence of Islam. According to Margoliouth, both intratextual and intertextual characteristics seem to point to a later date of composition.<sup>49</sup>

The question of the authenticity of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry remains a difficult issue, but we owe it among others to the scholarship of Arthur J. Arberry (1905-1969) that we reject the idea of dismissing the corpus of poetry as a whole and instead can adopt an attitude of caution and to carefully analyse particular poets and compositions. In the epilogue of his book *The Seven Odes*, a work on the famous seven polythematic odes (*qaṣīda* pl. *qaṣā'id*) of pre-Islamic times known as *mu'allaqāt*, Arberry analyses and refutes one by one the arguments of Ḥusayn and especially Margoliouth. In order to do this, he draws extensively upon the arguments and findings of predecessors, Arab as well as non-Arab scholars.<sup>50</sup> Among other things, Arberry points to the obscurity of the transmitted poetry: “If this poetry was all, or mostly, forged, why, one may now ask, is so much of it difficult to understand, and why does it abound in references to persons and events that exercised all the ingenuity of the commentators to explain? Are we to suppose that the forgers aimed not only to entertain but also to mystify their hearers?”<sup>51</sup> To assume that renowned Arabic philologists and historians like al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213/828) were unable to distinguish forgeries from genuinely pre-Islamic poetry and at the same time to claim the ability to do oneself so many centuries later is a sign of “a certain immodesty”, as Arberry carefully puts it.<sup>52</sup>

Another development that has contributed to the debate on the authenticity of the poetical corpus has been the application of the theory of oral-formulaic literature to the study of ancient Arabic poetry. The theory of oral literature is known, by the names of its two developers

---

<sup>49</sup> Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Fi l-Shi'r al-Jāhili* (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1925); D.S. Margoliouth, ‘The Origins of Arabic Poetry’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 3 (1 July 1925): 417–49. A revised edition of Ḥusayn’s work was edited in 1927, Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, *Fi l-Adab al-Jāhili* (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1927).

<sup>50</sup> Arthur John Arberry, *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature* (London etc.: Allen and Unwin, 1957). See also: Edouard Bichr Farès, *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam* (Protat frères, 1932), 6–20. Farès analyses the causes adduced by Ḥusayn for the falsification of poetry. He accepts some as being possible but dismisses most of them.

<sup>51</sup> Arberry, *The Seven Odes*, 244.

<sup>52</sup> Arberry, 244.

Millman Parry and Albert Lord, as the Parry-Lord theory.<sup>53</sup> The main exponents of its application to ancient Arabic poetry are James T. Monroe and Michael Zwettler.<sup>54</sup> In the Parry-Lord theory three formal criteria are distinguished as characteristic of oral poetry: a) its formulaic character, b) its stereotypical theme(s), and c) the lack of enjambment.<sup>55</sup> Monroe and Zwettler focus on the first criterion and conclude that ancient Arabic poetry is formulaic,<sup>56</sup> a conclusion that others dispute.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Milman Parry and Adam Parry, eds., *The Making of Homeric Verse: Collected Papers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); Albert Bates Lord, *The Singer of Tales*, *Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature* 24 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960).

Oral poetry, according to Parry and Lord, is formulaic. A poet composes the poem while he performs. For the composition he draws on his experience as well as on a stock of formulas, “a group of words which is regularly employed under the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea” (Milman Parry, ‘Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style’, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1 January 1930): 8). Such an oral composition is never repeated literally, neither by the poet nor by later transmitters: it is adapted, new elements are added and others can be suppressed. Until it is written down, the poem “exists in a fluid state and is recreated with each new performance” (James T. Monroe, ‘Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry’, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3 (1 January 1972): 8). Before the application of the Parry-Lord theory it was already generally accepted that ancient Arabic poetry had been orally transmitted and was not collected and written down until the 8<sup>th</sup> century, with the emergence of the schools of Baṣra and Kūfa and their study of the Arabic philology, grammar, literature and culture (cf. Lyall, *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic*, xxxv–xxxix; Jacobi, ‘Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik’, 10–13). However, the Parry-Lord theory of oral-formulaic literature allowed for the analysis of the impact of the orality on the composition and form as well as the authenticity and transmission of a poem or corpus. With the application of the Parry-Lord theory it seemed that the traditional concepts of *authenticity* and *authorship* could be considered as no longer relevant for the study of ancient Arabic poetry, or at least the questions asked had to be revised.

<sup>54</sup> For a concise and critical introduction to oral poetry research, see: Edward R. Haymes, *Das Mündliche Epos: Eine Einführung in Die ‘Oral Poetry’ Forschung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977). For the application of the Parry-Lord theory to ancient Arabic poetry, see: Monroe, ‘Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry’; Michael J. Zwettler, ‘Classical Arabic Poetry between Folk and Oral Tradition’, *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 2 (June 1976): 198–212.

<sup>55</sup> R. Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung (6.-7. Jahrhundert)’, in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. H. Gätje, vol. 2, 1987, 22–23; Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:21ff. For a synthesis and review of Monroe’s, and especially Zwettler’s, application of the Parry-Lord theory to ancient Arabic poetry, see ch. 4 “Oral poetry theory and Arabic literature” in Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 87ff.

<sup>56</sup> Monroe, ‘Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry’, 8–9; Zwettler, ‘Classical Arabic Poetry’, 211. See also Agnes Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel und die Genese des Islam: Das Menschenbild altarabischer Panegyriker im 7. Jahrhundert*, *Christentum und Islam* 2 (Würzburg: Ergon, 2004), 41.

<sup>57</sup> Alan Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry: Select Poems* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 2011), 17, 75. According to Jones, ancient Arabic poetry is not formulaic according to the definition of Parry. Rather, the poet employs a whole range of linguistic conventions and constructional aids. See Schoeler’s concise overview of the state of affairs in research on early Arabic poetry: there is a consensus (from the end of the decade of the 1980s onward) that the Parry-Lord theory of oral-formulaic poetry does not apply to early (and contemporary) Arabic poetry; Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 105–8. Schoeler dismisses the formulaic character of ancient Arabic poetry. In his view, the repetitions and similarities that occur across poems are understandable in the light of the topical conventions and the restrictions of the metre and rhyme. The

In his study on the oral and the written in early Islam, Gregor Schoeler dismisses the application of the Parry-Lord theory to early Arabic poetry: this non-epic poetry does not meet the criteria of oral-formulaic theory.<sup>58</sup> The ability to improvise a poem was important for the poets of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic times,<sup>59</sup> but as Schoeler indicates, this improvisation is of a different sort than that of epic poetry for circumstantial poems as well as for longer, polythematic odes. In the case of the circumstantial poems the poet, unfamiliar with the material, could hardly make use of “prefabricated formulae”.<sup>60</sup> The polythematic odes, on the other hand, were often reworked by the poet for some time until he was satisfied. Both the shorter and the longer compositions, because of their oral nature, could be altered even after their recitation—by the poet or by others.<sup>61</sup>

While Arabic poetry is thus neither improvisation poetry nor formulaic in the sense of the Parry-Lord theory, Monroe and Zwettler have contributed to the shift in the authenticity debate by elucidating its oral character and process of transmission. The fixation on written texts and the importance of the “true, authentic” version is absent in the primarily oral culture of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. As oral recitations, they were a more flexible dispositive than written, canonical, texts—a poet himself, the transmitter, or another poet could adapt verses to changed circumstances or adopt them in a new composition.<sup>62</sup> In addition, between the recitation of a poem and it being written down there was a process of oral transmission which could result in changes, errors, and confusions. Thus, at times one verse or set of verses reappear in another poem

---

same can be said of borrowings and parallels, which in addition may serve to underline the poet’s knowledge and mastery of the poetical tradition and which are a stylistic convention in a poetical reaction of one poet to another. Finally, possible cases of plagiarism of a poem by Imru’ al-Qays, for example, are quite natural, if we take into account that Imru’ al-Qays’ superiority as a poet was recognised by all. Schoeler, 98ff. See also Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 22–23.

<sup>58</sup> The classical odes were not epic in the sense of the long narrative poems (in the third person) centring on one hero, like the poems of Homer and Virgil. The *qaṣā'id* are shorter (around 30–100 verses), polythematic poems, generally in the first person. The sections revolving around a certain battle omit many details on the precise development of the war, on the motives behind it, and on the participants on both sides. Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 87ff. See also Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:21–25.

<sup>59</sup> It remained a prized quality for Arabic poets until this day: in the reality TV contests *Amīr al-Shu‘arā* or *Shā‘ir al-Malyūn* (Abu Dhabi TV), popular across the Arabic-speaking world, one of the requirements for the participants is to be able to improvise.

<sup>60</sup> Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 93–94.

<sup>61</sup> See the examples in Schoeler, 94.

<sup>62</sup> In 5. Al-Ḥuṭay’a I include a possible example of the adaptation of some verses by the poet himself: al-Ḥuṭay’a turned a praise poem into an invective one by changing a single word when the addressed group did not treat him as he wished; AHU, AHUL.

by the same poet or in the composition of another, at times only some verses survive of what must have been a longer composition, at times the order of verses changes from source to source, or specific words or phrases are substituted by others.<sup>63</sup> In individual cases sometimes we will be able to favour one variant over another.<sup>64</sup> In many other cases, as we will see throughout the analysis that follows, we simply have to accept the coexistence of variants without being able to choose an “original” reading.<sup>65</sup>

In present times, the consensus in the field of ancient Arabic poetry is that the corpus as it has been transmitted contains sufficient datable, authentic, and authoritative material to function as a research field on its own and to contribute to the study of the historical, social, religious, and linguistic characteristics of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia.<sup>66</sup> Obviously, prudence is called for, and the authenticity of an individual poem should always “be present as a problem in every research, at least in the conscience of the researcher”.<sup>67</sup> In that way I will proceed, and for doing so I find the approach of Ewald Wagner both elegant and fruitful. He argues that, as long as there is no

<sup>63</sup> Arberry, *The Seven Odes*, 253; Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1952, 1:86–107; Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 102. Schoeler points out that the same can be said of poetry up until the ‘Abbāsīd era: the editor of the *dīwān* of a poet like Abū Nūwās (d. ca. 200/815) had to deal with problems very similar to those with which an editor of a pre-Islamic *dīwān* would be faced: misattributions, errors, misinterpretations, repetitions, omissions, etc. The reason is that the transmission process of compositions of Abū Nūwās and his contemporaries was still similar to the transmission of pre-Islamic poets: the *rāwī* was entrusted with transmitting the poet, and only at a later stage they were put into writing. This leads Schoeler to conclude that the Parry-Lord theory either has to be applied also to the stage of early ‘Abbāsīd poetry, a written tradition, or that it has to be left aside not only for this stage, but also for the pre-Islamic era. Schoeler, 103.

<sup>64</sup> For example if anachronistic vocabulary, images, or statements appear in one variant. If two or more variants exist, errors in metre and rhyme might be an indication that the variant in which these are found is not to be trusted, although we may not be able to rule out that a flawed poem was amended by overzealous transmitters or editors.

<sup>65</sup> This might seem discouraging but, as Wagner states, although a complete *qaṣīda* without a single variant may appear attractive and as a solid basis for research and analysis, in light of the process of oral transmission the lack of any variants in fact may be more suspicious than a poem with variants; Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:20–29.

<sup>66</sup> For an overview of the developments in research, see Wagner, 1:1–11; Jacobi, ‘Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik’; Majd al-Mallah, ‘Classical Arabic Poetry in Contemporary Studies: A Review Essay’, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44, no. 2 (1 January 2013): 240–47. Next to the introductions to Arabic literature by Nicholson, Gibb, and Blachère, see the following works; Roger Allen, *An Introduction to Arabic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Pierre J. Cachia, *Arabic Literature: An Overview*, Culture and Civilisation in the Middle East (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002); Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*; Geert Jan van Gelder, *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic: Literature Anthology*, Library of Arabic Literature (New York etc.: New York University Press, 2013).

<sup>67</sup> “Die Authentizität des Textes, [...] muß in jeder Untersuchung, zumindest im Bewußtsein des Forschers, als Problem gegenwärtig sein”; Jacobi, ‘Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik’, 8–9. A careful analysis of specific poems and poets may still lead to the conclusion that they are—partially—spurious and forged.

corpus of certainly genuine poems from which we can develop formal criteria to differentiate between the genuine and the false, all we have are circular arguments. These arguments may be grounded in a working hypothesis and prove their validity, but until then Wagner, “in the hope that the falsifications have been done so well that they do not disturb the overall picture, will take the ancient Arabic poetry as a unit”.<sup>68</sup>

### *Poetry and historiography*

Poetry and historiography seem to be two different disciplines. “Poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular”, in the words of Aristotle; history recounts a succession of facts (the particular), while poetry, as a more “speculative” discipline, deals with the sort of things that *could* happen “according to likelihood and necessity”.<sup>69</sup> Based on particulars, poetry reaches for universal truths.<sup>70</sup> In modern scholarship, poetry is generally left out as a source for historiography<sup>71</sup> but in early Muslim sources, when historiographers, lexicographers, geographers and others gathered information on pre-Islamic Arabia, the poems and the *akhbār* or accounts that accompanied them were among the sources used, not only as illustrations to the prose, but also as a source of information on tribes and individuals, and on their conflicts, alliances, and relations with others.<sup>72</sup>

It goes without saying that poetry as a source on the past presents some problems. As Saleh S. Agha argues, the compositions might be apocryphal, composed on a later date to illustrate a

---

<sup>68</sup> “Ich möchte deshalb in der Hoffnung, daß die Fälschungen so gut gemacht sind, daß sie das Gesamtbild nicht stören, die altarabische Dichtung als Einheit betrachten”, Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:27–28, trans. MC.

<sup>69</sup> Aristotle, *Aristotle's Poetics*, ed. George Whalley, John Baxter, and Patrick Atherton (Montreal Que.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 811451b.

<sup>70</sup> Saleh Said Agha, ‘Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History’, in *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, ed. Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>71</sup> This division between science and poetry is, however, a relatively modern phenomenon, as demonstrated by A.J. Goldstein, who argues that in the Romantic age scholars and poets like Blake, Wordsworth, and Goethe understood science to need poetry; Amanda Jo Goldstein, *Sweet Science. Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life*, Repr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017).

<sup>72</sup> Agha, ‘Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History’, 7–8; Peter Heath, ‘Some Functions of Poetry in Pre-Modern Historical and Pseudo-Historical Texts: Comparing Ayyām al-‘Arab, al-Ṭabarī’s History, and *Sīrat ‘Antar*’, in *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, ed. Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011), 39–59. According to ‘Arafat, poetry in the historical narrative of the *sīra* literature was not only an important part, it was even expected by the audience, and used as a tool to emphasise, embellish, and dramatise the narration. W.N. ‘Arafat, ‘An Aspect of the Forger’s Art in Early Islamic Poetry’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28, no. 3 (1965): 32.

certain event or narrative; the narrative in which a genuine composition is embedded might be apocryphal; both the composition and the narrative in which it is embedded might be apocryphal and devised to serve a certain purpose or illustrate a certain point; or the composition as well as the narrative might be genuine.<sup>73</sup> Early Muslim authors of historiographical works were aware of these problems, and we see that some use poetry more freely while others limit its use out of pious or cultural reasons.<sup>74</sup>

Over the last decades there has been an increasing interest in acknowledging not only the literary worth of pre-Islamic and early Islamic poetry but also their significance for the study of the background of the society at that time.<sup>75</sup> In line with that, poetry is also recognised as a source for the understanding and contextualising of the Qurʾān, to illuminate linguistic and socio-political aspects of the text. Examples of this research and its outcomes can be found for example in the works of Thomas Bauer and Agnes Imhof,<sup>76</sup> but also in the latest book of the renowned scholar on the Qurʾān, Angelika Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community* (2015). Again, this use of poetry is not foreign to Muslim tradition. Already in the classical *tafsīr* tradition (Qurʾānic exegesis), pre-Islamic poetry was used to explain words and expressions in the Qurʾān that had become obscure for the later readers. This exegetical method had been sanctioned by the early authority and Qurʾānic exegete Ibn ʿAbbās (d. 68/687), who reportedly said that “When ye desire to learn the meaning of any strange word in the Qurʾān, look for it in the verses of the

<sup>73</sup> Agha, ‘Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History’, 8. See W.N. ʿArafat, ‘Early Critics of the Authenticity of the Poetry of the “Sira”’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 21, no. 1 (1958): 453–63; ʿArafat, ‘The Forger’s Art’; James T. Monroe, ‘The Poetry of the Sirah Literature’, in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston et al., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 368–73.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Webb, ‘Poetry and the Early Islamic Historical Tradition: Poetry and Narratives of the Battle of Şiffin’, in *Warfare and Poetry in the Middle East*, ed. Hugh Kennedy (London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013), 119–48; Heath, ‘Some Functions of Poetry’; A. F. L. Beeston and Lawrence I. Conrad, ‘On Some Umayyad Poetry in the History of al-Ṭabarī’, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 3, no. 2 (1 July 1993): 191–206; S. A. Bonebakker, ‘Religious Prejudice against Poetry in Early Islam’, *Medievalia et Humanistica* 7 (1976): 77–99.

<sup>75</sup> Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi, *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History* (Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011). Cf. also Beeston and Conrad, ‘On Some Umayyad Poetry in the History of al-Ṭabarī’; Webb, ‘Poetry and the Historical Tradition’.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Bauer, ‘The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry for Qurʾānic Studies Including Observations on Kull and on Q22:27, 26:225, and 52:31’, in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 699–732; Agnes Imhof, ‘The Qurʾān and the Prophet’s Poet: Two Poems by Kaʿb b. Malīk’, in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 389–403.

poets”.<sup>77</sup> However, in more recent research the use of poetry is not limited to an exegetical, explanatory function.<sup>78</sup> There is an increasing awareness that the corpus of ancient Arabic poetry is a valid object of research on its own as a rich literary corpus as well as a source for the understanding of the socio-historical background of pre-Islamic and early Islamic society.<sup>79</sup>

As Imhof expresses in relation to poems by the *mukhaḍram* Kaʿb b. Mālik (d. 50/670 or 53/673), a convert to Islam, the compositions of Kaʿb and his contemporaries “allow us a glimpse on how the Prophet’s message and the Qurʾān were perceived inside the early Muslim community”, and “they contribute to our understanding of how the earliest *umma* presented and interpreted itself”.<sup>80</sup> In her book *Religiöser Wandel und die Genese des Islam* Imhof further elaborates this by taking four *mukhaḍram* poets (different from the three selected for the present thesis) and analyses and compares two compositions of each from before and after the conversion to Islam, respectively. This analysis is focused on the values and beliefs in both compositions in order to see whether the worldview of the poets had undergone a change with their conversion to Islam or not.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Mohammed Bamyeh uses the discourse of poets to compare and oppose it to the discourse of Muḥammad and thus to trace the social origins of Islam.<sup>82</sup> Earlier, Tilman Seidensticker had used pre-Islamic poetry for a philological study and comparison to the language of the Qurʾān.<sup>83</sup>

---

<sup>77</sup> Cited and translated, without mentioning the original source, in Lyall, *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic*, xxxviii. Cf. Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung* (Leiden: Brill, 1920); Bonebakker, ‘Religious Prejudice’, 83.

<sup>78</sup> Bauer, ‘The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry’.

<sup>79</sup> For example the following research: Thomas Bauer, *Altarabische Dichtkunst: Eine Untersuchung ihrer Struktur und Entwicklung am Beispiel der Onagerepisode. Texte*, vol. 2 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992); Bauer, ‘The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry’; Gert Borg and Ed De Moor, eds., *Representations of the Divine in Arabic Poetry* (Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2001); Nadia Jamil, *Ethics and Poetry in Sixth-Century Arabia* (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017).

<sup>80</sup> Imhof, ‘The Qurʾān and the Prophet’s Poet’, 399.

<sup>81</sup> For a study of pre-Islamic/Islamic values in *mukhaḍram* poetry, see also Omar A. Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam in der Arabischen Dichtung: Von der Hiğra Bis Zum Tode Umars (1-23 D.H./622-644 n.Ch.)* (Leipzig: Pries, 1937).

<sup>82</sup> Mohammed A. Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, Discourse* (Minneapolis, MN etc.: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

<sup>83</sup> T. Seidensticker, *Das Verbum Sawwama: Ein Beitrag Zum Problem der Homonymen-Scheidung Im Arabischen*, 1986. See also Tilman Seidensticker, ‘Sources for the History of Pre-Islamic Religion’, in *The Qurʾān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qurʾānic Milieu*, ed. Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 293–321.

The works by Renate Jacobi and Geert Jan van Gelder have contributed to the study of the formal and structural aspects of poetry, the role of the poet, characteristics of specific genres and literary periods, etc.<sup>84</sup> Jaroslav Stetkevych and Suzanne Stetkevych provide interesting analyses on the meaning and significance of ancient Arabic poetry, although their focus on the symbolic, mythic, and ritual meanings of compositions has been rightly criticised, since their interpretations are often too allusive or too speculative and not grounded in the text and context.<sup>85</sup>

Malcolm Lyons and Gottfried Müller both approach Arabic poetry through the lens of the identity and role of the poet. Lyons does so by studying a wide range of poetry stretching from pre-Islamic times to poetry in Muslim Spain; by tracing the roles played by the poet, he is able to paint a picture both of the literary tradition and of the society to which the poet belonged. Lyons does not analyse the non-Muslim *mukhaḍram* poets and their attitude towards Muḥammad.<sup>86</sup> Müller, on the other hand, focuses on a single poet, the *mukhaḍram* Labīd b. al-Rabīʿa, considered one of the greatest ancient Arabian poets. Through Labīd's biography and the themes and topics of his composition Müller studies the pre-Islamic Bedouin society, its structure, values, and religion, and the position of the poet within it as an individual and representative of his community.<sup>87</sup> Müller considers the socio-historical context a crucial element for the understanding of the literary expressions of the time.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>84</sup> R. Jacobi, *Studien Zur Poetik der Altarabischen Qaṣīde*, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission / Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur 24 (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971); Jacobi, 'Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik'; Jacobi, 'Die Altarabische Dichtung'; Geert Jan van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes Towards Invective Poetry (Hijāʾ) in Classical Arabic Literature* (Brill Archive, 1988); Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Genres in Collision: Nasīb and Hijāʾ', *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 1 (1 January 1990): 14–25; Geert Jan van Gelder, 'Poetry in Historiography: Some Observations', in *Problems in Arabic Literature*, ed. M. Maróth (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2004), 1–14; Van Gelder, *Classical Arabic Literature*; Geert Jan van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry*, Arabische Studien 10 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012). Important studies on the metre in classical Arabic poetry, besides Van Gelder's *Sound and Sense*, are W.F.G.J. Stoetzer, 'Theory and Practice in Arabic Metrics' (Het Oosters Instituut, 1986); D. Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse: History and Theory of ʿArūd*, Studies in Arabic Literature 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

<sup>85</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 138–39, 149.

<sup>86</sup> Malcolm C. Lyons, *Identification and Identity in Classical Arabic Poetry*, Gibb Literary Studies 2 (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999), 40–59.

<sup>87</sup> The term "Bedouin" is used for the nomads or nomadic pastoralists of Arabia, and later also northern Africa. "In large measure, the term is used descriptively throughout the region to differentiate between those peoples whose livelihood is based upon the raising of livestock by mainly natural graze and browse and those who have an agricultural or urban base (*ḥaḍar*)"; Chatty, *Nomadic Societies*, 6, 8.

<sup>88</sup> Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 1–2.



According to Charles Lyall, we must even consider pre-Islamic poetry as the “history of the Arabs”, since poetry is the reflection of the experiences of the poet and his people: “In it the men of old live their very life, and have found for themselves an expression, the power and faithfulness of which those who understand it best are least able to exaggerate”.<sup>89</sup> It is not an objective reflection of reality, however: according to Müller the *qaṣīda* always “speaks in the name of someone to someone and therefore reflects at the same time the reality from the perspective of a specific social viewpoint”.<sup>90</sup> Gert Borg characterises the poems as “ego-documents” in which the poet reflects on the events and developments of a society, and expresses his feelings of anxiety and stress as a member of this society.<sup>91</sup>

### Poetry in the *sīra* books

When scanning the *sīra* and *maghāzī* material, the large number of poems dealing with nascent Islam might surprise us: throughout the prose narrative we find compositions in which the *mukhaḍḍam* poets react to and take a position in the conflicts between the group of Muḥammad’s followers and their opponents. The voices of opponents are heard, but always in relation to the Muslim community. Their examples as opposed to Muḥammad and his close and loyal followers must serve as a deterrent and as a mirror that enlarges the obedience and submission of the Muslim community. When studying these sources we must remember that, through the (conscious or unconscious) process of selection and elimination, poems not directly concerned with the events surrounding Muḥammad may have fallen into oblivion.<sup>92</sup>

According to W.N. ‘Arafat, the authenticity of the poems on nascent Islam in the *sīra* books is doubtful. The poems often come in pairs, a poem by an opponent and a poem by a follower of Muḥammad, but these pairs, according to ‘Arafat, often seem to be the work of one and the same

---

<sup>89</sup> Lyall, *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic*, xviii–xix.

<sup>90</sup> “Sie spricht stets für jemanden zu jemandem und wiederspiegelt damit zugleich die Wirklichkeit aus dem Blickwinkel eines spezifischen sozialen Standorts”; Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 3.

<sup>91</sup> G.J.A. Borg, ‘Poetry as a Source for the History of Early Islam: The Case of (al-)‘Abbās b. Mirdās’, *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 15 (2015): 137–63. Cf also: Bauer, *Altarabische Dichtkunst*.

<sup>92</sup> P. Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Meccano ‘Abd Allāh Ibn az-Ziba‘rā as-Sahmī’, *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 38 (1963): 324. The Hudhālī poet Sā‘ida b. Ju‘ayya is an example of a poet who seems to have sunk into oblivion because of his fierce hostility towards Muḥammad. See: Joseph Hell, ed., *Die Diwane Hudailiten-Dichter Sa‘ida ibn Ġu‘ajja, Abu Ĥiraš, al-Mutanahhil und Usama ibn al-Ĥarīṭ*, vol. 2, Neue Hudailiten-Diwane 2 (Leipzig, 1933), xiii–xiv.

poet of later times, who had certain material at his disposal and attempted—not always skilfully—to compose two poems reflecting the points of view from both sides, at the same time including traditional information on the course of the battles.<sup>93</sup> ‘Arafat was by no means the first to question the authenticity of the poetry in the *sīra*: early critics considered that many of the poems in the *sīra* were forgeries; in his edition of Ibn Ishāq’s *Sīra* Ibn Hishām left out compositions that Ibn Ishāq had included in it and questioned the authenticity of other poems that he nevertheless preserved.<sup>94</sup>

The question on the authenticity of the poetry in the *sīra* books is a difficult one and lies outside the scope of this research. I do not follow ‘Arafat in his general dismissal of the poems as later forgeries. At times the authenticity or attribution of a specific poem or pair of poems indeed seems doubtful, but in the cases of the three poets selected for the present research, for example, we can see whether their compositions found in the *sīra* works fit in the larger corpus and are consistent with what we know of their environment and circumstances of life. In addition, in the *sīra* works the poetical attacks against Muḥammad—at times virulent—are difficult to explain as later forgeries by a Muslim author. In general, we must apply the same caution and careful analysis to the poems in the *sīra* books as to the poems not found in them.

## 1.2 Method of research

### 1.2.1 Research question

The meticulous philological research of Arabic poetry in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the debates surrounding the authorship and authenticity of the compositions, the application of theories of literary studies to the field of Arabic poetry in the 1970s and onward, all this has led to the present

<sup>93</sup> For a comparison of one of such pairs, ‘Arafat, ‘The Forger’s Art’. According to ‘Arafat, these forgeries were to embellish and dramatise the narrative and were the work of more than one person, but he offers no conclusive alternative of possible forgers and when this work would have been done.

<sup>94</sup> Or he added the remark that the authenticity of a certain poem was to be doubted; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, xxv. Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī has some harsh words on the attitude of Ibn Ishāq towards poetry: “Muhammad b. Ishāq was one of those who did harm to poetry and corrupted it and passed on all sorts of rubbish. He was one of those learned in the biography of the prophet and people quoted poems on his authority. He used to excuse himself by saying that he knew nothing about poetry and that he merely passed on what was communicated to him. But that was no excuse, for he wrote down in the *Sīra* poems ascribed to men who had never uttered a line of poetry and of women too”; Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 845 or 846), *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shu‘arā’*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, vol. 1 (Jeddah: Dār al-Madani, 1952), 7–8. Trans. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, xxv.

situation in which we have at our disposal a poetical corpus that is “sizeable and reliable enough to serve as a foundation for the study of Arabic poetry in all its epochs”.<sup>95</sup> Building forth on this foundation I can proceed to formulate the current question of research.

The research question of this thesis is twofold. First, from a descriptive point of view: how did the contemporaries of Muḥammad receive, perceive, and react to his message, and how are their reactions to be understood in light of what we know of society in pre-Islamic Arabia? And in the second place, based upon the answers to the first question: how does the discourse of the poets serve to legitimise the institutions and the ways of thinking of their time? Faced with Muḥammad’s claim to authority and the emergence of a community around him, do the poets legitimise the ways of thinking and the societal organisation of old, or does their discourse strengthen and validate his position and claims?

Underlying both questions lies the following assumption: the *umma* as a community of Muslim believers was not established in a straightforward and linear process. What can the discourse of *mukhadram* poets teach us about the organisation of society on the eve of Islam, of the position of the individual therein and his ties to his group, on leadership and authority? And, in light of this understanding of society and its norms and values, how was Muḥammad perceived, how was his message understood, and how was the group around him framed and (de)legitimised?

Regarding the description and analysis I must note the following. Among Muḥammad’s contemporaries there were those who (initially) accepted his message and others who (initially) rejected it. In Muslim tradition, those who accepted his call are said to have “converted” or “submitted” (*aslama*) to Islam, while the others are characterised as polytheists (*mushrikūn*) who persevered in their unbelief. A contested term in religious studies, “conversion” in the most basic sense implies some sort of religious change.<sup>96</sup> Assuming that those who adhered to Muḥammad had, at the very least, to accept the basic tenet of his preaching—belief in one God and belief in Muḥammad as a messenger of this God—religious change, and therefore conversion, might be an appropriate indication. Regarding individuals and groups, when the sources inform us about their

---

<sup>95</sup> “Das vorliegende Textmaterial ist umfangreich und verlässlich genug, um als Grundlage für das Studium der arabischen Dichtung in allen ihren Epochen zu dienen”; Jacobi, ‘Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik’, 8.

<sup>96</sup> Lewis R. Rambo and Charles E. Farhadian, ‘Conversion’, ed. Lindsay Jones, *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), Gale Virtual Reference Library.

conversion or submission often we lack any information on how they understood this change.<sup>97</sup>

Therefore, I will generally limit myself to speak of “conversion” in the sense that they accepted the new status quo and recognised the position and authority of Muḥammad.

With a focus on the society of Northern and Central Arabia on the eve of Islam,<sup>98</sup> the research questions will be studied from two angles: allegiance and authority.

– A society in which the ideal was that of fierce loyalty towards one’s relatives, clan, and tribe would be gradually transformed into a society in which the ideal was that of a brotherhood of believers, relegating to a secondary plane any possible tribal ties or enmities.

– A primarily egalitarian society, in which a leader of a clan or tribe was chosen by consensus after he had proven his abilities and fitness to lead the group in times of war and hardship, was now transformed into a society in which a divine messenger—a figure not unknown—not only claimed spiritual power, but also military and political powers.

### 1.2.2 Research method

As sources for the descriptive and discursive research questions I use poems by contemporaries of Muḥammad. Is it possible to use the corpus of poems of the time of nascent Islam to extrapolate from it information on society and the individual? Of course, artistic representations should not be seen as a direct reflection of reality. In poetry, it is necessary to distinguish between literary devices and factual descriptions, between the hyperbolic expression of an ideal and the actual society with its mores and practices.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>97</sup> See the studies on the meaning and development of the terms *umma* (community), *mu’min* (believer), and *muslim* (one who submits). In the early stages of Islam the term *mu’minūn* (pl. of *mu’min*) probably included the members of the other two monotheistic religions, while *umma* was also not limited to the community around Muḥammad. Only at a later stage did these terms come to be used exclusively for Muslim believers. See among others: M.M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam: Studies in Ancient Arab Concepts*, 1972; F.M. Denny, ‘The Meaning of “Ummah” in the Qur’ān’, *History of Religions* 15, no. 1 (1 August 1975): 34–70; F.M. Denny, ‘Ummah in the Constitution of Medina’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 1977): 39–47; F.M. Denny, ‘Some Religio-Communal Terms and Concepts in the Qur’ān’, *Numen* 24, no. 1 (April 1977): 26–59; Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010); Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*.

<sup>98</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>99</sup> Brown, ‘The Social Context of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Poetic Imagery and Social Reality in the Mu’allaqat,’ 39–40, 42

Nonetheless, this *mukhaḍram* poetry can serve as a valuable source of information on the views and values of the people and on the social structure and authority, among other things. Through the poetical representations of events of the time we may be able to corroborate or question information found in archaeological findings or prose: minor and major clashes, transhumance movements, the approximate size or prominence of a certain tribe or confederation and, more in general, the organisation of society. In the case of the present research, the poems by Muḥammad's contemporaries will be examined, contextualised, and compared with information from other sources in order to serve as additional information on the history of early Islam.

Using the poems as a source for the history of nascent Islam, we are also able to move beyond a mere descriptive approach and find answers to the second research question, namely, how the poems may have served to legitimise the institutions and ways of thinking of their time. As Gottfried Müller states with reference to the *mukhaḍram* poet Labīd b. Rabī'a, "His compositions, as well as those from his contemporaries, are literary documents that testify to the unusual tensions and contrasts of his epoch, as well as to the attempt to overcome, or at least confine, their disrupting effect on the existence of the individual, as well as on the established values and standards, through severe, persisting, tradition".<sup>100</sup>

The analysis of poems by contemporaries of Muḥammad will not only lead to a clearer picture of how his contemporaries represented society, but also to a better understanding of the processes through which power and legitimacy, identities and beliefs were constructed around the time of nascent Islam. Poetry before the emergence of Islam represents the most important discourse of its time, giving voice to the values and ideals of society. As the traditionist and philologist Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (139-231 or 232/756-845 or 846) famously expressed in his book *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shu'arā'*, poetry in the *Jāhiliyya* was for the Arabs the "register of their learning and the final word of their wisdom which they had adopted and which they followed".<sup>101</sup> In time,

---

<sup>100</sup> "Seine Dichtungen sind, ebenso wie die seiner Zeitgenossen, literarische Dokumente, die von den ungewöhnlichen Spannungen und Gegensätzen der Epoche, sowie von dem durchaus zeitgemäßen Verzug zeugen, deren zersetzende Wirkung auf die menschliche Einzelexistenz, wie auf alle bis dahin verbindlichen Werte und Maßstäbe mit strenger, beharrender Traditionsgebundenheit zu bewältigen, zumindest jedenfalls einzudämmen". Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 2. See also Lyall's quote, in which pre-Islamic poetry is characterised as the "history of the Arabs"; footnote 89.

<sup>101</sup> *Wa kāna al-shi'r fi l-jāhiliyya 'ind al-'arab dīwān 'ilmihim wa-muntahā ḥukimihim bihi ya'khudūna wa-ilayhi yaṣīrūna*; al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1952, 1:24. Trans. Abdulla El-Tayib, 'Pre-Islamic Poetry', in *Arabic Literature to*

the Qurʾān and the words of Muḥammad as recorded in his biographies and traditions relegated the poetical compositions to a secondary position at best, but during Muḥammad's lifetime the poets were still seen as spokesmen of their community. In the words of the *mukhaḍram* poet and convert al-Muzarrid b. Ḍirār al-Ghatafānī: "I am the (clan's) spokesman with regard to those whom I have attacked".<sup>102</sup> As a reflection of the values and ideals of Arabian society, the corpus of poetry sheds light on the self-image of this society around the time of nascent Islam, a world in transformation in the social, political, economic, and religious spheres. At the same time, these poems not only reflect the situation, institution, or social structure that frames them as "discursive events", but also shape them.<sup>103</sup>

To answer this second research question I will use the approach of discourse analysis. In scholarship, *discourse* is defined differently by many and, consequently, so is *discourse analysis*. A general and broad definition of *discourse* may be: it is "language in use".<sup>104</sup> Discursive practice involves the process of "text production, distribution, and consumption".<sup>105</sup> Equally broadly defined, *discourse analysis* is then an approach to study language in use.<sup>106</sup> In a single poem we may find different "discursive strands" together; this entanglement or "discursive knots"<sup>107</sup> is an

---

*the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. Beeston et al., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 27.

<sup>102</sup> Trans: Lyons, *Identification and Identity*, 53.

<sup>103</sup> See Reiner Keller, *Doing Discourse Research: An Introduction for Social Scientists* (London: SAGE Publications, 2012), 24.

<sup>104</sup> Paul Baker and Sibonile Ellece, *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis* (London etc.: Continuum, 2011), 30–31. Reisigl and Wodak define discourse as "a way of signifying a particular domain of social practice from a particular perspective"; M. Reisigl and R. Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 35. Burr explains discourse as referring to "a set of meanings, metaphors, representations, images, stories, statements and so on that in some way together produce a particular version of events. [...] Surrounding any one object, event, person, etc. there may be a variety of different discourses, each with a different story to tell about the object in question, a different way of representing it to the world"; Vivien Burr, *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*, e-book (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 32.

<sup>105</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge etc.: Polity Press, 1992), 78.

<sup>106</sup> Keller, *Doing Discourse Research*, 5ff.

<sup>107</sup> Siegfried Jäger and Florentine Maier, 'Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis and Dispositive Analysis', in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles etc.: SAGE, 2009), 47. See Stuckrad, 'Secular Religion', 4; Kocku von Stuckrad, 'Discursive Study of Religion: Approaches, Definitions, Implications', *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 25, no. 1 (2013): 11.

indication that a discourse is not self-evident nor neatly delimited but only an analytical category,<sup>108</sup> “revealed” through discourse analysis and therefore, subject to interpretation.<sup>109</sup>

Within discourse analysis there are different approaches. For this research into the discourse on early Islam by Muḥammad’s contemporaries I will employ the *discourse-historical approach*, an approach that falls within the scope of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA is concerned with power relationships, ideologies, and hegemony in discourse, while discourse is seen “as a form of ‘social practice’”.<sup>110</sup> The CDA approach is based on the assumption that there exists a dialectical relationship between language in use and reality: discourse is not merely a descriptive, objective, passive enunciation of events, relationships, and institutions, but is performative as it “constructs” or “constitutes” social life.<sup>111</sup> Discourse institutionalises ways of thinking and thus legitimises knowledge, and so it is a means of exercising power.<sup>112</sup> In the case of the discourse of *mukhaḍram* poets, a single composition may have little “constructive” effect on social life, but as part of a discourse it contributes “to the enunciation and enforcement of social norms”.<sup>113</sup> The discourse-historical approach focuses on generally accepted, implicit truths, thus bringing to light “self-evident knowledge”.<sup>114</sup> It is a suitable approach for the present research because of its focus on the effects of discourse on social reality as well as on the changes in discourse in its relation with changes in society, on power relationships, ideologies, and hegemony in discourse, in combination with the available historical context and background information.

Generally, the discourse-historical approach integrates the context and background information in a diachronic analysis of how discourse changes over time in relation to socio-

---

<sup>108</sup> Stuckrad, ‘Discursive Study of Religion’, 16.

<sup>109</sup> Kocku von Stuckrad, ‘Secular Religion: A Discourse–Historical Approach to Religion in Contemporary Western Europe’, *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28, no. 1 (1 January 2013): 4.

<sup>110</sup> Norman Fairclough and Ruth Wodak, ‘Critical Discourse Analysis’, in *Discourse as Social Interaction*, ed. Teun A. van Dijk, vol. 2, *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction* (London etc.: Sage, 1997), 258. In words of Fairclough, CDA analyses “how discourse is shaped by relations of power and ideologies, and the constructive effects discourse has upon social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and belief”; Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 12, 64.

<sup>111</sup> Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 41-2, 62-5.

<sup>112</sup> Fairclough, 67. *Knowledge* understood here as not as “an objective truth of the world” but as “social communication, attribution, and legitimization of what is accepted in a given society as knowledge”; Stuckrad, ‘Discursive Study of Religion’, 9.

<sup>113</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 216. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>114</sup> Stuckrad, ‘Discursive Study of Religion’, 10. “Discourse is constructed upon implicit propositions which are taken for granted by participants, and which underpin its coherence”; Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, 23.

political changes.<sup>115</sup> The present research lacks such a diachronic approach because of the selected corpus of poetry, as will be detailed below. Nevertheless, through the discourse-historical approach we will gain insight into the ideologies and worldview of the times around nascent Islam, as well as into the self-evident truths and beliefs of its time, and into the transformations in the discourse in relation with social changes in a time in which Islam emerged. I will analyse how in discourse linguistic mechanisms were enacted and how they possibly changed over time.

The discourse I study in this research is the discourse of poets of Muḥammad's immediate context on (a) allegiance and (b) authority. The poems taken together may be considered the "dispositive" in which this discourse develops.<sup>116</sup> I identify how the poet speaks in the composition of himself in relation to his group, which group this is, and how he understands aspects such as leadership, hierarchy, loyalty, and fidelity, among other aspects. Sometimes the image is the reverse, and the poem offers insight not into how the poet sees himself but into how he sees the enemy—as an individual or as a group—and thus how he presents the antagonism between his group and the opponent, how he understands aspects of baseness, submission, and humiliation, betrayal and disloyalty. As we will see, strands from the discourse on allegiance are frequently entangled with strands from the discourse on authority and leadership, as well as with others that I will leave out of the discussion or only mention in passing.

For discourse analysis, a series of words are usually selected in relation to the research question, and the sources or dispositives are then scanned for the occurrence of these words. In the case of literary sources, and especially poetry, with its formal and aesthetic restrictions and considerations, this method cannot be followed: too many allusions, synonyms, and metaphors would be overlooked. Ancient Arabic poetry is known for its rich vocabulary and allusions. Many different, very specific terms exist for a group of people related through blood, but it is not sufficient to scan the poems for each of these substantives in order to derive any conclusions as to

<sup>115</sup> Reisigl and Wodak, *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*; Martin Reisigl and Ruth Wodak, 'The Discourse-Historical Approach', in *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, ed. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 2nd ed. (Los Angeles etc.: SAGE, 2010), 87–121. Contrary to the diachronic approach of the *discourse-historical approach*, the *historical discourse analysis* is a synchronic approach, studying a particular historical stage of the discourse; Laurel J. Brinton, 'Historical Discourse Analysis', in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton (Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001), 139–40.

<sup>116</sup> Von Stuckrad defines a "dispositive" as "the totality of the material, practical, social, cognitive, or normative 'infrastructure' in which a discourse develops"; Stuckrad, 'Discursive Study of Religion', 15.



how the poet envisions his family, clan, and tribe, for we would overlook allusions in the form of pronouns, names and nicknames, adjectives, and others. Thus, when in the analysis I speak of “a discursive strand on allegiance” in the poems by a particular poet, for example, I will not be referring to the times this poet uses the term “allegiance” in his poems, but more broadly, how he presents the ties that bind him—or another individual or group—to the larger group, how this group functions, and how these ties determine their choices. Similarly, the “discursive strand on authority” does not refer to how the poet uses the particular term “authority” but how he positions himself—or another individual or group—in relation to others.

Pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry was primarily oral, intended to be recited. In the collections of poems and other sources in which the compositions have come down to us we lack the non-textual clues related to a particular poem: information about the reception by the audience, on the intonation of the poet or transmitter—perhaps ironical or sarcastic—, on the emphasis or repetition of certain passages, on interruptions, laughter, gasps of unbelief, or perhaps awkward silences at the end.<sup>17</sup> This is something to be kept in mind: unfortunately there is an unmistakable difference between the dispositives as they were intended, namely, to be recited and heard, and the way I am studying them, as a textual medium.<sup>18</sup>

### *The selected corpus – the good, the bad, and the ugly*

For this research I study the corpus of poetry of contemporaries of Muḥammad indicated as *mukhaḍram* poets, individuals who were born before and died after the emergence of Islam. Among the compositions of Muḥammad’s contemporaries we find (a) poems that do not address the issue of nascent Islam at all, (b) poems that only deal with it incidentally, and (c) poems in which nascent Islam is at the centre of attention. These categories are not absolute; distinction could still be drawn between poems from the last two categories that deal with Islam in a positive or negative way, or orthodoxly (according to the basic tenets of faith) or unorthodoxly.

---

<sup>17</sup> Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry*, 4–5, 14–15.

<sup>18</sup> Regarding the customary speed and intonation in the recitation of poetry in general, classical sources offer some insight and we may look for clues in contemporary recitations of classical Arabic poetry. However, it is difficult to say whether present-day recitations reflect how Arabic poetry sounded in the past or how people think it should have sounded. On the role of sound in classical Arabic poetry, and how sound, metre, rhyme, and wordplay interact closely with meaning, see the monograph Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry*.

The corpus of *mukhaḍram* poetry is extensive and is subject to difficulties concerning issues of authenticity, attribution, and transmission. At the impossibility of taking the corpus as a whole for the present research, I have narrowed down the analysis to the corpus of three poets: ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, and al-Ḥuṭayʿa. The first two belong to the Meccan tribe of the Quraysh while al-Ḥuṭayʿa was a travelling poet whose lineage is unclear. The proportion of Qurashī poets in this research, which is not in accordance with the proportion of Qurashī poets in the anthologies, is justified, in my view, by the fact that as Muḥammad’s tribesmen the Quraysh were among the first who interacted with Muḥammad at the start of his prophetic career, while, as his tribesmen, they would also be confronted with questions different from those of al-Ḥuṭayʿa, for example. As we will see, a comparison of the lives and poems of ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā yields interesting results in terms of similarities and differences.

The formal criteria I have applied for the selection of the poets are the following. All three are listed as “professional poets” and not as individuals who happened to compose a poem or more during their lifetime.<sup>199</sup> In addition, all three are counted among the best poets of their time. Each of them has his own *dīwān* or collection of poems in at least one relatively recent edition, and yet none of them has been extensively studied in modern times, nor has the complete *dīwān* of any of them been translated and commented. We know details about their lives, which intersect with that of Muḥammad: they interacted with him or with the Muslim community and composed poems on it, sometimes exchanging poems with opponents. I will include these response poems by

<sup>199</sup> On the Arabian peninsula on the eve of Islam there were what we could term “occasional poets”, men or women who, driven by the circumstances, burst out in poetry to sing praises to their group or to wail over the death of a close relative, or simply to pass the time during the travels or long nights. It is impossible to determine how much of these transmitted compositions attributed to seemingly occasional poets is authentic and how much has been lost. Among the “professional poets” there were poets who lived detached from their clan and tribe: brigand-poets (*ṣuʿlūk* pl. *ṣaʿālik*), excluded—by choice or by force—from their tribe and forced to wander from place to place. “Court poets” stayed with a sedentary tribe which was not their own. In both cases, poetry was their source of income. Al-Ḥuṭayʿa could be considered the latter, a court poet, travelling from group to group and earning a living with his poems. Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:341–42, 343ff. A third group among the “professional poets” were “tribal poets” like ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, who used their poetry for the sake of their own kin and who played a central role as the memory of the tribe; cf. Blachère, 2:337–38. The word for poet, *shāʿir*, derives from the verb *shaʿara*, which can mean: “to know, to possess knowledge”; Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry*, 5 n. 14; Ignaz Goldziher, *Abhandlungen Zur Arabischen Philologie*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1896), 16–18. For a tribe that claimed certain prominence it was important to have good poets to proclaim and preserve not only their great deeds, but also their noble ascendancy. Blachère mentions the example of the Banū Murād and Banū Khathʿam, two important tribes, who were ridiculed for the scarcity of their “tribal poets”. Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:340.

others—entirely or partially—since they offer other insights into the larger discourse of the time. More subjectively, the lives, ideas, and ideals of the three poets as portrayed in the source material were interesting and offered a depth of character and layering in their compositions which sparked my curiosity. ʔirār can be seen as “the good”, a man who in his poems holds fast to the ideals of old in spite of the changing times and even though it brings him and his group no good. Ibn al-Ziba’rā, “the bad”, seems equally heroic and steadfast at first but is a pragmatic man who has adapted to sedentary life and its challenges for his benefit and that of his group. Al-Ḥuṭay’a, in the end, carries his nickname “the ugly” with pride and, as other elements in his life exploits it to his benefit.

Of the three poets selected, the *dīwān* of al-Ḥuṭay’a is the most extensive. It contains over 100 poems, from very short to considerably long compositions. It was therefore necessary to select specific poems from al-Ḥuṭay’a’s corpus, which I have done based on their general topics. In the cases of Ibn al-Ziba’rā and ʔirār I have taken their *dīwān* as a whole for the analysis.

For the analysis I offer a translation of and comment upon the poems, and I embed them as much as possible in the accounts of the event or events to which they refer and in the larger developments in society. Sometimes the sources contradict each other, presenting different events to which a poem would refer. When this happens, the editors usually do not choose a version but simply mention the two or more conflicting reports. In specific cases I have found intertextual or intratextual indications in favour of one report or the other, or present yet another alternative.

### *A note on the translation and interpretation of poetry*

“Poetry is what gets lost in translation”, in the famous saying by the American poet Robert L. Frost (1874-1963) in his taped “Conversations on the Craft of Poetry” (1959).<sup>120</sup> Frost said this while discussing his preference for formal verse over free verse, and agreed to the definition of poetry by the poet and philosopher Samuel T. Coleridge (1772-1834) as presented by the interviewers. Coleridge had defined poetry as “the best words in the best order”, while prose is “the words in their best order”.<sup>121</sup> For the present research I will have failed both men: I do attempt to translate

---

<sup>120</sup> More in full: “I could define poetry this way: it is that which is lost out of both prose and verse in translation”; Deborah Brown, Annie Finch, and Maxine Kumin, eds., *Lofty Dogmas: Poets on Poetics* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005), 200.

<sup>121</sup> Brown, Finch, and Kumin, 200. See also the definitions of poetry in classical Arabic literary studies as cited by Van Gelder: Van Gelder, *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry*, 4–15.

the poems into English, but I do not seek to keep the metre and rhyme of the original formal verse, nor do I strive for a literary translation to replicate the best words in their best order. My translations are mere attempts at transferring the meaning to the non-Arabic speaker.

When not stated otherwise, the translations of the poems are my own. When available I use the translations by others, especially those of Guillaume in his translation of the *Sīra* edited by Ibn Hishām, sometimes offering my own alternatives. Guillaume’s translations are indicated with the initials AG. In such a translation by Guillaume, when I offer an alternative of my own I indicate it—in the text or footnotes—with the initials MC. For reasons of consistency, when quoting the translation by Guillaume or others I have taken the liberty to adapt the transcription system of Arabic words and names to the system I use throughout this book. For the same reasons of consistency and clarity I adapt Guillaume’s translation of the substantives *nabī* and *rasūl* and translate them as “prophet” and “messenger”, respectively, while Guillaume gives the two terms both as “apostle”. Oftentimes, in one poem variant readings can be found throughout the sources for particular words or phrases, and, although they do not always alter the interpretation significantly, I include them in the footnotes. In those cases I do not state the source of each variant in the footnotes: the sources in which a particular poem is found are detailed in the first footnote to the Arabic text of each poem.

In the transcription of poetry, and contrary to the transcription of prose in this thesis, I transcribe the declinations. I do not transcribe the assimilation of the definitive article.

Finally, and unless stated differently, the English translation of the Qur’ān employed is that of Arberry.<sup>122</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Arthur John Arberry, trans., *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*, repr. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).



# Part 1

---

Historical outline



# Chapter 2

---

The tribe and the *umma*



### 2. THE TRIBE AND THE *UMMA*

Arabia, the trapezoid peninsula of arid lands and scarce water, was not always as essential for the world economy as it became in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, after the discovery of the first oil fields in the thirties of that century. Its coast had a certain strategic importance for sea-faring and the southern part of the peninsula had been a trade centre since before the Common Era, but the aptly-named “Empty Quarter” (*al-Rub‘ al-Khālī*) and the vast deserts of the interior of the peninsula, in spite of a certain appeal to the romantic mind, had no key economic role to play.

Nevertheless, the peninsula had not remained isolated from the rest of the world until the oil discovery. Arabia is mentioned in ancient sources from before the Common Era by travellers and traders. Trade routes along its coasts and across the peninsula connected it to other regions. Especially Yemen was a rich trade centre in Late Antiquity, as an export centre of frankincense and as a harbour and transport centre for traders to and from Asia. The peninsula was also an area of interest for the Roman and the Persian empires, which contended over it and sought to bring it under their influence, especially in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> century CE. Around that period the Byzantine and the Sasanid empires established formal relations with tribes on the western and eastern fringes of the Arabian peninsula, respectively, to act as their “buffer-states” or vassals.<sup>123</sup>

For the purpose of this research on pre-Islamic and early Muslim society on the peninsula, it is necessary to distinguish between two areas: Northern and Central Arabia on the one hand and Southern Arabia and the Fertile Crescent on the other.<sup>124</sup> Differences in life conditions and natural resources led to different developments in Northern and Central Arabia as compared with the southern and eastern part of the peninsula and the Fertile Crescent.<sup>125</sup> The south and the east were “zones of state power”,<sup>126</sup> city-based civilizations with impressive cities, temples and funerary

---

<sup>123</sup> W. Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’, *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients*, no. 1 (1997): 11–18; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 17–18.

<sup>124</sup> G.R. Hawting, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Qur‘ān’, *EQ*, 4:254; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 58–59. This same geographical limitation has to be applied when considering the corpus of pre-Islamic poetry, which deals solely with Northern and Central Arabia of the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE onwards; see Jonathan A.C. Brown, ‘The Social Context of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Poetic Imagery and Social Reality in the Mu‘allaqat’, *Arab Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2003): 43 n. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Michael C. A. Macdonald, ‘Reflections on the Linguistic Map of Pre-Islamic Arabia’, *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, no. 11 (2000): 38–40.

<sup>126</sup> Fred M. Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads in the Near East in Late Antiquity (400–800 C.E.)’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 29.

structures, as excavations reveal;<sup>127</sup> “highly centralized, hierarchical, and bureaucratized political structures (‘states’) based on agricultural tax base”.<sup>128</sup> The north and the centre of the peninsula, on the other hand, due to the scarcity of natural resources and its difficult access, lacked such a more or less uniform state organisation and infrastructure and were “zones of nomadic power”.<sup>129</sup> There is scarce evidence of settlements in the north and the centre until the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE.<sup>130</sup>

The growing commercial relations between the Arabian peninsula and Mesopotamia and the Greco-Roman world, especially due to the demand of spices and aromatics from Southern Arabia, as well as the competition between the Byzantine and the Sasanian empires between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries over the areas of interest of the Arabian peninsula, intensified the contact between the inhabitants of the peninsula, and increased their involvement in the area of world politics of their time.<sup>131</sup>

## 2.1 The ‘Arabs’ and the ‘tribe’ – the problem of a definition

To be able to study the question of allegiance and authority on the Arabian peninsula we must determine the identity of the inhabitants of the peninsula and the definition of a “tribe”.

Regarding the first question, the idea has been contested that the inhabitants of Arabia in pre-Islamic times saw themselves as a unity, with different tribes that could all be traced to the ancestor Ishmael.<sup>132</sup> Scholars do not agree on the period in which a notion of a common “Arabness” emerged on the peninsula. Authors like al-Azmeh and Shahid assume an Arab identity and common Arab ethnicity of the inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula before the emergence of

<sup>127</sup> Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 12–14. On society of Southern Arabia, cf. for example: Brian Doe, *Southern Arabia, New Aspects of Antiquity* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971); Adolf Grohmann, *Arabien, Kulturgeschichte Des Alten Orients*; 3. Abschnitt, 4. Unterabschnitt; *Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft*; Abt. 3, 1. Tl, 3. Bd., 3. Abschnitt, 4. Unterabschnitt (München: Beck, 1963).

<sup>128</sup> Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads’, 29.

<sup>129</sup> Donner, 29.

<sup>130</sup> Donner, 29–30; G.E. von Grunebaum, ‘The Nature of Arab Unity before Islam’, *Arabica* 10 (1963): 8–9; Hawting, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia’, 254; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 58–59.

<sup>131</sup> Compared with Southern Arabia, the areas of Northern and Central Arabia were more exposed to the battles and land seizures of the Persian and Byzantine powers due to their geographical proximity. Robert G. Hoyland, ‘Arabian Peninsula’, *EL* 3, II, 105–18; Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’.

<sup>132</sup> Peter Webb, ‘Identity and Social Formation in the Early Caliphate’, in *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, ed. Herbert Berg (New York: Routledge, 2017), 129–58.

Islam.<sup>133</sup> In contrast, Webb, Hoyland, and others point out the problematic nature of referring to these pre-Islamic inhabitants of the peninsula as “Arabs”. According to these authors, it overlooks the distinctive geographical, social, and political entities and their developments, and it does not take into consideration the way the inhabitants saw themselves and others.<sup>134</sup> In a recent publication Peter Webb studies the development of a notion of shared identity of the Arabs and concludes that it originated relatively late as a result of “the process of Arab ethnogenesis during the first two centuries of Islam”, which “prompted early Muslims to appreciate the need to both construct one pan-Arabian ancestor, and connect him to a prophetic milieu”.<sup>135</sup>

With regards to the second question posed above, as to the definition of the tribe, I must note the following: in this analysis I will focus on Northern and Central Arabia as the primary context of emerging Islam. In this region, pre-Islamic society was predominantly tribal, formed by nomadic, semi-nomadic, and settled groups with a loose political structure.<sup>136</sup> In spite of the fluidity of the social and political environment and the diversity of economic and cultural circumstances of Northern and Central Arabia, the social organisation of these areas in pre-Islamic times was quite uniform: it was based on kinship and descent, that is, social units based on—real or fictional—common ancestry.<sup>137</sup> The tribe consists of consecutive inclusive groups, the smallest group being the family, which is part of a clan, a small group of related families which in turn

---

<sup>133</sup> 'Aziz al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Irfan Shahid, *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984); Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989).

<sup>134</sup> Donner, 'Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History'; Robert G. Hoyland, 'Arab Kings, Arab Tribes and the Beginnings of Arab Historical Memory in Late Roman Epigraphy', in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. H. Cotton et al. (Cambridge, 2009); Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*; Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*.

<sup>135</sup> Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 212. See also: Suliman Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1997). For a defence of an early, pre-Islamic, crystallisation of the Arab identity, see for example: al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity*. On ethnogenesis, “the process by which ethnic identities form and evolve over time”, see Webb, 'Identity and Social Formation', 131. See also Excursus – The 'ajam and the 'arab.

<sup>136</sup> See W. Caskel, 'The Bedouinization of Arabia', in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, vol. 3, *The Formation of the Classical Islamic World* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 34–44, for a description of Arabia before the “Bedouinization” and tribalization, around 100 CE, and the reasons for the decline of the small kingdoms and petty states on the peninsula and rise of the new Bedouin socio-political organisation. On the hierarchical or non-hierarchical structures of the tribes in pre-Islamic Arabia, see below, 2.3.1 Authority in pre-Islamic Arabia.

<sup>137</sup> Anatolij M. Khazanov, *Nomads and the Outside World*, 2nd ed. (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), 121.

belongs to the tribe.<sup>138</sup> These units are characterised by—real or fictional—kinship and mutual aid. It is assumed that around the time of Islam common ancestry was counted through the patrilineal line.<sup>139</sup>

In research on pre-Islamic Arabia, the “tribe” is defined by some as an economical unit,<sup>140</sup> by others as a political unit,<sup>141</sup> and by others as an ideological or cultural unit.<sup>142</sup> More often, however, it is defined along the lines of a combination of at least two of these characteristics: as a unit of subsistence bound together by a notion of common descent,<sup>143</sup> or as a political organisation based on kinship.<sup>144</sup> Scholars disagree on the question as to whether the pre-Islamic “tribe” on the Arabian peninsula functioned as a group and had any real political and economic function.<sup>145</sup> Some, as Robert Hoyland and Emanuel Marx, argue for the tribe as a “mutual aid group” and a “unit of subsistence” with an economical and a political function.<sup>146</sup> Other scholars define the pre-Islamic tribe not as a unit of action, a stage in the development of political organisations, or a response to a particular ecological and economic environment, but rather in terms of identity, in the sense that

<sup>138</sup> Rudi Paul Lindner, ‘What Was a Nomadic Tribe?’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 4 (1 October 1982): 693–94. As with the tribe in general, it is difficult to ascribe a specific socio-political or economic function or functions to each level of the segmentary system, as Hoyland does; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 114–15.

<sup>139</sup> For an argument in favour of matriarchy and a matrilineal system in Arabia, see William Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, ed. Ignaz Goldziher and Stanley A. Cook (London: A. and C. Black, 1903). For arguments against it, cf. Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’, 42–45; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 144; Theodor Nöldeke, ‘Anzeigen: W. Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 40 (1886): 148–87.

<sup>140</sup> For example: Caskel, ‘The Bedouinization of Arabia’.

<sup>141</sup> For example: Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads’.

<sup>142</sup> For example: William Lancaster and Fidelity Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations in the Arabian Peninsula’, *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 3, no. 3 (1 October 1992): 145–72.

<sup>143</sup> Emanuel Marx, ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence: Nomadic Pastoralism in the Middle East’, *The American Anthropologist*, no. 2 (1977): 343–63.

<sup>144</sup> E. Bräunlich, ‘Beiträge zur Gesellschaftsordnung der arabischen Beduinenstämme’, *Islamica* 6 (1934): 68–111, 182–229; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*; Hoyland, ‘Arab Kings, Arab Tribes and the Beginnings of Arab Historical Memory in Late Roman Epigraphy’.

<sup>145</sup> Ella Landau-Tasseron, ‘Alliances among the Arabs’, *al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Arabes* 26, no. 1 (2005): 143. According to Peter Webb, following Weber: kinship is “symbolic, not biological: belief in shared ancestry between members of a group is imagined as a result of history’s vicissitudes, a consequence of collective action, not its cause”; Webb, ‘Identity and Social Formation’, 131.

<sup>146</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 114–15; Marx, ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence’.

the tribe determines how the individual and the group sees itself and the other, regardless of the practical or political influence (or lack thereof) of the tribe in their daily life.<sup>147</sup>

To choose one definition for “tribe” is problematic. Even within the delimited context of the Arabian peninsula in pre-Islamic times we see that the term meant different things at different times and that scholars of the past and the present do not agree on one definition.<sup>148</sup> In addition, in primary sources different terms are used without a clear definition or distinction, sometimes interchangeably. The term *qawm*, for example, is used in pre-Islamic poems for “tribe”, but so are *qabila* or *‘ashīra*, while *qawm* sometimes means “clan” or even “household” or “family”, depending on the poet, the compiler, and the scholar, or even on the specific context in which the term appears.<sup>149</sup>

The primary sources employed for this research do not shed light on the precise social, political, economic, and religious situation of pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia, nor do they answer the question whether we can speak of the “politics” or “economics” of a certain group that defined itself through a common ancestor.<sup>150</sup> What the sources do inform us about is the discourse on the self-understanding of the individual and the group in pre-Islamic Arabia. It is precisely this discourse which I will study in the present research: the discourse of Muḥammad’s contemporaries on allegiance and authority. Before moving to the analysis of the poems, in what follows I will

---

<sup>147</sup> Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations’, 146. Cf. William Lancaster and Fidelity Lancaster, ‘Thoughts on the Bedouinisation of Arabia’, *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 18 (1 January 1988): 51–62; Lindner, ‘What Was a Nomadic Tribe?’ See the definition of Eickelmann: “From the historically known precolonial period, it [the tribe] appears to have existed more as a set of ordered names which provided a range of potential identities for various groups at different times than as a base for sustained collective action”; Dale F. Eickelman, *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*, 2nd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989), 144. Cited in: Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations’, 147.

<sup>148</sup> Paul Dresch, *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), 336; Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations’, 149. For definitions of a “tribe” by different scholars as well as a critique of different definitions, see Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 20–22 n. 24. For the anthropological perspective on tribes and nomads in the Middle East and beyond, see for example the volume edited by D. Chatty and references therein; Dawn Chatty, ed., *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*, Handbook of Oriental Studies 81 (Leiden: Brill, 2006). On the difficulty of defining a “tribe” Tapper says: “[i]t seems that, as with so many would-be general or universal concepts, it is impossible to find an analytic terminology that both takes account of indigenous categories and applies widely enough to be useful for comparison and classification”, Richard Tapper, ‘Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East’, in *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, ed. Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner (University of California Press, 1990), 49–50.

<sup>149</sup> Nöldeke, ‘Anzeigen’, 175–76; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 120–21; Webb, ‘Identity and Social Formation’, 135–36.

<sup>150</sup> Landau-Tasseron, ‘Alliances among the Arabs’, 145.

briefly sketch how individuals and groups understood and organised themselves within tribal society *and* within the *umma*.

## 2.2 Allegiance

### 2.2.1 Allegiance in pre-Islamic Arabia

“I am the Jushamite; in order that thou mayst recognise me I describe my lineage, point after point”, we hear in a poem by a certain Abū Usāma, a contemporary of Muḥammad and member of the Banū Jusham b. Mu‘āwiya, a tribe living in North Arabia, part of the Hawāzin confederation: the assertion of his lineage is closely linked to his identity.<sup>151</sup> In the Arabia of pre-Islamic times and on the eve of Islam an individual would identify himself and be identified by others through his lineage. Being interconnected, the tribal eponyms formed a network of family links within the greater tribal framework, thus delineating a structure of associations and disassociations between groups.

The concept of *‘aṣabiyya* (zeal in defending and aiding one’s group, party spirit, tribal solidarity) has frequently been used to explain the strong attachment of the individual to his family, clan, and tribe in pre-Islamic Arabia.<sup>152</sup> In this tribal society the kinship relations were the “structural basis of social organization”;<sup>153</sup> individuals and subgroups were bound together through the notion of a shared ancestry.<sup>154</sup> The different tribes were ordered according to their common ancestor. Not necessarily did the notion of common descent in pre-Islamic Arabia reflect an actual

<sup>151</sup> *Anā l-jushamiyyu kaymā ta’rifūnī / ubayyīnu nisbatī naqran bi-naqri*; S.M. Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes Chosen from the Selections of al-Mufaḍḍal and al-Aṣmā’ī* (Dacca: University of Dacca, 1938), Ar. 81, Trans. 71-2 nr. 34 v.6; Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and ‘Abd al-Ḥafīẓ Shalabī, vol. 2 (Cairo: Maktabat wa-Maṭba‘at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955), 34; al-Akhfash al-Aṣghar (d. 927), ‘Alī b. al-Sulaymān b. al-Faḍl. *al-Ikhtiyārāyn al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt wa-l-Aṣma’iyāt*. Edited by Fakhr al-Din Qabawa. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu‘āsir, 1999, 263.

<sup>152</sup> Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam*, 44; F. Gabrieli, “Aṣabiyya”, *EL2*, 1:--; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*, 55–56. Perhaps the most famous use of *‘aṣabiyya* is that of the historian Ibn Khaldūn (732-84/1332-82). Although much later, and possibly influenced by his understanding of the *umma*, in the *Muqaddima* (Introduction) to his work on universal history (*Kitāb al-Ibar*), Ibn Khaldūn uses the concept of *‘aṣabiyya* to analyse history and the state. According to Ibn Khaldūn, for a group to become powerful and to impose its hegemony on others a strong cohesion and group identity is crucial; ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1382), *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal, 3 vols, Bollingen Series 43 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), for example: pp. 261-76.

<sup>153</sup> Khazanov, *Nomads*, 139.

<sup>154</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 113.

common ancestry; in fact, more frequently did it represent a presumed, fictional, shared ancestry.<sup>155</sup> As mentioned, *‘aṣabiyya* is a central element to understand the attachment of the individual to the group—almost with the status of a “sacred creed”.<sup>156</sup> However, we would be mistaken if we were to take it as a static, unbreakable organisation: a large social unit, a tribe or tribal framework, could split into smaller branches, and smaller branches could become associated through a fictional genealogy.

As the historian Rudi P. Lindner points out, in the genealogical representation linking an individual or smaller group to the ancestor of the tribe, the mid-level links are vague and often contradictory. Precisely the absence of these links or their imprecision allowed new associations and dissociations by means of “discovering” new or “forgetting, pruning” old members of the tribal framework for practical reasons or because of a specific historical situation. Over time, new alliances could be forged and troubled relations with past associates could be forgotten without need for a total revision of tribal oral history.<sup>157</sup> Thanks to the oral character of the genealogies they were not only a record of the past but also an explanation of the present, for they could shift and adapt to new circumstances.<sup>158</sup>

Depending on the situation, the boundaries and demarcations between groups could shift since the group one felt part of and loyal to was not necessarily the same in case of: a conflict (a) between the nuclear family and the clan, (b) between the clan and the larger tribe, or (c) between two tribes of different descent, for example. As we will see in the analysis of the selected poems, it is often not clear to which segment within their tribal framework a poet is referring when he

---

<sup>155</sup> See for example Joseph Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine: Recherches Ethnologiques sur le ‘Orfou Droit Coutumier des Bédouins*, Petite Bibliothèque Sociologique Internationale. Série A, Auteurs Contemporains 12 (Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1971), 42–43; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:66; Nöldeke, ‘Anzeigen’, 179–80; Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, 6–7.

<sup>156</sup> Mohammed A. Bamyeh, ‘The Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia’, in *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*, ed. Dawn Chatty (Brill, 2006), 38.

<sup>157</sup> Khazanov, *Nomads*, 142–43; Landau-Tasseron, ‘Alliances among the Arabs’, 152–53; Lindner, ‘What Was a Nomadic Tribe?’, 696–97; M.C.A. Macdonald, ‘Ancient Arabia and the Written Word’, in *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies. Supplement: The Development of Arabic as a Written Language: Papers from the Special Session of the Seminar for Arabian Studies Held on 24 July, 2009*, ed. M.C.A. Macdonald (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010), 22.

<sup>158</sup> See for example: Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhuri (d. ca. 892), *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḍ al-Zirikli, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996), 25.

speaks of “us, we”; what is generally obvious is that he sees his group as a unit defined by shared ties of blood, implying a shared purpose and mutual liability.<sup>159</sup>

Although the common ancestor of a tribe might not have been real, in Arabia around the time of Muḥammad the common descent had become “the natural explanation of the origin of tribal groups”.<sup>160</sup> The genealogies, even when—partially—fictional, served the purpose of preserving and explaining the history of the tribe and differentiating it from other groups. Done collectively, it did not matter whether this genealogy was real or fictional: by naming it, it came into being, whereas by collectively forgetting a shared lineage it ceased to exist. In terms of J.L. Austin we could perhaps speak of the tribe bearing the name of a common ancestor as a “performative” or “illocutionary” act: an utterance that does not describe or record something, and is therefore not true or false, but that is—part of—an action in itself.<sup>161</sup> By naming his lineage, the individual positioned himself within a group which he delimited—to the exclusion of those who fell outside this demarcation. As an example of such a demarcation may serve two verses by the pre-Islamic poet Ṭufayl b. ‘Awf al-Ghanawī, verses directed against the hostile tribe of the Banū Ṭayyi’. Ṭufayl speaks of the enmity between his group and the Ṭayyi’ as being for eternity, as in his eyes, it is not the result of personal grudges or recent conflicts, but related to the essence of the two clans, inherited through the generations: “And verily our two tribes have been enemies from of old, and as for that which remains of time, continue steadfast, O enmity! // To this day we have not created relationship with you, nor do you find any with us when tracing back lineage”.<sup>162</sup>

The shared blood ties carried an ideological significance: a shared inheritance that was passed down through the generations. This legacy could be material, such as the rights of pasture in a certain region, as well as intangible, in the form of the traditions and customs of old, or a

<sup>159</sup> As we see in a short poem by Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on his clan, the Qurashī Banū Muḥārib b. Fihir, in which he presents his group (“we, us”) as unitedly fighting against the enemy and defending one another. For the text of the poem and the analysis, see DK02.

<sup>160</sup> Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, 25.

<sup>161</sup> Promises and bets are illocutionary acts, but the naming of a ship is also an example of it. John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words*, The William James Lectures 1955 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962).

<sup>162</sup> *Wa-ḡad kāna ḡayyānā ‘aduwwayni fi lladhī / khalā fa‘alā mā kāna fi l-dahri fa-rtubi // ilā l-yawmi lan nuḡdith ilaykum wasīlatan / wa-lam tajidūhā ‘indanā fi l-tanassubi*. Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, Ar. 11, Trans. 9 nr. 1 vv.73-4; found in: al-Akhfash al-Aḡḡhar, *al-Ikhtiyārāyn*, 44-45.



legacy of great and noble deeds.<sup>163</sup> A noble lineage (*nasab*) was a prerequisite for the honour of an individual and the group. However, it was not enough to inherit such a glorious and noble lineage: the individual standing in this noble line was to continuously live up to the expectations and responsibilities entailed in it—*noblesse oblige*, as the saying goes. The contrary was also true, because to belong to a despised group meant inherited shame and disgrace,<sup>164</sup> and weak links in one's lineage could be used mockingly by an opponent.<sup>165</sup> It was considered shameful, for example, to have a slave or a non-Arab among the ancestors, or a female who had been a *laqīṭa* (a foundling of unknown descent).<sup>166</sup> These expectations and responsibilities for the individual were enclosed in the concept of *ḥasab* (nobility, rank or quality), that is, the noble deeds and virtues an individual had to display continuously.<sup>167</sup> The combination of *ḥasab wa-nasab* only applied to free men, not to slaves or women.<sup>168</sup>

### *Alliances and protection*

A common eponym not only offered an explanation of the past and the present for the group but also implied the duty of protection and aid of the group towards the individual and vice versa. The tribes subsisted through a “peculiar blend of extreme individualism and [an] extreme submergence of the individual in the collective”:<sup>169</sup> the tribe demanded responsibility and deep commitment of the individual to the collective, and in turn the individual could rely on the tribe for his subsistence.<sup>170</sup> A clan or tribe could ban a member in case of a crime committed within the

---

<sup>163</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 261; M. Lecker, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia’, in *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. 1 - The Formation of the Islamic World: Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, ed. Chase F. Robinson (Cambridge University Press, 2010), 154–55; Marx, ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence’, 351.

<sup>164</sup> Cf. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:51–53; H. Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire* (Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1928), 242–43.

<sup>165</sup> Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 57; Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, 29. Obviously, such insults or praises were not always factual descriptions of a real genealogy but served the purpose of the composition. Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 9; Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, xiii. See section 2.2.1 Allegiance in pre-Islamic Arabia.

<sup>166</sup> Farès, *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:138; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 65; Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, 29–30.

<sup>167</sup> Farès, *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*, 87–88.

<sup>168</sup> Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 82 n. 204. See also Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 1 n. 1; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 65; ‘Ḥasab wa-Nasab’, *EL2*, 3:238–39.

<sup>169</sup> Grunebaum, ‘Arab Unity’, 11.

<sup>170</sup> G.J.A. Borg, ‘Ṣa‘ālik’, *EAL*, 670–1.

group or when the individual posed a threat to its stability. The individual in question was then excluded from the protection and forced to live as an outlaw (*ṣu'lūk*, pl. *ṣa'ālīk*).<sup>171</sup>

This mutual liability was not limited to blood relatives: it extended to strangers seeking protection or travellers seeking lodging. The institution of hospitality or granting protection (*jiwār*, *ijāra*) to strangers was firmly embedded in the customary laws of pre-Islamic society. Not only was a guest or protégé to be protected as if he belonged to one's kin, he also had to be provided for generously. "The protégé among them doesn't know he is a protégé", as a pre-Islamic poet exclaimed in praise of a certain group and their hospitality.<sup>172</sup> The relation between the host and the protégé (*jār* pl. *jārān*) did not depend upon the length of the stay; even if the guest was only passing through and received lodging and food for one night or more, the host would take upon himself the duty of defending him. According to Chelhod, offering hospitality turned a stranger in an ally, securing an otherwise possibly precarious situation. Rejecting the offered hospitality, on the other hand, was a clear sign of enmity.<sup>173</sup>

Besides this institution of *ijāra*, in which one party was on the giving and the other on the receiving end, in pre-Islamic Arabia two individuals or groups could also be associated in an egalitarian union with mutual duties and rights, the institution of *ḥilf* or *walā'*.<sup>174</sup> The two parties involved, the allies or confederates, were indicated as *ḥulafā'* (sg. *ḥalīf*) or *mawālī* (sg. *mawlā*). According to Goldziher, the earliest, pre-Islamic, use of the term *mawlā* shows that it originally simply meant "relative", with a later distinction drawn between "the relatives through birth" (*mawālī al-wilāda*) and "the relatives by oath" or "by alliance" (*mawālī al-yamūn*; *mawālī bi-l-ḥilf*),

<sup>171</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 124. We know of individual *ṣa'ālīk* who grouped together in bands, forming a group of outcasts that served defensive and offensive purposes, thus replacing in a way the tribal structure. The *ṣu'lūk* al-Shanfarā al-Azdī, for example, in his poem known as *Qaṣīda Tā'iyya*, speaks of a band of outcasts led by him; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 203ff.

<sup>172</sup> *Lā ya'lamu l-jāru fihim annahu l-jāra*; Abū Zakariyā' Yahyā b. 'Alī al-Tibrīzī (d. 1109), *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa* (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.), 108.

<sup>173</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit Dans La Société Bédouine*, 65–66. See Q 11: 69–70, where we read of Noah's fear when his guests do not eat of the food he has offered them.

<sup>174</sup> Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 149–53; Ella Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances in Islam', in *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, ed. Monique Bernards and John Nawas (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 30–33. On the different types of *walā'* relations in Islam, their development and (legal) repercussions, see Ulrike Mitter, 'Origin and Development of the Islamic Patronate', in *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, ed. Monique Bernards and John Nawas (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 70–133; Ulrike Mitter, *Das Frühislamische Patronat: Eine Studie Zu Den Anfängen Des Islamischen Rechts* (Würzburg: Ergon, 2006). *Ḥilf*, besides an "alliance" between equal parties, was sometimes used for a sworn agreement or cooperation; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 146ff.

that is, the confederates.<sup>175</sup> Usually, such alliances derived from a shared interest, for example the need or desire to increase the defensive and offensive capacities of both sides<sup>176</sup> or the common goal of blood revenge against a third group.<sup>177</sup> Also, a protégé could become an ally or confederate of the individual or the clan that had taken him in.<sup>178</sup> Often an alliance between two groups was temporary: at the death of the leader of one group, the other group could consider the alliance as terminated.<sup>179</sup>

A weaker tribe could seek the protection of a stronger one by entering into a *ḥilf* with it, and two or more weaker groups could join forces in a confederation. Understandably, not needing confederates was a reason to boast, for it was a sign of strength.<sup>180</sup> The opposite also seems true: it could be an honour to have a certain individual or group as an ally; the group that offered *ḥilf* was recognised as strong by its allies.<sup>181</sup>

### *Intertribal conflicts*

Intimately tied to the genealogical system was the institution of blood vengeance (*tha'r*), for it was of cardinal importance to the honour of the group and the individual. In pre-Islamic Arabia the belief existed that after the violent death of a man an owl (*hāma*, *ṣadā*) came out of his skull and shrieked: *isqūnī* (“give me to drink”) until the dead was avenged.<sup>182</sup> The blood of a killed man called for blood—preferably that of the murderer, but otherwise that of a member of his clan or tribe—in

---

<sup>175</sup> Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:101–2, 103–4; Landau-Tasserion, ‘Alliances in Islam’, 24ff.

<sup>176</sup> Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:66; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 33–34.

<sup>177</sup> Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:66. Cf. W. Dostal, ‘Mecca before the Time of the Prophet - Attempt of an Anthropological Interpretation’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Ashgate, 1999), 205–43.

<sup>178</sup> The pre-Islamic outcast (*ṣu'lūk*) Ḥājjiz al-Azdī, for example, became a *ḥalīf* of the Qurashī clan of the Banū Makhzūm; al-Iṣfahānī (d. 976), Abū al-Faraj. *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. Edited by Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Ibrāhīm al-Sa‘afin, and Bakr ‘Abbās. 3rd ed. Vol. 13. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2008, 146.

<sup>179</sup> See Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’, 40f.; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 80, 146.

<sup>180</sup> Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:102. See also Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 30–31; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 153; Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, 68–69.

<sup>181</sup> See the case of Khālīd b. al-Ḥārith, known as Abū Qārīz. When he entered Mecca during Ḍirār’s lifetime, different clans asked him to join them or to marry one of their daughters. See below (DK09), and: Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 860), *Kitāb al-Munammaq fi Akhbār Quraysh*, ed. Khurshīd Aḥmad Fārūq (Beirut: ‘Ālam al-Kutub, 1985), 239.

<sup>182</sup> T. Emil Homerin, ‘Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry’, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (1985): 165–84; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 93–94; Chelhof, *Le Droit Dans La Société Bédouine*, 270–71; Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Marzūqī (d. 1030), *Sharḥ Diwān al-Ḥamāsa* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2003), 858.

order to restore the lost honour or the lost balance between groups.<sup>183</sup> The duty of *tha'r* extended to the protégé and the ally: if an ally or a member of a different group was killed by an outsider while he was a protégé of an individual or a group, his host or allies had to avenge his blood or pay blood money to his kin.<sup>184</sup>

Blood vengeance was a custom with the force of law. There was no fault in taking vengeance; on the contrary, it was a fault to leave blood unavenged.<sup>185</sup> It was a reason to boast if an individual or a clan could claim to never leave a killing unavenged—a sign of their loyalty and fidelity to their kin as well as of their steadfastness and determination, not shunning danger in order to repay blood with blood. Thus, the pre-Islamic poet and tribal leader al-Afwah al-Awdī boasted of his group paying, but never accepting, blood money: instead, they would choose the more honourable path and take vengeance for their dead.<sup>186</sup> The poetical motif of *taḥrīd* or call to avenge the spilled blood is recurrent in poems by female relatives of the victim, urging the closest of kin of the victim to fulfil their duty.<sup>187</sup>

The group of the murderer could offer to pay blood money (*diya*), usually a number of camels, to the group of the victim, but accepting such a payment was rather seen as a sign of weakness in the poetical discourse.<sup>188</sup> The one killed in retaliation should be of an equal or superior status: it was not enough to kill a slave to avenge a slain free man nor to kill a free man to avenge a slain chief.<sup>189</sup> In principle a soul was avenged for a soul—although frequently this regulation was not upheld, as pride could be taken in killing many in retaliation for one man.<sup>190</sup>

<sup>183</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit Dans La Société Bédouine*, 276; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 40; Lancaster and Lancaster, 'Tribal Formations', 151.

<sup>184</sup> Farès, *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*, 90–91; Yūsuf Khulayf, *al-Shu'arā al-Ṣa'ālik fi l-'Aṣr al-Jāhili*, 4th ed. (Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.), 95–96; Landau-Tasserion, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 144.

<sup>185</sup> Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire*, 212.

<sup>186</sup> "Nous payons une *dya* pour le sang; mais à aucun prix nous ne l'acceptons pour les nôtres" (*wa-innā lanu'fi l-māla dūna dimā'inā / wa-na'ba'fā-mā nastāmu dūna damin 'aqlā*); al-Iṣṣāhānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 12:120. French trans. Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire*, 198.

<sup>187</sup> G.J.A. Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibt ich den Kummer meines Herzens: Eine Studie zur altarabischen Trauerklage der Frau*, Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 81 (Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1997), 4–5, 162–65; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 33–34.

<sup>188</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 269; Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire*, 198–99.

<sup>189</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 284–86.

<sup>190</sup> Suzanne P. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*, Myth and Poetics (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), 55ff.; O. Procksch, *Über die Blutrache bei den vorislamischen Arabern und Mohammeds Stellung zu ihr* (Leipzig, B.G. Teubner, 1899), 5–7.

In hindsight it is difficult to determine exactly which group was responsible for avenging the blood of a slain kinsman. The closest kin of the victim, that is, the sons, brothers, the father, and his paternal uncles or cousins, would feel the call to “quench the thirst”.<sup>191</sup> However, whether the family, the clan, or even the tribe as a whole came into action to avenge one of their own seems to have depended upon the situation.<sup>192</sup> The distinction in duties and responsibilities as drawn by Otto Procksch may be helpful in understanding the dynamics of the individual towards the group and vice versa. In his study of the institution of blood revenge in pre-Islamic Arabia, Procksch distinguishes between an (a) active and (b) a passive responsibility for and solidarity with the tribe. According to Procksch, the passive solidarity was based on the unity of the tribe. If a member of the tribe had killed a member of another tribe, the passive solidarity of the murderer’s tribe for its member meant first of all that the tribe protected him, and secondly, that any member of the tribe could be killed in his place by the avengers. The active solidarity, on the other hand, was the duty of avenging one’s kinsman. The passive solidarity would apply to all members of the murderer’s tribe, while the active solidarity was usually taken up by the closest of kin of the victim.<sup>193</sup>

### Fratricidal conflicts

If a member of a group had been killed by an outsider, the demands of the institution of blood revenge were relatively simple: the murderer or one of his kinsmen had to die in retaliation or blood money had to be paid. The narrower the ties of kinship between the murderer and the victim, the more limited the group against which the victim’s kin could take revenge: if one’s brother killed one’s son, only the murderer himself, his sons, or grandsons could be held accountable. In such cases it seems to have been more common to demand the payment of blood

---

<sup>191</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 273–74.

<sup>192</sup> Procksch, *Über die Blutrache*, 16. According to Robertson Smith, however, the group responsible for avenging the spilled blood was quite delineated. Not only the victim’s closest of kin, but the group (*hayy*) had the duty to avenge its member. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, 26–27. See also Bräunlich’s analysis of the *khamsa* (“five”), the group of the five closest grades of relatives to an individual subject to the passive and active responsibilities of *tha’r* among Bedouin groups of his time. Whether such a systematisation existed already in pre-Islamic times is not clear from the sources; Bräunlich, ‘Beiträge zur Gesellschaftsordnung’, 80ff.

<sup>193</sup> Procksch, *Über die Blutrache*, 11ff.

money.<sup>194</sup> We find expressions of tensions resulting from such conflicts in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poems. Thus, the pre-Islamic poet al-Ḥārith b. Wa'la expresses his apprehension in a poem on the death of his brother, killed by his own people. Avenging his brother would mean attacking his own kin: "My people, they have slain, O Umayma, my brother; so If I shoot [at them] my arrow will strike me; // And verily if I forgive, I shall indeed forgive a great thing; but verily if I assault, I shall indeed weaken my bone".<sup>195</sup> Similar complications arose when one's protégé was murdered by a kinsman. The protégés had to be defended by their host; if they were killed, the host had to avenge them or pay blood money to their kin, even if the murderer belonged to the group of the host.<sup>196</sup> We see that, when ties of blood became entangled with the demands of retaliation, loyalty and fidelity could be a burden.

### 2.2.2 The nomads and the town dwellers in tribal Arabia

The emergence of Islam and the development of a community around Muḥammad, a community that would become known as the *umma*, meant a transformation of at least the ideals of loyalty and fidelity to one's kin, as we will see below. However, it is too simplistic to attribute these transformations in society solely to the message preached by Muḥammad, as if before the emergence of Islam society was no more than an amalgamation of nomadic groups, held together by their pride and *ʿaṣabiyya* and busy with fights and feuds for obscure and trivial matters.

<sup>194</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 282–84; William Thomson, 'Islam and the Early Semitic World', *The Muslim World* 39, no. 1 (1 January 1949): 43.

<sup>195</sup> *Qawmī humū qatalū Umayma akhī / fa-idhā ramaytu yuṣībunī sahmī // fa-la'in ʿafawtu la-a'fuwan jalalan / wa-la'in saṭawtu la-uwhinan ʿazmī*; Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, Ar. 120, Trans. 105 nr. 43 vv.26-7. See also the marthiya on Kulayb b. Rabī'a by his wife. Her brother had killed her husband, and she lamented her situation in between her kin and the family of her husband: both of her "tents" had collapsed and buried her: "Oh Ermordeter, durch den das Geschick das Dach meiner beiden Häuser gleichzeitig von oben her zerstört hat // Es vernichtete das Zuhause, das ich neu gefunden hatte, und machte sich auf, mein erstes Zuhause zu zerstören" (*yā qatilan qawwaḍa l-dahru bihī / saqfa baytayya jamī'an min ʿali // hadama l-bayta – lladhī -staḥḍaththuhū / wa-nthanāfi hadmi bayti l-awwali*), al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 5:41 vv.10-11. Trans. Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer*, 185ff.

<sup>196</sup> Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 291–93, 315–16. On anecdotes on complications caused by the need to defend or avenge one's guest against one's own kin, see for example the stories on 'Umayr b. Salmā and Samaw'al b. ʿĀdiyā, both remembered as *awfā al-ʿarab*, "the most loyal of the Arabs" for their readiness to defend and avenge their *jār* even if that meant going against their people; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:467, 469; Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Azdi Ibn Durayd (d. 933), *al-Ishtiqāq*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1991), 348; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, 86–87; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 443ff.; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 84–85.

Instead, scholars like Bulliet, Caskel, and Zwettler distinguish larger trends that affect the processes of “bedouinisation” or “sedentarisation” on the Arabian peninsula before the emergence of Islam. These trends were affected by external factors like the crumbling of the Byzantine and Sasanid empires on the fringes of the peninsula, which forced the settled inhabitants of the Arabian peninsula to become nomadic groups, or by the invention of the camel saddle, which would have allowed the nomads to use the camel as a war animal, increasing their military power.<sup>197</sup> Other scholars object to this explanation through historical and technological circumstances, for they argue that this analysis overlooks the way the inhabitants of the peninsula understood their own position and identity.<sup>198</sup>

Whatever the explanation, it is clear that the division into nomadic and settled groups was not fixed: there were continuous processes of sedentarisation and de-sedentarisation.<sup>199</sup> Long periods of drought or other natural disasters could force a nomadic tribe to settle—partially—and survive on agriculture, an occupation generally despised by the nomadic pastoralists.<sup>200</sup> Confrontations with stronger tribes could also result in the expulsion of the weaker group from the pasture grounds it had traditionally occupied. Settled groups, on the other hand, could retake the nomadic customs—either as a whole or leaving part of the group in the settlement.<sup>201</sup>

The nomads and town dwellers represented two opposite ways of life in tribal Arabia, with many semi-nomadic groups occupying the spectrum in between. The different groups were interdependent: the nomads depended on the settlements for trade and provisions, and the town dwellers depended on the nomads for the transport of crops and goods as well as for safe-conducts for caravans.<sup>202</sup> Sometimes the nomads and the settled population of one area belonged

---

<sup>197</sup> Richard W. Bulliet, *Islam: The View from the Edge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Caskel, ‘The Bedouinization of Arabia’; Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’; Michael J. Zwettler, ‘Ma’add in Late-Arabian Epigraphy and Other Pre-Islamic Sources’, *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* 90 (2000): 223–309.

<sup>198</sup> Robert G. Hoyland, ‘Epigraphy and the Emergence of Arab Identity’, in *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, ed. Petra M. Sijpesteijn et al. (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 219–42; Hoyland, ‘Arab Kings, Arab Tribes and the Beginnings of Arab Historical Memory in Late Roman Epigraphy’; Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Bedouinisation’.

<sup>199</sup> Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads’, 29; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 11ff. Cf. Caskel, ‘The Bedouinization of Arabia’; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 199–200; Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Bedouinisation’.

<sup>200</sup> Khazanov, *Nomads*, 160.

<sup>201</sup> Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 19–20.

<sup>202</sup> Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads’, 24; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 191–92; Lecker, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia’, 157–58, 160–61; Marx, ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence’, 347–48.

to the same tribe. Whether the inhabitants of the town(s) of one area dominated the nomads or the other way around is difficult to determine, since the sources often do not provide details on the precise functioning and organisation of the different groups.<sup>203</sup> Compared with nomadic clans or tribes, the contacts of settled groups with other groups were more frequent and structural because of trade and pilgrimage, for example. A larger degree of work specialisation offered possibilities for the individual to earn a living even if he did not belong to the main clan or tribe of the town.<sup>204</sup> Frequent and long-lasting contacts and relationships with outsiders changed, if not the view on kinship, at least the role of genealogies as the principle according to which society was structured.<sup>205</sup> The tribal ideal was thus most closely followed by isolated, nomadic tribes, whereas it became more diluted in settlements, “where many non-kin relations assume great social importance and to some extent counterbalance kin-based ‘tribal’ ties”.<sup>206</sup> As Michael Mann indicates, “Fixed settlement traps people into living with each other, cooperating, and devising more complex forms of social organization”.<sup>207</sup> As we will see in the following section and in the analysis of the poems by ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, the town of Mecca can serve as an example of how the tribal values and ideals were enforced or loosened in a sedentary context.

### *The case of Mecca*

As the hometown of Muḥammad, I will pay special attention to Mecca around the eve of Islam. The position and role of the town in the history of pre-Islamic Arabia is debated. In Muslim traditional sources and scholarship it is attributed a prominent role as a centre of trade and

<sup>203</sup> Lecker states that the settlements stood higher in hierarchy than the nomads; Lecker, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia’, 158–60. Donner, however, argues that nomads could exercise direct or indirect power over settlements and may have been “the dominant factor in the local power structure”. Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads’, 29–30, 31.

<sup>204</sup> Lecker, ‘Pre-Islamic Arabia’, 158.

<sup>205</sup> Cf. Macdonald, ‘Ancient Arabia and the Written Word’, 22; Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations’; Lindner, ‘What Was a Nomadic Tribe?’, 696, 697; Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, 7–11.

<sup>206</sup> Donner, ‘The Role of Nomads’, 28. Nevertheless, genealogies remained an important element in society, and the values of tribal belonging, loyalty, and protection were not only remembered as virtues of old but presented as the standards to strive for at the time. Jorgensen argues that the process of sedentarisation led precisely to an increased—ideological—importance of genealogies in Arabia, an idea he bases on G.R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750* (London, 2000). See Cory Alan Jorgensen, ‘Jarir and al-Farazdaq’s Naqa’id Performance as Social Commentary’ 2012, 20ff.

<sup>207</sup> Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 42.



pilgrimage,<sup>208</sup> but scholars like Hawting and Crone have contested its central role in pre-Islamic times.<sup>209</sup> A middle position in the debate is defended for example by Peter Webb. According to him, there are indications for Mecca's sanctity predating Islam, but he warns against overestimating the town "as a pan-Arabian centre of worship common to all 'Arabs'", a view that would have its roots in later Muslim times. The same warning would apply to Mecca as a trade centre: the prominence of the town in Muslim times seems to have affected the memory of its pre-Islamic past.<sup>210</sup> In what follows I will briefly describe the tribal society of Mecca around the time of nascent Islam, with a focus on the relations and conflicts within the tribe, for these relations allow insight into the discourse on allegiance and authority in compositions by *mukhaḍram* poets.

### Allegiance in Mecca

In Mecca around the time of Muḥammad, the Qurashī ancestor Quṣayy b. Kilāb was remembered as the one who succeeded in unifying various scattered clans and groups of one larger kinship group in Mecca (Figure 1), which at the time was a permanent settlement around the Ka'ba, a sanctuary that until then had been under control of the Banū Khuzā'a.<sup>211</sup>

---

<sup>208</sup> Fred M. Donner, 'The Historical Context', in *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 23–39; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 34–35; U. Fabietti, 'The Role Played by the Organization of the "Ḥums" in the Evolution of Political Ideas in Pre-Islamic Mecca', in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Ashgate, 1999), 348–56; M.J. Kister, 'Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15 (1972): 61–64; M.J. Kister, 'Mecca and the Tribes of Arabia: Some Notes on Their Relations', in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, ed. M. Sharon (Cana; Leiden: Brill, 1986), 33–57.

<sup>209</sup> Patricia Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Oxford: Blackwell; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987); Patricia Crone, 'Serjeant and Meccan Trade', *Arabica* 39, no. 2 (1 July 1992): 216–40; Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry*, 25ff. See also: Lindstedt, 'Pre-Islamic Arabia and Early Islam', 164–65.

<sup>210</sup> Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 82; Peter Webb, 'The Hajj before Muhammad: Journeys to Mecca in Muslim Narratives of Pre-Islamic History', in *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, ed. Venetia Porter and Liana Saif (British Museum, 2013), 6–14.

<sup>211</sup> Dostal, 'Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit', 24–26. The name *Quraysh* has three interpretations: it could derive from a verb meaning "to collect together", in which case it would refer to this uniting the groups into one larger unit; or from a verb meaning "to trade and make profit", referring then to the commercial focus of the Quraysh; it could also be the diminutive of *qirsh*, "shark"; Eric R. Wolf, 'The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1 December 1951): 331; W. Montgomery Watt, 'Quraysh', *EI*2, 5:434–35. In a line attributed to the pre-Islamic poet Maṭrūd b. Ka'b al-Khuzā'i we hear: "Your father Quṣayy was called gatherer / through him God gathered the clans of Fihri" (*Abūikum Quṣayyūn kāna yud'ā mujammī'an / bihi jamma'a Allāhu l-qabā'ila min Fihri*); Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarir al-Ṭabari (d. 923), *Tārikh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1960), 256–

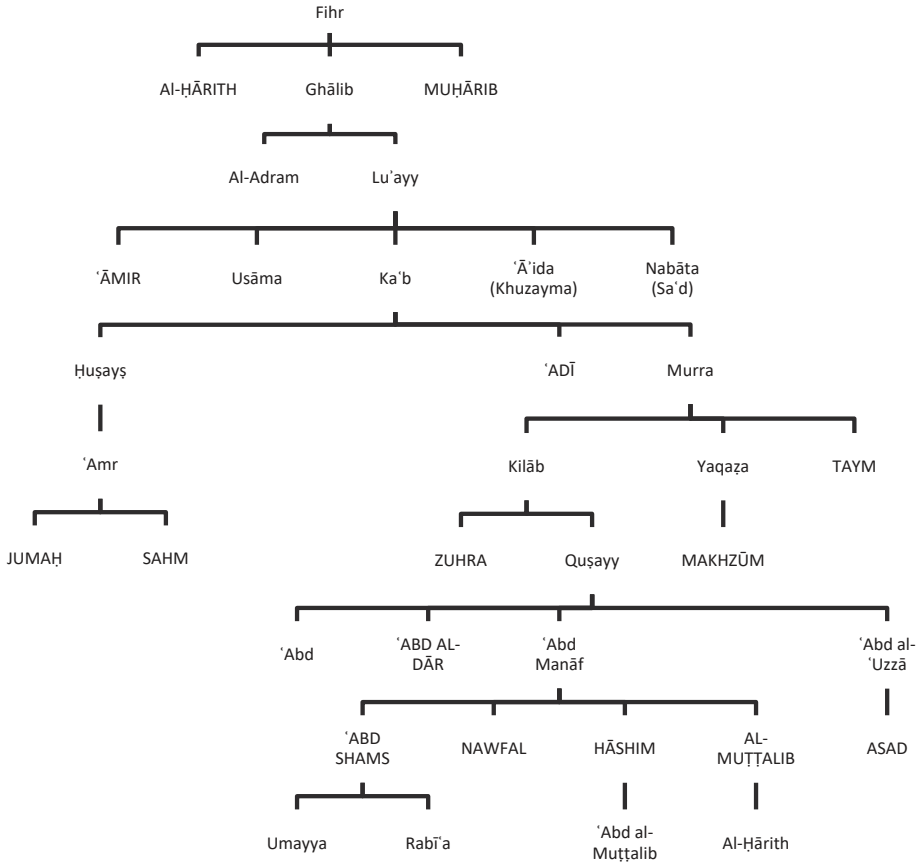


Figure 1 – The main clans of the Quraysh in times of Muḥammad. Taken and adapted from Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 7. In capital letters: clans commonly mentioned in Muḥammad's time.

In the allocation of quarters to the different clans within the town we find a first indication of power struggles within the Quraysh (Table 1): the more prominent clans lived in the vicinity of the Ka'ba and were indicated as the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ* (the Quraysh of the hollow). The smaller and less powerful clans lived further away from the centre and were known as the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* (the Quraysh of the outskirts).<sup>212</sup> According to al-Baladhurī, this division was not consensual but derived

57; Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Translated and Annotated. Vol. VI. Muḥammad at Mecca*, trans. W. Montgomery Watt and M.V. McDonald (SUNY Press, 1988), 21–22.

<sup>212</sup> Jawād 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-'Arab qabl al-Islām*, vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 2001), 8–9, 27, 52; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-'Abbās Fākihī (d. ca. 892), *Akhbār Makka fi Qadīm al-Dahr wa-Hadithihī*, ed. 'Abd al-Malik 'Abd Allāh Ibn Duhaysh, vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Khiḍr, 1994), 149–50. Cf. *Tāj al-*

from power and dominance: the more powerful clans expelled (*akhrājū*) the others to the outskirts of the town (*zawāhir Makka*).<sup>213</sup>

TABLE 1

<i>Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ</i>
‘Abd al-Dār
Sahm
Makhzūm
‘Adī
Jumaḥ
‘Abd Manāf
Asad
Zuhra
Taym
<i>Quraysh al-Zawāhir</i>
Muḥārib b. Fihir
‘Āmir b. Lu’āyy
Al-Ḥārith b. Fihir <sup>214</sup>
Al-Adram b. Ghālib
‘Awf b. Fihir
Some minor groups or families

Table 1 – Division of the Qurashī clans according to their geographical allocation in Mecca

At the death of Quṣayy conflicts arose among his descendants over the official political and cultic functions and institutions of Mecca that Quṣayy had united in his person.<sup>215</sup> Among these were the cultic functions (*hijāba*) such as the institutions of water supplies (*siqāya*) and food supplies (*rifāda*) for the pilgrims. The political functions (*siyāda*) comprised, among other things, the custody of the banner of war (*liwā’*) and the guardianship of the *Dār al-Nadwa*, an assembly house

<sup>213</sup> *Arūs* s.v. *b-ṭ-h, ḡ-h-r*. See also Kister, ‘Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam’, 81; W. Montgomery Watt et al., ‘Makka’, *El2*, 6:145-87.

<sup>214</sup> al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 1:51.

<sup>215</sup> At some point towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Banū al-Ḥārith b. Fihir were forced to seek refuge among the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ* and were counted among them from then on. Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka*, 1994, 5:150.

<sup>216</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 50.

founded by Quṣayy which was used for consultation on political affairs and for official ceremonies.<sup>216</sup>

As a result of these power struggles the Quraysh split in two factions: the *Ahlāf* (the Confederates) and the *Muṭayyabūn* (the Perfumed).<sup>217</sup> The group of the *Ahlāf* was formed by the clans ‘Abd al-Dār, Sahm, Makhzūm, ‘Adī, and Jumaḥ. The *Muṭayyabūn* comprised the clans ‘Abd Manāf (a large group formed by the subgroups or clans ‘Abd Shams, Nawfal, Hāshim, and al-Muṭṭalib), Asad, Zuhra, Taym, and al-Ḥārith b. Fihr (Table 2).<sup>218</sup> The Banū Muḥārib b. Fihr and the Banū ‘Āmir b. Lu’ayy stayed neutral.<sup>219</sup> At some point not long before the emergence of Islam, the Hāshim, al-Muṭṭalib, Asad, Zuhra, Taym, and perhaps the al-Ḥārith b. Fihr, that is, the *Muṭayyabūn* without the ‘Abd Shams and the Nawfal, formed the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* faction, which substituted the *Muṭayyabūn* (Table 3).<sup>220</sup> To complicate matters further, around the time of nascent Islam it seems that the division in two groups was surpassed by a threefold division which aligned in part, but not entirely, with the old *Ahlāf*–*Muṭayyabūn*/*Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* division (Table 4).<sup>221</sup>

TABLE 2

<i>Ahlāf</i>
‘Abd al-Dār
Sahm

TABLE 3


TABLE 4

Group A
‘Abd al-Dār
Sahm

<sup>216</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 32; Abū Ja’far Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, ed. I. Lichtenstadter (Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadida, n.d.), 164–65; R. B. Serjeant, ‘Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 179–80.

<sup>217</sup> Mahmood Ibrahim, ‘Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14 (1982): 351.

<sup>218</sup> Among others: Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 33; Muṣ’ab b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Zubayrī (d. 851), *Nasab Quraysh*, ed. E. Lévi-Provençal (Cairo: Dār al-Ma’ārif, 1999), 383. On the importance of the factions in Meccan society, see for example the accounts quoted by Kister of the *Ahlāf* and the *Muṭayyabūn* having separate cemeteries in Mecca. At Uḥud the two factions are said to have fought under different banners. Kister, ‘Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam’, 83.

<sup>219</sup> Or perhaps they were not included in either faction because of their relative weakness: both groups belonged to the weaker *Quraysh al-Zawāhir*. The al-Ḥārith b. Fihr had likewise belonged to the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* but were accepted among the *Quraysh al-Biṭāh*, and joined the *Muṭayyabūn* (and maybe the later *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*) and *Group B*. See footnote 214. Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 272. See Watt’s analysis of the divisions among the Quraysh in times of Muḥammad; Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 4ff.; W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, Repr. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 55ff.

<sup>220</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 52–55, 186–89; Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad Ibn Sa’d (d. 845), *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Khāliq ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn, and Yahyā Muqallid, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1990), 103; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:133–35. Landau-Tasseron argues that the new faction was formed by groups who agreed on cooperating in protecting the strangers coming to Mecca; Landau-Tasseron, ‘Alliances among the Arabs’, 146.

<sup>221</sup> Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 7.

Makhzūm
Jumāḥ
‘Adī

<i>Muṭayyabūn</i>
‘Abd Manāf: Hāshim
Al-Muṭṭalib
‘Abd Shams
Nawfal
Asad
Zuhra
Taym
Al-Ḥārith b. Fīhr

<i>Neutral groups</i>
‘Āmir b. Lu’āyy
Muḥārib b. Fīhr

<i>Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl</i>
Hashim
Al-Muṭṭalib
-
-
Asad
Zuhra
Taym
Al-Ḥārith b. Fīhr?

Makhzūm
Jumāḥ

<i>Group B</i>
Hashim
Al-Muṭṭalib
-
-
-
Zuhra
Taym
Al-Ḥārith b. Fīhr
‘Adī

<i>Group C</i>
‘Abd Shams
Asad
Nawfal

Table 2 – Division of the Quraysh into the *Ahlāf* and *Muṭayyabūn*

Table 3 – *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* faction that formed out of the *Muṭayyabūn*

Table 4 – Further division of the Quraysh: three factions around the time of Muḥammad

## Alliances and protection in Mecca

The Quraysh were the main tribe of Mecca, but around the eve of Islam a large number of individuals and groups from outside the tribe lived among it: some staying in Mecca temporarily, others permanently. Travellers and traders, but also outcasts from other tribes (*ṣu‘lūk* pl. *ṣa‘ālik*) were attracted to the town due to its political and economic hegemony, and clans as a whole or prominent members of the Quraysh occasionally offered them the possibility of an individual alliance and protection (*ḥilf*) in exchange for their services, for example in a private militia.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>222</sup> A. Arazi, ‘Ṣu‘lūk’, *Elz*, 9:863-67; Lammens, *L’Arabie Occidentale avant l’Hégire*, 238–39. Cf. the list of *ḥulafā’* of the different Qurashī patrons and the various reasons behind their coming to Mecca—if the reasons were known: Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 232ff.

Through institutions like the *ilāf* (a system of alliances and treaties to secure the crossing of Qurashī caravans through other territories)<sup>223</sup> and the *ḥums* (a supratribal cultic union), the Quraysh were able to set up supratribal relations that benefitted the political and commercial supremacy of Mecca and secured the tribe and their caravans when travelling through the peninsula. Not much is known about this supratribal *ḥums*, established somewhere around the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but it seems to have centred on the cult of the Ka'ba.<sup>224</sup> “The *ḥums* were the Quraysh, the Kināna, and the Khuzā'a, united in strength in their cult (*taḥammasū fi dīnihim*)”, according to al-Marzūqī.<sup>225</sup> An elusive term, the precise meaning of *dīn* and the evolution of its usage have been much debated. It appears in pre-Islamic poetry, mostly in the sense of “habits, customs” that have been inherited from the ancestors and as such have an almost sacred, cultic function.<sup>226</sup> Other clans and tribes which were not part of the *ḥums* also recognised the holiness of the *ḥaram* or sacred enclave of Mecca and respected the same sacred months as the Quraysh. However, and contrary to the *ḥums*, these groups, known as *muḥrimūn*, do not seem to have shared a form of worship and a notion of a common “faith” or cult (*dīn*).<sup>227</sup> In spite of being a cultic union, pertinence to the *ḥums* was still explained through—real or fictional—descent from the same stock as the Quraysh.<sup>228</sup>

<sup>223</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 21-2, 35-6. Cf. Q 106, where we find a reference to *ilāf Quraysh*.

<sup>224</sup> Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’, 32-35.

<sup>225</sup> al-Marzūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa*, 19. According to Ibn Ḥabīb the *ḥums* are: “the Quraysh, the Kināna, and the Jadila”; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 348. In the *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, the *ḥums* are defined as “the Quraysh”, and the *aḥmās al-'arab* as those “whose mothers are from the Quraysh; and they were strict in their cult (*kānū mutashaddidīna fi dīnihim*)”; Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Farāhīdī al-Khalīl b. Aḥmad (d. ca. 776), *Kitāb al-'Ayn*, ed. Mahdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, n.d.), 153 s.v. ḥ-m-s.

<sup>226</sup> In Muslim times *dīn* would come to mean “religion” (Q 2: 217; 3: 19, etc.). See the classical study on *murūwwa* and *dīn* in Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:11ff. For a slightly different take on the concept see: Braymann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 4ff.; Hans-Michael Haussig, ‘A Religion’s Self-Conception of “Religion”: The Case of Judaism and Islam’, in *Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East*, 2004, 19-27; Uri Rubin, ‘Ḥanīfiyya and Ka'ba: An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of Dīn Ibrāhīm’, *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 85-112; Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind* (New York: MacMillan, 1963), 93ff.

<sup>227</sup> Fabietti, ‘The Organization of the “Ḥums”’, 349-50.

<sup>228</sup> As Müller shows through the example of the Banū Rabī'a b. 'Āmir b. Ṣa'sa'a; Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 18-20. See: Fabietti, ‘The Organization of the “Ḥums”’, 355-56.

In the sacred area of the *ḥaram* of Mecca fighting was prohibited.<sup>229</sup> Pilgrims and traders travelling to and from Mecca did not need to fear an attack, and as such the *ḥaram* also served the political and commercial ends of the Quraysh.<sup>230</sup> By enlarging the sacred territory the Quraysh were able to secure their area even more, and it seems that alliances and marriage policies were used for that end: we are told that the Quraysh only married women from their tribe or women from groups that belonged to the *ḥums*, while they only gave their daughters in marriage to a non-Qurashī if his group promised to recognise the sacredness of the Meccan *ḥaram*.<sup>231</sup> Again, this is an indication that the *ḥums*, in spite of being a union that surpassed tribal divisions and centred on a common cult, was still legitimised through ties of blood and alliances.

The patchwork of Qurashī clans and individuals and groups from other tribes in Mecca could benefit the Quraysh, but also entailed a potential danger. As a town in which trade and pilgrimage played a central role, peace and stability were crucial for the prosperity of Mecca, which meant that at times compromises had to be sought between, on the one hand, the ideal of loyalty to one's kin and, on the other, the need to avoid large-scale conflicts. In spite of the inner divisions and rivalry of which we hear among the Quraysh, it seldom came to bloodshed.<sup>232</sup> In the analysis of the poetical discourse which follows we find several examples of what we could call 'policies of appeasement' employed in Mecca in order to avoid intratribal conflicts.<sup>233</sup> According to Lammens, besides the importance of stability the Meccans also avoided conflicts because they were weak and incapable of fighting, and forced to employ troops of black slaves and Bedouins to fight their battles, which he identifies as the *Aḥābīsh*.<sup>234</sup> Although this view by Lammens on the *Aḥābīsh* as black slave mercenaries has been generally criticised,<sup>235</sup> the Qurashi fixation on trade and stability

---

<sup>229</sup> J. Chelhod, 'Ḥawṭa', *El2*, 3:293-94; Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', 172-73, 176.

<sup>230</sup> Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 34-36; Dostal, 'Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit', 34; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munanmaq*, 232ff.

<sup>231</sup> M.J. Kister, 'Mecca and Tamīm (Aspects of Their Relations)', *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965): 137; Fabietti, 'The Organization of the "Ḥums"', 350-51; Aḥmad Ibrāhīm al-Sharīf, *Makka wa-l-Madīna fi l-Jāhiliyya wa-'Aṣr al-Rasūl* (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1965), 148.

<sup>232</sup> Lecker, 'Pre-Islamic Arabia', 166.

<sup>233</sup> See 4. Ibn al-Zibā'rā, poem Z02; M.J. Kister, 'On Strangers and Allies in Mecca', *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 113-54.

<sup>234</sup> H. Lammens, 'Les "Aḥābīs" et l'Organisation Militaire de la Mecque au Siècle de l'Hégire', *Journal Asiatique* 11, no. 8 (1916): 425-82; Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire*, 253.

<sup>235</sup> In the sources, the *Aḥābīsh* are described as a group which supported the Quraysh around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, but their identity is debated. They are thought to have been an association of various smaller tribes and clans allied with the Quraysh; Daniel Pipes, 'Black Soldiers in Early Muslim Armies', *The*

was sometimes a motif to mock them.<sup>236</sup> The Hudhali poet Sā'ida b. Ju'ayya sneered: "They [the Quraysh] are called 'the strong ones', and yet no one has ever lived through a terror [raid] by them / until one sees them [one day] in the midst of the capture and the cattle".<sup>237</sup> Occasionally the Quraysh were unable to avoid a conflict: kinship or alliances with other groups could draw them into a conflict. This happened, for example, with the series of pre-Islamic clashes or battles known as *Ḥarb al-Fijār* (the Sacrilegious war) between the Hawāzin and the Kināna, the latter being allies and relatives of the Quraysh.<sup>238</sup> Such unwilling involvement in wars because of alliances or kinship illustrates the dangers of tribal society: seemingly insignificant events or minor clashes could escalate and affect larger groups.<sup>239</sup>

### 2.2.3 Allegiance in the *umma*

In Islam, the universal call to submit to the one and only God and to accept Muḥammad as God's messenger would lay the foundations for the ideal of a supratribal community of faith uniting all believers regardless of their gender, race, or ancestry (Q 49: 13).

In what follows I will not go into the precise usage and evolution of the Islamic notion of *umma*, as the community of believers (*mu'minūn*) came to be known,<sup>240</sup> but will outline the

---

*International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 1 (1980): 87–94; Landau-Tasserou, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 37; 'Ḥabash, Ḥabasha', *EL2*, 3:2–8.. See the account of DK08 (and footnote 391) for an account which substantiates this second hypothesis.

<sup>236</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 207; Lammens, *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire*, 251–52; Eric R. Wolf, 'The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1951): 338.

<sup>237</sup> *Yud'awna ḥumsan wa-lam yarta' lahum faza'un / ḥatta ra'awhum khilāla l-sabyi wa-l-na'ami*; Hell, *Die Diwane Hudailiten-Dichter*, 1933, 2:19 nr. 2 v.33. Hell's German translation reads: "Sie werden 'Gestrenge' genannt und man hatte von ihnen noch keinen Schrecken (d.h. Überfall) erlebt, bis man sie (eines Tages) inmitten der Gefangenen und des Viehes sah"; Joseph Hell, ed., *Die Diwane Hudailiten-Dichter Sa'ida ibn Ğu'ayya, Abu Ḥiraš, al-Mutanahhil und Usama ibn al-Ḥarīṭ*, vol. 1, Neue Hudailiten-Diwane 2 (Leipzig, 1933), 10 nr. 2 v.33. *Ḥums*: pl. of *aḥmas*, "hard, strong (in fighting or in religion)", an allusion to the Quraysh, since the *Hums* were a cultic group of the Quraysh and some other groups; see below.

<sup>238</sup> J.W. Fück, 'Fidjār', *EL2*, 2:883–4.

<sup>239</sup> As is manifest in the accounts of the War of *Basūs*, a long and bloody war between the Bakr b. Wā'il and the Taghlib b. Wā'il that started with the killing or the wounding of a camel; Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer*, 185ff.; J.W. Fück, 'al-Basūs', *EL2*, 1:1089.

<sup>240</sup> The notion of *umma* has been studied from different perspectives. The meaning of *umma* in the Qur'an is not always easy to determine: "example, model" (referring to Abraham, Q 16: 120), "fixed term, determined moment" (Q 11: 8; 12: 45), "community" (Q 10: 19; 23: 52), or the equivalent of *milla*, meaning "traditional religion" of a people, "guidance", as in the passage here quoted (Q 43: 22, 23). For the use of *umma* in pre-



general idea and ideal and consequently focus on the dynamics and tensions between the ideal and the existing notions of allegiance and authority. Did the responsibilities and duties of the believers towards one another substitute the pre-Islamic responsibilities of the individual towards his kin and vice versa? This brief outline will allow us later to analyse the poems by Muḥammad's contemporaries in which they react, among other things, to the community that gradually formed around him.

### *Genealogies and the umma*

In the early period the ideal of the Muslim community was neither uncontested nor always well-defined. We are told that before the Emigration (*Hijra*, 1/622) to Medina, the Quraysh attempted to undermine Muḥammad's growing authority by imposing a boycott against Muḥammad's clan of the Banū Hāshim and its close allies of the al-Muṭṭalib, as the two groups often acted as one clan. The boycott failed, not least because Muḥammad's group of followers was not limited to one clan or group of clans from the Quraysh.<sup>241</sup>

The ideal of the community of followers around Muḥammad would be that of individuals united on an equal level in their submission to God and the prophet, not distinguished by their lineage and inherited honour. "There are no genealogies in Islam", we hear in a *ḥadīth* attributed to Muḥammad, and we are told that it was forbidden to boast of one's noble ancestors.<sup>242</sup> In the Qur'an it is said that not ancestry but piety marks the outstanding and noble character of the individual, as after stating that the believers are brothers to one another (Q 49: 10) we read: "Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware" (Q 49: 13). The same idea is put in the mouth of Muḥammad upon entering Mecca after the *Fath* or Conquest (8/630): "God has put an end to the haughtiness of the *jāhiliyya* and its priding in the forefathers; all of you are [descendants] from Adam, and Adam [descended] from dust. The

---

Islamic times, see Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', 48–49. For *umma* in the Qur'an see, among others: Denny, 'The Meaning of "Ummah" in the Qur'an'; Denny, 'Religio-Communal Terms'; Denny, 'Ummah in the Constitution of Medina'. For the use and development of *umma* in later Muslim thought, see Webb, 'Identity and Social Formation'.

<sup>241</sup> Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 120–22; Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam*, 208–9.

<sup>242</sup> Reuben Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, Second edition of The sociology of Islam (Cambridge: University Press, 1965), 56. Cf. A.J. Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition: Alphabetically Arranged*, 1960, 85 s.v. Genealogy.

most noble of you for God is the most pious".<sup>243</sup> However, and perhaps not surprisingly, striving to show a good *nasab* did not come to an end with the emergence of Islam.<sup>244</sup>

In the *umma*, not all ties of blood were to be cut. In a report by the Andalusian geographer, theologian and philologist al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094), we are told that some time after the *Fath* (8/630) Muḥammad was walking through Mecca when he heard a verse in praise of the Quraysh and specifically of his own clan. He listened to it approvingly and said: "Indeed, and the affection (*mayl*) of a man towards his people (*ilā ahlihi*) is not party spirit (*‘aṣabiyya*)".<sup>245</sup> It is not unthinkable that these words were put in the mouth of Muḥammad at a later time to validate the expressions of affection for one's kin as distinct from the disruptive and condemned *‘aṣabiyya*. Nonetheless, it is true that in the Qur'an we find numerous verses which speak positively of upholding family ties (Q 47: 22; see also Q 2: 83; 177; 16: 90; 17: 26, etc).<sup>246</sup> Belief and unbelief, however, did cut across family ties and released the believers from the duties and responsibilities towards their unbelieving kin. An unbeliever, for example, was not to inherit from a believer or vice versa, as is preserved in the *aḥādīth* collections.<sup>247</sup>

In spite of the ideal of the *umma*, the ties of blood remained strong. As an anecdotal example of their continued effect and power even after the Emigration might serve the following tradition, included in *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. We are told that Muḥammad called on his follower and poet Ḥassān b. Thābit, from the Medinan tribe of the Banū Khazraj, to compose invectives against his opponents from the Quraysh. Before proceeding, however, Muḥammad wanted his kinsman and follower Abū Bakr to "explain to you [Ḥassān] my lineage (*nasabī*) for my lineage is among them (*fa-innā li fihim nasaban*)". After being instructed, Ḥassān assured Muḥammad that he would save him and his family the insults: "I will draw you [Muḥammad] out from them just as hair is drawn out from the dough (*al-‘ajīn*)". Leaving out the question about the authenticity and dating of this

<sup>243</sup> Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidi (d. 822), *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, ed. Marsden Jones, vol. 2 (Beirut, 1989), 836.

<sup>244</sup> According to Retsö, in the formative phase of the Islamic state the weight of a good *nasab* even increased as the political structures evolved and crystallised: a noble lineage "became tied to one's position in a large political structure of a kind which had not existed in Arabia before"; Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, 29.

<sup>245</sup> Abū ‘Ubayd ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz al-Bakrī (d. 1094), *al-Tanbīh ‘alā Awhām Abī ‘Alī fi Amālihi*, 2nd ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 2000), 75–76. We are told that the verse that Muḥammad heard was: "Quraysh was an egg – it split, and the egg-yolk was on ‘Abd Manāf". See Z04, Z05 for the Arabic text, the context and the different versions of the account.

<sup>246</sup> For more references, see Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition*, 203–4 s.v. Relations.

<sup>247</sup> David S. Powers, 'Inheritance', *EQ*, 2:518–526.

tradition, the concern that we perceive in it sounds plausible: a harsh and explicit invective against the Quraysh could also affect the believers from this tribe.<sup>248</sup>

### *Alliances and protection in the umma*

The pre-Islamic custom of *jīwār* (protection of the guest) does not seem to have changed radically with the emergence of Islam. The individual and the group had the duty of protecting their guest, the traveller, the orphans, and the needy in general (Q 4: 36). Even the non-believer was to be protected by a believer if he asked for it—since it could lead to his conversion (Q 9: 6).<sup>249</sup>

Contrary to the duty of protecting the guest, the pre-Islamic institution of alliances and treaties with individuals and groups was not undisputed in Islamic times. Treaties and agreements within the nascent community could endanger the unity of the believers, while treaties with outsiders possibly violated the precepts as laid down in Q 9: 23, for example.<sup>250</sup> Landau-Tasserón, in her analysis of existing and new alliances within the nascent community, states that, in spite of this Qur'anic injunction, Muḥammad himself “concluded alliances and acted according to principles laid by them”, even with individuals or groups who did not recognise him (yet) as a prophet.<sup>251</sup> Likewise, in later times pre-existing alliances were enforced and new alliances were established between tribes and groups under Islamic rule, even when they sometimes went against the principle of unity within the *umma*.<sup>252</sup> Landau-Tasserón concludes that “it is evident that Muslims debated the validity of the pre-Islamic institution of alliance from a very early period onward. Eventually, pre-Islamic alliances of all types survived in Islam. [...] The ban issued by jurists on newly inaugurated alliances was not successful and alliances of all types continued to be initiated”.<sup>253</sup>

---

<sup>248</sup> Abū al-Ḥusayn Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875), *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, n.d.), 1935.

<sup>249</sup> See the references to *aḥādīth* concerning the protection of the *jār* (s.v. *djār*) in Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition*, 58–59. The poet Ḥassān b. Thābit praised Muḥammad for not forsaking the guest; cf. Abū 'Ubāda al-Walīd b. 'Ubayd al-Buḥtūrī (d. 897), *Kitāb al-Ḥamāsa*, ed. P.L. Cheikho, *Mélanges de La Faculté Orientale* (Beirut, 1910), 138 nr. 709.

<sup>250</sup> “O believers, take not your fathers and brothers to be your friends (*awlīyā'*, “allies, friends”, a term implying allegiance and protection), if they prefer unbelief to belief; whosoever of you takes them for friends (or: allies), those—they are the evildoers”.

<sup>251</sup> Landau-Tasserón, ‘Alliances in Islam’, 6–9.

<sup>252</sup> Landau-Tasserón, 10ff.

<sup>253</sup> Landau-Tasserón, 33.

Although the ties of blood with one's close relatives were to be respected, the new community entailed a new order of things. Ideally, the relations between individuals and groups were subordinated to the ties of faith. Muḥammad is declared in Q 33: 6 to be the most important of the community, "nearer to the believers than their selves", while the wives of Muḥammad are as "mothers" of the believers.<sup>254</sup> The shared belief was also to create new ties; individual believers from different clans and groups were more than merely allies, hosts or guests: "The believers indeed are brothers; so set things right between your two brothers, and fear God" (Q 3: 103; 43: 10).

In the sources we find anecdotes showing that both contemporaries of Muḥammad as well as later Muslims had difficulties in accepting this transformation of society. Thus, for example, a certain Jabala b. al-Ayham, a distinguished man from the Banū Ghassān, had converted to Islam and came to Mecca to perform the *ḥajj* in times of the caliph 'Umar (r. 13-23/634-644). In the crowd, a Bedouin stepped on his cloak and Jabala hit the man in the face. The Bedouin complained to the caliph 'Umar, who ruled that the man could retaliate for the injury. Astonished, Jabala asked: "How can this be possible? He is a man of the people and I am a prince". 'Umar told him: "Islam made you one with him and you can have no superiority over him except in piety and good works".<sup>255</sup>

Tensions would also arise in later times between Arab and non-Arab Muslims. The term *mawlā* (pl. *mawālī*), which in pre-Islamic times was used in the sense of relative through blood or oath, in Muslim times received the added and specific meaning of a non-Arab Muslim "client" who entered a—non-egalitarian—relationship of protection with an Arab individual or tribe.<sup>256</sup> In spite of the ideal of the *umma* as an egalitarian community of believers, the non-Arab Muslim *mawālī*

<sup>254</sup> In the same verse, this pious statement is followed by a more practical one: the rightful inheritors of a deceased believer are his family members, although he might decide to give part of his wealth to close friends. This part could not exceed one third of one's possessions, as Muḥammad stated. Powers, 'Inheritance'.

<sup>255</sup> *Kayfa dhāka* [...], *wa-huwa sūqa wa-ana malik*? [...] *fa-lastā tafḍulahu bi-shay'in illā bi-l-tuqā wa-l-'āfiyya*; al-Ḥafḥānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 15:112. Trans. Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, 55.

<sup>256</sup> On *walā'* relations and the *mawālī*, see footnote 174. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:102–3; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances in Islam', 24ff. Confusion existed, though, between the terms *ḥalīf* and *mawlā*, for the latter was sometimes used, both in pre-Islamic and Islamic times, to refer to an "ally", not a "client". Sometimes the terms *mawlā* and *ḥalīf* were used interchangeably; Landau-Tasseron, 33, 41–42.

would often feel discriminated by Arab Muslims.<sup>257</sup> The *ʿaṣabiyya* (party spirit) of the Muslim Arabs would lead to resentment especially among Persian Muslims.<sup>258</sup>

In spite of these changes in society, the *Ridda* wars (wars of apostasy) after the death of Muḥammad can be understood in the light of *hilf* relations between tribes. In pre-Islamic times an alliance between individuals or tribes commonly came to an end at the death of one of the two parties or of the leader of one of the groups. Apparently, some of the tribes understood their alliance with Muḥammad in this pre-Islamic sense, and less as a binding religious covenant. At his death, these tribes which in the past had entered into an alliance with Muḥammad and were considered to have converted, saw no reason to extend the agreement under his successor, Abū Bakr (r. 11-13/632-634), and subsequently rejected his authority and leadership, and rebelled against him in the *Ridda* wars.<sup>259</sup>

### *The umma and blood vengeance*

With the emergence of Islam, the collective duty of blood vengeance seems to have evolved into a more individual institution. In pre-Islamic times, tribal allegiance implied shared liability in an active and a passive sense: an individual was responsible for avenging the blood of a killed kinsman, and could be killed in retaliation for a murder committed by a kinsman. In Islam, the principle of personal responsibility would supersede that of tribal solidarity: not the group, but the guilty individual was to suffer the consequences of his actions (Q 6: 164; 17: 15).<sup>260</sup> In the Qurʾān, retaliation, indicated as *qiṣāṣ*, is divinely sanctioned both in cases of murder as well as non-lethal

---

<sup>257</sup> On the early Muslim attitude towards genealogies, see A. Neuwirth, 'Eine "Religiöse Mutation der Spätantike": Von Tribaler Genealogie Zum Gottesbund Koranische Refigurationen Pagan-Arabischer Ideale Nach Biblischen Modellen', in *Genealogie und Migrationsmythen Im Antiken Mittelmeerraum und Auf der Arabischen Halbinsel*, ed. Almut-Barbara Renger and Isabel Toral-Niehoff, 2014, 201–30.

<sup>258</sup> The literary movement of the *shuʿūbiyya* in Persia in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries (and around the 11<sup>th</sup> century in al-Andalus) is an expression of this discontentment; Ignaz Goldziher, 'Die Šuʿūbiyya Unter Den Muhammandanern in Spanien', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, no. 4 (1899): 601–20; Göran Larsson, *Ibn García's Shuʿūbiyya Letter: Ethnic and Theological Tensions in Medieval al-Andalus* (Brill, 2003); R. P. Mottahedeh, 'The Shuʿūbiyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran', *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 161–82.

<sup>259</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 31, 142; al-Jubūrī, *Shiʿr al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 309ff.; Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 79–80. See 5. Al-Ḥuṭayʿa.

<sup>260</sup> Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances in Islam', 9, 18ff.

physical injuries (Q 2: 179).<sup>261</sup> In this life, retaliation should be proportionate. Thus we read in the Qur'an, sanctioning the Jewish regulations in the Torah: "And therein [in the Torah] We prescribed for them: 'A life for a life, an eye for an eye, a nose for a nose, an ear for an ear, a tooth for a tooth, and for wounds retaliation (*qiṣāṣ*)'" (Q 5: 45). The verse continues with a promise for whoever decides to forgive and abstain from his right to retribution: "But whosoever forgoes it as a freewill offering, that shall be for him an expiation" (Q 5: 45). In addition, retaliation should always be against the offender alone, not against his kin.<sup>262</sup> Ultimately, the stipulations of the Qur'anic *qiṣāṣ* differ from the customary pre-Islamic *tha'r*, for "the right of taking vengeance [is] transposed from human to divine hands".<sup>263</sup>

The ideal of the ties of faith superseding the ties of blood is also manifest in the following. In pre-Islamic times, the killing of a kinsman was strongly condemned; within the nascent community emerging around Muḥammad it was forbidden to kill a fellow believer (Q 4: 92, "It belongs not to a believer to slay a believer, except it be by error"). In pre-Islamic times, blood money was to be paid to the kin of the victim; in the nascent community the payment of blood money, compulsory in the case of undeliberate offences, was limited to believers and tribes allied with Muḥammad; the believers were not expected to pay it to non-believers (Q 4: 92).<sup>264</sup>

At the conquest of Mecca (8/630), Muḥammad nullified all past claims to blood revenge.<sup>265</sup> He made an exception for the case of a certain Qurashī, Miqyas b. Ḥubāba al-Laythī,<sup>266</sup> wanted dead because he had murdered one of his fellow followers of Muḥammad and had apostatised afterwards,<sup>267</sup> returning to Mecca "a polytheist" (*mushrik*) or "an apostate" (*murtadd*).<sup>268</sup> Miqyas is said to have composed two short poems on the event. In one poem he speaks in boastful words of

<sup>261</sup> Khaled Abou El Fadl, 'Retaliation', *EQ*, 4:436-37; Richard Kimber, 'Blood Money', *EQ*, 1:239-240.

<sup>262</sup> Landau-Tasserion, 'Alliances in Islam', 22.

<sup>263</sup> Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 68.

<sup>264</sup> Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 264-65.

<sup>265</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:412; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*, 3: (Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1960), 60-61; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 552-53.

<sup>266</sup> Or: Miqyas b. Ṣubāba or Ḍubāba, see the references in footnote 267 and 268.

<sup>267</sup> We are told that Miqyas killed a Helper who accidentally had killed Miqyas' brother after accepting blood money for his death; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 2:76-78; 'Imād al-Din Ismā'il b. 'Umar Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1986), 156.

<sup>268</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:293-94, 410; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:860-62; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:609; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:59-60.

the vengeance he has achieved, a sign of the power of his kin;<sup>269</sup> in the second poem Miqyas boasts of being the first to “return to the idols”.<sup>270</sup> At the conquest of Mecca Miqyas is said to have been killed upon orders of Muḥammad by a man from his own clan, Numayla b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Laythī.<sup>271</sup>

In the chapters that follow we will see that the account of Miqyas’ killing does not stand on its own: more than once we hear of clashes between the customs of old and the norms and values of the nascent *umma*. In a poem attributed to Miqyas’ sister following his killing, she reviles her kinsman Numayla for murdering her brother. In it, she does not even allude to Muḥammad or to a new sort of community. Rather, her attack is based on the tribal notion of allegiance: by killing a kinsman Numayla has weakened and disgraced his own group, his kin.<sup>272</sup>

## 2.3 Authority

### 2.3.1 Authority in pre-Islamic Arabia

Generally speaking, tribal society lacks power hierarchy and monopoly of force, conditions for the state in the definition of Max Weber. For Weber, the state is a “human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force*”. This monopoly of force presupposes a centralised government and a territorial unit, but not necessarily a single ethnic, religious, or social unit or class.<sup>273</sup> Contrary to the state, the tribe as a whole has the collective

---

<sup>269</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:294; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:609; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 122; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 492.

<sup>270</sup> *wa-kuntu ilā l-awthāni awwala rāji’in*; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:293–94 vv.1-4; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:609 vv.1-4; Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā al-Balādhurī (d. ca. 892), *Futūḥ al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1988), 50 vv.1,4,3; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 122 v.3; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 492 vv.1-4. Besides these sources, the poem appears across many others and presents variant readings for almost all verses, without significantly altering the meaning of each of them.

<sup>271</sup> al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:861; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:410–11; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:60; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 551.

<sup>272</sup> “By my life, Numayla shamed his people / and distressed the winter guests when he slew Miqyas // Whoever has seen a man like Miqyas / who provided food for young mothers in hard times” (*La-‘amrī laqad ajzā Numaylatu raḥṭahu / wa-fajja’a aḍyāfa sh-shitā’i bi-Miqyasi // fa-li-llāhi ‘aynā man ra’ā mithla Miqyasin / idhā n-nufasā’u aṣbahat lam tukharrasi*); Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:410–11. Trans. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 551.

<sup>273</sup> Max Weber, ‘Politics as a Vocation’, 1919. Essay in: Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. Charles W. Mills and Hans H. Gerth (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 78. Italics in the original.

responsibility of defending its members and avenging the wrongdoings committed against them. In essence, the tribe is an egalitarian structure with little social stratification and differentiation.<sup>274</sup>

Tribal society is a *segmentary* system, that is, a society formed by the juxtaposition of similar groups.<sup>275</sup> On one and the same level the different segments of a tribe are economically equivalent and independent of one another.<sup>276</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia, different nomadic tribes could become associated more or less closely in a tribal confederation, usually—but not necessarily—a territorial unit.<sup>277</sup> These units were not stable and could quickly expand or decrease by association and dissociation.<sup>278</sup> Depending on their wealth and influence as well as on their exposure to the Byzantine or Sasanid empires, some tribes would form a more integrated and coordinated framework than others. The poorer, more isolated tribes, such as the camel-herding nomadic tribes of the inner desert, usually were quite autonomous and only loosely tied to the tribal framework. The power and functions of the head of such a group were limited to being its spokesperson and leader of its ceremonies. These nomadic groups probably were relatively small units, which could expand or disintegrate depending on their relative security and stability.<sup>279</sup> The wealthier communities could afford a more integrated superstructure with a supreme chief or a network of chiefs. Often this more integrated structure developed as a response to the demands of a state or states in the vicinity with which the tribe wanted to deal or as a response to the pressure of hostile neighbouring tribal confederations or states. In both cases it was important to have one chief or group of chiefs to lead the negotiations or coordinate the defence framework.<sup>280</sup> Trade routes and other contacts with the sedentary population also affected social differentiation and

<sup>274</sup> The wealthier and larger communities tended to be more hierarchical and to have a greater division of labour; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 16–17; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 259–60; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 148, 151–52. “Social differentiation”, in Khazanov’s definition, is “any forms of social inequality and stratification”, while “social stratification” is “the presence in a society of hierarchical hereditary strata and groups with different rights and duties, and which occupy different positions in public life, the running of their society, and/or in production and/or distribution”; Khazanov, 152 n.

<sup>275</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 42.

<sup>276</sup> Patricia Crone, ‘The Tribe and the State’, in *The State. Critical Concepts*, ed. J.A. Hall, vol. 1 (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 447. Against this internal and structural uniformity, cf. Khazanov, *Nomads*, 145ff, and references.

<sup>277</sup> Brown, ‘The Social Context’, 45 n. 29; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:66.

<sup>278</sup> Cf. Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage*, 2–3.

<sup>279</sup> According to Donner, the nomadic “tenting group” would consist of some five to 20 individuals; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 16–17. Cf. Khazanov, *Nomads*, 128–29, 132, 134, 152.

<sup>280</sup> Bamyeh, ‘The Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia’, 39; Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’, 4; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 259; Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations’, 161.



stratification.<sup>281</sup> However, the “ephemeral Bedouin states”<sup>282</sup> that emerged as a result usually disappeared as quickly as they appeared.<sup>283</sup>

The tribes of Northern and Central Arabia, both the nomadic and the sedentary groups, were characterised by a quite homogeneous social organisation, with almost no authority structures.<sup>284</sup> In the words of Nicholson, “Loyalty in the mouth of a pagan Arab did not mean allegiance to his superiors, but faithful devotion to his equals”.<sup>285</sup> The principal social distinction was between the full members of a tribe and the dependent or affiliated members, who could be allies, protégés, or guests who needed temporary or permanent support outside their own tribe, as well as slaves.<sup>286</sup>

A group would oppose supreme authority from within and from the outside and it was a reason to boast if a group was neither submitted nor dependent on others. Such a group was known as a *ḥayy ‘imāra*, a tribe that subsists by itself, or *ḥayy laqāḥ*, a tribe that does not submit to kings.<sup>287</sup>

The tribal councils or assemblies (*majlis* pl. *majālis*; *mala’*), constituted by all free male members of the group, passed rulings and examined possible wrongdoings. The wealthier sedentary communities of Arabia had a more elaborate legal system and institutional framework with a supreme council representing the different tribal groups.<sup>288</sup> Within the assembly of a clan or tribe, there was one whose voice carried more authority: the chief (*sayyid*). The authority of the chief was based primarily on his noble and free lineage and on his proven experience and qualities. It was usually a man of mature age who had shown to possess qualities and virtues like

---

<sup>281</sup> This is the central thesis of Khazanov’s study; Khazanov, *Nomads*, 186.

<sup>282</sup> Marx, ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence’, 349.

<sup>283</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 115–16; Marx, ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence’, 349. Cf. Khazanov, *Nomads*, 148ff., 168–69.

<sup>284</sup> Bamyeh, ‘The Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia’, 38–39.

<sup>285</sup> Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 83.

<sup>286</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 118, 120.

<sup>287</sup> Lane, s.v. ‘*m-r*; *l-q-ḥ*’; Borg, ‘Poetry as a Source for the History of Early Islam’, 12; Farès, *L’Honneur chez les Arabes avant l’Islam*, 52. See ‘Abd al-Qādir b. ‘Umar al-Baghdādī (d. 1682), *Khizānat al-Adab wa-Lubb Lubāb Lisān al-‘Arab*, ed. ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4th ed., vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānījī, 1998), 471. Examples of the opposite, of groups submitted to strangers, are, for example, the Bedouin tribes with close relations with the Lakhmid kings of al-Ḥīra; Dostal, ‘Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit’, 15–16; Kister, ‘On Strangers and Allies in Mecca’, 115.

<sup>288</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 124–25.

forbearance, generosity, bravery, and magnanimity.<sup>289</sup> Commonly, the successive chiefs of a group were descendants from the same family. However, the position was not automatically inherited: a chief had to be elected and approved by the *majlis* and had to prove that he was able to fulfil the main duties for the sake of the tribe, that is, that he could offer protection, both in a military and a material sense. Thus the *mukhaḍram* poet ‘Āmir b. al-Ṭufayl, chief of the Ja‘fār b. Kilāb, from the Banū ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘a, boasted that although he descended from a line of chiefs, his leading position in the first place was because of his own merits: “As for me, though I be the son of the Chief of ‘Āmir and the Knight of the tribe, called on for help in every adventure, // It was not for my kinsmen’s sake that ‘Āmir made me their chief: God forbid that I should exalt myself on mother’s or father’s fame! // But it was because I guard their peculiar land, and shield them from annoy, and hurl myself against him that strikes at their peace”.<sup>290</sup>

As a *primus inter pares*, the chief had to set an example and give support to his tribe, but his authority was based on the assumption of responsibilities, not on a series of privileges.<sup>291</sup> In case of incompetence or injustice the leadership could be challenged.<sup>292</sup> In an account of the poet-warrior Durayd b. al-Ṣimma, leader of the Banū Jusham b. Mu‘āwiya from the North Arabian confederation of the Hawāzin, we are told that, after a successful raid of the Jusham against the Ghaṭafān, Durayd’s group halted to rest and divide the spoils, against Durayd’s advice to continue travelling back into safe territory. The next morning they were attacked by the Ghaṭafān; Durayd was badly wounded and his brother was killed. In a poem mourning his brother’s death, Durayd lamented his people’s rash decision but at the same time expressed his loyalty to them through fair and foul: “I gave them my orders at Mun‘araj al-Liwā, but they did not perceive clearly the right course till the forenoon of the following day // When they disobeyed me, I [made myself one] of

<sup>289</sup> Values and virtues comprised in the unwritten code of *murūwwa*, see below. Cf. Farès, *L’Honneur chez les Arabes avant l’Islam*, 54–56; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 43; Müller, *Ich bin Labid*, 81–82; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 83.

<sup>290</sup> *Innī wa-in kuntu –bna sayyidi ‘Āmirin / wa-fārisihā l-mandūba fi kulli mawkibi // fa-mā sawwadatnī ‘Āmirun ‘an qarābatin / abā –llāhu an asmū bi-ummin wa-lā abi // wa-lakinnanī aḥimī ḥimāhā wa-attaqī / adhāhā wa-armī man ramāhā bi-mankibi*; Charles J. Lyall, ed., *The Dīwāns of ‘Abīd Ibn al-Abras and ‘Āmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl*, E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series 21 (Leiden: E. Brill, 1913), Ar. 92-3, Trans. 97 nr. 1. These three verses are from a longer poem that Lyall does not treat in full in his edition.

<sup>291</sup> C.E. Bosworth, ‘Sayyid’, *EL*, 9:115-16; Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 55–56; Grunebaum, ‘Arab Unity’, 11–12; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 117–18; Lancaster and Lancaster, ‘Tribal Formations’, 157.

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Bräunlich, ‘Beiträge zur Gesellschaftsordnung’, 109; Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 119; M.J. Kister, *Society and Religion from Jāhiliyya to Islam* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1990), 36.

them, holding that their error was right and I was not right // Am I anyone but one of Ghaziyya, and if Ghaziyya go astray, I stray with them and if they act rightly, I am right [too]?”<sup>293</sup>

Worse than ignoring the advice of the *sayyid* was following unsound or foolish advice. A frequent poetic insult is that the opponents follow a fool, obeying an unexperienced leader incapable of bringing them any good. Such an insult was hurtful in two ways, for it implied that not only the tribe had failed in the past in the choice of a capable leader, but also that in the present they were unable to amend their fault and refuse his ill advice. To quote the pre-Islamic poet and tribal leader al-Afwah al-Awdi: “The tribe does not prosper, when in disunion, without a chief; and there is no (real) chief when their stupid ones assume the leadership”.<sup>294</sup>

Besides the *sayyid*, the roles of two other figures within tribal society of pre-Islamic Arabia are important to consider in relation to the question of authority: the soothsayers (*kāhin*, pl. *kuhḥān*) and the poets (*shā’ir* pl. *shu’arā’*). The roles of both are closely connected. Poets and soothsayers functioned as tribal counsellors and leaders, as well as “a sort of oracle of the tribe”, for their knowledge and insight were associated with a supernatural source, the spirits (*jinnī* pl. *jinn*).<sup>295</sup> The poets also functioned as keepers of the wisdom and traditions and thus as the oral register of the tribe’s history and genealogy.<sup>296</sup>

In the case of the poets, it seems that the original belief was not that *all* poetry originated through supernatural inspiration: some compositions were inspired, others were not. The poetic genre in which this inspiration was most important was that of *hijā’* (lampoon, invective). Considering the close connection between poetry and the greatness of a tribe, it will not come as a surprise that poems were used not only to praise one’s group but also to attack the enemy. Indeed, Ibn Sallām al-Jumaḥī (d. 231 or 232/845 or 846) noted that “Poetry prospers by wars between

---

<sup>293</sup> *Amartuhumu amrī bi-mun’arajī l-liwā / fa-lam yastabīnū l-rushda illā ḍuḥā l-ghadi // fa-lammā ‘aṣawnī kuntu minhum wa-qad arā / ghawāyatahum wa-annanī ghayru muhtadi // wa-hal ana illā min Ghaziyyata in ghawat / ghawaytu wa-in tarshud Ghaziyyatu arshudi*; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 86–88 vv. 8-10.

<sup>294</sup> *Lā yaṣluḥu l-qawmu fawḍā lahum lā sarāta lahum / wa-lā sarāta idhā juhḥāluhum sādū*; Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, Ar. 20, Trans. 18-20 nr. 3 v.7. See also footnote 186.

<sup>295</sup> ‘Shā’ir’, *El2*, 12:717-22, the contribution by T. Fahd; Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:332–33; Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur. Supplement*, vol. 1, 1937, 18ff.; T. Fahd, ‘Divination’, *EQ*, 1:542–45; T. Fahd, ‘Kāhin’, *El2*, 4:420-22; Goldziher, *Abhandlungen Zur Arabischen Philologie*, 1:3–5, 16–17; A.S. Tritton, ‘Arrāf’, *El2*, 1:659-660.

<sup>296</sup> Goldziher connects the concept of the poet with the figure of the ‘*arrāf*’, “diviner, eminent in knowledge, professional knower”. Indeed, the verbs ‘*arafa* and *sha’ara* have the same semantic connotation: “to know, to possess knowledge”; Goldziher, *Abhandlungen Zur Arabischen Philologie*, 1:16–18.

tribes".<sup>297</sup> According to Goldziher, *hijā'* poetry originally was not only defamation and scoffing, but a spell, a curse, thought to have an inevitable effect on the person (or object) against whom or which it had been uttered, and as such it served in times of war against the opponent. Poets were seen as equally important as warriors in matters of defending their group and poetry was part of warfare: in pre-Islamic times, during the holy months both fighting and *hijā'* poetry were forbidden.<sup>298</sup>

### Sunna and *muruwwa*

Overall, tribal society, as an acephalous and segmentary society, is based on tradition and the maintenance of the group ideal.<sup>299</sup> The laws of ancient Arabian tribal society were customary laws, determined by tradition and ancient practice, and hence inherently conservative.<sup>300</sup> In pre-Islamic times, the concept of *sunna*, which later would receive a strong Islamic imprint, seems to bear the meaning of "tradition", that is, the customs and values of old.<sup>301</sup> Following the tradition of the forefathers was doing what was "known" (*ma'rūf*), what was familiar and therefore socially accepted and good; going against this tradition was doing something "unknown" (*munkar*), strange, and therefore by definition "ignoble, base".<sup>302</sup> It was praiseworthy to imitate the examples of old: "We follow the ways of our forefathers, those who kindled wars and were faithful to the ties of kinship", as the pre-Islamic poet 'Abīd b. al-Abraṣ boasted of his kin.<sup>303</sup>

In pre-Islamic Arabia, the intratribal and intertribal relations had led to the development of a code of conduct and values, known as *muruwwa* (or *murū'a*). The term derives from the root *m-r-*; from the same root derives the substantive *mar'* or *imru'*, "a (free) man". From a characterisation of the physical qualities of man, *muruwwa* evolved into the abstract indication of

<sup>297</sup> al-Jumahlī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:259.

<sup>298</sup> Goldziher, *Abhandlungen Zur Arabischen Philologie*, 1:3–5, 8–9, 16–17. See also: Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:340–41.

<sup>299</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 78, 260–61.

<sup>300</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 121–22. Cf. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 40 n. 68.

<sup>301</sup> Dostal, 'Mecca before the Time of the Prophet', 211. On *sunna* in pre-Islamic times and early Islam, see Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 121–22.

<sup>302</sup> Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 259–60; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, 213ff.

<sup>303</sup> *Fa-ttaba'nā dhāta ūlānā l-ūlā l- / -mūqīdī l-ḥarbi wa-mūfi bi-l-ḥibālī*; Lyall, *The Dīwāns of 'Abid Ibn al-Abraṣ and 'Āmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl*, Ar. 60, Trans. 48 nr. 20 v. 18. For metrical reasons Lyall doubts the authenticity of the poem.

the moral qualities of a “perfect human” (*volkommener Mensch*).<sup>304</sup> According to Gottfried Müller, the concepts of *mar'* and *muruwwa* are intrinsically united. Not a woman, a child, or a slave but only a free man can possess *muruwwa*; on the other hand, no free man can be a true *mar'* if he lacks the virtues of *muruwwa*. Müller understands *mar'* as a status that one has to constantly and actively fulfil through the possession and exertion of *muruwwa*.<sup>305</sup> As a comprehensive yet concise characterisation of the different values under the umbrella of *muruwwa* I quote in full Müller's definition:

Zu ihnen gehören sich so überschneidende Konzepte wie die *hamāsa*, eine spezifische Kombination von Mut und Tapferkeit im Kampf, Ausdauer im Mißgeschick, Beharrlichkeit in der Durchsetzung der Blutrache, Schutz des Schwachen und Herausforderung des Starken; der *ṣabr* als im Besonderen die Ausdauer und Fähigkeit des Widerstehens gegenüber dem, was gefahrvoll begegnet; der *wafā'*, die Loyalität und Treue, die sich im Stammesbereich als *birr*, als die durch die *ṣilat al-raḥim*, die Blutsbindung, definierte Verwandtenliebe bzw. Bündnistreue zwischen den Stammesangehörigen, und im Verhältnis des Einzelnen zur Wirklichkeit überhaupt als *ṣidq*, als Standfestigkeit und Glaubwürdigkeit, als die Haltung dessen, der sich selbst die Treue hält, bewährt. Weiter gehören zu den altarabischen Tugenden der *'ird*, die Ehre, mit den beiden sie kennzeichnenden Elementen der Durchsetzung des *ma'rūf*, des allgemein Anerkannten, in der Öffentlichkeit, und des *ibā'*, der stolzen Zurückweisung jeglicher fremden Autorität und Abhängigkeit, auf der einen Seite und der mit diesem Ehrbegriff so eng verbundene *karam*, die besonders durch Großzügigkeit sich auszeichnende Würde, mit der der Einzelne sich erst voll im öffentlichen Leben bewährt, auf der anderen.<sup>306</sup>

### 2.3.2 Authority in the umma

The basic tenet of belief in Islam is belief in one God (the doctrine of *tawḥīd*). In the Qur'ān, belief in God goes hand in hand with the belief in his prophets (Q 24: 62; 49: 15; 61: 11). Obedience to God implies obedience to his messengers, especially Muḥammad: “Whosoever obeys the Messenger, thereby obeys God” (Q 4: 80; see Q 4: 59; 5: 92). Muḥammad's authority was not based on his

---

<sup>304</sup> Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 82. Paralleling the development of the Latin term *virtus* or the Greek ἀνδρεία, derived respectively from the substantive *vir* and ἀνὴρ, “man”, cf. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:22.

<sup>305</sup> Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 82 n. 204. See also Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 1 n. 1. According to B. Farès, *muruwwa* should not be confused with the concept of “honour” (*'ird*), which he considers the central element of pre-Islamic society. Honour, in his view, is a moral principle independent from *muruwwa* or chivalry (understanding chivalry in its Medieval sense, as Farès does); Farès, *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*, 21ff.

<sup>306</sup> Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 82. See also the extensive notes Müller includes in this section. The virtues he mentions in this section are *hamāsa*, which Müller defines along the lines of bravery, endurance, and tenacity; *ṣabr*, endurance in the face of danger and hardship; *wafā'*, loyalty and fidelity, which in the context of one's tribe is indicated as *birr*, loyalty and fidelity to those to whom one is attached through ties of blood (*ṣilat al-raḥim*), and outside the context of one's kin is indicated as *ṣidq*, trustworthiness and steadfastness to oaths and alliances; *'ird* or honour, with its elements of upholding the *ma'rūf*, the known and recognised, and *ibā'*, rejection of strange authority and dependence; and finally *karam* or generosity.

election by the tribal council because of his great deeds and lineage (*ḥasab wa-nasab*), as his contemporaries would expect, but on his claim of being a divinely sanctioned messenger (Q 8: 64; 66: 8, etc.).<sup>307</sup>

An important element in the Qurʾānic discourse is formed by the—real or staged—debates with present or past opponents to convince the audience of the truth and to warn them of the consequences of unbelief.<sup>308</sup> The peoples of the past are presented as an example and warning: their rejection of the prophets' message led to their destruction (Q 41: 13-6). Disobedience and unbelief will lead to punishment—a punishment of the individual, which is a change with regard to the collective duties and responsibilities of the tribe. Those who believe, on the other hand, will be rewarded (Q 84: 25; 85: 11; 95: 6). All individuals will taste reward and punishment, not only in the hereafter but also already during this life (cf. Q 3: 145,148; 13: 34).

The Emigration or *Hijra* from Mecca to Medina (1/622) evinced not only that Muḥammad had difficulties in convincing the Quraysh of his prophethood and leadership, as it deviated from the *sunna* of their forefathers, but it also marked the expansion of his scope of influence (Q 19: 97; 26: 214; cf. Q 14: 4). From the start it had not been limited to the Quraysh as his kin, for its universalism was implicit in the call to believe in one God and the announcement of the Day of Judgement (Q 4: 79; 25: 1; etc.). However, with the *Hijra* the audience of Muḥammad expanded to include a growing community in Medina formed by individuals and groups from the Quraysh, from the Medinan tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj, and soon from other tribes as well.

The figure of a prophet must have been known on the Arabian peninsula through the presence of Jewish and Christian communities. Nonetheless, Muḥammad's non-Qurashī opponents rejected Muḥammad's claim, among other things, because they understood it as submission to a stranger and an undermining of their independence. The poet and chief al-Zibriqān b. Badr, from the Tamīm, came to Medina with a delegation of his tribe in the year 9/630-1 and was involved in a poetical exchange with the Muslim poet Ḥassān b. Thābit. In one of these poems, al-Zibriqān bragged: "We restrain others, but no one restrains us – thus we are exalted in

<sup>307</sup> However cf. Serjeant, who argues that Muḥammad, had he not belonged to an honourable, arms-bearing group and holy family within the Quraysh, would never have been accepted as a leader by the other tribes. "Holy families" or "religious aristocracy" derive their authority from the divinity and are closely associated to a sacred enclave (*ḥaram*); Serjeant, 'Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia', 168-9,174; Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests*, 34.

<sup>308</sup> Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau, 'Polemics in the Koran: The Koran's Negative Argumentation over Its Own Origin 1', *Arabica* 60, no. 1-2 (1 January 2013): 131-45.

praise”.<sup>309</sup> Similarly, when his tribe urged him to accept Islam, ‘Āmir b. al-Ṭufayl, a poet and hero of the Banū ‘Āmir b. Ṣa‘ṣa‘a, reportedly answered: “I have sworn that I will not cease until all the Arabs follow after me. Shall I then myself follow after this youngster from the Quraysh?”<sup>310</sup>

---

<sup>309</sup> *Innā abaynā wa-lā ya’bā lanā aḥadun / innā kadhālika ‘inda f-fakhri nurtafa’u*. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:563; Su‘ūd Maḥmūd ‘Abd al-Jābir, ed., *Shi‘r al-Zibriqān b. Badr wa-‘Amr b. al-Ahtam* (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1984), 46–48 nr. 18 v. 8; Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, ed. W.N. ‘Arafat, vol. 2 (London: Luzac & Co., 1971), 98.

<sup>310</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 17:44. Cf. Lyall, *The Dīwāns of ‘Abīd Ibn al-Abrāṣ and ‘Āmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl*, 89. *Fatā*: a term with various meanings, among them: young man, strong and young man, slave, generous man. Lyall translates it here as “champion”, but Farès states that *fatā* (and its derivatives) in pre-Islamic times was not a laudatory term but used mainly as “adolescent” or “man” in general (in the prime of life); in later Muslim times it would come to be used in a sense similar to “knight, chivalrous man”; Farès, *L’Honneur chez les Arabes avant l’Islam*, 25ff.







# Part 2

---

Poetical Analysis



# Chapter 3

---

ḌIRĀR B. AL-KHAṬṬĀB AL-FIHRĪ

### 3. ʔIRĀR B. AL-KHAṬṬĀB AL-FIHRĪ

ʔirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb b. Mirdās al-Fihri was a famous member of the Qurashī tribe around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup>. He belonged to the Banū Muḥārib b. Fihri, one of the less numerous and powerful Qurashī clans who lived on the outskirts of Mecca and did not belong to either the *Ahlāf* or the *Muṭayyabūn* (the later *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*) faction.<sup>311</sup>

ʔirār is mentioned as one of the leaders of the Quraysh, for example in the *Ḥarb al-Fijār* (the Sacrilegious War), a long tribal conflict towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century in which the Quraysh assisted their allies of the Kināna against the Hawāzin and Thaḳīf.<sup>312</sup> As a poet, ʔirār is considered by later Muslim literary critics the best Qurashī poet of his time, followed by Ibn al-Zibaʿrā.<sup>313</sup> In spite of his fame as a renowned poet and leader of his clan and among the Quraysh in general,<sup>314</sup> the classical bibliographical works offer little details about ʔirār's life.<sup>315</sup> The dates of his birth and death are uncertain, but he is a *mukhaḍram* poet, that is, he was born before the advent of Islam and died after its emergence. Faced with Muḥammad's prophetic career, ʔirār was long among his fierce opponents and fought on the side of the Quraysh against Muḥammad and his followers: he participated in the battles of Badr (2/624), Uḥud (3/625), and al-Khandaq (5/627). ʔirār also used his poetical talent in his opposition to Muḥammad, composing invectives against him and his followers.<sup>316</sup>

In spite of his opposition to Muḥammad, and contrary to his fellow Qurashī poet Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, at the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad in the year 8/630 ʔirār is not mentioned among those whom Muḥammad ordered to be killed. While Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, as we will see, fled the town to

<sup>311</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>312</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 169–70; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 171–72; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 11:59; Jābī Zāda ʿAlī Fahmī, *Ḥusn al-Ṣaḥāba fi Sharḥ Ashʿar al-Ṣaḥāba*, vol. 1 (Riyāḍ: Dār Saʿāda, 1906), 31.

<sup>313</sup> Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. ʿAlī Ibn Ḥajar al-ʿAsqalānī (d. 1449), *al-Iṣāba fi Tamyiz al-Ṣaḥāba*, ed. ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawjūd and ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwad, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), 392; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 445.

<sup>314</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 331–32; ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1382), *Dīwān al-Mubtadaʿ wa-l-Khabar fi Tārīkh al-ʿArab wa-l-Barbar wa-man ʿĀsarahum min Dhawī al-Shāʿn al-Akbar*, ed. Khalīl Shaḥāda, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988), 387.

<sup>315</sup> Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:308–9; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte Des Arabischen Schrifttums. Poesie, Bis ca. 430 H.*, vol. 2, 1967, 281–82. For references to classical biographical works, see the notes in what follows.

<sup>316</sup> Sezgin, *GAS*, 2:281–82; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 414. For the dating of these and other events I follow Ibn Hishām's edition of the *Sira*; within Muslim and non-Muslim tradition exist variations with regards to this dating.

escape his death, Ḍirār was able to stay in Mecca, where he is said to have “converted” or “submitted” (*aslama*) to Islam. Ḍirār is said to have participated in later Muslim conquests, and his death is dated around the year 12/633, at the battle of Yamāma, or perhaps later in Iraq or Syria.<sup>317</sup>

### *The poems of Ḍirār*

For the Arabic texts of Ḍirār’s poems I follow primarily the edition of his *dīwān* by Aslīm b. Aḥmad. When other sources present significant variants I will mention them. For the English translation of the poem I draw extensively on the notes of Aslīm b. Aḥmad and, when available, on the translations by Guillaume in his translation of Ibn Hishām’s edition of the *Sīra*. When not stated otherwise, the translations of the poems are my own.

The poems of Ḍirār that have been preserved, summing some 100 verses in total, are found in a variety of sources: across *sīra* books, in the *Aghānī*, and in genealogical and historical sources like *Nasab Quraysh* and the *Tārīkh* of al-Ṭabarī. The majority of these poems or fragments by Ḍirār deal with matters related to the emerging group of followers of Muḥammad.

Ḍirār’s *dīwān* as edited by Fārūq Aslīm b. Aḥmad (ed. 1996) contains 27 poems or fragments. In this *dīwān*, four poems are related to pre-Islamic events (nr. 5; 10; 17; 18),<sup>318</sup> while 12 poems are against Muḥammad and his followers (nr. 3; 4; 8; 9; 13; 15; 16; 20; 24; 25; 26, and the poems nr. 14; 26).<sup>319</sup> Five poems can be dated after his conversion (nr. 1; 6; 12; 19; 23),<sup>320</sup> and six others are of an uncertain date (nr. 2; 7; 11; 21; 27, and poem nr.22).<sup>321</sup> Besides these 27 compositions, I have found one poem that is not included in Aslīm b. Aḥmad’s edition.<sup>322</sup>

We see that only a few of Ḍirār’s poems can be dated prior to the emergence of Islam. It possibly goes too far to interpret this fact primarily as the result of a later process of selection by Muslim authors, excluding those poems that were an affront to what was considered good and

<sup>317</sup> Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:308–9; Abū ‘Umar Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 1070), *al-Istī‘āb fi Ma‘rifat al-Aṣḥāb*, ed. ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, 1992), 748; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 3:392.

<sup>318</sup> Here respectively: DK09; DK07; DK08; DK10.

<sup>319</sup> Here respectively: DK17; DK14; DK11; DK13; DK18; DK16; DK20; DK12; DK15; DK19. The poems nr. 14; 26 are not included in this analysis, see footnote 456.

<sup>320</sup> Here respectively: DK21; DK25; DK23; DK24; DK22.

<sup>321</sup> Here respectively: DK02; DK05; DK01; DK06; DK04. The single line of nr. 22 is not included in this analysis; I have not been able to contextualise nor to translate it in any meaningful way.

<sup>322</sup> Here: DK03.

moral in later times. Indeed, not all those poems that have been preserved speak positively about Muḥammad and his early followers. However, assuming a process of selection, how and why would these compositions against Muḥammad have survived? Perhaps the higher number of poems by ʿDirār that are related to Islam is—at least in part—the result of a poetical awakening of ʿDirār by the events surrounding Muḥammad. Just like he was called, by virtue of the shared responsibilities of belonging to the Quraysh, to fight against Muḥammad on the battlefield, he may also have been called to fight against him with his poems.<sup>323</sup> And perhaps the solution is even simpler, as it might be sought in ʿDirār’s age. Around the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> century he is mentioned as a leader of his clan and he must have been an adult man by then—it is not entirely surprising that the core of his poetical activity is centred in times of Muḥammad’s prophetic activity.

Some of the poems by ʿDirār included in the *Sīra* books of Ibn Hishām and Ibn Kathīr are exposed to doubts regarding their attribution and authenticity. Of the ten poems attributed to ʿDirār in his *Sīra*,<sup>324</sup> Ibn Hishām notes that authorities on poetry suspect the authenticity of three.<sup>325</sup> Besides noting these suspicions, Guillaume, translator and editor of Ibn Hishām’s *Sīra*, adds one other poem which he suspects,<sup>326</sup> while al-Jubūrī, in his work on *mukhaḍram* poetry, questions the authenticity of yet another poem attributed to ʿDirār in Ibn Hishām’s *Sīra*.<sup>327</sup> For the sake of the analysis I will include these suspected poems in what follows, also to see whether the suspicions prove solid.

In the *Sīra* by Ibn Hishām, four poems attributed to ʿDirār are found in a pair with a reply by a poet on the side of Muḥammad. Of these four, three responses are attributed to the Helper poet Kaʿb b. Mālik and one to Ḥassān b. Thābit. These responses are included—partially—in the analysis, for they enable us to contextualise ʿDirār’s compositions and elucidate his worldview in contrast with that of his opponents.

---

<sup>323</sup> See also 4. Ibn al-Zibaʿrā.

<sup>324</sup> On the doubts concerning *mukhaḍram* poems in the *Sīra* works, see chapter 1. Introduction.

<sup>325</sup> DK12, DK14, DK17.

<sup>326</sup> DK19.

<sup>327</sup> DK13.

### *Themes in Ḍirār's poetry*

Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, as a member of the Quraysh and habitant of the sedentary town of Mecca, is said to have fought in various battles and perhaps participated in the caravan trade through the desert. These activities, although certainly harsh, were of a different order than the seasonal transhumance of nomadic clans or tribes in search of pasture, and different from the defensive or offensive raids for survival. Nonetheless, the outlook on life as expressed in Ḍirār's compositions is still close to that of pre-Islamic Bedouin poets: a life in which honour and glory lie in upholding and defending the values and virtues of tribal nomadic life.<sup>328</sup>

Prominent *murūwwa* values in Ḍirār's discourse are a strong attachment to the tribe and loyalty to the alliances in combination with a fierce and proud individual independence. The interaction between these seemingly opposed values can be seen in the poems on battles. In these, he speaks as a member of a group—"we" against the "others"—, but at the same time the individual honour and glory seem more important to Ḍirār than the end result of the battle for his group as a whole.

Perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, Ḍirār is remembered for his vehement loyalty to his kin. "He [Ḍirār] breathed the air of tribal *'aṣabiyya* (party spirit, tribal solidarity)".<sup>329</sup> We see this for example in Ḍirār's opposition to Muḥammad and the group around him. So, in the poems he composed on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers after the Emigration, Ḍirār presents the enemy mainly as the hostile tribes of Yathrib. Nevertheless, we will see that the Ḍirār as a man fiercely loyal to his kin is not the full picture. The loyalty to the Quraysh for which he is remembered did not prevent him, for example, from composing verses against his tribesmen from among the enemy and even to rejoice in the death of prominent Qurashī opponents fighting on Muḥammad's side. Through the analysis of Ḍirār's corpus of poems we will see how these seemingly contradictory attitudes towards his clan and tribe are embedded in his discourse on allegiance.

A second prominent theme in Ḍirār's corpus is the refusal to submit oneself and one's tribe to anyone—be it a strange group or someone from the own tribe claiming a position to which he was not entitled. Only Fate is a force in front of which man stands powerless, and even when

<sup>328</sup> Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:7–8.

<sup>329</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, ed. Fārūq Aslim b. Aḥmad (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1996), 5. On *'aṣabiyya*, see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.



confronted with Fate one must not recoil cowardly but adopt an attitude that can be summarised as bold resignation towards life.<sup>330</sup> In ʿDirār’s words, in a poem of which only one verse has survived:<sup>331</sup>

[DKor *ṭawīl*]

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ الدَّهْرَ يَلْعَبُ بِالْفَتَى - وَلَا يَمْلِكُ الْإِنْسَانُ دَفْعَ الْمَقَادِرِ .1

1. Don't you see that Fate plays with the man and that man does not have a powerful defence against fates?

### 3.1 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s poems

#### 3.1.1 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his clan

ʿDirār’s clan of the Banū Muḥārib b. Fihr did not belong to one of the two factions among the Quraysh, the *Ahlāf* and *Muṭayyabūn*, but instead was one of those weaker and less numerous Qurashī clans. It belonged to the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* (the Quraysh of the Outskirts), the clans relegated to the outskirts of Mecca by the stronger and more numerous clans that settled in the centre or hollow of Mecca (*Quraysh al-Biṭāh*).<sup>332</sup> For the daily life of the Quraysh and for the intratribal relations the implications of the allocation of different quarters are rather unclear, but we may assume that this division based on power and numbers was known and felt among the clans. In several compositions by ʿDirār as well as in accounts of his life we see indeed that the relegation of his clan to the outskirts of the town was somehow present in his mind. In the three poems that follow we see how the discursive strands on allegiance and authority are entangled: as a full member of the Muḥārib b. Fihr, ʿDirār positions his clan above the other Qurashī clans in the intratribal strive for prominence and fame in spite of their apparent weakness.

In the first poem ʿDirār praises his clan as heroic and outstanding. In *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* this poem is included in a section that deals with the geographical allocation of quarters to the Qurashī

---

<sup>330</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 218.

<sup>331</sup> ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 65 nr. 11.

<sup>332</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*, Table 1.

clans in Mecca,<sup>333</sup> and indeed, it can be read as a protest poem of (a section of) the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* against the claims to power and supremacy of the *Quraysh al-Biṭāh*. It reads:<sup>334</sup>

[DKo2 *ṭawīl*]

1. وَنَحْنُ بَنُو الْحَرْبِ الْعَوَانِ نَشْنُهَا – وَبِالْحَرْبِ سُمِّيْنَا فَنَحْنُ مُحَارِبٌ .1  
 2. إِذَا قَصَّرَتْ أَسْيَافُنَا كَانَ وَصْلَهَا – خُطَانَا إِلَى أَعْدَائِنَا فَنَضَارِبُ .2  
 3. فَذَلِكَ أَفْنَانَا وَأَبْقَى قَبَائِلًا – سِوَانَا تَوْفِيهِمْ قِرَاعَ الْكَتَائِبِ .3

1. We are the sons of Endless War, we kindle it – That’s why we’re called after War, we are the [Banū] Muḥārib<sup>335</sup>
2. If our swords fall short our steps bring us closer to our enemies and we strike them
3. This has destroyed us, [this] has preserved tribes other than us with their avoidance of striking with the swords the enemy lines.<sup>336</sup>

In these verses Ḍirār praises his clan but omits any reference to the larger Qurashī tribe: it may be intended as a poetical statement in the intratribal power struggles over the allocation of the quarters.

In v.1 Ḍirār plays with the meaning of the name of his clan, the Banū Muḥārib b. Fihri: the basic meaning of the root of the active participle *muḥārib* (“contender, fighter, warrior”) is that of “war, violence, plunder”. According to Ḍirār, this name has been given to the clan because of their incessant fighting. They do not just fight back when attacked, for they are not afraid to ignite a conflict (v.1). In v.2 the message is reinforced: these “Sons of Endless War” are unstoppable, and instead of keeping a safe distance from the enemy, they come closer. This v.2 is identical to a verse attributed to two other poets,<sup>337</sup> but not necessarily does this mean that the attribution of DKO2 to

<sup>333</sup> al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:40–41.

<sup>334</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Diwān*, 46 nr. 2; al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:40–41; Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 1176), *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*, ed. ‘Umar b. Gharama al-‘Amrawī, vol. 24 (Dār al-Fikr, 1995), 400; Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 1176), *Tahdhīb Tārīkh Dimashq al-Kabīr*, ed. ‘Abd al-Qādir Badrān, vol. 7 (Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1979), 35.

<sup>335</sup> Variant: *nashunnuhā* (“we pour it out”), that is, they attack the enemy from every side.

<sup>336</sup> The change of rhyming vowel in the last verse (from *u* to *i*, a fault known as *iqwā’*) is a serious fault, but not uncommon among ancient poets; William Wright, *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*, ed. W. Robertson Smith and M.J. De Goeje, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), ii 356-7.

<sup>337</sup> Lines by the pre-Islamic poet al-Akhnas al-Taghlibī and the *mukhaḍram* poet Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), *Kitāb al-Shi’r wa-l-Shu’arā’*, vol. 1 (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2002), 308–9; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 2:263.

Ḍirār is doubtful: the ideas on authorship and plagiarism were not the same as they are today.<sup>338</sup>

Such a line on the heroism of the own group could be used and re-used by different poets, with or without minor changes.

In light of the praise in vv.1-2 the statement in v.3 might come as a surprise. Their eagerness to fight may have resulted in immaterial glory for the Muḥārib b. Fihir, but they also brought problems upon themselves. It may be brave to go against the enemy disregarding the consequences (v.2), but it is not always wise. Nonetheless, the tone of v.3 is not that of a lamentation, and certainly not of regret: it voices a boastful self-awareness and pride. The losses suffered by other groups may have been less severe, but they cannot boast of a readiness to fight like that shown by Ḍirār's group (vv.1-2).

While in this composition it is rather clear to which group the poet professes his allegiance, namely, his clan, there is no clear enemy, at least not in the verses that have come down to us: it is "us" against "the rest". In other poems (like DK05), Ḍirār praises particular Qurashī individuals for protecting the tribe; in this poem, he does not praise the Muḥārib b. Fihir for defending the Quraysh nor does the poet speak of the assistance to his clan by the rest of the Quraysh. Although Ḍirār does not explicitly portray the Quraysh as enemies of the Muḥārib b. Fihir, between the lines he seems to resent the fact that his tribe did not prevent the losses suffered by his clan. Implicitly he may be accusing the other clans of seeking cover behind the Muḥārib b. Fihir in the fight (v.3).

Around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the *Quraysh al-Ḍawāhir* sometimes functioned independently from the *Quraysh al-Biṭāh*: we are told that they carried out attacks and established alliances with other clans and tribes;<sup>339</sup> Ḍirār is said to have gathered a group of Qurashī clients and rebels which,

---

<sup>338</sup> For examples and an analysis of 'plagiarism' in pre-Islamic poetry, see: I. Goldziher, 'Der Diwān des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. I', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, no. 1 (1892): 42–48. In his discussion (and rejection) of the Parry-Lord theory of oral-formulaic poetry as applied to classical Arabic poetry (see chapter 1. Introduction), Schoeler presents examples on the accusation and rejection of plagiarism by ancient poets. However, Schoeler's examples and analyses are related mainly to the classical *qaṣīda* (ode). In contrast to these artistic and lengthy compositions, in which the poets had to conform to the conventions and yet had to present them in "a new, perhaps even original form", it is reasonable to assume that in the shorter, circumstantial poems the poet would feel free to use metaphors, similes, and even whole verses from the stock of poems he knew, "a shared pool of material". Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 96ff.

<sup>339</sup> al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 11:59; 'Abd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Iṣāmī (d. 1699), *Simṭ al-Nujūm al-'Awālī fi Anbā' al-'Awālī wa-l-Tawālī*, ed. 'Adīl Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998), 206; Kister, 'Some Reports Concerning Mecca from

under his leadership, carried out raids and abductions and stole camels.<sup>340</sup> Among the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* the Muḥārib b. Fihr was one of the stronger clans. Perhaps their relative power—and perhaps a wish to further strengthen and emphasise their independence from the other Qurashī clans—is what allowed or pushed Ḍirār to seemingly act against the interest of the rest of the Quraysh. We do not know much about these raids, for example whether or not they only took place under Ḍirār’s leadership. What we do know is that at least one of these raids caused the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* to run into trouble when they attacked the Banū Kināna, a tribe living in the vicinity of Mecca, not only distant relatives of the Quraysh but also their allies.<sup>341</sup> A group of the Kināna, responded to this raid with an attack that, we are told, forced the Banū al-Ḥārith b. Fihr to take refuge among the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ*: they “entered” (*dakhalat*) Mecca and from then on they were counted as part of the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ*.<sup>342</sup> How and why the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ* could admit in their midst a clan that had attacked allies of the tribe and provoked their anger is not mentioned in the sources.

It is in the context of the raids of the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* that the historian al-Balādhurī (d. ca. 279/892) quotes the following verses by Ḍirār. In them, the poet speaks of an alliance between Qurashī clans and the Banū ‘Abs:<sup>343</sup>

[DK03 *rajaz*]

قَرَّبَ بَنِي فِيهِرٍ وَقَرَّبَ عَبَسَا . 1  
 قَوْمًا تَرَاهُمْ لِلِقَاءِ تَعَسَا . 2  
 لَا يُسَامُونَ بِالرَّمَا حِ الدَّعَسَا . 3

1. Bring the Banū Fihr and bring the ‘Abs
2. To a people whom you see miserable before a fight
3. [Since] with regard to the piercing lances one cannot compete with them.<sup>344</sup>

Jāhiliyya to Islam’, 81. “The *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* used to raid and assault” (*kānat Quraysh al-Zawāhiri tughīru wa-taḡhzū*; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:622. See also al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 11:53.

<sup>340</sup> al-Jumāhī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:250–51.

<sup>341</sup> al-‘Iṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 1:206; Kister, ‘Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam’, 81; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 9.

<sup>342</sup> Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka*, 1994, 5:150. Al-Balādhurī mentions two different, minor, groups that “entered” the centre of the town and were counted among the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ*, although the circumstances in which it happened are omitted; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 11:53–54.

<sup>343</sup> al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 11:59. The poem is not found in Ḍirār’s *dīwān*.

The short poem is not so much in praise of one group as it is an insult against another; an unnamed enemy, scared even before the attack happens (v.2). Because of the plural form of the verb in v.3 and because of the positive content of that verse it seems plausible to interpret it as a characterisation of the Fihr and the ‘Abs (v.1), to whom the enemy of v.2 (sg.) cannot compare in fierceness or who are not hurt in the fight, if we follow an alternative reading of the verb (see footnote 344).

The group of the poet is identified as the Fihr and the ‘Abs (v.1). As an ancestor of the Quraysh, the name Fihr was sometimes used to refer to the Qurashī tribe as a whole.<sup>345</sup> Coming from ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, it is probable that “Fihr” refers here to the three clans Muḥārib b. Fihr, Ma‘īṣ b. ‘Āmir b. Lu‘ayy, and al-Adram b. Ghālib, for at the time, we are told, they constituted an alliance “until this day, and are called *Banū Fihr*”.<sup>346</sup> In any case, ʿDirār might have been pleased with the ambiguity of the name Fihr. In DK02 v.1 ʿDirār played with the meaning of *Muḥārib* to stress his clan’s willingness and ability to fight; perhaps now he used the ambiguity of *Fihr* to emphasise the claim to power of his clan—and its allies—within the Quraysh. The identity of the second group, the Banū ‘Abs, may be the tribe by that name, part of the Ghaṭafān; their relation to the Fihr is not entirely clear (v.1).<sup>347</sup>

The identity of the opponent ʿDirār alludes to is unclear. As a short, improvised poem, for which the *rajaz* metre was common in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times, the poem probably was an immediate response to an event.<sup>348</sup> Perhaps some verses were lost, but even as it stands ʿDirār’s audience may have been able to identify the enemy if they knew the event to which it referred. We may assume that the opponents were non-Qurashī groups or individuals, since the *Quraysh al-*

---

<sup>344</sup> The metre of this verse is incorrect. Perhaps we can read: *lā yas’amūna bi-l-rimāḥi l-da’sā*, “They never tire of piercing with lances”.

<sup>345</sup> Watt, ‘Quraysh’. Perhaps this is the case in DK15 v.4, see below.

<sup>346</sup> The *Banū Fihr* alliance seems to have broken apart at some point, and the name *Banū Fihr* came to refer to an alliance of the Muḥārib b. Fihr, ‘Abd b. Ma‘īṣ, and Taym b. Ghālib; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 272–73.

<sup>347</sup> In the context of this poem, al-Balādhurī speaks of “an alliance” (*ba‘d al-ḥilf*) between the ‘Abs and the Fihr “concerning [the trade from?] Yemen” (*‘alā l-Yaman*), but he does not offer further details. Whether he bases this relationship on the poem by ʿDirār or whether he possessed additional information corroborating this relationship is unclear. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 11:59.

<sup>348</sup> Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 20, 23. See also D. Frolov, ‘The Place of Rajaz in the History of Arabic Verse’, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28, no. 3 (1997): 242–90; Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse*.

*Zawāhir* maintained close relations with their kin and there is no mention of them attacking fellow Qurashī clans.<sup>349</sup>

The poems DK02 and DK03 can be read as claims to prominence of Ḍirār's clan among his tribe, an assertion of the fierceness and independence of the Muḥārib b. Fihir in spite of their relegation to the outskirts of the town. Without explicitly speaking of a noble lineage and the ties of blood that bind them, he speaks of his group as descendants of one ancestor (DK02 v.1, "We are the sons of Endless War [...] we are the [Banū] Muḥārib"). This group and their allies are powerful and independent, feared by the enemy. The two poems may be understood as poetical statements against the status quo, that is, against the predominance of the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ* and their control of the cultic and political institutions within Mecca.

The fact that the clans of the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* had been relegated to a secondary plane in Mecca by the more powerful and numerous clans of the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ* did not entail automatically that these minor clans shared a sense of solidarity among each other, as we will see in the poem that follows. The verses by Ḍirār are directed against the Qurashī brothers Ḥajar and Ḥujayr b. 'Abd b. Ma'īṣ and their descendants. These Banū Ma'īṣ belonged to the clan of the 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy,<sup>350</sup> a clan from the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir*. Like the Muḥārib b. Fihir, the 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy did not belong to either the *Ahlāf* or the *Muṭayyabūn* faction. The two clans belonged to an alliance known as *Banū Fihir*,<sup>351</sup> and in addition they had agreed to cooperate and were known as the *Ajrabān* (the two with scabies).<sup>352</sup> This name was given to them, we are told, because they were known to hurt anyone who would attack or resist them, "much as a man with scabies infects all with whom he comes into contact".<sup>353</sup> In spite of these commonalities and alliances, something must have come in between the Banū Ma'īṣ and Ḍirār, for he composed the following poem

<sup>349</sup> al-'Iṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 1:206; Kister, 'Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam', 81; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 9.

<sup>350</sup> Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821), *Ġamharat An-Nasab: Das Genealogische Werk des Hiṣām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī*, ed. Werner Caskel and Gert Strenziok, vol. 1, 2 vols (Leiden: Brill, 1966) table 27.

<sup>351</sup> Together with the Banū al-Adram b. Ghālib or the Taym b. Ghālib, see section Allegiance in Mecca.

<sup>352</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 272–73; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 4, 27–8.

<sup>353</sup> Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:68. Cf. al-'Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 5:48; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 9, 94. Al-'Iṣāmī speaks of the Banū Baghid b. 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy as the group allied with the Muḥārib b. Fihir, but this must be a misspelling of Ma'īṣ; cf. al-'Iṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 1:206. For similar reasons of fierceness an alliance between the 'Abs and Dhubyān was also known as *al-Ajrabān*; see 5. Al-Ḥuṭay'a and N.A. Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a bi-Sharḥ Ibn Sikkī wa-l-Sukkari wa-l-Sijstāni* (Cairo, 1958), 60 nr. 16 v.2.

against Ḥajar and Ḥujayr and their descendants, that is, a minor group within the minor clan of the ‘Āmir b. Lu‘ayy.<sup>354</sup>

[DK04 *basīf*]

1. أَنْبِيتُ أَنَّ غَوَاةً مِنْ بَنِي حَجْرٍ - وَ مِنْ حُجَيْرٍ بِلَا ذَنْبٍ أَرَاغُونِي .1
2. أَعْنُوا بَنِي حَجْرٍ عَنِّي غَوَاتِكُمْ - وَيَا حُجَيْرِ إِلَيْكُمْ لَا تَبْرُونِي .2
3. لَا تَحْمِلُونِي عَلَى خَدْبَاءَ عَارِيَةٍ - فَأَرْكَبَ الشَّرَّ إِنِّي غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ .3

1. I was informed that erring men from the Banū Ḥajar and from Ḥujayr sought me [to destroy me], without any misdeed [from my side]<sup>355</sup>
2. Avert your erring men from me, Banū Ḥajar; Ḥujayr, keep to yourself, don't you test me<sup>356</sup>
3. Don't carry me off on an unsaddled, wild animal,<sup>357</sup> or else I'll do mischief; you will not be safe from me.<sup>358</sup>

The group of opponents addressed by Ḍirār in the poem must have constituted a small group, but in his eyes this does not excuse them (v.1). Although he speaks of an attack of a group against him alone (v.1), his tone is not that of fear. Rather, he challenges the opponents to test his determination (v.2). The enemies might attack or seek to humble him but he will not be subjugated (v.3).

The precise circumstances in which Ḍirār composed these lines against Ḥajar and Ḥujayr are unclear, and we do not know how they—or their offspring—had wronged him.<sup>359</sup> Perhaps the Banū Ma‘īṣ in one way or the other had threatened to put an end to the alliance of the *Banū Fihr* or the *Ajrabān*,<sup>360</sup> or perhaps it was a more personal feud between them and the poet. The end of v.3 can be understood as Ḍirār unbinding the alliance that had tied him to Ḥajar and Ḥujayr and the Banū Ma‘īṣ. Presupposing a previous attack or offence committed against him or his group (v.1), the poet does not feel obliged to keep his side of the bargain and threatens them.

<sup>354</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 94 nr. 27; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 430–31.

<sup>355</sup> Variant: *unbi'tu* (“I was informed”).

<sup>356</sup> Variant: *lā tuwarrūni* (“don't you trick me”).

<sup>357</sup> al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 431. Variant: *alā jarbā'a 'ariyatīn* (“like she-camel affected with scabies”); a reference to their common nickname *Ajrabān*.

<sup>358</sup> Variant: *fa-arkaba l-sharra ilā ghayri ma'mūni* (“I will do wrong to those who will not be safe from it”).

<sup>359</sup> See the hypothesis below, footnote 401: this poem against the Qurashī men Ḥajar and Ḥujayr or their offspring may be related to a conflict between the Quraysh and the Banū Jadhīma.

<sup>360</sup> As the Banū Ma‘īṣ did with their alliance with the Banū ‘Adī b. ‘Amr. Ibn Ḥabīb states that the alliance between the Banū Ma‘īṣ, the Banū Taym b. Ghālib, and the Muḥārib b. Fihr was firm, and that “until this day” they are known as Banū Fihr; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 272–73.

In the sources available I have not found any reply—poetical or military—to this poem by the insulted individuals or group. When the poet Ibn al-Ziba‘rā composed a reviling poem against a section of the Quraysh (Z02), different Qurashī clans quickly responded by isolating Ibn al-Ziba‘rā and thus avoiding an intratribal conflict. In this case, it seems that the Quraysh as a whole did not take any steps against Ḍirār. This is not entirely surprising: contrary to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s insult against a prominent Qurashī group, Ḍirār’s poem was an insult against a minor group within a minor clan relegated to the outskirts of the town and would hardly have posed a threat to the stability and prosperity of the tribe.

### 3.1.2 Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his tribe

Ḍirār’s proud declarations on his clan and its allies (DK02, DK03) and about himself against an enemy group from within the Quraysh (DK04) did not lead to a rupture of the ties that bound him to the Quraysh, nor did his poetical statements against the status quo entail a complete rejection of the division of power and authority as he knew it. Hence, in his corpus we find poems in praise of individuals from other Qurashī groups or the Qurashī tribe as a whole. The following verses, for example, are directed at the Qurashī brothers Zuhayr and Hāshim, sons of al-Ḥārith b. Asad b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā:<sup>361</sup>

[DK05 *basīf*]

- لِهَاشِمٍ وَزُهَيْرٍ فَرْعٌ مَكْرَمَةٌ - بِحَيْثُ لَاحَتْ نُجُومُ الْفَرْغِ وَالْأَسَدِ . 1  
 مُجَاوِرُ الْبَيْتِ ذِي الْأَرْكَانِ بَيْنَهُمَا - مَا دُونَهُ فِي جِوَارِ الْبَيْتِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ . 2

1. Truly, Hāshim and Zuhayr are the highest of generosity when the stars of Fargh and Asad shine<sup>362</sup>
2. Their house neighbours on the House of the Corners – besides it there is none neighbouring the House.

<sup>361</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 57 nr. 7; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 212; al-Zubayr Ibn Bakkār (d. 870), *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh wa-Akhhāruhā*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr (Cairo: Dār al-‘Urūbah, 1962), 441.

<sup>362</sup> *Fargh*: name for two of the Mansions of the Moon (*al-Farghān*: *al-Fargh al-Awwal* and *al-Fargh al-Thānī*), four stars wide apart, forming the corners of a square, each consisting of two (bright) stars from the constellations Pegasus and Andromeda. It may also refer to Orion (*al-Jawzā’*). *Asad*: the constellation Leo or the star Cor Leonis or Regulus. On the Arabian peninsula, these stars are best seen in winter. Lane s.v. *f-r-gh*; <sup>2</sup>-s-d.



Ḍirār compares the generosity of these two men to the light of the brightest of stars in winter. Generosity in the hardship of winter is a trait often used in pre-Islamic and *mukhadram* poetry to praise an individual or group.<sup>363</sup> As in other poems (see DK02, DK03), Ḍirār plays with the meaning of the name of the group he refers to, in this case the Banū Asad b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā: *asad* (or *asad*, “lion”) is the name of the constellation Leo or of the star Regulus from this constellation.<sup>364</sup>

The “house” of Asad b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā lay next to the Ka‘ba, we are told: “The Ka‘ba gave it shadow in the morning, and it gave shadow to the Ka‘ba in the evening”.<sup>365</sup> Besides the meaning “to neighbour, to live near sb.”, the root *j-w-r* also bears the connotation of protection. The fact that the “house” of Asad lies so close to the Ka‘ba speaks of the prominence of the group in Mecca, but Ḍirār’s audience may have understood it also as an implicit reference to the duty that derives from such a position and proximity: protecting the Ka‘ba. As the centre of pilgrimage of the town, protecting the Ka‘ba would also entail protecting Mecca and its inhabitants as a whole.

In another short poem Ḍirār praises this same Zuhayr b. al-Ḥārith b. Asad:<sup>366</sup>

[DK06 *basīf*]

- .1 مَا ضُمِّنَ الْحِجْرُ مِمَّنْ قَدْ مَضَى أَحَدٌ – مِّنَ الْبَرِيَّةِ لَا فُضِّحَ وَلَا عَجِمَ
- .2 بَعْدَ ابْنِ آجَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ فَضَّلَهُ – إِلَّا زُهَيْرًا لَهُ التَّفْضِيلُ وَالكَرَمُ

1. The *Ḥijr* does not contain anyone from the past, any creature, well-spoken or barbarians,<sup>367</sup>
2. Besides Ibn Ājar,<sup>368</sup> because God distinguished him, except for Zuhayr – to him belong excellence and nobility.

The “Ḥijr” (v.1) is an area or enclosure within the sacred precinct of Mecca, next to the Ka‘ba and with a certain cultic function.<sup>369</sup> According to Ḍirār, this sacred area only contains the remains of “the son of Ājar” and Zuhayr b. al-Ḥārith. *Ājar* (v.2) must be *Hājar*, that is, Hagar, the slave-woman

<sup>363</sup> See Z03 v.7 Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 78, 92.

<sup>364</sup> Lane, s.v. *a-s-d*.

<sup>365</sup> Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh*, 441.

<sup>366</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 86 nr. 21; Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh*, 442–43.

<sup>367</sup> That is, “non-Arabs or Arabs”. On the use of the opposition *fushh-‘ajam* in this poem and a discussion of its meaning, see below, Excursus - The ‘*ajam* and the ‘*arab*.

<sup>368</sup> Or: after the death of Ibn Ājar.

<sup>369</sup> Uri Rubin, ‘The Ka‘ba: Aspects of Its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 314ff.

owned by Abraham's wife Sara who bore him Ishmael. In accordance with Ḍirār's words, in Muslim tradition the Ḥijr is the place where Ishmael was buried.<sup>370</sup> In at least one source it is said that Zuhayr b. al-Ḥārith b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Quṣayy was (also) buried there.<sup>371</sup> Zuhayr's date of birth and death are unknown, but he must have lived around the time of Muḥammad: he is from the same generation as his cousins Khadija bt. Khuwaylid b. Asad, who would become the first wife of Muḥammad, and the Christian Waraqa b. Nawfal b. Asad, whom Muḥammad is said to have consulted after his first divine revelation.<sup>372</sup> In Ḍirār's eyes, the fact that Zuhayr is buried in the Ḥijr is an obvious sign of his rank, not only among the Quraysh but among all creatures (v.1). The poem is directed at Zuhayr (v.2), but indirectly it is in praise of the Quraysh as a whole, for it speaks of the prominence, the sanctity, and the long history of the town.

What is interesting about the poems DK05 and DK06 is that, while in the compositions DK02 and DK03 Ḍirār distinguished his clan (and its allies) from the rest of the Quraysh and seemed to campaign against the predominance of the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ* within Mecca, here there is no sign of such an attempt to change the status quo. The men praised in DK05 and DK06 live (and are buried, in the case of Zuhayr) in the nearness of the Ka'ba, and in the poems this trait is presented as a sign of their nobility. In these two compositions there is no trace of resentment from the side of Ḍirār—or the *Quraysh al-Zawāhīr* as a whole—against the *Quraysh al-Biṭāḥ*.

### *Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the Yawm 'Ukāz*

Not only did Ḍirār use his poems to defend and praise the Quraysh and Qurashi individuals, he also fought in defence of his tribe in several battles. He participated in the pre-Islamic *Ḥarb al-Fijār*, a long conflict between, on the one hand, the Kināna and the Quraysh, and, on the other, the Qays 'Aylān (without the Ghaṭafān). Ḍirār is said to have been one of the leaders of the *Quraysh al-Zawāhīr* in this conflict.<sup>373</sup>

<sup>370</sup> Rubin, 325–27; R. Paret, 'Ismā'īl', *EI2*, 4:184–85.

<sup>371</sup> Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh*, 442–43.

<sup>372</sup> al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 334; Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh*, 411; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:191ff.; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 19. In addition, a grandson of Zuhayr is mentioned among the Qurashi victims of Uḥud (3/625); Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:128.

<sup>373</sup> See footnote 312.

Ḍirār composed at least one poem on the *Ḥarb al-Fijār*, specifically on the battle of *Yawm Ukāz* (the Day of ‘Ukāz), also known as *Yawm Sharib* (the Day of Sharib).<sup>374</sup>

[DK07 *mutaqārib*]

1. أَلَمْ تَسْأَلِ النَّاسَ عَن شَأْنِنَا - وَلَمْ يُثْبِتِ الْأَمْرَ كَالْخَايِرِ .1
2. غَدَاةَ عُكَاظٍ إِذَا اسْتُكْمِلَتْ - هَوَازِنُ فِي كَفِّهَا الْحَاضِرِ .2
3. وَجَاءَتْ سُلَيْمٌ تَهْزُ الْقَنَا - عَلَى كُلِّ سَلْهَبَةٍ ضَاوِرِ .3
4. وَجِئْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ عَلَى الْمُضْمَرَاتِ - بِأَرْعَنَ ذِي لَجَبٍ زَاخِرِ .4
5. فَلَمَّا التَّقِينَا أَذَقْنَاهُمْ - طِعَانًا بِسُمِّرِ الْقَنَا الْعَاثِرِ .5
6. فَعَرَّتْ سُلَيْمٌ وَلَمْ يَصْبِرُوا - وَطَارَتْ شُعَاعًا بَنُو عَامِرِ .6
7. وَفَرَّتْ ثَقِيفٌ إِلَى لَاتِيهَا - بِمُنْقَلَبِ الْخَائِبِ الْخَايِرِ .7
8. وَقَاتَلَتْ الْعَنْسُ شَطْرَ النَّهَا - رِثْمٌ تَوَلَّتْ مَعَ الصَّادِرِ .8
9. عَلَى أَنَّ دُهُمَانَهَا حَافِظَتْ - أَحْيِرًا لَدَى دَارَةِ الدَّائِرِ .9

1. Didn't you ask the people about what occupies our mind? And no one can confirm what happened except one who has experienced it<sup>375</sup>
2. On the morning of ‘Ukāz, when the Hawāzin, all of them, were prepared, with all their manpower available?<sup>376</sup>
3. The Sulaym came brandishing their spears, each of them on a strong, slender [horse]<sup>377</sup>
4. We came to them on slender ones, in a large [army], shouting loud war cries
5. When we met we made them taste the piercing with the blindingly reddish spears<sup>378</sup>

<sup>374</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 63–64 nr. 10; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 22:50; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 11:58 vv.1-2,5-7.

<sup>375</sup> Variant: *wa-mā jāhīlu l-amri ka-l-khābiri* (“the one ignorant of the affair is not like the informed one”).

<sup>376</sup> Variant: *wa-qad ajfalat / Hawāzinu fī laffihā l-ḥādir* (“Hawāzin fled quickly, in their turning ready”).

For the genealogies of Hawāzin and the other groups mentioned in these verses, see Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 92ff.

<sup>377</sup> These must be the Sulaym b. Maṣṣūr b. ‘Ikrima, brothers of the Hawāzin b. Maṣṣūr b. ‘Ikrima, from the Qays ‘Aylān. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 13:301; Abū Muḥammad ‘Alī b. Aḥmad Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), *Jamharat Ansāb al-‘Arab*, ed. Commission of scholars (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1983), 264, 468.

<sup>378</sup> Variant: *bi-simmi l-qanā l-‘ātiri* (“with the vehemently striking [or: the calamity, the hardness] of the slaughtering spears”).

“To taste the spears” (or variants of this phrase) is a common expression in pre-Islamic poetry. The (second) direct object *ṭa‘ānan* (“piercing, thrust”) next to *adhqanāhumu* (“we made them taste”) differs only in its last root letter from the substantive *ṭa‘ām* (“food”), thus playing with the meaning of the verb.

6. The Sulaym acted heedlessly and did not hold fast, and the Banū ‘Āmir fled in all directions<sup>379</sup>
7. Thaḳīf then fled to their goddess, walking like a disappointed loser<sup>380</sup>
8. And al-‘Ans fought half of the day, then they turned and fled with the one who had left [before them]<sup>381</sup>
9. While the Duhmān held fast as the last ones to the destruction that came [to them].<sup>382</sup>

Although he was one of the Qurashī leaders at the *Yawm Ukāz*, in this poem Ḍirār does not boast of his own merits and heroism. In fact, he does not mention any particular individual or Qurashī clan, nor does he explicitly state that in the war the Quraysh fought alongside their allies of Kināna—the same group the *Quraysh al-Zawāhir* raided at least once, led by Ḍirār himself. Instead, he speaks consistently of one group (“we, us”). In contrast, the enemy is presented as deeply divided: throughout the nine verses Ḍirār refers by name to six different tribal groupings. However, and similarly to him not distinguishing individual achievements among his group, he does not mention individual failures among the enemy lines. His aim seems to be to contrast the closed ranks of his group to the disorganised troops of the enemy. Except for their lineage, the individual identities are not important: they either belong to the group of the poet or to one of the various groups of the enemy.

The poem opens with a rather conventional phrase, a fictional dialogue (v.1): an unnamed individual is pressed to gather information on the battle that has taken place.<sup>383</sup> Through such an introductory formula the poet sets the expectations for the audience, preparing them for verses on a past event. In the first place it is a poem intended for a Qurashī audience of Ḍirār’s time to remember and celebrate their victory. For what we know of the function of the pre-Islamic and

---

The root *s-m-r* has different meanings, among them a reddish or brownish colour (here: reddish from blood or “tawny” in the sense of “experienced, much-used”). The verb *samara* (*‘aynah*) also means “to blind (one’s eye)”, coming close to the meaning of the active participle *‘ā’ir*, “blinding”.

<sup>379</sup> Variant: *fa-farrat Sulaymun* (“Sulaym fled”).

Banū ‘Āmir: perhaps the Banū ‘Āmir b. ‘Ikrima, cousins of the Hawāzin and Sulaym, or (more probably) the ‘Āmir b. Ṣa’sa’a, a powerful subgroup of the Hawāzin.

<sup>380</sup> Variant: *wa-farrat Thaḳīfun wa-ashyā’uhā* (“Thaḳīf and their followers fled”).

Thaḳīf: Thaḳīf b. Munabbih b. Bakr b. Hawāzin.

<sup>381</sup> The identity of the al-‘Ans is unclear; it probably is a subgroup of the Hawāzin.

<sup>382</sup> Probably the Duhmān b. Naṣr b. Mu’āwiya, from the Hawāzin; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġanharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 92, 115. According to a report in the *Aghānī*, the Duhmān were the last group to be put to flight; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 22:48–49.

<sup>383</sup> For similar conventional openings in which one or two anonymous individuals are told to pass on certain information, see Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:64–67.

*mukhadram* poet as knower and transmitter,<sup>384</sup> however, it would also serve the purpose of preserving the memory of the Qurashī victory for the generations to come.

As is common in pre-Islamic and *mukhadram* poetry, ʿDirār does not pay attention to the details leading up to the war nor to its course. It is not an epic poem but a short composition in which the poet, seemingly with the emotions still boiling, boasts of the victory of his people.<sup>385</sup> He describes the course of the battle in general terms. On the “morning of ‘Ukāz” (v.2) his group met the Hawāzin and the Sulaym, two large groups of the Qays ‘Aylān confederation, all prepared for battle (vv.2-3). Under the attack of ʿDirār’s unified group (vv.4-5), the order and readiness among the enemy lines (vv.2-3) gives way to chaos (vv.6-8). Interesting is ʿDirār’s treatment of the reactions of the enemy groups. Different tribes of the Qays ‘Aylān had united against the Kināna and the Quraysh, but under the pressure of the battle the different groups apparently started to take decisions on their own, whether or not led by their own tribal leader(s) (vv.6-9). The purpose of ʿDirār is not so much to distinguish one enemy group over the other, since in the end they all fled. Rather, the different reactions of the groups emphasise the chaos and division among them, in stark contrast to the unity among ʿDirār’s group.

Special attention may deserve v.7. We are told that the people of Thaḳīf were forced to flee, returning to their deity as a failed and disappointed group. In ʿDirār’s time, part of the Thaḳīf had settled in the town of al-Ṭāʿif, to the south-east of Mecca. This was the place of worship of al-Lāt, a pre-Islamic divinity venerated by the Thaḳīf and other tribes. The fact that ʿDirār speaks of *lātihā* and not of *al-Lāti* leaves room for two reading possibilities: “their goddess” without further specifying her identity, or “their al-Lāt”. In both cases the audience must have understood the reference, for the relation between the Thaḳīf, al-Ṭāʿif and al-Lāt was generally known.

We could be inclined to read v.7 as a condemnation of the idolatry of the Thaḳīf; a scorning comment on their goddess, who failed to deliver them from the defeat. However, even though we hear of idols and sacred stones being revered in pre-Islamic times, we rarely hear of the role these gods or spirits played in the daily life or afterlife of the people that venerated them.<sup>386</sup> If ʿDirār

---

<sup>384</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *unma*.

<sup>385</sup> Cf. Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:22, 161–62.

<sup>386</sup> Hawting, *The Idea of Idolatry*, 28–29. Contrary to for example Dozy and Goldziher, Hawting does not think that this absence of religious sense can be explained through the circumstances of the poets, like the continuous struggle for survival, and their great interest in worldly matters like fighting, hunting and drinking; cf. R.P.A. Dozy, *Geschichte der Mauren in Spanien Bis Zur Eroberung Andalusiens Durch Die*

intended to mock al-Lāt as an ineffective, false deity we would expect him to contrast her with another deity or group of deities, but that does not happen. In addition, al-Lāt was also revered in Mecca, and Ḍirār does not take a stand in any of his poems, neither in those prior nor in those after his conversion to Islam, against idol worship. All in all, it seems that we can understand this flight of Thaḳīf to “their goddess” simply as a shameful return to their place of settlement, al-Ṭā’if.

It is noteworthy that in *Ansāb al-Ashrāf* there is a variant reading of v.7 in which the reference to al-Lāt is omitted: *wa-farrat Thaḳīfun wa-ashyā’uhā* (“Thaḳīf and their followers fled ...”).<sup>387</sup> It probably goes too far to render a special significance to this omission in v.7 as a deliberate removal of the name of a pre-Islamic goddess, for we do find references to al-Lāt and other pre-Islamic deities throughout the *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, both in prose as well as in poetry. In addition, the rendering of DK07 in al-Balādhuri’s work presents many variants across the verses in comparison to the version in Aslīm b. Aḥmad’s *dīwān* edition.<sup>388</sup>

While the poems DK02 and DK03 can be read as poetical statements by Ḍirār against the division of power within the Quraysh, a division in which his clan the Muḥārib b. Fihri was on the weaker side, in the poems DK05, DK06, and DK07 we see that his discourse on his kin was not fully permeated with discontentment. In DK07 there is no sign of inner division or inner conflicts within the Quraysh. While the enemy is deeply divided, the Quraysh fight as one. Although implicit, we may distinguish here an entanglement of the discursive strands on allegiance and authority: weakened and scattered, the enemy has to acknowledge the superiority of the Quraysh.

### *The Quraysh and the affair of the Banū Jadhīma*

Had Ḍirār praised the Quraysh in the aftermath of a tribal war (DK07), in the poem that follows and the account in which it is traditionally embedded we gain yet another perspective into the reality of tribal life in Ḍirār’s time. The unity of the Quraysh as proudly expressed in DK07 is nowhere to be found, and in vain does Ḍirār call his tribe to strength and determination in defending their shared honour and in protecting their position among the other tribes. Again, we see how the discourses on allegiance and authority are entangled.

*Almoraviden* (711-110), German translation, vol. 1 (Leipzig: Fr. Wilh. Grunow, 1874), 15; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:12.

<sup>387</sup> al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 11:58.

<sup>388</sup> al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 12:156.

There are two slightly different accounts of this conflict in which the Quraysh were involved in pre-Islamic times. In the *Aghānī* we are told that a Qurashī caravan travelling from Yemen back to Mecca came to the waters of the Banū ‘Āmir b. ‘Abd Manāt b. Kināna, close to Mecca. The Banū ‘Āmir, or their subgroup Jadhīma b. ‘Āmir b. ‘Abd Manāt, had an unresolved conflict with a man from a group indicated as Banū Fahm (not further specified), and inquired whether the Fahmī was among the group of Qurashī traders. In spite of the negative answer of the Quraysh, when the Jadhīma searched the caravan they found the Fahmī hiding among the luggage. Not content with killing him, they also killed several Qurashīs, wounded some others, and robbed them. We are told that the Qurashī men killed by the Jadhīma were ‘Affān b. Abī al-‘Āṣī from the Banū Umayya, ‘Awf b. ‘Abd ‘Awf from the Banū Zuhra, al-Fākīh b. al-Mughīra, and al-Fākīh b. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, the latter two from the Banū Makhzūm.<sup>389</sup>

In the *Munammaq* by Ibn Ḥabīb, the context of the account is slightly different, although the outcome is the same. According to Ibn Ḥabīb, the Qurashī caravan had been entrusted an inheritance of a deceased man from the Banū Jadhīma who had died in Yemen. Before the Qurashīs were able to hand his inheritance to his relatives, they were attacked and robbed by men from the same group as the deceased, the Banū Jadhīma, leaving one casualty on the side of the Quraysh.<sup>390</sup>

The Quraysh wanted vengeance for the slain, but were refrained from it by the Banū al-Ḥārith b. ‘Abd Manāt b. Kināna. The Banū al-Ḥārith were relatives of the Jadhīma and allies of the Quraysh: they belonged to the *Aḥābīsh Quraysh*.<sup>391</sup> By siding with their relatives over their allies in the resolution of the conflict, the Banū al-Ḥārith “gave preference to the tribal ‘spirit of kinship’ (*al-‘aṣabiyya al-qabaliyya*) over the ‘covenant of clientship’ (*al-ḥilf*)”.<sup>392</sup> Although his clan had not been directly affected by the attack of the Jadhīma, Ḍirār added his voice to those who wanted

---

<sup>389</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 7:217–18; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 54.

<sup>390</sup> According to Ibn Ḥabīb, ‘Affān and his son ‘Uthmān were able to escape, while he mentions only one dead, namely al-Fākīh, the son of al-Mughīra; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 207–8.

<sup>391</sup> This account substantiates the interpretation of the *Aḥābīsh Quraysh* as military aids and allies of the Quraysh, not a military unit composed of the black slaves of the Quraysh, as Lammers understood it; see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>392</sup> F. Aslim, in Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 54 n. 2. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 208; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 264.

vengeance. When he understood that the Quraysh wanted to settle for peace, he composed the following poem, calling his people to take vengeance instead.<sup>393</sup>

[DKo8 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَرَى ابْنَيْ لُؤَيٍّ أَوْشَكَ أَنْ يُسَالِمَا – وَقَدْ سَلَكَتْ أُنْبَاؤُهُمْ كُلَّ مَسَلِكِ .1  
 2. فَيَا ابْنَيْ لُؤَيٍّ، إِنَّمَا يَمْنَعُ الْحَنَّا – أَوْلُو الْعِرْضِ وَالْأَحْسَابِ وَالْمُتَمَسِّكِ .2  
 3. فَإِنَّ شَقَاءَ الظُّلْمِ مَا قَدْ جَمَعْتُمَا – وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ الْأَقْوَامَ بِالشَّرِّ يَبْرِكِ .3  
 4. فَإِنْ أَنْتُمْ لَمْ تَتَّارُوا بِرِجَالِكُمْ – فَذُكُّوا الَّذِي أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ بِمِدْوَكِ .4  
 5. أَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَّا الْجَارُ فِيكُمْ فَتَغَضُّبُوا – لِمَا نِيلَ مِنْ عِرْضٍ وَمَالٍ مُنْهَكِ .5

1. I see the two sons of Lu'ayy drawing near to peace – their sons have disbanded in every direction<sup>394</sup>
2. O sons of Lu'ayy, only the guardians of honour and nobility and firm determination will stop the foul language
3. Indeed, suffering from evil is what you both gathered – if someone guards himself with evil from the peoples he will be left alone
4. If you don't take vengeance for your men, then go and crush the perfume of the one to whom you should be a crushing stone
5. Indeed, was there among you no protector for us so that you would be angry for the defamed honour and the wasted property bestowed?<sup>395</sup>

As Aslīm b. Aḥmad indicates, in the *Ḥamāsa* of al-Buḥturī the poem is fittingly included in the section “What was said inciting to kill for blood vengeance” (*ḥimā qīla fī l-taḥrīd ‘alā al-qatl bi-l-tha’r*).<sup>396</sup> Indeed, the intention of the poem is unmistakable: Ḍirār blames the Quraysh for not seeking blood vengeance.

Lu'ayy b. Ghālib (v.1) had more than two sons; according to the editor of Ḍirār's *dīwān* the two intended here must be ‘Āmir and Ka'b.<sup>397</sup> This is plausible, since ‘Āmir, and especially Ka'b, were the progenitors of large factions within the Quraysh.<sup>398</sup> The men (or man, according to Ibn Ḥabīb) killed by the Jadhīma belonged to clans descending from Ka'b b. Lu'ayy. By speaking of “the

<sup>393</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 77–78 nr. 17; al-Buḥturī, *al-Ḥamāsa*, 29 nr. 116; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 7:217–18 vv. 1,4,3.

<sup>394</sup> Lu'ayy: the son of Ghālib b. Fihr, the ancestor of the Quraysh.

<sup>395</sup> Or: “was there not among you a *jār* (guest) from us”. The metre of the first hemistich is incorrect but could be amended by omitting *fa*.

<sup>396</sup> al-Buḥturī, *al-Ḥamāsa*, 29 nr. 116. Cf. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 77.

<sup>397</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 77 n. 1.

<sup>398</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ḡamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 4, 27.



two sons of Lu'ayy" and not, for example, of the "sons of Fihr", ʔirār is able to differentiate between the descendants of Lu'ayy b. Ghālib b. Fihr and the rest of the Quraysh, singling them out for their fear and lack of resolution. At the same time it excludes his clan from the invective: the Muḥārib b. Fihr did not descend from Lu'ayy b. Ghālib b. Fihr.

ʔirār reminds the sons of Lu'ayy of their high rank and the responsibilities that come with it in leading and protecting the tribe (v.2). Their failure to do so has led to error and confusion (v.1), further developed in the first part of v.3. In the second part of v.3 ʔirār presents the solution. All would agree on the topical wisdom that ʔirār adds: a tribe that stands up against other peoples or tribes (*aqwām*) that seek to wrong them will gain their respect and that of others (v.3). Not doing anything to avenge their dead, ʔirār implies, will not only mean a stain on the honour of the Quraysh but also present them as an easy prey for their (future) enemies.<sup>399</sup>

The image ʔirār uses in v.4 perhaps needs some explanation. Among the Quraysh, and presumably among other tribes as well, pounding or grinding aromatics to make perfume was a women's job.<sup>400</sup> Mockingly, ʔirār tells his people that, if they do not avenge their dead, they could just go and serve their enemies humbly. Instead of harming the enemy like a bruising stone, they would be like women bruising perfume.

The poem ends with a repetition of the ideas expressed in vv.2-3: the "sons of Lu'ayy" should remember and live up to their responsibilities as members of the Quraysh (v.5), to prevent further disorder (v.1), blame (v.2), and evil (vv.3,5).<sup>401</sup>

The poem by ʔirār offers no further clues in favour of one of the two versions on the conflict mentioned above. It is possible that ʔirār composed it in the aftermath of the event.

<sup>399</sup> In an anecdote dated around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century and recorded by Ibn Ḥabīb we find a similar statement. 'Utba b. Rabī'a b. 'Abd al-Shams, at the time leader of the 'Abd Manāf, agreed to support the Qurashī clan of the Banū 'Adī in seeking blood vengeance for an attack they had suffered. He reportedly told the Quraysh: "If you forsake something like this from among you, the Arabs won't stop killing men from among you and get away with it"; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 129–30. ʔirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 77 n. 3.

<sup>400</sup> ʔirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 77 n. 4. See *Tāj al-'Arūs* s.v. *d-w-k*.

<sup>401</sup> Perhaps the poem DK04 is also to be understood in the aftermath of this attack of the Banū Jadhīma against the Quraysh. Ḥajar and Ḥujayr, reviled in DK04, were related to the Banū 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna: their mother was a woman from their subgroup Banū Murra b. 'Abd Manāt (Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821), *Jamharat al-Nasab*, ed. Maḥmūd Fardūs al-'Aẓm, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqẓā al-'Arabiyya, 1939), 164.) In addition, Ḥujayr was married to a woman from the Banū al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna (al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 431). Perhaps Ḥajar and Ḥujayr or their offspring attempted to have ʔirār silenced, fearing that the Quraysh would listen to his call for blood revenge against their relatives of the non-Qurashī group of the 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna.

However, the tone of the composition seems to indicate that he composed it when the Quraysh had not yet settled the issue with the Banū Jadhīma. In spite of the harsh words, the poet is not driven by hatred or aversion towards his kin: he still hopes that the sons of Lu'ayy will come to their senses and remember their responsibilities towards their tribe. More than an invective, this poem reads as an urgent warning by a man troubled by the danger his tribe faces.

In another composition Ḍirār had praised his clan the Muḥārib b. Fihr as “the sons of Endless War” and similar terms (DKo2), but here he recognises the descendants of the Lu'ayy b. Ghālīb as the only ones strong enough to defend the tribe (v.5). This apparent contradiction may reveal the different purposes and contexts of the compositions. One might argue that, were the Banū Muḥārib b. Fihr as valiant and heroic as Ḍirār portrayed them (DKo2), they could well do without the “two sons of Lu'ayy” and defend the Qurashi honour on their own. However, DKo8 was composed in a context of conflict and a call for blood vengeance, a reminder of the responsibilities and duties of the “sons of Lu'ayy” towards the larger tribe.

Even if it was composed before the settlement, Ḍirār's poem made no difference: the Quraysh settled with the Banū Jadhīma. The latter claimed that they had had nothing to do with the killing of the Qurashīs but that it had been an individual action of some of their members. Nevertheless, they agreed to pay blood money and war was avoided.<sup>402</sup>

Ḍirār was not happy with the settlement between the Quraysh and the Banū Jadhīma (DKo8). He rebuked Khālid b. al-Ḥārith b. 'Ubayd (also known as Abū Qārīz) from the Banū al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna, a *ḥalīf* (client) of the Qurashi clan Banū Zuhra,<sup>403</sup> for the attitude of his clan towards their patron. In his eyes, by defending their kinsmen of the Banū Jadhīma the Āl Qārīz had betrayed the Quraysh. Ḍirār reproved Khālid and his people and told him: “Take *for us* our caravan and our blood, don't take *from us*!”<sup>404</sup> He composed the following lines against Khālid:<sup>405</sup>

<sup>402</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 142–43, 207–11.

<sup>403</sup> There is some disagreement regarding his name: Khālid b. 'Ubayd b. Jābir or Khālid b. 'Ubayda b. Suwayd; Ibn Ḥabīb, 239; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 264.

<sup>404</sup> The reply put in Khālid's mouth is rather enigmatic: *a'yunakum 'alayhim wa-lā a'yunahum 'alaykum* (lit.: “your eyes upon them and not their eyes upon you”). Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 208. Is Khālid stating: “I am as a spy among you for them, not a spy on them for you”? Or must we think in the direction of the phrase *alayhi mi'tun 'aynan*, “On him [is incumbent the payment of] a 100 *dinars*”, in which case we would take it as “Your *dinars* are incumbent upon them [for payment] etc.”, i.e., they have to pay you, you do not have to

[DK09 *mutaqārib*]

1. دَعَوْتُ إِلَى خُطَّةٍ خَالِدًا - مِنَ الْمَجْدِ ضَيَّعَهَا خَالِدٌ .1
2. فَوَاللَّهِ أَذْرِي أَضَاهَى بِهَا - بَنِي الْعَمِّ أَمَّ صَدْرُهُ بَارِدٌ .2
3. وَلَوْ خَالِدٌ عَادَ فِي مِثْلِهَا - لَتَابَعَهُ عُنُقٌ وَارِدٌ .3

1. I called Khālid to the affair of honour,<sup>406</sup> [but] Khālid neglected it
2. By God, I don't know if he was gentle towards them, his kin, or if his chest was cold<sup>407</sup>
3. If Khālid adopts again such a position [against us], it will be followed by a dangling neck.<sup>408</sup>

In plain words Ḍirār directs the accusation to Khālid. The poem is only three verses long, but Khālid's name is repeated no less than three times (vv.1,3), thus emphasising the identity of this man who has turned a deaf ear to the advice about the right course (v.1). In light of the account of Khālid's actions, v.2 is not so much a real question but rather an expression of Ḍirār's astonishment at Khālid's disloyalty towards the Quraysh, whose *ḥalīf* he was. Khālid clearly was more inclined towards his kin (*banū 'amm*, v.2) than towards the Quraysh, and Ḍirār threatens him: the next time Khālid will be humbled or perhaps even killed (v.3)—by the Quraysh, we may assume.

Had Ḍirār belonged to a powerful group or had he felt that others powerful enough shared his wish for vengeance and his anger at what he saw as treason from the side of Khālid, perhaps he would have killed him on the spot. Again, we see that the poems in praise of his clan and its allies (DK02, DK03) do not necessarily represent the true position and rank of the Banū Muḥārib b. Fih

---

pay them? Whether *'ayn* was already used in the sense of (golden) *dīnar* in Ḍirār's time is unclear. Lane, s.v. *'y-n*.

<sup>405</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 54–55 nr. 5; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 208 v.1; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 264 v.1; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 7:217. This part of the account, of the role of the Banū al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt, is omitted by Ibn Ḥabīb in another section of his book, cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 142–43.

<sup>406</sup> "I required Khālid to act upon this affair", i.e. to seek blood vengeance for the killed Qurashīs and to take back the robbed goods.

<sup>407</sup> I.e., "he was indifferent [towards us]".

<sup>408</sup> I.e., "he will die" or "he will be declared outlawed". *Unuq wārid*: the active participle *wārid* has to do with "coming to water". The comments to the poem in the *dīwān* and *Aghānī* explain its use here in the sense of *mutadallīn*, used among other things for a bucket lowered into the well, and from there also used in the sense of "humbled, abased". *Unuq wārid* is then a "dangling neck", cut off, or a "humbled neck", an image of submission.

among the Quraysh.<sup>409</sup> The last verse of DK09, in spite of the violent and confident language of the poem, is rather an empty threat and an anti-climax, as well as an expression of Ḍirār's frustration.

We must remember that the Quraysh and the Kināna, the tribe to which the Jadhīma belonged, were distant relatives and allies: they fought side by side in the pre-Islamic *Ḥarb al-Fijār* (DK07). Ḍirār protested against the peace settlement and called for vengeance (DK08), and rebuked Khālīd b. al-Ḥārith from the Banū al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt for their role in the whole (DK09). It is clear that kinship relations and alliances could complicate matters when they became entangled with offences that had to be avenged.<sup>410</sup> Khālīd's group, the Banū al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt, found themselves indeed in a difficult spot: as clients of the Quraysh they were supposed to side with them in matters of blood revenge and tribal conflicts. Now, however, the opponents of the Quraysh were their own relatives, the Jadhīma b. 'Āmir b. 'Abd Manāt. In Ḍirār's eyes, the alliance between the Quraysh and the Banū al-Ḥārith outweighed the ties of blood that bound them to the Banū Jadhīma, but Khālīd apparently did not share this view.<sup>411</sup>

This was not the end of the effects of the attack of the Banū Jadhīma against the Qurashī caravan. More tensions arose among the Quraysh because the Qurashī leader Hishām b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī ransomed men from his clan who had been taken captive by the Jadhīma, but did not ransom a captive from the clan 'Abd al-Dār.<sup>412</sup> Even in Muslim times its effects were still felt: we are told that after the conquest of Mecca (8/630), Khālīd b. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī was sent by Muḥammad to the Jadhīma to call them to Islam. However, and even

<sup>409</sup> See also the comments to DK08, where he presents the "two sons of Lu'ayy" as the only ones able to defend their tribe the Quraysh.

<sup>410</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>411</sup> It is difficult to say who was right in this case. Slaves and allies had the duty of defending their master or host, we read in 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 2001, 7:394. Landau-Tasseron, on the other hand, argues that the limits of the "co-liable group", that is, the group with a shared responsibility, are difficult to determine precisely, and could change from case to case; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 144–45. Chelhod mentions the possibility of an alliance of non-belligerence between two groups, which did not entail the obligation of jointly attacking an enemy; Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 381–82. However, the alliance between the Banū Zuhra and the Āl Qārīz must have been a "hosting alliance", in the words of Landau-Tasseron, an alliance between a weaker guest and a strong host, since they are said to have "entered" (*dakhala*) the Zuhra; Landau-Tasseron, 'Alliances among the Arabs', 152–53; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 230.

<sup>412</sup> The man in question composed an invective against Hishām; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 207–8; Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. 'Imrān al-Marzubānī, *Mu'jam al-Shu'arā'*, ed. F. Krenkow (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1982), 357; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-A'lām*, 15th ed., vol. 5 (Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 2002) v.1.

though they declared that they already were among the followers of Muḥammad, Khālid took the opportunity to kill a large number of their men in revenge for al-Fākih b. al-Mughīra.<sup>443</sup>

In short, we see that this attack of the Banū Jadhīma against a Qurashī caravan caused (a) a tribal conflict between the Banū ‘Āmir b. ‘Abd Manāt and the Quraysh, and (b) tensions between the Quraysh and a group of their clients. It also led to (c) a conflict between different Qurashī clans, and (d) it even had repercussions within the early community of followers of Muḥammad.

#### *The Quraysh and the affair of the Banū Daws*

At some point towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century or beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup>, the Quraysh became involved in a conflict with the Banū Daws b. ‘Udthān, from Azd Sarāt (or: Asd Sarāt), a group that lived to the south-east of al-Ṭā’if.<sup>444</sup>

As is often the case with tribal struggles in pre-Islamic and early Muslim times, the causes are rather obscure, involving many different individuals and groups. As the immediate spark that set the fire, however, is mentioned the killing of Abū Uzayhir al-Dawsī by the hands of the Qurashī Hishām b. al-Walīd. According to the sources, Hishām thus fulfilled a wish expressed by his father al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī on his deathbed,<sup>445</sup> but it almost led to a fight within the Quraysh. Abū Uzayhir al-Dawsī was a *ṣihr* (relative through his wife or daughter) of the Qurashī leader Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb of the Banū Umayya.<sup>446</sup> Reportedly Abū Sufyān’s son Yazīd gathered the faction of the *Muṭayyabūn* with the intention of attacking the Banū Makhzūm and avenge Abū Uzayhir. In a dramatic fashion we read in the *Munammaq* how Abū Sufyān—not in Mecca when

---

<sup>443</sup> Muḥammad saw himself forced to repair the damage inflicted by Khālid b. al-Walīd. He rebuked him, and we are told that he sent ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib to the Banū Jadhīma to pay blood money for their dead and to replace whatever goods they could have lost, “even a dog’s bowl”. At his return to Mecca, ‘Alī informed Muḥammad, who stood up, faced the *qibla*, raised his hands, and said up to three times: “God, I am innocent before Thee of what Khālid b. al-Walīd has done”. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:428–30; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:430–31, 875ff.; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 124, 209.

<sup>444</sup> al-Jumaḥī dates the event before the emergence of Islam, while in other accounts it seems to take place after its emergence, but before the conquest of Mecca by the Muslims (8/630). al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:251–52; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 199. According to al-Ya’qūbī, the Daws lived in the vicinity of Mecca; Aḥmad b. Abī Ya’qūb al-Ya’qūbī (d. 897?), *al-Buldān* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2001), 154.

<sup>445</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:413; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 434; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 199; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 3:393. On the conflict between Abū Uzayhir and al-Walīd, see for example: ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī* (Cairo, 1929), 74ff.; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 2:258–59.

<sup>446</sup> Or his *ḥalīf*, see Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 2:258.

his son summoned the *Muṭayyabūn*—arrived just in time to jump in between the two Qurashī groups ready to fight. Taking the banner from his son's hands, Abū Sufyān brought his kinsmen to their senses: why would they be willing to start a war within the Quraysh because of a Dawsī?<sup>417</sup> This question was all the more poignant at the time, for the Quraysh had a common enemy in Muḥammad and he, Abū Sufyān warned, would benefit from and gloat in the inner division of the Quraysh.<sup>418</sup>

This settled the matter for the Quraysh, but not for the kinsmen of Abū Uzayhir, who had been a prominent man among the Daws.<sup>419</sup> We are told that at some point Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and some men from his tribe came to the territory of the Daws, perhaps with a trade caravan. When the Daws heard of the Qurashī expedition they attempted to kill them in revenge for Abū Uzayhir.<sup>420</sup> Ḍirār was saved by a *mawlā(h)* (freedwoman) of the Daws, Umm Ghaylān, who offered him refuge as a protégé.<sup>421</sup> He composed the following poem in praise of her:<sup>422</sup>

[DK10 *ṭawīl*]

1. جَزَى اللَّهُ عَنَّا أُمَّ غَيْلَانَ صَالِحاً - وَنَسَوْتَهَا إِذْ هُنَّ شُعْتُ عَوَاطِلُ
2. يُرْخِزِحَنَ عَنِّي الْمَوْتَ بَعْدَ أَقْتِرَابِهِ - وَقَدْ بَرَزْتَ لِلثَّائِرِينَ الْمَقَاتِلُ
3. وَعَوْفًا جَزَاهُ اللَّهُ خَيْرًا فَمَا وَنَى - وَمَا بَرَدَتْ مِنْهُ لَدَيَّ الْمَفَاصِلُ
4. دَعَا دَعْوَةَ دَوْسًا فَسَالَتْ شِعَابُهَا - بُعْرٌ وَلَمَّا يَبْدُ مِنْهُمْ تَخَاذُلُ
5. أَلَيْسَ الْأَلَى يُوفِي الْجَوَارَ عَيْدُهُمْ - بِقَوْمٍ كِرَامٍ حِينِ تَبَلَى الْمَحَاصِلُ
6. وَقَمْتُ إِلَى سَيْفِي فَجَرَدْتُ نَصْلَهُ - وَعَنْ أَيِّ نَفْسٍ بَعْدَ نَفْسِي أَقَاتِلُ

<sup>417</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munanmaq*, 202–3; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 323.

<sup>418</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munanmaq*, 203. This warning by Abū Sufyān, to keep the unity within the Quraysh in face of the threat posed by Muḥammad and his followers, would be an argument against al-Jumāḥī's early dating of the killing of Abū Uzayhir, see footnote 414.

<sup>419</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:413.

<sup>420</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 434; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munanmaq*, 203–4; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:106–7; 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-'Arab*, 2001, 18:278.

<sup>421</sup> Or: Umm Jamīl; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 434–35.

<sup>422</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 79–81 nr. 18; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:414–15 vv. 1,2,4,3,6; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munanmaq*, 204 vv.1,2,4,3,6; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:136 vv.1,2,4,6; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:58–59 vv.1,2,4,6; al-Jumāḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:252 vv. 1,2,6; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 3:393 vv.1,3; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 1995, 24:395–96 p. 395: vv.1-7; p. 396: 1,2,4,6; Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 188–90.

وَأَقْبَلْتُ أَمْشِي بِالْحَسَامِ مُهْنَدًا – فَلَا هُوَ مَفْلُوكٌ وَلَا أَنَا نَاكِلٌ .7

1. God reward Umm Ghaylān well for [her help to] us, and [reward] her women, without jewels, the hair unkempt
2. They kept from me death when it had come near and my vital parts were exposed to the avengers<sup>423</sup>
3. And may God reward ‘Awf<sup>424</sup> well; he was not weak, his junctures did not become weak from fatigue for me
4. He called, calling the Daws, and the mountain roads flowed with nobles – from their side there has not yet appeared any weakness<sup>425</sup>
5. Are not those whose slaves are faithful to the covenant of protection a noble people when everything decays?
6. I rose up for my sword and bared the blade – which soul shall I fight for if not my own?<sup>426</sup>
7. I rose up with the sword from India, no crack was in it nor was I a coward.

The poem has been transmitted in different sources and presents many variants in the order and number of verses as well as in the text itself.<sup>427</sup> The interpretation of several verses as they are transmitted in Aslim b. Aḥmad’s *dīwān* is indeed problematic, as we will see below.

In pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poems it is not uncommon to find a reference to God (*ilāh*, *al-ilāh*, and *Allāh* for “god, the God”) in blessings or oath formulae.<sup>428</sup> Here, Ḍirār wishes God’s favour for Umm Ghaylān and the women, perhaps female relatives, who assisted her (v.1).<sup>429</sup> In the accounts in which the poem is embedded the attention is centred on Umm Ghaylān and Ḍirār; here the poet speaks of more people who saved him and others (“us”, v.1). Perhaps the names of

<sup>423</sup> Variant: *fa-hunna dafa’na l-mawta* (“they (f. pl.) repelled the death”); variant: *fa-hunna šarafna l-mawta* (“they (f. pl.) repelled the death”).

<sup>424</sup> Variant: *‘Amran* (“Amr”).

<sup>425</sup> On *lammā* with jussive in the meaning of “not yet” see Wright, *Grammar*, ii 22d. This verse presents many variants, both in the first and in the second hemistich, some of which present metrical or lexical problems. Variant *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*: *da’at ... bi-‘izzin* (“she called ... with noise”); variant *Sira* ed. Ibn Hishām: *da’at ... bi-‘izzin wa-addathā l-sharāju l-qawābilu* (“she called ... with nobles, [as if] parties of men befell them, facing each other”); variant *Munammaq*: *da’at ... bi-rajlin wa-ardafahā l-shurūju l-qawābilu* (“she called ... with men, followed by parties of men facing each other”); variant *Tārīkh Ibn ‘Asākir* 24:395: *da’ā ... bi-‘izzin wādihā l-shi’ābu l-ghawā’ilu* (“he called ... with nobles, its valley the mountain roads places of destruction”).

<sup>426</sup> Variant: *fa-jarradtu sayfi thumma qumtu bi-našlihi* (“I unsheathed my sword and then I rose with its iron blade”).

<sup>427</sup> See footnote 422, the footnotes to each verse, and Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 106–7.

<sup>428</sup> Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 10–11, 18–19.

<sup>429</sup> In the *Sira* as edited by Ibn Hishām we are told that Umm Ghaylān used to comb the women’s hair and prepare the brides for their wedding. We may also understand the second hemistich of v.1 in the sense that Umm Ghaylān and other women hastened to help Ḍirār, not caring for their appearances, focused solely on the safety of their guest. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:414; al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1952, 1:252.

other Qurashi men have been lost or omitted in the accounts, or perhaps this reference reflects the idea that in helping Ḍirār she did well to his whole kin.<sup>430</sup>

In the verses that follow Ḍirār depicts himself alone in face of a pressing danger. V.2 is a vivid description of the threat: Ḍirār had found himself completely exposed to the enemy. In speaking of “avengers” (v.2) who seek his blood, Ḍirār seemingly recognises the right of the Daws to seek retaliation for Abū Uzayhir. Neither does he protest against the fact that, even though he had not been personally involved in the killing of Abū Uzayhir, it is he whom the Daws seek to kill. In light of what Procksch has termed the passive responsibility of the tribe, Ḍirār implicitly recognises the right of the Daws to kill any Qurashi individual to avenge their killed kinsman Abū Uzayhir.<sup>431</sup> Thus, the poem is more than merely a composition in reproach of the Daws for their attack against him, as it praises Umm Ghaylān for her assistance.

V.3 is problematic, especially when followed by v.4. Understandably, several versions either omit v.3 or put it after v.4 (see the references above). The first name of the male figure is clear (‘Awf or ‘Amr), as is the role he played in the event. If we take him to be a son of Umm Ghaylān<sup>432</sup> it is reasonable to assume that he assisted Ḍirār. However, in the context of retaliation, the “call [of war] of the Daws” (v.4) seems to be a call against the Quraysh. The editor of Ḍirār’s *dīwān* explains v.4 as the man calling the Daws to assist him—but against whom? Were they not the ones who wanted to kill Ḍirār? To read v.3 after v.4 may solve this problem: an unnamed avenger (*da‘ā*, v.2) called the Daws to fight against Ḍirār. Fulfilling what Procksch categorised as the active solidarity of the tribe, all the Dawsī nobles answered to the call except for ‘Awf, who stood up in defence of Ḍirār.<sup>433</sup> V.5 would then emphasise the contrast between ‘Awf and the rest of the Daws: the freedwoman Umm Ghaylān, “her women” (her daughters?, v.1), and ‘Awf showed true loyalty, for

<sup>430</sup> We are told that during the caliphate of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13-23/634-644) Umm Ghaylān came to the caliph asking for his protection in return for the help she had offered Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Because of the names of their respective fathers, Umm Ghaylān mistakenly thought that Ḍirār and ‘Umar were brothers. Thinking that she had helped his close relative Ḍirār, now she asked for ‘Umar’s help in return. The shared name, however, was a coincidence: ‘Umar belonged to the clan ‘Adī b. Ka’b, Ḍirār to the Muḥārib b. Fihri. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb told the woman: “I am not his brother except in Islam”. Whether he acceded to Umm Ghaylān’s request or not is not mentioned. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:415; ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā ‘Abd al-Wāḥid, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Ma‘rifa, 1976), 89; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:106-7; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 434-35; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 726 n. 224.

<sup>431</sup> Procksch, *Über die Blutrache*, 11f. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>432</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 80 n. 3; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 3:393.

<sup>433</sup> Procksch, *Über die Blutrache*, 11f. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.



Umm Ghaylān had taken in ʿDirār as her guest whom she had the duty to protect, even against her kin.<sup>434</sup> V.5 may seem in praise of the Daws but in fact ʿDirār lashes out against them: if the servants of a group are more loyal than the free men amongst them, how can this group claim any nobility?

In the final two verses ʿDirār expresses that he did not helplessly await the attack. In v.1 he referred to a group that was protected by Umm Ghaylān; in vv.6-7 the focus is on him alone. Umm Ghaylān saved his life, but he still did what could be expected from a warrior and leader: he rose up to meet the enemy.

In the poem, not only Umm Ghaylān but also ʿDirār himself emerge as models of loyalty: Umm Ghaylān because she protected her guest against her own kin, and ʿDirār because he accepts without protesting the fact that the Daws seek to kill him for an offence committed by someone else from the Quraysh. This passive responsibility towards his tribe does not entail a passive attitude: ʿDirār is ready to sell his life dearly.

Until now, the discursive strands on allegiance and authority in the compositions by ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb are frequently entangled. By acknowledging the shared liability within the Quraysh, in his words and deeds the poet shows his active and passive responsibility for and solidarity with his clan and tribe. He sided with his kin in times of war and conflict, he attacked with the sword and with his poetical talent those who wronged them, and he stood by his kin when strangers sought to retaliate against them. How would ʿDirār react to Muḥammad's message, the nascent community of followers around him, and the ensuing divisions within his tribe the Quraysh?

### 3.1.3 ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the umma

From the start of Muḥammad's prophetic career, ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb was among the fierce opponents of his kinsman. He fought with his tribesmen against Muḥammad and his followers at Badr (2/624), Uḥud (3/625), and al-Khandaq (5/627), not only with the sword but also with his poems. In the poems that follow we will see how ʿDirār presented himself and his group in relation to Muḥammad and his followers.

None of the preserved poems by ʿDirār against Muḥammad and his followers can be dated before the *Hijra* (Emigration) to Yathrib, the later Medina (1/622). We can only speculate as to

---

<sup>434</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 204; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:136.

whether earlier poems have been lost. However, since the Emigration marked a literal and ideological divide between the two factions, it is not surprising to see a rise in poems and accounts dealing with Muḥammad and especially with the clashes between him and the Quraysh after the Emigration. The latent conflict became real, and what had been a simmering danger to the Meccan institutions and customs now erupted into open warfare.

*Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb's poetical response to the pledge at 'Aqaba*

To Ḍirār is attributed a poetical reaction to the (second) meeting at 'Aqaba (622), an encounter during which envoys from Yathrib (later known as Medina) pledged allegiance to Muḥammad which would result in the Emigration shortly after. Ḍirār's poem is said to be the first poem to have been recited after the Emigration.<sup>435</sup> If that dating is correct, we will need to assume that he did not compose it immediately after the 'Aqaba meeting but only when the Emigration had put the pledge of Muḥammad's followers into perspective:<sup>436</sup>

[DKr *tawīl*]

1. تَدَارَكْتُ سَعْدًا عَنُوَّةً فَأَخَذْتُهُ – وَكَانَ شِفَاءً لَوْ تَدَارَكْتُ مُنْدِرًا .1
2. وَلَوْ نَلْتُهُ طَلْتُ هُنَاكَ جِرَاحُهُ – وَكَانَ حَرِيًّا أَنْ يُهَانَ وَيُهْدَرَا .2

Trans. AG:

1. I overtook Sa'd by force and took him by force – it would have been better if had I caught Mundhir
2. If I had got him his blood would not have to be paid for. He deserves to be humiliated and left unavenged.

<sup>435</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 58; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:450.

<sup>436</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 58–59 nr. 8; Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, ed. W.N. 'Arafat, vol. 1 (London: Luzac & Co., 1971), 224; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:450–51; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, 1992, 2:606 v.1; al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 1005), *Kitāb al-Awā'il*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Wakil (Ṭanṭā: Dār al-Bashīr li-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyya, 1987), 426; Faṭḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 1334), *Uyūn al-Athar fi Funūn al-Maghāzī wa-l-Shamā'il wa-l-Siyar*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1993), 192–93; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 206. Trans. Guillaume, 206. In his edition of Ḥassān b. Thābit's *dīwān* Ḥasanayn quotes this poem without mentioning Ḍirār as the poet (*qāla rajul min Quraysh ...*); Ḥassān ibn Thābit, *Dīwān*, ed. Sayyid Ḥanafī Ḥasanayn (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1983), 308.

The two men in v.1 are understood to be Sa'd b. 'Ubāda and al-Mundhir b. 'Amr. Both men were prominent Khazrajīs from the clan of the Banū Sā'ida, although from two different subgroups.<sup>437</sup> The names of Sa'd and al-Mundhir are among the men from Yathrib who attended the second meeting at 'Aqaba.<sup>438</sup> It was after this meeting that a group of the Quraysh is said to have taken Sa'd and al-Mundhir by force—whether this happened before or after the Emigration is unclear. Al-Mundhir was able to escape, but Sa'd was brought to Mecca and was beaten and abused until he was set free thanks to the intervention of the Qurashī Jubayr b. Muṭ'im b. 'Adī al-Nawfalī and/or al-Ḥārith b. Ḥarb al-Umawī.<sup>439</sup> According to some sources, between Sa'd and Jubayr (or between Sa'd and Jubayr's father Muṭ'im b. 'Adī, and perhaps al-Ḥārith b. Ḥarb too) there was a relationship of *jiwār* (neighbourly protection): Sa'd protected the Qurashī men when they came to "his country" (*bi-baladihi*).<sup>440</sup>

The sources are silent on the reasons for the Quraysh to capture Sa'd b. 'Ubāda but we may assume that they saw the contacts between Muḥammad and the people from Yathrib as a threat. Whether they knew the contents of the pledge at 'Aqaba or not, the Quraysh may have feared an alliance between a section of their tribe and these outsiders. As it would turn out, this fear was not unfounded: not long after, the Quraysh found themselves on the battlefield fighting against those of their own kin who had allied with the Yathribī tribes of the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj.

Although related to the events surrounding the opposition to Muḥammad in Mecca and the Emigration of Muḥammad and his followers to Yathrib, we will be disappointed if in Ḍirār's poem we search for a statement against Muḥammad and his message. Ḍirār does not even explain his anger at Sa'd and al-Mundhir. The poem could be read as a reaction to a tribal conflict between

<sup>437</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 148; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:367. Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-Athar*, 1993, 1:191; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 1:250. Cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 185, 187.

<sup>438</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:444; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 269.

<sup>439</sup> al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 200; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 4:410–11; Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1382), *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, 2:349, 419; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-Athar*, 1993, 1:193; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:450–51. Cf. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 206. The Qurashī men who set Sa'd free were Umayya b. Khalaf and al-Ḥārith b. Hammām, according to Ḥasanayn; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 308.

<sup>440</sup> Ibn Khaldūn, *Tārīkh Ibn Khaldūn*, 2:349. Some add that these travels were for reasons of trade; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:449–50; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:367; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:165; Sa'īd al-Afghānī, *Aswāq al-'Arab fi l-Jāhiliyya wa-l-Islām*, 3rd ed. (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1974), 78–79 n. 3. It seems unlikely that Jubayr protected Sa'd out of sympathy for Muḥammad: Jubayr appears in accounts of the battle of Uḥud (3/625) commissioning his slave Waḥshī to kill Ḥamza, Muḥammad's uncle; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:61.

the Quraysh and the Khazraj or, since Ḍirār omits any reference to his lineage or that of the opponents, as related to a conflict sparked by a more personal grudge.<sup>441</sup>

In the accounts of the aftermath of the ‘Aqaba pledge, Ḍirār is not mentioned as a key figure in apprehending Sa’d—it is an act attributed to the Quraysh in general.<sup>442</sup> In his poem, however, Ḍirār presents the submission of Sa’d as a personal accomplishment. Throughout the two verses he does not refer to his clan or tribe, but he uses up to four times a verb in the first person singular. In the only implicit reference to a larger group, this group is characterised by its absence and inaction: had he died, al-Mundhir would not have been avenged by his kin (v.2), a sign of his own ignobility and that of his tribe. Why Ḍirār would have preferred to apprehend al-Mundhir instead of Sa’d (v.1) is unclear.<sup>443</sup>

Aslim b. Aḥmad, editor of Ḍirār’s *dīwān*, states that this poem by Ḍirār is a reproach directed at his kinsmen Jubayr and al-Ḥārith for their role in liberating Sa’d,<sup>444</sup> but I disagree: Ḍirār does not allude to the Qurashī man or men who set Sa’d free. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, coming from Ḍirār such a rebuke would have been surprising, for the *murawwa* values are prominent throughout his compositions. He praises individuals and groups for their loyalty and fidelity to their oaths and alliances (DK10), and reviles others for their treason and infidelity (DK04, DK09). He may have regretted that he was hindered in harming Sa’d but in this poem he does not revile his kinsmen for fulfilling the duty of neighbourly protection towards Sa’d.

To Ḥassān b. Thābit is attributed a poem in response to Ḍirār’s poem against Sa’d and al-Mundhir. It is said to be “the first poem he [Ḥassān] composed in Islam”,<sup>445</sup> and it reads:<sup>446</sup>

<sup>441</sup> Perhaps like DK04.

<sup>442</sup> See, among others: Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:449–50; al-Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:367; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:165.

<sup>443</sup> Such wishes or regrets on past opportunities (“if only...”) are rather common in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry. They do not necessarily refer to a real possibility now truncated but are rather a figure of speech, a way for the poet to free himself (and his group) from blame and ridicule: “if only ... I/we would have been successful”. See for example: Z16 v.14; Z17 v.15.

<sup>444</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 58.

<sup>445</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:224; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 308. The date of Ḥassān’s conversion is uncertain, but is commonly dated after the Emigration of Muḥammad and his Qurashī followers to Yathrib.

<sup>446</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:224–26 nr. 103; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 308 nr. 211 vv. 1,5-7,9-11; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:451–52 vv. 1,5,11,7-10,6; al-‘Askari, *Kitāb al-Awā’il*, 427 vv.1,11; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 206–7.

[HbT01 *ṭawīl*]

1. لَسْتِ إِلَى سَعْدٍ وَلَا الْمَرْءِ مُنْذِرٍ – إِذَا مَا مَطَايَا الْقَوْمِ أَصْبَحْنَ ضَمْرًا
2. تَمَنَّى ضِرَارًا وَالْأَمَانِي جَمَّةً – مَتَى الْجَهْلُ أَنْ يَلْقَى بِضَجْنَانٍ مُنْذِرًا
3. فَلَيْتَ وَرَبِّ الرَّاقِصَاتِ إِلَى مِنَى – خَوَارِجَ مِنْ نَقْفِ الْكَدِيدَيْنِ ضَمْرًا
4. فَدَعْ عَنْكَ سَعْدًا إِنَّ سَعْدًا وَمُنْذِرًا – سَوَاءٌ إِذَا شَدَّ لِحَرَبِكَ مِثْرًا
- ...
6. فَإِنَّا وَمَنْ يُهْدِي الْقِصَائِدَ نَحُونَا – كَمُسْتَبْضِعٍ تَمْرًا إِلَى أَرْضِ حَبِيرَا
- ...
10. وَلَا تَكُ كَالْعَاوِي فَأَقْبَلَ نَحْرَهُ – وَلَمْ يَخْشَهُ سَهْمًا مِنَ النَّبْلِ مُضَمْرًا
11. أَتَفْخُرُ بِالْكَتَّانِ لَمَّا لَبِسْتَهُ – وَقَدْ تَلَبَّسُ الْأَنْبَاطُ رِيْطًا مُفَصَّرًا

1. You were not equal to Sa'd and the man Mundhir when the riding animals of the people were thin<sup>447</sup>
2. Dīrār desired (desires are many) some ignorant desires: to meet Mundhir at Dajnan<sup>448</sup>
3. If only, by the Lord of the trotting camels, they had come to Minā from the trodden lands, emaciated<sup>449</sup>
4. So leave Sa'd, for Sa'd and Mundhir are on a par when they prepare themselves to fight you
- ...
6. Truly, who directs odes against us is like the trader [bringing] dates to the people of Khaybar<sup>450</sup>
- ...
10. And do not be like the howling dog that turns its chest – it doesn't fear it, the arrow of the hidden archer<sup>451</sup>
11. You boast of wearing linen? The Nabataeans also wear whitened garments!

<sup>447</sup> Sa'd: variant: 'Amr. The dropping of the first short syllable in hemistich 1 of verse 1 in a poem in *ṭawīl* metre is not uncommon; Stoetzer, 'Theory and Practice in Arabic Metrics', 133–35, 152–53.

<sup>448</sup> Dajnan: a place in the vicinity of Mecca; Shihāb al-Dīn Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 1244), *Kitāb Mu'jam al-Buldān*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1995), 453.

<sup>449</sup> Kudayd: the spelling is uncertain. A place near Mecca; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 4:442.

"By the Lord of the trotting camels": a common oath in pre-Islamic times that continued to be used in Muslim times; see AB01 v.9 and the comments in 4. Ibn al-Zibā'rā. For a similar oath, see DK19 v.5.

Minā: perhaps an allusion to the treaty of 'Aqaba between Muḥammad and the envoys from Yathrib. A 'aqaba is a mountain road and became the proper name for the place where Muḥammad met twice with a group from Yathrib before the Emigration: the mountain road that led from Mecca to Minā, close to Mecca; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 4:134–35; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 5:198–99.

<sup>450</sup> I.e. "bringing water to the sea".

<sup>451</sup> Variant: *ka-al-ghāwī* ("as one who deviates").

This response poem by Ḥassān to DK11 presents some difficulties: the number and order of the verses differ across the editions, which also present significant lexical variants.<sup>452</sup> In the edition of Ḥasanayn, in v.1 the first name is ‘Amr, not Sa’d. In this same edition vv.2-4 are omitted, precisely the verses in which we find the names of Ḍirār, Sa’d and al-Mundhir. In this edition, therefore, the link between the poem and the one by Ḍirār (DK11) cannot be inferred from the text itself. Following this reading, the poem is a composition against a haughty and ignorant man whose name is not specified.

Ḥassān takes the individual attack of Ḍirār as an insult against his whole tribe (“against us”, v.6). Like Ḍirār, Ḥassān does not mention Muḥammad’s prophethood. According to Ḥassān, Ḍirār cannot compare himself to Sa’d and al-Mundhir (vv.1,4), but the superiority of the latter two does not derive, as we might expect to hear from Ḥassān as a follower of Muḥammad, from their submission to God. Rather, in Ḥassān’s eyes the superiority of his kinsmen Sa’d and al-Mundhir derives from their lineage and heroism (v.4). Similarly, Ḥassān insults Ḍirār not for his disobedience to Muḥammad or to God, but for his foolishness and lowliness. He is pictured as a man incapable of taking any right decisions, let alone to assert his nobility and authority (and that of his people) over men like Sa’d and al-Mundhir (vv.6-11). The destruction that awaits Ḍirār if he continues on this course is not a divine punishment, but material loss (vv.1-2,6-11).

### *Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the battle of Badr (2/624)*

Several of Ḍirār’s poems deal with the battles against Muḥammad and his followers after their Emigration to Yathrib. Four poems in Ḍirār’s *diwān* are related to the battle of Badr (2/624): one longer poem and three shorter ones in which he laments the death of Qurashī men. It was at Badr that the first large battle took place between, on the one hand, Muḥammad and his followers from among the Quraysh (indicated as *Muhājirūn* or Emigrants) and from the Yathribī or Medinan tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj (indicated as *Anṣār* or Helpers) and, on the other, Muḥammad’s opponents from the Quraysh. The latter were defeated and had to flee.<sup>453</sup>

As they have reached us, two of Ḍirār’s poems on Badr are very short (1 verse and 2 verses, respectively), Both are elegies on the Qurashī leader ‘Uqba b. Abī Mu‘ayṭ b. Abī ‘Amr b. Umayya,

<sup>452</sup> See note 446.

<sup>453</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, ‘Badr’, *EL2*, 1:867-68.

from the Banū ‘Abd Shams, a cousin (*ibn khāl*) of ʿUqbā. <sup>454</sup> ‘Uqbā had been injured and taken prisoner by the Muslims at Badr and was killed by order of Muḥammad. <sup>455</sup> Since these two short compositions, which may be fragments of longer poems, do not contribute to the discussion of ʿUqbā’s discourse on allegiance and authority, their analysis will be omitted here. <sup>456</sup> It will suffice to say that from these two poems we cannot infer anything about the precise context nor about ʿUqbā’s view on the battle of Badr (2/624), its causes, and its consequences. Although put in the context of the conflict with Muḥammad, they could well have been composed in the aftermath of a pre-Islamic tribal conflict of the Quraysh: the virtues and values for which ‘Uqbā is to be remembered, namely nobility, heroism, and generosity, are the same that appear time and time again in pre-Islamic elegies, panegyrics, and self-praise. <sup>457</sup>

In a third and longer elegy after Badr (2/624), ʿUqbā laments the death of his kinsman Abū Jahl, a leader of the Quraysh and member of the prominent clan of the Banū Makhzūm. The elegy reads: <sup>458</sup>

[DK12 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَلَا مَنْ لِعَيْنِ بَاتَتِ اللَّيْلَ لَمْ تَنَمْ – تُرَاقِبُ نَجْمًا فِي سَوَادٍ مِنَ الظُّلْمِ
2. كَأَنَّ قَدَى فِيهَا وَلَيْسَ بِهَا قَدَى – سَوَى عَبْرَةٍ مِنْ جَائِلِ الدَّمْعِ تَنْسَجِمُ
3. فَبَلِّغْ قُرَيْشًا أَنَّ خَيْرَ نَدِيَّهَا – وَأَكْرَمَ مَنْ يَمْشِي بِسَاقٍ عَلَى قَدَمِ
4. نَوَى يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ رَهْنٌ خَوْصَاءَ رَهْنُهَا – كَرِيمُ الْمَسَاعِي غَيْرِ وَعَدٍ وَلَا بَرِّمُ

<sup>454</sup> ʿUqbā’s mother was a daughter of Abū ‘Amr b. Umayya and sister of Abū Mu‘ayy; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 1995, 24:392.

<sup>455</sup> ʿUqbā b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 71; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 174,478-9; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 365; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:459.

<sup>456</sup> (1) *Idhā -ttaṣalat tad‘ū abāha li-ḥārithin / da‘at bi-smi sayyāli l-‘aṭā‘i za‘ūfi // wahūbi n-najibāti l-marāqili bi-l-ḥuḥā / bi-akwārīhā tajtābu kulla tanūfi* (“When she called, she called by her father, [saying] ‘To the wealthy one!’ She called by a name [of one] pouring gifts, rapidly slaughtering // Giving freely the strong camels, swift at the height of day, that cross through every desert with their saddles”); ʿUqbā b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 71 nr. 14; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:297. (2) *Aynu fa-bkī li-‘Uqbata -bni Abāni / far‘i Fihrin wa-fārisi l-fursāni* (“O my eye, weep for ‘Uqbā b. Abān, a noble man of Fihri, hero among the heroes”); ʿUqbā b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 93 nr. 26; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:297.

<sup>457</sup> ʿUqbā b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 93 nr. 26; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:297. And: ʿUqbā b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 71 nr. 14; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:297.

<sup>458</sup> ʿUqbā b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 83–85 nr. 20; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:27–28; al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r al-Mukhaḍramūn*, 140; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 351–52.

5. فَالَيْتُ لَا تَنفَكُ عَيْنِي بِعَبْرَةٍ - عَلَى هَالِكٍ بَعْدَ الرَّئِيسِ أَبِي الْحَكَمِ
6. عَلَى هَالِكٍ أَشَجَى لُؤَيٍّ بِنِ غَالِبٍ - أَتَتْهُ الْمَنَائِيَا يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ فَلَمْ يَرِمِ
7. تَرَى كِسَرَ الْخَطِيئِ فِي نَحْرِ مُهْرِهِ - لَدَى بَائِنٍ مِنْ لَحْمِهِ بَيْنَهَا خِذَمٌ
8. وَمَا كَانَ لَيْتُ سَاكِنٌ بَطْنَ بِيَشَةِ - لَدَى غَلَلٍ يَجْرِي بِبَطْحَاءَ فِي أَجَمِ
9. بِأَجْرًا مِنْهُ جِينٌ تَخْتَلِفُ الْقَنَا - وَتُدْعَى نَزَالٍ فِي الْقَمَاقِمَةِ الْبُهَمِ
10. فَلَا تَجْزَعُوا آلَ الْمُغِيرَةِ وَاصْبِرُوا - عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ يَجْزَعُ عَلَيْهِ فَلَمْ يُلَمِ
11. وَجَدُوا فَإِنَّ الْمَوْتَ مَكْرُمَةً لَكُمْ - وَمَا بَعْدَهُ فِي آخِرِ الْعَيْشِ مِنْ نَدَمِ
12. وَقَدْ قُلْتُ إِنَّ الرِّيحَ طَيِّبَةً لَكُمْ - وَعِزَّ الْمَقَامِ غَيْرَ شَكٍّ لَدِي فَهَمِ

Trans. AG:

1. Alas for my eye that cannot sleep, watching the stars in the darkness of the night!
2. It is as though a mote were in it, but there is naught but flowing tears
3. Tell Quraysh that the best of their company, the noblest man that ever walked<sup>459</sup>
4. At Badr lies imprisoned<sup>460</sup> in the well; the noble one, not base-born and no niggard
5. I swear that my eyes shall never weep for any man now Abū al-Ḥakam our chief is slain
6. I weep for him whose death brought sorrow to Lu'ayy b. Ghālib, to whom death came at Badr where he remains<sup>461</sup>
7. You could see fragments of spears in his horse's chest, scraps of his flesh plainly intermingling with them<sup>462</sup>
8. No lion lurking in the valley of Bisha,<sup>463</sup> where through jungled vales the waters flow,
9. Was bolder than he when lances clashed,<sup>464</sup> when the cry went forth among the valiant: 'Dismount!'
10. Grieve not overmuch, Mughira's kin, be resolute (though he who so grieves is not to be blamed)<sup>465</sup>
11. Be strong, for death is your glory, and thereafter at life's end there is no regret
12. I said that victory will be yours and high renown – no man of sense will doubt it.<sup>466</sup>

<sup>459</sup> Or: "of all men".

<sup>460</sup> Or: "dwells as a pledge". *Thawā*: a very common verb for "to live, to dwell" in the grave.

<sup>461</sup> MC: "The killed on the day of Badr brought distress to the Lu'ayy b. Ghālib – Fate reached him, he didn't get out of the way".

<sup>462</sup> The *Khaṭṭī* spear or lance: a type identified by its place of origin, on the eastern part of the Arabian peninsula; Friedrich Wilhelm Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber Aus Ihren Dichtern Dargestellt: Ein Beitrag Zur Arabischen Alterthumskunde, Synonymik und Lexicographie Nebst Registern* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886), 217–18.

<sup>463</sup> Bisha: a valley rich in water and lions in Yemen; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 1:529.

<sup>464</sup> Lit.: "when lances came from all sides".

<sup>465</sup> MC: "Don't be overcome with grief, Āl al-Mughira, and endure it – though who so grieves over *him* is not to be blamed".

<sup>466</sup> Lit.: "The wind is favourably towards you, and yours is the position of honour".



Ibn Hishām states that the attribution of this poem to ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb is doubted by some, but he does not mention any reason.<sup>467</sup> The topics and structure of the composition fit ʿDirār’s *dīwān*: the poet praises the *ḥasab wa-nasab* of the Quraysh (their great deeds and noble lineage, v.12), and the *muruwwa* of the deceased (vv.3-4). In addition, there are no flagrant anachronistic formulations that would point to it being a later composition.

Like in other poems he composed on the conflict between the Quraysh and Muḥammad,<sup>468</sup> ʿDirār presents the battle as a tribal fight of the Quraysh against a hostile group. There is no reference to intratribal tensions and fighting within the Quraysh. Muḥammad’s name is not mentioned, and the poem does not offer any insight into the causes of the fight.

Abū Jahl, the deceased, was a Qurashī leader and one of the most famous opponents of Muḥammad in Mecca. He is pictured in the Qurʾān and in later Muslim tradition as the prototype of the *jāhili* unbeliever, a haughty and willingly ignorant man (Q 96: 9-16).<sup>469</sup> ʿDirār, however, portrays him as a heroic and noble man whose passing causes deep sorrow and despair among his kin.

The poem opens with some topical lines that set the tone, shaping the expectations of the audience as the introductory verses to a *marthiya* or elegy. The *topos* of insomnia is very recurrent in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* compositions, especially in *marāthī*: the poet is unable to sleep out of anxiety, separation from his beloved ones, or sorrow, as is the case here (v.1).<sup>470</sup> An unnamed male individual is then addressed to “inform the Quraysh” of the event (v.3), a conventional phrase that enables the poet to shift to the specific occasion of the composition (vv.3-4ff.).<sup>471</sup>

The message itself (v.3) is grim: the best and most noble individual of the Quraysh has been killed and his corpse has been thrown in a dry well (vv.3-4).<sup>472</sup> According to the traditional accounts of Badr, the killed opponents of Muḥammad were thrown in a mass grave, a well or pit

---

<sup>467</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:28. This poem is only found in Ibn Hishām’s edition of the *Sīra*, and it is true that the authenticity of the poems in the *sīra* material is sometimes problematic; see 1. Introduction.

<sup>468</sup> See the poems DK13 and DK21, below. The same can be said of Ibn al-Zibāʿrā’s poems on these battles. See for example: Z18.

<sup>469</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, ‘Abū D̲jahl’, *EL*2, 1:115.

<sup>470</sup> Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer*, 114ff.

<sup>471</sup> Borg, 117–21.

<sup>472</sup> On the use of the image of the grave as a “dwelling place”, an image of death putting an end to the nomadic travelling, see Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 288ff.

(*bir*, *qalib*).<sup>473</sup> Omitting the fate of other kinsmen, Ḍirār focuses the attention on a single individual, finally named in v.5: Abū al-Ḥakam, better known as Abū Jahl, from the Makzūmī group of the Banū al-Mughīra. In v.3 Ḍirār referred to the Quraysh as a group, in v.6 he speaks of the Qurashī subgroup of the descendants of Lu'ayy b. Ghālib b. Fihir, and in v.10 he further specifies the family of the deceased, descendants of al-Mughīra, son of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Makhzūm. Although the Banū Mughīra and Ḍirār's clan of the Banū Muḥārib b. Fihir belonged to different branches within the Quraysh, Ḍirār does not look at Abū Jahl's killing from a distance: instead, deep sorrow grips the Quraysh as a whole (vv.3,6).

The death of Abū Jahl is described in gruesome detail (v.7), possibly to emphasise that he did not die a coward. His colt was wounded in the chest, a clear sign that Abū Jahl bravely faced the enemy (vv.8-9). The grief of the Quraysh is justified (vv.5-6,10), but Ḍirār calls his kinsmen not to be overwhelmed with sorrow. The notion of *ṣabr*, "patience, endurance", is prominent in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry as one of the virtues that characterise the noble man: the ability or determination not to despair when faced with hunger, danger, and death.<sup>474</sup>

Ḍirār's call to fight seems to offer a way out of the crippling grief (vv.11-12). It is plausible to assume that this call was meant for the tribe as a whole, not only for the direct kin of Abū Jahl (v.10). The idea expressed in v.11, that death on the battlefield means honour and glory for the deceased, is common in poetry of Ḍirār's time.<sup>475</sup> Generally, this death is not phrased as self-sacrifice for the greater good like the victory or survival of the tribe, but as a sign of one's *ḥasab wa-nasab*. This individuality of the endeavour is manifest in these verses: Ḍirār's call to fight does not derive primarily from the need to defend the Quraysh, but is related to the question of how one will be remembered after one's death (v.11). Ḍirār does not doubt that his people will win, but in any case, dead or alive, victors or losers, his fellow Qurashīs must affirm and confirm their rightful position, their nobility and glory on the battlefield (v.12). In this composition, the discursive strand on allegiance is thus entangled with that on death and afterlife, as well as with the discourse on

<sup>473</sup> See, among others: Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:638ff.; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:448–49; Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wil al-Qur'ān: Taḥṣīr al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr, vol. 4 (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2000), 333 n. 3; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-Athar*, 1993, 1:306.

<sup>474</sup> Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 14; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 181.

<sup>475</sup> See the paragraph Al-Ḥuṭay'a on his deathbed in 5. Al-Ḥuṭay'a.

authority: Ḍirār is certain that his kin will respond to his call to fight, will not fear death, and will be victorious and assert their superiority (v.12).

In the aftermath of Badr a fourth composition is attributed to Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, found in a pair with a composition by the *Anṣārī* poet Ka'b b. Mālik (see below). His other three poems in the aftermath of Badr are relatively short elegies focused on the losses on his side.<sup>476</sup> In this poem Ḍirār adopts a somewhat wider perspective: he addresses the enemy, describes the battle, and voices his opinion on it. This seems to have been indeed one of the functions of the tribal poets: to defend the honour of their kin, not only after a victory but also after a loss.<sup>477</sup> The poem reads:<sup>478</sup>

[DK13 *tawil*]

1. عَجِبْتُ لِفَخْرِ الْأَوْسِ وَالْحَيْنِ دَائِرٍ - عَلَيْهِمْ غَدًا وَالْدَّهْرُ فِيهِ بَصَائِرُ
2. وَفَخْرِ بَنِي النَّجَّارِ إِنْ كَانَ مَعْشَرٌ - أُصِيبُوا بِبَدْرِ كُلُّهُمْ تَمَّ صَائِرُ
3. فَإِنْ تَكُ قَتَلَى غُودِرَتْ مِنْ رِجَالِنَا - فَإِنَّا رِجَالٌ بَعْدَهُمْ سَنُعَادِرُ
4. وَتَرْدِي بِنَا الْجُرْدُ الْعَنَاجِيحُ وَسَطَكُم - بَنِي الْأَوْسِ حَتَّى يَشْفِي النَّفْسَ ثَائِرُ
5. وَوَسَطَ بَنِي النَّجَّارِ سَوْفَ نَكْرُهَا - لَهَا بِالْقَنَا وَالِدَارِ عَيْنَ زَوَائِرُ
6. فَتَرَكُ صَرَعَى تَعْصِبَ الطَّيْرِ حَوْلَهُمْ - وَلَيْسَ لَهُمْ إِلَّا الْأَمَانِي نَاصِرُ
7. وَتَبْكِيهِمْ مِنْ أَهْلِ يَثْرِبَ نِسْوَةٌ - لَهِنَّ بِهَا لَيْلٌ عَنِ النَّوْمِ سَاهِرُ
8. وَذَلِكَ أَنَّنَا لَا تَزَالُ سُيُوفُنَا - بِهِنَّ دَمٌ مِمَّنْ يُحَارِبِينَ مَائِرُ
9. فَإِنْ تَظْفَرُوا فِي يَوْمٍ بَدْرٍ فَإِنَّمَا - بِأَحْمَدَ أَمْسَى جَدُّكُمْ وَهُوَ ظَاهِرُ
10. وَبِالنَّفَرِ الْأَخْيَارِ هُمْ أَوْلِيَاؤُهُ - يُحَامُونَ فِي اللَّأْوَاءِ وَالْمَوْتِ حَاضِرُ
11. يُعَدُّ أَبُو بَكْرٍ وَحَمْرَةٌ فِيهِمْ - وَيُدْعَى عَلِيٌّ وَسَطٌ مَنْ أَنْتَ ذَاكِرُ
12. وَيُدْعَى أَبُو حَفْصٍ وَعُثْمَانُ مِنْهُمْ - وَسَعْدٌ إِذَا مَا كَانَ فِي الْحَرْبِ حَاضِرُ
13. أَوْلِيكَ لَا مَنْ تَنَحَّتْ فِي دِيَارِهَا - بَنُو الْأَوْسِ وَالنَّجَّارِ حِينَ تُفَاخِرُ

<sup>476</sup> DK12 and the poems mentioned in footnote 456.

<sup>477</sup> Jacobi, 'Die Altarabische Dichtung', 26–28; Müller, *Ich bin Labid*, 3–5.

<sup>478</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Diwān*, 60–62 nr. 9; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:13–14; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira*, 1976, 2:534–35; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 343–44; al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r al-Mukhadramin*, 138–39 vv.1,9–12.

14 . وَلَكِنْ أَبُوهُمْ مِنْ لُؤَيِّ بْنِ غَالِبٍ – إِذَا عُدَّتِ الْأَنْسَابُ كَعُتْبٍ وَعَامِرٍ

15 . هُمْ الطَّاعِنُونَ الْخَيْلَ فِي كُلِّ مَعْرَكٍ – غَدَاةَ الْهَيْبِاجِ الْأَطْيَبُونَ الْأَكَاثِرُ

1. I wondered at the boasting of the Aws – the time of death will come to them tomorrow – In Fate are many ways
2. And at the boasting of the Banū Najjār – if a group [from us] was wounded at Badr you may say that there all of them were steadfast
3. If some of our men were left dead, we certainly are men! We shall leave others after their death<sup>479</sup>
4. When a company of swift horses will run and carry us among you until the avenger will have quenched his soul, O Banū Aws
5. And in the midst of the Banū Najjār we will make them turn, the horses carrying the heavy load of armour and spears<sup>480</sup>
6. We will leave men on the ground with birds [of prey] around them, nothing to aid them but deceitful desires
7. The women from the people of Yathrib will mourn them, lying there awake at night and deprived of sleep because of them
8. That is, that our swords still have blood on them, dripping from those they fought
9. If, then, it is that you succeeded the Day of Badr your good fortune depended on Aḥmad, he is your good fortune
10. And on the troop of best [men], they are close to him – They protect him in hardship, when death has come near
11. Abū Bakr and Ḥamza could be counted among them, and ‘Ali among those you could mention<sup>481</sup>
12. Among them Abū Ḥafṣ could be mentioned, and ‘Uthmān, and Sa’d, when in the war he was present<sup>482</sup>

<sup>479</sup> Trans. AG: “If some of our men were left dead, we shall leave others dead on the field”.

<sup>480</sup> Trans. AG: “We shall return to the charge in the midst of the Banū l-Najjār, our horses snorting under the weight of the spearmen clad in mail”.

<sup>481</sup> Abū Bakr: Abū Bakr b. Abī Kuhāfa, later known as al-Ṣiddīq, to become the first caliph. Ḥamza: Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib. ‘Alī: ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib.

<sup>482</sup> Abū Ḥafṣ: identified by Aslīm as ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. In the *Sīra* by Ibn Hishām we are told that once Muḥammad addressed ‘Umar as *Abū Ḥafṣ*, on which occasion ‘Umar pointed out that Muḥammad had not used that *kunya* for him before. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:629; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 301. In the *Sīra* edition by Ibn Kathīr Muḥammad uses the same *kunya* on a second occasion; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:436; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 4:318. For the identification of Abū Ḥafṣ as ‘Umar in a later source see for example: Taḳī al-Dīn Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), *Imtā‘ al-Asmā‘ bi-mā li-l-Nabī min al-Aḥwāl wa-l-Amwāl wa-l-Ḥafada wa-l-Matā‘*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999), 183.

‘Uthmān: ‘Uthmān b. ‘Affān. Sa’d: Sa’d b. Abī Waqqāṣ, from the Qurashī clan Banū Zuhra b. Kilāb; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 61.

Sa’d is mentioned in some sources as having fought at Badr; otherwise it could have read: “*if* in war he was present”; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 263. To Sa’d is attributed in the *Sīra* of Ibn Hishām “the first blood to be shed in Islam”, when he struck an attacker who interrupted a small group of followers of Muḥammad during their prayer, before the Emigration, as well as “the first arrow to be shot in Islam”, during the first expedition

13. And those, and not the ones born in their dwellings, that is, the Aws and Najjār, are the ones who should be glorified
14. Their father was Lu'ayy b. Ghālib; if the noble families are to be mentioned: Ka'b and 'Āmir
15. They are the ones who pierce the horsemen at every place of battle; the morning of the battle they were the most noble.<sup>483</sup>

The poet expresses his astonishment at words spoken by the Aws and the Najjār (vv.1-2). The poem thus seems to be a response to a composition by an enemy from one of the Yathribī tribes; this could well be the poem KM01 by Ka'b b. Mālik (see below). In the previous elegy by ʿDirār the enemy group was only present as the unnamed and unmentioned killers of Abū Jahl (DK12); in this poem it is ʿDirār's own group that is referred to only in the most general terms ("us, we"). The enemy, on the other hand, is identified as the Banū Aws and the Banū Najjār, the latter being a clan of the Khazraj. A similar tendency to speak not of the Khazraj as a whole but of the Najjār is found in the next poem by ʿDirār (DK14; but see also DK17, in which they are mentioned) as well as in poems by Ibn al-Zibā'ra on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers (Z16). It might be due to the fact that the Najjār was one of the most prominent Khazrajī clans at the time, and the most numerous in the battles of Badr (2/624) and Uḥud (3/625).<sup>484</sup> In any case, ʿDirār does not seem to exclude the rest of the Khazraj from his poetical attack: in v.7 he speaks of the soon-to-be-bereaved women as the women of "the people of Yathrib", and also in v.13 he refers to the town as a whole.

So far ʿDirār has spoken in general terms of Fate, that inescapable force that determines life and death and that will certainly cause the boastful words of the enemy to turn against them (v.1), but in vv.3-8 he states that his group (carrying out what Fate determines?) will force the groups from Yathrib to take back their boasting. The latter will face a certain and bloody defeat in retaliation for ʿDirār's people who were killed at Badr.

The way ʿDirār looks back on the battle of Badr is surprising. In pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry it is not uncommon to find that a defeated group acknowledges the victory of the enemy, and even praises the enemy or at least speaks of him in positive terms. This theme, known as *inṣāf* (equity), may serve to emphasise the fierceness of the battle while at the same time it highlights

---

of the group around Muḥammad against the Quraysh after the Emigration; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:253, 591; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 1:454; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:356.

<sup>483</sup> Or: "the most numerous".

<sup>484</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, 'al-Anṣār', *EL2*, 1:514-15.

the bravery of the own group.<sup>485</sup> In this poem, however, Ḍirār recognises the defeat of his group but does not attribute it to the might of the enemy as a whole.

Had Ḍirār first spoken of the opponents as the Aws and the Najjār, now it turns out that at least one other group sided with them and played a crucial role in the enemy victory. What first appeared to be a conflict between the tribe of Mecca and the tribes of Yathrib turns out to be more than that: the people of Yathrib were aided by some people from Mecca (vv.9-15). By mentioning these seven men by name, Ḍirār portrays this Qurashī support to the tribes of Yathrib as limited to a small group (vv.9,11-12). Perhaps surprisingly, Ḍirār does not rebuke the seven men nor does he accuse them of treason because of turning their back on their tribe. Instead, they are characterised as noble and heroic. He even makes use of the opportunity to praise the Quraysh as a whole through Lu'ayy b. Ghālib, ancestor of a large section of the tribe (v.14-15).<sup>486</sup>

Of the Qurashī individuals mentioned in vv.9,11,13, six are remembered in Muslim tradition as early followers of Muḥammad and prominent members of the nascent community around him: the four men who would become known as the rightly guided caliphs, namely Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Uthmān, and 'Alī, and the two Companions Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, uncle of Muḥammad and military leader at Uḥud (3/625), where he would die, and Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, later commander of the Muslim army.<sup>487</sup> Therefore, it is plausible to assume that *Aḥmad* in v.9 refers to Muḥammad. Based on Q 6: 6, *Aḥmad* is sometimes used in Muslim tradition as a name or title for Muḥammad.<sup>488</sup> Although J. Schacht argues that *Aḥmad* was not a common title or name for Muḥammad during his lifetime, we find it in several *mukhaḍram* poems (Z13, Z24, KM02).<sup>489</sup>

<sup>485</sup> Agha, 'Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History', 14–15; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 8:327.: "The Arabs have [in their repertoire] poems in which the poets were fair to their enemies, and in which they spoke the truth about the heat of battle they and their enemies [equally] suffered, and about how they were sincere in exchanging brotherliness. They called [these poems] *al-munṣifāt*". Trans. Agha, 'Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History', 29 n. 52. See also al-Buḥturi, *al-Ḥamāsa*, 47–49.

<sup>486</sup> His own clan, the Muḥārib b. Fihri, did not belong to this branch of the Quraysh; see DK12.

<sup>487</sup> G.M. Meredith-Owens, 'Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib', *EL2*, 3:152–54; G.R. Hawting, 'Sa'd b. Abī Waqqāṣ', *EL2*, 8:696–97.

<sup>488</sup> See Reynold's analysis of the names or titles for Muḥammad in Muslim tradition, and their historical and symbolic values; Gabriel Said Reynolds, 'Remembering Muhammad', *Numen* 58, no. 2–3 (2011): 188–206. Strictly speaking, *aḥmad* is the elative of *maḥmūd* or *ḥamīd* and means "more, or most, worthy of praise". Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 61 n. 9.

<sup>489</sup> J. Schacht, 'Aḥmad', *EL2*, 1:267. See also the table in which Farrukh details the number of occurrences of *Aḥmad* and other titles for Muḥammad in *mukhaḍram* poetry: Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 37, 45–46.

Because of the treatment of Muḥammad and prominent Companions in this poem, its authenticity has been doubted by al-Jubūrī, who argues that Ḍirār, known for “his *‘aṣabiyya* [party spirit] and his fierceness against the Muslims”, would never have composed such lines.<sup>490</sup> The fact that, besides Muḥammad, the six men mentioned are all prominent Emigrants could point to the poem being a later composition put in the mouth of a *mukhaḍram* poet to discredit the Helpers—in later Muslim times, tensions would grow between the groups of the Emigrants and the Helpers.<sup>491</sup> Would it not be too much of a coincidence that Ḍirār mentions precisely these men instead of some other followers of Muḥammad known to him as his kinsmen but fallen into oblivion in Muslim tradition? Keeping in mind the process of oral transmission and adaptation of poetry, is it possible that in vv.11-12 names of less known Companions were substituted in time by a pious Muslim to do justice to Muslim tradition? Or, were these lines as a whole perhaps added at a later stage?

Even though the names of the Qurashī individuals raise questions, the tone of the poem is not anachronistic. There is no obvious Qur’ānic influence in the tone or the topics. The six Qurashī men among the enemy are not praised for anything they did not yet do in times of Ḍirār; the reason for them to be singled out is their lineage: they are praised as noble as descendants of Lu’ayy b. Ghālib, more precisely, of Ka’b and ‘Āmir sons of Lu’ayy (vv.14-15).<sup>492</sup> In addition, Muḥammad—if “Aḥmad” in v.9 indeed refers to him—is mentioned only in passing, and the reason for which he is singled out as the bringer of good fortune in this context can be understood in a military and not a prophetic sense. Finally, there is the reference to Yathrib and not to Medina, the name the town would receive in later Muslim times (v.7). I have not found any early sources that doubt the early dating of the composition. A final consideration in favour of the early dating of the poem is the fact that it is found in a pair with a poem by the Muslim poet Ka’b b. Mālik (KM01). As I will argue below, the content of Ḍirār’s poem seems to indicate that it is a reply to Ka’b’s poem, and not the other way around. This assumption is yet another argument in favour of the

---

<sup>490</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 139. On the other hand, Ibn Hishām, who questioned or straightaway excluded from his *Sīra* edition poems that he considered doubtful (see Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, xxv), does include this poem and attributes it to Ḍirār; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:13–14.

<sup>491</sup> On these tensions, see for example: al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 38; Bamyeh, *The Social Origins of Islam*, 190.

<sup>492</sup> In DK08 Ḍirār had rebuked these same “two sons of Lu’ayy” for settling for peace instead of taking revenge.

authenticity of DK13. Why would a later Muslim bother to forge a hostile reply to a pious poem by a fellow Muslim?

As for the attribution of DK13 to Ḍirār: it may prove impossible to determine the author unequivocally, but we can explore whether the topics and themes of the poem fit Ḍirār's corpus. Following the conventions of *inṣāf* (equity), in some of his poems Ḍirār characterises the enemy as noble and courageous. Therefore, it does not seem all too far-fetched to assume that in DK13 Ḍirār could praise one group from the enemy ranks and insult the other. This way, he kills more than one bird with one stone: (a) he diverts shame and ridicule from his tribe, for their loss on the battlefield is only due to the power of a stronger enemy and not due to their own irresolution and fear; (b) he implicitly praises the Quraysh as a whole when he speaks of the power of those among the enemy who belong to his own tribe; and (c) by praising one hostile group and insulting the other he may even be able to drive a wedge between the enemy ranks.<sup>493</sup>

Also in favour of attributing the poem to Ḍirār speaks what we know about him from his poems and accounts of his life: in the battles against Muḥammad and his followers he is said to have killed several men from the ranks of the Helpers but not a single soul from the Qurashī Emigrants. At the battle of Uḥud (3/625) Ḍirār is said to have had the chance to kill 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (mentioned in DK13 v.12 as Abū Ḥafṣ) but let him go unharmed, for 'Umar and he, although fighting on opposed sides, were kinsmen.<sup>494</sup>

The poem DK13 by Ḍirār is found in a pair with a composition by the Helper poet Ka'b b. Mālik, from the Khazrajī clan of the Banū Salima.<sup>495</sup>

<sup>493</sup> A similar tactic was employed in Muslim times by the Helper poet Ḥassān b. Thābit who, we are told, after the emergence of Islam tried to stir up the conflict between the Quraysh and the Banū Daws (referred to above) in the hopes of cutting the ties between these two groups, allies in the fight against Muḥammad and his followers. Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:362–63 nr. 192; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 2:258–66; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 355–57 nr. 250; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:413–14; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 201–2; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 323; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 190. And: Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:372–73 nr. 200; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 2:270–74; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 357–62 nr. 251; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī*, 74–77; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 205.

<sup>494</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:415; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:89; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:106–7; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 434–35; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 726 n. 224.

<sup>495</sup> Ka'b b. Mālik al-Anṣārī, *Dīwān Ka'b b. Mālik al-Anṣārī*, ed. Sāmī Makki al-'Ānī (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, 1966), 200–201 nr. 18; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:14–15; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:526–27; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:335; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 344.



[KMor *tawil*]

1. عَجِبْتُ لِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ قَادِرٌ - عَلَى مَا أَرَادَ لَيْسَ لِلَّهِ قَاهِرٌ
2. قَضَى يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ أَنْ نُلَاقِي مَعْشَرًا - بَعَوْا وَسَبِيلُ الْبَغْيِ بِالنَّاسِ جَائِرٌ
3. وَقَدْ حَشَدُوا وَاسْتَنْفَرُوا مِنْ يَلِيهِمْ - مِنَ النَّاسِ حَتَّى جَمَعُهُمْ مُتَكَائِرٌ
4. وَسَارَتْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُحَاوِلُ غَيْرَنَا - بِاجْمَعِهَا كَعَبٌ جَمِيعًا وَعَامِرٌ
5. وَفِينَا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالْأَوْسُ حَوْلَهُ - لَهُ مَعْقِلٌ مِنْهُمْ عَزِيزٌ وَنَاصِرٌ
6. وَجَمَعَ بَنِي النَّجَارِ تَحْتَ لِيَوَائِهِ - يُمَشُّونَ فِي الْمَازِي وَالنُّنُوعُ تَائِرٌ
7. فَلَمَّا لَقِينَاهُمْ وَكُلُّ مُجَاهِدٌ - لِأَصْحَابِهِ مُسْتَبْسِلُ النَّفْسِ صَابِرٌ
8. شَهِدْنَا بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا رَبَّ غَيْرُهُ - وَأَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ بِالْحَقِّ ظَاهِرٌ
9. وَقَدْ عُرِيَتْ بِيضٌ خِفَافٌ كَانَتْهَا - مَقَابِيسُ يُزْهِيهَا لِعَيْنَيْكَ شَاهِرٌ
10. بِهِنَّ أَبَدْنَا جَمَعُهُمْ فَتَبَدَّدُوا - وَكَانَ يُلَاقِي الْحَيِينَ مَنْ هُوَ فَاجِرٌ
11. فَكُتِبَ أَبُو جَهْلٍ صَرِيحًا لِيُوجِّهَهُ - وَعُتِبَتْهُ قَدْ غَادَرْنَهُ وَهُوَ عَائِرٌ
12. وَسَيْبَةٌ وَالتَّيْمِيُّ غَادَرْنَ فِي الْوَعَى - وَمَا مِنْهُنَّ إِلَّا يَذِي الْعَرْشِ كَافِرٌ
13. فَأَمْسُوا وَقُوَّةُ النَّارِ فِي مُسْتَفْرَّهَا - وَكُلُّ كَفَّورٍ فِي جَهَنَّمَ صَائِرٌ
14. تَلَطَّى عَلَيْهِمْ وَهِيَ قَدْ شَبَّ حَمِيهَا - بِزُبُرِ الْحَدِيدِ وَالْحِجَارَةِ سَاجِرٌ
15. وَكَانَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ قَدْ قَالَ أَقْبِلُوا - فَوَلَّوْا وَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ سَاحِرٌ
16. لِأَمْرِ أَرَادَ اللَّهُ أَنْ يَهْلِكُوا بِهِ - وَلَيْسَ لِأَمْرِ حَمَهُ اللَّهُ زَاجِرٌ

Trans. AG:

1. I wonder at God's decree, since He does what he wills, none can defeat Him
2. He decreed that we should meet at Badr an evil band (and evil leads to death)<sup>496</sup>
3. They had summoned their neighbours on all sides until they formed a great host
4. At us alone they came with ill intent, Ka'b and 'Amir and all of them<sup>497</sup>
5. With us was the Messenger of God with Aws around him like a strong impregnable fortress<sup>498</sup>
6. The tribes of Banū Najjar beneath his banner advancing in light armour while dust rose high

<sup>496</sup> MC: "The ways of evil lead people astray"

<sup>497</sup> MC: "They leaped towards us, all of Ka'b and 'Amir not seeking anyone else but us".

<sup>498</sup> On my adaptation of Guillaume's translation of *rasul Allāh* as "God's apostle", see section: A note on the translation and interpretation of poetry" in 1. Introduction.

7. When we met them and every steadfast warrior ventured his life with his comrades
8. We testified to the unity of God<sup>499</sup> and that His apostle brought the truth
9. When our light swords were unsheathed 't was though fires flashed at their movement<sup>500</sup>
10. With them we smote them and they scattered and the impious<sup>501</sup> met death
11. Abū Jahl lay dead on his face and 'Utba our swords left in the dust<sup>502</sup>
12. Shayba and al-Taymī they left on the battlefield, everyone of them denied Him who sitteth on the throne<sup>503</sup>
13. They became fuel for Hell, for every unbeliever must go there
14. It will consume them, while the stoker increases its heat with pieces of iron and stone
15. The Messenger of God had called them to him<sup>504</sup> but they turned away, saying, 'You are nothing but a sorcerer'
16. Because God willed to destroy them, and none can avert what He decrees.

The use of the same metre and rhyme and the parallel phrasing in the first verse of the poems DK13 and KM01 point to one poem being a reply to the other. Generally speaking, and compared with the poems by his fellow Helper poet Ḥassān b. Thābit, the compositions dealing with nascent Islam attributed to Ka'b b. Mālik are less tribal and more pious, with many references to belief and disbelief and quotes or references to Qur'ānic passages.<sup>505</sup> This pious disposition is manifest in this poem too, with confessions of sorts in the first, the middle, and the last verses (vv.1,8,16).

Contrary to DK13, in Ka'b's poem it is obvious from the start that the battle that has been fought was more than just an ordinary war between tribes or clans: it was a fight of good against evil. At the same time, the old tribal lens is not completely absent from Ka'b's discourse on allegiance: he speaks of the assistance of the Aws and the Najjār to the "Messenger of God" (vv.5-6), but he does not mention any Qurashī Emigrant siding with Muḥammad. Although the description of the battle in vv.3-6 and vv.9-12 does not differ much from those in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍḍram* battle poems, we cannot say the same of v.7, in which we find the idea of fighting in sacrifice for

<sup>499</sup> MC: "We testified that God, there is no lord beside him".

<sup>500</sup> The image used is that of the small, incandescent piece of wood used to transfer fire from one place to another.

<sup>501</sup> Lit.: "who deviated".

<sup>502</sup> Abū Jahl 'Amr b. Hishām b. al-Mughira al-Makhzūmī. 'Utba b. Rabī'a b. 'Abd al-Shams. Variant: 'āfir ("full of dust").

<sup>503</sup> Shayba b. Rabī'a b. 'Abd al-Shams, brother of 'Utba (v.11). al-Taymī: either 'Uthmān b. Mālik b. 'Ubayd Allāh or 'Umayr b. 'Uthmān b. 'Amr, the two men from the Taym b. Murra who were killed at Badr by followers of Muḥammad: Ka'b b. Mālik al-Anṣārī, *Dīwān*, 201; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:710.

<sup>504</sup> MC: "had called: Come forward!"

<sup>505</sup> Imhof, 'The Qur'ān and the Prophet's Poet', 389–90; W. Montgomery Watt, 'Ka'b b. Mālik', *EL2*, 4:315-16. In line with this piety and closeness to Muḥammad we are told that Ka'b transmitted many traditions on Muḥammad; Ka'b b. Mālik al-Anṣārī, *Dīwān*, 55–56.

the survival of one's kin.<sup>506</sup> Vv.13-14, with their description of a punishment in the afterlife, similarly depart from the common pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* notions on life and afterlife. The focus lies not on this life's trials and the unavoidable death, on the end of everything except for the amassed glory and great deeds.<sup>507</sup> On the contrary, Ka'b speaks of an afterlife, describing rather graphically the torture of Hell (vv.13-14).

The error of the enemy is that they, contrary to Ka'b's group (v.8), did not heed the call of the "Messenger of God" (v.15) and did not recognise his authority as being sent with the truth by God. The error, deviation, and unbelief logically lead to the inescapable divine decree of their destruction (v.16). In pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poems, Fate was envisioned as an impersonal force that had to be faced with determination and resignation, but that could not be escaped.<sup>508</sup> It determined one's span of life, but did not depend on how one lived—Fate was blind, so to speak: it did not distinguish between young and old, poor and rich, good and bad. The power of God's decree as described by Ka'b, on the contrary, specifically targets individuals and groups, while their destiny in the afterlife depends on their beliefs and behaviour, that is, on whether they recognise God's authority or not.

Ibn Hishām states that Ka'b's KM01 is a reply to Ḍirār's DK13.<sup>509</sup> I would argue for the contrary, for Ḍirār explicitly addresses a hostile audience (DK13 v.9), and in the final verses of his poem he seems to present his version of the events as opposed to the enemy claiming the victory for the Aws and Najjār (DK13 vv.13-15). In addition, his opening of the poem seems to be a sarcastic countering of that of Ka'b: while Ka'b expresses his wonder at God's deeds and marvels at the victory (KM01 v.1), Ḍirār dismisses the boasting of the Banū Aws and Najjār (perhaps Ka'b's boasting in KM01) as hollow and vain (DK13 vv.1-2).

### *Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the battle of Uḥud (3/625)*

Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb also fought at the battle of Uḥud (3/625) against Muḥammad and his followers, both Emigrants and Helpers. The Quraysh had marched against Muḥammad in order to set right

---

<sup>506</sup> See the comments to DK12.

<sup>507</sup> Homerin, 'Echoes of a Thirsty Owl'; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 57.

<sup>508</sup> See DK01.

<sup>509</sup> Ibn Kathīr is inclined towards the same interpretation: he once quotes the whole poem by Ka'b omitting that of Ḍirār; a second time he quotes only the first verse as a reply by Ka'b to Ḍirār. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:13–14; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:526–27, 534–35.

their defeat at Badr and to avenge their dead. Although they did not destroy the enemy army completely, they were able to put Muḥammad and his followers to flight.

It is in the context of the battle of Uḥud that a famous account of Ḍirār is transmitted: Ḍirār boasted of having killed several enemies at Uḥud by saying that he had “married ten companions of Muḥammad to the *ḥūr al-ʿin*”. The *ḥūr al-ʿin* are found in the Qurʾān in promises related to paradise: the believers will be paired with (or: married to) these “beautiful ones with large eyes” or “wide-eyed houris” (Q 44: 54; 52: 20; 56: 22).<sup>510</sup> By adopting this Qurʾānic terminology, Ḍirār not only boasts of his achievements on the battlefield but also seems to sarcastically mock the ideas of an afterlife as preached by Muḥammad. And yet, it is said that during the same battle of Uḥud Ḍirār had the opportunity to kill the Emigrant ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb but that he only beat him with the sword and told him: “Off with you, Ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, I won’t kill you”, for he had vowed not to kill a fellow Qurashī.<sup>511</sup>

His refusal to kill a man from his own tribe did not stop Ḍirār from celebrating the death of other Emigrants. In his corpus, five poems are related to Uḥud. In the following poem Ḍirār looks back on the battlefield and seems to reflect upon the events that led up to the battle and which forced him to fight against people from his own kin:<sup>512</sup>

[DK14 *basīṭ*]

1. مَا بَالُ عَيْنِكَ قَدْ أُرْزِيَ بِهَا الشُّهُدُ – كَأَنَّمَا جَالَ فِي أَجْفَانِهَا الرِّمْدُ
2. أَمِنْ فِرَاقِ حَبِيبٍ كُنْتَ تَأَلَّمُهُ – قَدْ حَالَ مِنْ دُونِهِ الْأَعْدَاءُ وَالْبُعْدُ
3. أَمْ ذَاكَ مِنْ شَغَبِ قَوْمٍ لَا جِدَاءَ بِهِمْ – إِذِ الْخُرُوبُ تَلَطَّطَتْ نَارَهَا تَقْدُ
4. مَا يَنْتَهُونَ عَنِ الْعَيِّ الَّذِي رَكِبُوا – وَمَا لَهُمْ مِنْ لُؤْيٍ وَيَحْتَهُمْ عَضْدُ

<sup>510</sup> M. Jarrar, ‘Houris’, *EQ*, 2:456-458; Ruth Roded, ‘Women and the Qurʾān’, *EQ*, 5:540.

<sup>511</sup> See the comments to DK13. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:415; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:89; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:106-7; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 434-35; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 726 n. 224. Reportedly, Ḍirār was not the only one who felt torn in the fight against Muḥammad and his followers, among them his own kin. At the earlier battle of Badr, the Qurashī ʿUtba b. Rabīʿa is said to have called the Quraysh to abandon the fight against Muḥammad, for they might be forced to kill their own relatives. He wished other tribes would fight against Muḥammad and solve the problem for the Quraysh. Another Qurashī leader, Abū Jahl, rejected the idea of retreating, and reproached ʿUtba for his supposed cowardice and the fear that his son, among the Emigrants, would be killed by his own group. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:623.

<sup>512</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 50-53 nr. 4; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:164-65; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-Athar*, 1993, 2:49; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 423-24.

5. وَقَدْ نَشَدْنَاَهُمْ بِاللَّهِ قَاطِبَةً - فَمَا تَرُدُّهُمْ الْأَرْحَامُ وَالنَّشْدُ
6. حَتَّى إِذَا مَا أَبَوْا إِلَّا مُحَارَبَةً - وَاسْتَحْصَدَتْ بَيْنَنَا الْأَضْغَانُ وَالْحَقِيدُ
7. سِرْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ بِجَيْشٍ فِي جَوَانِبِهِ - قَوَانِسُ الْبَيْضِ وَالْمَحْبُوكَةُ الشُّرْدُ
8. وَالْجُرْدُ تَرْفُلُ بِالْأَبْطَالِ شَارِبَةً - كَانَتْهَا حِدًّا فِي سِيرِهَا تَوْدُ
9. جَيْشٌ يَقُودُهُمْ صَخْرٌ وَيَرَأْسُهُمْ - كَانَهُ لَيْثٌ غَابٍ هَاصِرٌ حَرْدُ
10. فَأَبْرَزَ الْحَيْنَ قَوْمًا مِنْ مَنَازِلِهِمْ - فَكَانَ مِنَّا وَمِنْهُمْ مُلْتَقَى أُحُدُ
11. فَعُودِرَتْ مِنْهُمْ قَتْلَى مُجَدَّلَةٌ - كَالْمَعْرِ أَصْرَدَهُ بِالصَّرْدِحِ الْبِرْدُ
12. قَتَلَى كِرَامُ بَنُو النَّجَارِ وَسَطَهُمْ - وَمُضْعَبٌ مِنْ فَنَانَا حَوْلَهُ قِصْدُ
13. وَحَمْرَةُ الْقُرْمِ مَضْرُوعٌ تُطِيفُ بِهِ - تُكَلَّى وَقَدْ حَزَّ مِنْهُ الْأَنْفُ وَالْكَبِدُ
14. كَانَهُ حِينَ يَكْبُؤُ فِي جَدِّيَّتِهِ - تَحْتَ الْعِجَاجِ وَفِيهِ تَعَلَّبٌ جَسِدُ
15. حُورًا نَابٍ وَقَدْ وَلَّى صَحَابَتُهُ - كَمَا تَوَلَّى التَّعَامُ الْهَارِبُ الشُّرْدُ
16. مُجَلِّحِينَ وَلَا يَلُؤُونَ قَدْ مُلِئُوا - رُغْبًا فَجَنَجَتْهُمْ الْعَوْصَاءُ وَالْكُؤْدُ
17. تَبْكِي عَلَيْهِمْ نِسَاءٌ لَا بُعُولَ لَهَا - مِنْ كُلِّ سَالِيَةٍ أَثْوَابُهَا قَدَدُ
18. وَقَدْ تَرَكْنَاَهُمْ لِلطَّيْرِ مَلْحَمَةً - وَلِلضَّبَاعِ إِلَى أَجْسَادِهِمْ تَفْدُ

Trans. AG:

1. What ails thine eye which sleeplessness affects as though pain were in thine eyelids?
2. Is it for the loss of a friend whom you hold dear, parted by distance and foes?<sup>513</sup>
3. Or is it because of the mischief of a useless people when wars blaze with burning heat?
4. They cease not from the error they have committed. Woe to them! No helper have they from Lu'ayy
5. We adjured them all by God, but neither kinship nor oaths deterred them<sup>514</sup>
6. Till finally when they determined on war against us and injustice and bad feeling had grown strong,
7. We attacked them with an army flanked by helmeted strong mailed men<sup>515</sup>
8. And slender horses sweeping along with warriors like kites, so smooth was their gait;<sup>516</sup>

<sup>513</sup> Or: "with whom you were close".

<sup>514</sup> Or: "we made them swear by God", "made them return". The metre of the verse is inconsistent.

<sup>515</sup> Lit.: "on its flanks white peaks [of helmets] and closely woven mail-coats made of rings". *Qawnas* pl. *qawānis*: lit.: the peak of a helmet; Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber*, 351.

<sup>516</sup> *Ḥadāt* pl. *ḥadā'*: also "arrowhead". The pronunciation *ḥidāt* pl. *ḥidā'* is more common for the bird; cf. Lane s.v. *ḥ-d'*.

9. An army which Ṣakhr led and commanded like an angry lion of the jungle tearing his prey<sup>517</sup>
10. Death brought out a people from their dwellings, we and they met at Uḥud
11. Some of them were left stone dead like goats which the hail has frozen to the cold ground
12. Noble dead, the Banū Najjār in their midst, and Muṣ'ab with broken pieces of our shafts around him<sup>518</sup>
13. And Ḥamza the chief, prostrate, his widow going round him. His nose and liver had been cut away. It was<sup>519</sup>
14. As if, when he fell, he bled beneath the dust, transfixed by a lance on which the blood had dried
15. He was the colt of an old she-camel whose companions had fled as frightened ostriches run away
16. Rushing headlong filled with terror, the steep precipitous rocks aiding their escape
17. Husbandless women weep over them in mourning garb rent in pieces
18. We left them to the vultures on the battlefield and to the hyaenas who made for their bodies.

The opening of the poem is traditional: the poet brings back the sorrowful memories of a now distant beloved.<sup>520</sup> Using the poetical conventions of his time, Ḍirār transforms the lament over the broken ties between lovers into a lament over the broken ties of kinship. The answer to the rhetorical question (v.2) regarding the cause of the insomnia and sorrow<sup>521</sup> is that they are not the result of the parting of a friend or a beloved, but much worse, they are the result of the departure of a whole group (vv.3-5). This group or people (*qawm*) is described in negative terms; they have been stirred up to mischief and are useless on the battlefield (vv.3-4). Neither the ties of blood (*arḥām*) nor the oaths (promises, threats?) that tied them to Ḍirār and his people had any effect on them (v.5). It comes as no surprise that Ḍirār states that this group is not supported (anymore?) by “Lu'ayy” after the failed attempts to make them return to the right path (vv.4-5).<sup>522</sup> As the ancestor of a large branch within the Quraysh, “Lu'ayy” in v.4 may be understood as a reference to the Quraysh as a whole as represented by their most prominent clans and leaders.

<sup>517</sup> MC: “lion of the woods”. Ṣakhr: Abū Sufyān Ṣakhr b. Ḥarḇ.

<sup>518</sup> Muṣ'ab: Muṣ'ab b. 'Umayr, from the Banū 'Abd al-Dār.

<sup>519</sup> Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, paternal uncle of Muḥammad. *Thaklā*: a woman bereft of her child, i.e. “his bereft mother”, and not “his widow”, as Guillaume translates it. Lane s.v. *th-k-l*.

<sup>520</sup> Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 24; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 77–78; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:75–76.

<sup>521</sup> See DK12 and DK13 v.7.

<sup>522</sup> The reference to God in this poem by Ḍirār against the followers of Muḥammad (v.5) is curious but does not necessarily point to a later dating of the composition. Such references in oaths, blessings, and imprecations were not uncommon in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍḍam* poetry. See the comments to DK10; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 10–11, 18–19.

While in a conventional *nasīb* or amatory opening of an ode the beloved belonged to a different tribe and the departure of the beloved usually was due to the seasonal transhumance,<sup>523</sup> it is clear that the people addressed by ʿDirār belong to his own kin, and that their departure can only be explained as an “error” (v.4). Not content with leaving, they have decided to take up arms against their kin (v.6).

In vv.7-9 and vv.11-18 we find a description of the battle through the eyes of ʿDirār, who focuses, as we would expect, on his group (v.9) and its achievements (vv.11-13). V.10 seems to cut the description of the fight in two parts. In this verse, ʿDirār looks back once again on the causes that led to this war: “Death (*al-ḥayn*) brought out (or: expelled) a people from their dwellings”. The term *ḥayn* bears the connotation of “appointed time (by Fate)”, thus indicating the unavoidable defeat of the enemy. It is unclear whether ʿDirār had a specific “dwelling” (*manzil*, pl. *manāzil*) in mind. It could be Mecca, in which case the verse should be understood as directed at the Qurashī individuals who, against the ideal of allegiance and loyalty to their tribe, had joined a strange group (v.12) only to be destroyed now on the battlefield. However, it could also be a more general statement directed at the enemy, including the Quraysh among them.

Until now ʿDirār has alluded to the enemy only implicitly and as a group from his own tribe, but now he also mentions the Banū Najjār, a clan from the Yathribī Banū Khazraj (v.12). The poet does not try to explain the alliance between the Najjār and Qurashī men like Muṣʿab and Ḥamza (vv.12-13) against the rest of the Quraysh. Neither does he try to differentiate between the Banū Najjār and the Qurashī individuals among them. While in one of his poems on the earlier battle of Badr (DK13) ʿDirār distinguished between the two groups among the enemy, in this case the Banū Najjār as much as the Qurashī individuals on their side are to be defeated (vv.15-18).

ʿDirār closes the poem with a description of the fate of the enemies who were unable to flee: they are bewailed by their women (v.17) and their dead bodies are exposed to the wild animals (v.17). The ties of kinship that once bound them have indeed been cut, but now from both sides. Earlier ʿDirār blamed the other side for their neglect of the ties of blood (vv.3-5), but now he himself does not even allude to this allegiance anymore. He ignores the fact that at least some of the widowed women (v.17) belonged to the Quraysh, as well as the fact that at least some of the bodies lying in the dust must have been bodies of Qurashī individuals.

---

<sup>523</sup> Jacobi, *Studien Zur Poetik der Altarabischen Qaṣīde*, 13–49; Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 24–25; Wagner, *Grundzüge*, 1:83–100.

As the composition of a proud victor, in this poem we also find the discursive strand on authority. A lowered or cut-off nose (v.13), or a nose tied with a halter, was an image for humiliation and submission.<sup>524</sup> Throughout the poem Ḍirār uses vibrant metaphors and images from the animal world to characterise the dominance of his group over that of the enemy: like fierce animals of prey they are fixated on their victims (vv.8-9), reduced to frightened and helpless prey (vv.11,15-16).

Interestingly, Ḍirār does not mention Muḥammad as a chief of the opposing group, but instead mentions as a leader of the enemy Muḥammad's paternal uncle Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (v.13).<sup>525</sup> Ḍirār's description of Ḥamza's fate at Uḥud follows what we read in some *sīra* and *maghāzī* accounts:<sup>526</sup> we are told that Hind bt. 'Utba and other women from the Quraysh went around on the battlefield of Uḥud cutting off the noses and ears of the dead enemies from Muḥammad's side. When Hind found Ḥamza, she reportedly cut out his liver and chewed on it.<sup>527</sup>

In the following short poem on Uḥud (3/625) Ḍirār praises his sword and his people:<sup>528</sup>

[DK15 *basīṭ*]

1. فَمَا السَّحَابُ غَدَاةَ الْحَرِّ مِنْ أُحُدٍ - بِنَاكِلِ الْحَدِّ إِذْ عَايَنْتُ غَسَّانَا
2. غَادَرْتُ مِنْهُمْ بِجَنْبِ الْقَاعِ مَلْحَمَةً - صَرَغَى فَمَا عَدَلُوا يَا مَيِّ قَتَلَانَا
3. فَلَوْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ وَالْخَيْلُ تُنْتَبِئُهُمْ - وَالْبَيْضُ تَأْخُذُهُمْ مَتْنَى وَوَحْدَانَا
4. أَيْقَنْتِ أَنْ بَنِي فِهْرِ وَإِخْوَتَهُمْ - كَانُوا لَدَى الْقَاعِ يَوْمَ الرُّوعِ فُرْسَانَا

1. Al-Saḥāb, the morning of the fight at Uḥud, did not hesitate when I saw those from Ghassān<sup>529</sup>

<sup>524</sup> See for example: Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:101–5 nr. 22 v.11; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 80 nr. 28 v.3.

<sup>525</sup> Similarly to his poems on Badr (DK12, DK13).

<sup>526</sup> On the variant accounts of Hind at Uḥud and their interpretation, see N.A. Boekhoff-van der Voort, 'Hind Bint 'Utba, de "Levereetster": Verhalen over Een Invloedrijke Vrouw Uit de Tijd van de Profeet Muhammad', in *Jaarboek Voor Vrouwengeschiedenis*, 29, n.d., 43–60.

<sup>527</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:91; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 1:286; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:524–25. On the liver as a central part of one's body and the destruction of the liver as an image of total annihilation, see M. Rodinson, 'Kabid', *EL*, 4:327–33.

<sup>528</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 89 nr. 24; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 414. It is not found in Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*.

<sup>529</sup> Al-Saḥāb: the name of Ḍirār's sword; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 414; Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber*, 170, 370. Ghassān: reference to the Banū Aws and the Banū Khazraj, from the tribe of Ghassān; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 89.



2. I left them prostrated on the low ground as a meat place, thrown down – But they were not equal, O Mayy, to our dead
3. If you had seen them, the horses trampling them and the swords thrusting them, one or two at the time,
4. You would be certain that the Banū Fīhr and their brothers were true heroes at the lowlands that day of the battle.

By praising his sword al-Saḥāb (“the Cloud”, v.1), Ḍīrār is obviously also praising himself: having an outstanding sword or a noble riding animal was a show of nobility and heroism. We know the (nick-)names of many swords and horses of pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* heroes, often recorded in poems and in the bibliographical material by later authors and compilers.<sup>530</sup> We do not know anything about the woman Mayy mentioned in v.2,<sup>531</sup> whom Ḍīrār uses to make the point that the dead enemies can by no means be compared to the men slain among his group (v.2).

A brief survey of *mukhaḍram* poems shows that alluding to the Aws and Khazraj by the name of Ghassān is not common—Ḍīrār may have chosen it here to subtly point out their foreign past: while the Quraysh were considered to be a Northern Arabian group, the Aws and the Khazraj came from an originally Southern Arabian group, the Ghassān, from the Banū Azd.<sup>532</sup> Ḍīrār also may have employed this name to scornfully recall the ties of the Banū Ghassān of his time, relatives of the Aws and Khazraj, with the Roman empire on the fringes of the Arabian peninsula, but against this hypothesis speaks the fact that the tribes of Yathrib do not seem to have been closely tied to their distant relatives of the Banū Ghassān.<sup>533</sup> In addition, Ḍīrār does not further allude to this dependence from a foreign force to scorn the enemy.

The discursive strands on allegiance and authority are deeply entangled in this poem. Blood vengeance is explained in research as a means to restore the lost honour and balance

---

<sup>530</sup> See among others the following monographs: Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber*; Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821) and Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. ‘Alī Ibn al-‘Arabī, *Les Livres Des Chevaux’ de Hiṣām Ibn al-Kalbī et Muḥammad Ibn al-A‘rābī*, ed. Giorgio Levi Della Vida, Uitgaven van de Stichting de Goeje 8 (Leiden: Brill, 1928).

<sup>531</sup> Such references to real or imaginary women as addressees are frequent in Arabic poetry; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 205.

<sup>532</sup> The ancestry of the Quraysh is commonly traced back to ‘Adnān, considered the ancestor of the Northern Arabian tribes; Watt, ‘Quraysh’; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 1:46. The ascendancy of the Aws and Khazraj is traced back to Qaḥṭān, ancestor of the Southern Arabian tribes; W. Montgomery Watt, ‘al-Aws’, *EL2*, 1:771-72; W. Montgomery Watt, ‘al-Khazradj’, *EL2*, 4:1187; Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 3:320. See also chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*. On the genealogical system organising all pre-Islamic groups into one family tree, see Webb, who states that it must have been invented in ‘Abbāsīd times; Webb, ‘Identity and Social Formation’, 136.

<sup>533</sup> Irfan Shahid, ‘Ghassān’, *EL2*, 2:1020-21.

between groups, but, as we see in this verse, the idea of balance should not be mistaken for equality and reciprocity; it manifests the need to display supremacy and power. By killing several men in revenge for one single mortal victim, a clan or group could express that their members were more honourable than the members of the other group.<sup>534</sup>

In vv.1-2 it seems that the dead enemies have all been killed by the poet, but in vv.3-4 the perspective is widened: others have fought next to Ḍirār. He had referred to the enemy through the name of a distant ancestor (v.1), and likewise he refers to his own group by the name of Fihr, the ancestor of the Quraysh (v.4).<sup>535</sup> It is unclear whether Ḍirār intended the “Banū Fihr” as a reference to the Quraysh as a whole or as a specific reference to his own clan, the Muḥārib b. Fihr (and its allies within the Quraysh).<sup>536</sup> We cannot exclude that the ambiguity was intended by the poet, or at least that different audiences may have understood the reference differently. If he is speaking of the Quraysh, the “brothers” (v.4) probably are their relatives from the Banū Kināna who fought alongside them at Uḥud. If he is speaking of the Muḥārib b. Fihr and its allies, the “brothers” must be the other Qurashī clans, descendants of Fihr through a different branch.

In his poems on the battle of Badr and Uḥud discussed above, Ḍirār portrays the fight mainly as a war between tribes (DK12, DK14), sometimes with an allusion to Quraysh among the enemy troops, but only as individuals (DK13). The following poem by Ḍirār on Uḥud opens with a different perspective: the enemy army ready to attack Ḍirār and his group is formed by a troop from the Quraysh (indicated as Banū Ka'b, a branch from the Quraysh) *together* with the “Khazrajiyya” people:<sup>537</sup>

[DK16 *basīṭ*]

1. لَمَّا أَتَتْ مِنْ بَنِي كَعْبٍ مُزَيَّنَةً - وَالْخَزْرَجِيَّةُ فِيهَا الْبَيْضُ تَأْتَلِقُ
2. وَجَرُّدُوا مَشْرِفِيَّاتٍ مُهَنَّدَةً - وَرَايَةً كَجَنَاحِ النَّسْرِ تَحْتَفِقُ
3. فَفَلْتُ يَوْمَ بَأْيَامٍ وَمَعْرَكَةٍ - تُنْبِي لِمَا خَلَفَهَا مَا هُرْهَرَ الْوَرَقُ

<sup>534</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>535</sup> See a similar ambiguity in DK03.

<sup>536</sup> The three Qurashī clans Muḥārib b. Fihr, Ma'īṣ b. 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy, and al-Adram b. Ghālib were known as Banū Fihr; see the comments to DK03.

<sup>537</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 72–74 nr. 15; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:145–46; al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 141; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 413–14.

4. قَدْ عُوذُوا كُلَّ يَوْمٍ أَنْ تَكُونَ لَهُمْ – رِيحُ الْقِتَالِ وَأَسْلَابُ الَّذِينَ لَقُوا
5. خَيْرْتُ نَفْسِي عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْ وَجَلٍ – مِنْهَا وَأَيَقَنْتُ أَنَّ الْمَجْدَ مُسْتَبِقُ
6. أَكْرَهْتُ مُهْرِي حَتَّى خَاضَ عَمَرْتَهُمْ – وَبَلَّهُ مِنْ نَجِيعِ عَائِكِ عَلَقُ
7. فَظَلَّ مُهْرِي وَسِرْبَالِي جَسِيدُهُمَا – نَفْخُ الْعُرُوقِ رِشَاشُ الطَّعْنِ وَالْوَرَقُ
8. أَيَقَنْتُ أَنِّي مُقِيمٌ فِي دِيَارِهِمْ – حَتَّى يُفَارِقَ مَا فِي جَوْفِهِ الْحَدَقُ
9. لَا تَجْرَعُوا يَا بَنِي مَخْزُومٍ إِنَّ لَكُمْ – مِثْلُ الْمُغِيرَةِ فِيكُمْ مَا بِهِ زَهْقُ
10. صَبْرًا فِدَى لَكُمْ أُمِّي وَمَا وَلَدَتْ – تَعَاوَرُوا الضَّرْبَ حَتَّى يُدِيرَ الشَّفَقُ

Trans. AG:

1. When there came from Ka'b a squadron and the Khazrajiyya with glittering swords<sup>538</sup>
2. And they drew their Mashrafiyya swords and displayed a flag fluttering like the wings of an eagle<sup>539</sup>
3. I said, This will be a battle worth many a battle, it will be talked of as long as leaves fall
4. Every day they have been accostumed to gain the victory in battle and the spoils of those they encountered
5. I forced myself to be steadfast when I felt afraid and I was certain that glory could only be got in the forefront<sup>540</sup>
6. I forced my steed to plunge into their ranks and drenched him with their blood<sup>541</sup>
7. My horse and my armour were coloured with blood that spurted from their veins and coagulated
8. I felt sure I should stay in their dwellings for ever and a day<sup>542</sup>
9. Do not despair, O Banū Makhzūm, for you have men like al-Mughīra, men without blame<sup>543</sup>
10. Be steadfast, may my mother and my brothers<sup>544</sup> be your ransom, exchanging blows until time be no more.<sup>545</sup>

<sup>538</sup> MC: "from the Banū Ka'b".

<sup>539</sup> MC: "Mashrafiyya swords from India". Mashrafiyya: a type of swords; Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber*, 125, 131.

<sup>540</sup> MC: "[Then] I gave preference to courage over what was of fear". Guillaume choses to read *ṣabbartu nafsi* ("I made my soul steadfast") for *khayyartu nafsi*, but no older versions support this reading. If we follow instead the reading *khayyartu nafsi*, *nafsi* must be taken as "my courage" or the like instead of "my soul".

<sup>541</sup> MC: "I spurred my foal until it waded through their rank at the centre of the fight, and it became stained with clots of blood from a red abdominal wound".

<sup>542</sup> Lit.: "until the pupil of my eye would separate from what is in it".

<sup>543</sup> Al-Mughīra: al-Mughīra b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Amr b. Makhzūm, an ancestor and leader of the Banū Makhzūm, a Qurashī clan to which belonged, among others, Khalīd b. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, one of the leaders of the Quraysh at Uḥud.

<sup>544</sup> Lit.: "what was born of her".

<sup>545</sup> Lit.: "until the evening glow disappears".

V.1 could be a description of both contending sides, the Khazrajiyya *against* the group of the poet, but this is improbable in light of the verses that follow: in v.2 Ḍirār speaks of one group gathered under a single banner and ready to attack the enemy, while in vv.4-8 the poet presents himself as fighting alone against a large group. It is not until v.9 that he introduces those that fight alongside him. The two groups in v.1, then, must be taken as allies: a section from the Quraysh have joined the Banū Khazraj in their fight against Ḍirār and his people.

The battle promises to be fierce as the enemy has been victorious in the past (v.4; probably an implicit reference to their victory at Badr). Facing the impressive enemy army, the poet seems to stand alone (vv.5-8).<sup>546</sup> Nonetheless, he does not allow himself to give in to fear, reminding himself that glory, the honour that derives from great deeds, has to be achieved and defended (v.5). Following the graphical description of the battlefield (vv.6-7), Ḍirār shows in v.8 that he followed his own advice in v.5: he was certain of the victory that would allow him to stay in the enemy area.<sup>547</sup>

Until now it had been the poet against the rest (vv.3-8), but in v.9 Ḍirār addresses his group, with special praise for al-Mughīra, from the Qurashī clan of the Banū Makhzūm.<sup>548</sup> Although the verse seems to speak of an individual, it must be taken as a reference to the group, the descendants of al-Mughīra b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amr al-Makhzūmī, for al-Mughīra can hardly have been alive anymore when the battle took place.<sup>549</sup> This reference to al-Mughīra (or: Āl Mughīra) moves the focus away from the poet and centres it on a larger group within the Quraysh. It also highlights the tensions within the Quraysh, for the Makhzūm descended from Fihri, ancestor of the Quraysh, through the line of Ka‘b b. Lu‘ayy b. Ghālib b. Fihri, part of which group has now joined the Banū Khazraj in the fight against their own brothers (v.1). The call to fight in v.10,<sup>550</sup> although preceded by the praise directed at the Āl Mughīra, is probably intended for the group as a whole.

<sup>546</sup> See also DK15, with a similar focus first and foremost on his individual achievements.

<sup>547</sup> Another interpretation could be: Ḍirār is conscious that he might die. According to Bravmann, the verb *aqāma* and participle *muqīm* are frequently used in the sense of “to die, to be buried”.

<sup>548</sup> See DK12 v.10.

<sup>549</sup> The date of his death is unknown, but al-Mughīra is the grandfather of, among others, Abū Jahl and Khālid b. al-Walid, who were leaders—and thus men of a certain age—of the Quraysh in times of Muḥammad; M. Hinds, ‘Makhzūm’, *EL2*, 6:137-40.

<sup>550</sup> A promise to ransom someone with one’s property, one’s relatives or even oneself is an expression of loyalty and close ties, and as such a common phrase (even a cliché, according to Jones) in early Arabic poetry. We find it in poems by Ibn al-Zibā‘rā and al-Ḥuṭay‘a too; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 207.

The fact that ʿDirār and his people faced an army composed not just of the tribes from Yathrib but also from a group of the Quraysh (v.1) is not further developed. To face his own kinsmen on the battlefield also does not deter him: he is fully committed to the endeavour. As we have come to expect at this point, ʿDirār does not pay attention to the causes of the battle and the reason why people from the Quraysh are siding with different tribes against their own kin. Contrary to what we saw in DK14, in this poem (as in DK15) ʿDirār does not bewail what could be seen as treason to the ties of blood. He neither emphasises nor condemns the Quraysh who side with the people of Yathrib: he states the facts as they are and exerts himself and his group to fight with all their strength against the enemy, whomever they are (vv.5,10).

Among the many poems composed on the battle of Uḥud (3/625) there is one by the Helper poet Kaʿb b. Mālik to which ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb composed a poetical reply.<sup>551</sup> In his composition, Kaʿb emphasises Muḥammad’s leadership and the unity of the group around him. The poem reads:<sup>552</sup>

[KM02 *mutaqārib*]

1. نَشَجْتَ وَهَلْ لَكَ مِنْ مُنْشِجٍ - وَكُنْتَ مَتَى تَذَكِّرُ تَلَجَجٍ
2. تَذَكَّرُ قَوْمٍ أَتَانِي لَهُمْ - أَحَادِيثُ فِي الزَّمَنِ الْأَعْوَجِ
3. فَقَلْبُكَ مِنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ خَافِقٌ - مِنَ الشَّوْقِ وَالْحَزَنِ الْمُنْضِجِ
4. وَقَتْلَاهُمْ فِي جِنَانِ النَّعِيمِ - كِرَامِ الْمَدَاخِلِ وَالْمَحْرَجِ
5. بِمَا صَبَرُوا تَحْتَ ظِلِّ اللِّوَاءِ - لِيَوَاءِ الرَّسُولِ بِذِي الْأَضْوَجِ
6. غَدَاةً أَجَابَتْ بِأَسْيَافِهَا - جَمِيعًا بَنُو الْأَوْسِ وَالْخَزْرَجِ
7. وَأَشْيَاعُ أَحْمَدَ إِذْ شَايَعُوا - عَلَى الْحَقِّ ذِي النُّورِ وَالْمَنْهَجِ
8. فَمَا بَرَحُوا يَضْرِبُونَ الْكُمَاةَ - وَيَمْمُضُونَ فِي الْقَسْطِ الْمُرْهَجِ

<sup>551</sup> See below. The metre of the two poems is identical, as is expected in such a pair of poems, but the rhyme differs: in Kaʿb’s *dīwān* the following poem is reported to end in *-j*, while ʿDirār’s poem ends in *-ji*. A *mutaqārib* ending in short+long is more common than an ending in long syllable, which is an argument in favour of the rhyme *-ji* instead of *j* also in Kaʿb’s poem.

<sup>552</sup> Kaʿb b. Mālik al-Anṣārī, *Dīwān*, 187–88 nr. 12; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:138–39; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira*, 1976, 3:12–13; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 4:56–57; al-ʿIṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 2:147; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 409–10. On the rhyme of this poem, see footnote 551.

9. كَذَلِكَ حَتَّى دَعَاهُمْ مَلِيكٌ - إِلَى جَنَّةِ دَوْحَةِ الْمَوْلِجِ
10. فَكُلُّهُمْ مَاتَ حُرَّ الْبَلَاءِ - عَلَى مِلَّةِ اللَّهِ لَمْ يَخْرُجْ
11. كَحَمْرَةَ لَمَّا وَفَى صَادِقًا - بِذِي هَبَّةٍ صَارِمٍ سَلْجِجِ
12. فَلَاقَاهُ عَبْدُ بَنِي نَوْفَلٍ - مُبْرِيرٌ كَالْجَمَلِ الْأَدْعَجِ
13. فَأَوْجَرَهُ حَرَبَةً كَالشَّهَابِ - تَلَهَّبُ فِي اللَّهَبِ الْمُوهَجِ
14. وَنُعْمَانٌ أَوْفَى بِمِيثَاقِهِ - وَحَنْظَلَةُ الْخَيْرِ لَمْ يُخْنِجِ
15. عَنِ الْحَقِّ حَتَّى غَدَّتْ رُوْحُهُ - إِلَى مَنْزِلِ فَاخِرِ الزُّبْرَجِ
16. أَوْلَيْكَ لَا مَنْ تَوَى مِنْكُمْ - مِنْ النَّارِ فِي الدَّرَكِ الْمُرْتَجِ

Trans. AG:

1. You weep, but do you want one to stir you to tears? You who are lost in grief when you remember them
2. Remembering a people of whom stories have reached me in this crooked age
3. Your heart palpitates at the memory of them in longing and tearful sadness
4. Yet their dead are in lovely gardens, honoured in their exits and entrances
5. Because they were steadfast beneath the flag, the flag of the Messenger at Dhū al-Aḍwaj<sup>553</sup>
6. The morning when the Banū Aws and Khazraj all responded with their swords
7. And Ḥamad's supporters followed the truth, the light-giving straight way
8. They continually smote the warriors as they passed through the clouds of dust
9. Till at last the King summoned them to a garden with thick trees at its entrance<sup>554</sup>
10. All of them proved pure in the trial, died unflinchingly in God's religion<sup>555</sup>
11. Like Ḥamza when he proved his loyalty with a sharp well-whetted sword<sup>556</sup>
12. The slave of the Banū Nawfal met him, muttering like a huge black camel<sup>557</sup>
13. And pierced him with a lance like a flame that burns in a blazing fire
14. And Nu'mān fulfilled his promise and the good Ḥanzala turned not from the truth<sup>558</sup>

<sup>553</sup> Dhū al-Aḍwaj: according to Yāqūt: the proper name of a place near Uḥud; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 1:215. This poem by Ka'b and its reply by Ḍirār seem to be the only places in which the term is found. It is possible that it is not a proper name but a more general indication: "at the bendings of the *wādī*".

<sup>554</sup> *Jannati* is metrically incorrect; *jannatin* would be correct, but semantically problematic.

<sup>555</sup> I have not found any pre-Islamic attestation of the term *milla*, which occurs 15 times in the Qur'an and is commonly translated as "religion". It is not unlikely that Ka'b uses *milla* in the more general sense of "path, way of life as prescribed by God and as opposed to the customs of old as imposed by the opponents of Muḥammad" (see Q 14: 13).

<sup>556</sup> Ḥamza: Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, paternal uncle of Muḥammad.

<sup>557</sup> The slave of the Banū Nawfal: Waḥshī, Abyssinian slave of Jubayr b. al-Muṭ'im b. 'Ai b. Nawfal. In reward for killing Ḥamza it is said that he was manumitted by Jubayr; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:70-72.

<sup>558</sup> Lit.: "did not turn his face". Nu'mān: either Nu'mān b. 'Abd 'Amr or Nu'mān b. Mālik; both men belonged to the Khazraji clan of the Banū Najjār; Ibn Hishām, 2:125-26. Ḥanzala: Ḥanzala b. Abī 'Āmir al-Awsī, after

15. Until his spirit passed to a mansion resplendent in gold
16. Such are (true men) not those of your company who lie in nethermost hell with no escape.

This poem is an elegy on Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib and other men killed at Uḥud by the opponents of Muḥammad. Besides Muḥammad (“Aḥmad”),<sup>559</sup> Ḥamza is the only Qurashi Emigrant mentioned by Ka‘b, but his death is described in no less than three verses (vv.11-13).<sup>560</sup>

Ka‘b clearly asserts Muḥammad’s leadership. The group that he considers his own (“the Banū Aws and the Khazraj altogether”, v.6) is united not under their tribal banner but under “the banner of the Messenger” (v.5; see KM01 vv.5,8,15). In an earlier poem on Badr the poet spoke of the banner of the Najjār as differentiated from the banner of the Aws (KM01 vv.5-6), but here he presents the two tribes (v.6) as “Aḥmad’s supporters”, fighting as one for the sake of “the truth” (v.7). Contrary to the poems by Ḍirār on these battles, Ka‘b alludes here to the reasons or the purpose of the fight: his group, “Aḥmad’s supporters” or followers, fought heroically (vv.6,8) in defence of “the truth” and the “clear path”.<sup>561</sup> Those who died gave their lives not for their personal honour or that of their tribe, but “for God’s religion”.

The discursive strands on allegiance and authority (and afterlife) are clearly entangled in this poem. Ka‘b applies the notions of allegiance and loyalty not to relationships through blood but to this group, constituted by people from different tribes but united in following Muḥammad (vv.11,14). In pre-Islamic Arabia disloyalty to one’s kin and one’s allies was a serious offence, but according to Ka‘b this new sort of alliance under the authority of “the Messenger” (v.5) is rewarded: because of their truthfulness and loyalty to the compacts those who died in the battle are welcomed in a delightful garden (vv.4,9,14-15).<sup>562</sup> Of the enemy, only Ḥamza’s killer is mentioned (v.12), a slave belonging to the Banū Nawfal (v.12), a clan from the Quraysh. The Nawfal were close

---

his death known as *Ghasil al-Malā’ika*, “washed by the angels”, for reportedly, when Muḥammad heard that he had been killed, said: “The angels will prepare his body for burial”; Ibn Hishām, 2:75.

<sup>559</sup> On the use of *Aḥmad* as a name or title for Muḥammad, see DK13 v.9 and comments.

<sup>560</sup> See DK14 v.13 and comments.

<sup>561</sup> These terms appear frequently in the Qur’ān to refer to the message brought by Muḥammad and previous prophets, the divine revelation (Q 2: 257).

<sup>562</sup> The idea of an afterlife as alluded to in this poem is virtually absent from pre-Islamic compositions (see vv.9,16; also KM01); M. Abdeselem, ‘Mawt’, *EL2*, 6:910-911; Borg, *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer*, 11ff.; Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 32-38; Homerin, ‘Echoes of a Thirsty Owl’; James E. Montgomery, ‘Dichotomy in Jāhili Poetry’, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 17 (1986): 20. In addition, it is not Fate which determines one’s lifespan, but the King (*malik*; v.9), one of the names for God, also used in the Qur’ān. The title of *malik* appears in several *mukhaḍram* poems, and seems to have been a fairly common title for God (or: a god) already in pre-Islamic times. Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 18-19, 26-28.

relatives of Ḥamza's clan, the Banū Hāshim, and both groups belonged to the Banū 'Abd Manāf. However, Ka'b does not develop the implied intratribal conflict within the Quraysh and leaves it to the audience to derive any conclusions from it.

To Ḍirār is attributed a response to Ka'b's poem (KM02) on Uḥud. Against Ka'b's sorrow over the death of Ḥamza, Ḍirār wishes that he and the enemy suffer an even deeper grief:<sup>563</sup>

[DK17 *mutaqārib*]

1. أَيَجْرُعُ كَعْبٌ لِأَشْيَاعِهِ - وَيَبْكِي مِنَ الزَّمَنِ الْأَعْوَجِ
2. عَجِيجَ الْمُدَكِّي رَأَى الْفُهُ - تَرَوَّحَ فِي صَادِرٍ مُحْنَجِ
3. فَرَّاحَ الرِّوَايَا وَعَادَرْنَهُ - يُعْجَعِجُ فَسْرًا وَلَمْ يُجْدَجِ
4. فَقُولًا لِكَعْبٍ يُنْتِنِي الْبَكَا - وَلِلنَّيِّءِ مِنْ لَحْمِهِ يُنْضَجِ
5. لِمَضْرِعِ إِخْوَانِهِ فِي مَكْرٍ - مِنْ الْخَيْلِ ذِي قَسْطَلٍ مُرْهَجِ
6. فَيَا لَيْتَ عَمْرًا وَأَشْيَاعُهُ - وَعُتْبَةَ فِي جَمْعِنَا السَّوَجِ
7. فَيَشْفُو النَّفْسَ بِأَوْتَارِهَا - بِقَتْلَى أُصِيبَتْ مِنَ الْخَرْجِ
8. وَقَتْلَى مِنَ الْأَوْسِ فِي مَعْرِكٍ - أُصِيبُوا جَمِيعًا بِذِي الْأَضْجِ
9. وَمَقْتَلِ حَمْرَةَ تَحْتَ اللَّوَاءِ - بِمُطَرِّدِ مَارِنٍ مُخْلَجِ
10. وَحَيْثُ انْتَنَى مُصْعَبٌ ثَاوِيًا - بِضَرْبَةِ ذِي هَبَّةٍ سَلْجَجِ
11. بِأُحْدٍ وَأَشْيَافُنَا فِيهِمْ - تَلْهَبُ كَاللَّهَبِ الْمُوَهْجِ
12. عَدَاةَ لَقَيْنَاكُمْ فِي الْحَدِيدِ - كَأَسْدِ الْبِرَاحِ فَلَمْ تُعْنَجِ
13. بِكُلِّ مُجَلِّحَةٍ كَالْعُقَابِ - وَأَجْرَدَ ذِي مِيعَةٍ مُسْرَجِ
14. فَدُسْنَاهُمْ ثُمَّ حَتَّى انْتَنَوْا - سِوَى زَاهِقِ النَّفْسِ أَوْ مُحْرَجِ

Trans. AG:

1. Does Ka'b grieve over his followers and weep over a crooked age?<sup>564</sup>
2. Crying like an old camel who sees his companions returning at even while he is kept back?

<sup>563</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 47–49 nr. 3; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:139–40; al-ʿIṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 2:147–48; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 410–11.

<sup>564</sup> MC: "over his party".



3. The water camels pass on and leave him grumbling of ill-treatment while he is not even saddled for women
4. Say to Ka'b, 'Let him double his weeping and let him suffer the pain therefrom;
5. For the death of his brothers when the cavalry charged in clouds of rising dust'
6. Would that 'Amr and his followers and 'Utba had been in our flaming meeting-place<sup>565</sup>
7. That they might have slaked their vengeance on those of Khazraj who were slain<sup>566</sup>
8. And on those of Aws who died on the battlefield, all of them slain in Dhū al-Aḍwaj<sup>567</sup>
9. And the killing of Ḥamza under the flag with a pliant death-dealing lance<sup>568</sup>
10. And where Muṣ'ab fell and lay smitten by a sword's quick stroke<sup>569</sup>
11. In Uḥud when our swords flashed among them flaming like a roaring fire
12. On the morn we met you with swords like lions of the plains who cannot be turned back;
13. All our steeds like hawks, blood horses fiery, well-saddled<sup>570</sup>
14. We trod them down there until they fled except the dying or those hemmed in.

In his edition of the *Sīra*, Ibn Hishām notes that the attribution of this poem to Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb is doubtful, but offers no arguments for it.<sup>571</sup> In tone and topics it fits Ḍirār's corpus.

The poem opens with the portrayal of Ka'b b. Mālik inconsolably crying over something now lost forever (v.1), a mocking reference to Ka'b's *marthiya* on Ḥamza in the aftermath of the defeat of Ka'b's group at Uḥud (KM02). Ḍirār compares Ka'b to an old camel, reduced to a helpless, useless, and isolated onlooker—not even fit anymore as a riding animal for light jobs like carrying a woman (vv.2-3). Through two unnamed messengers Ḍirār exhorts Ka'b to redouble his laments (v.4), and proceeds to boast of the victory of his people (vv.5-14).

Although addressed to Ka'b, the poem also speaks to Ka'b's group, whom Ḍirār in v.1 calls "supporters" or "followers" of Ka'b, using the same substantive as Ka'b used in KM02 v.7 (*shī'a* pl. *ashyā'*). In the context of Ka'b's poem and in light of their fight under the "banner of the Messenger", this group may be understood as "followers of Muḥammad", gathered and led by him. In Ḍirār's poem, however, and considering that he also speaks of the "followers of 'Amr" in v.6, he probably uses *ashyā'* in the more general sense of "party", a people united in their affair or objective.<sup>572</sup> Similarly, when in v.5 Ḍirār speaks of the enemy group as Ka'b's "brothers" (*ikhwān*) it

<sup>565</sup> MC: "and his party". 'Amr: 'Amr b. 'Abd Wadd, from the Banū 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy. 'Utba: 'Utba b. Rabī'a b. 'Abd al-Shams. 'Amr and 'Utba were killed at Badr (2/624) fighting against Muḥammad and his followers.

<sup>566</sup> MC: "To slake their vengeance".

<sup>567</sup> Dhū al-Aḍwaj; see KM02 v.5.

<sup>568</sup> Ḥamza: Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, paternal uncle of Muḥammad.

<sup>569</sup> Muṣ'ab. B. 'Umayr, from the Banū 'Abd al-Dār.

<sup>570</sup> Lit. "short-haired, fiery, well-saddled".

<sup>571</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:141.

<sup>572</sup> Lane s.v. *sh-y-'*.

is probably not intended in the sense of “brothers in religion” (Q 9: 11) but as “relatives, kin”.<sup>573</sup> This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that Ḍirār refers to the enemy by the names of the Yathribī tribes. In the poems DK13 and DK14 Ḍirār spoke of the enemy as the Aws and the Najjār but here, probably to include in his blame Kaʿb b. Mālik’s group of the Banū Salima, he speaks of the Aws and the Khazraj, the latter being the larger group to which both the Najjār and the Salima belonged (vv.7-8).

Until now, the poem could be read as a common pre-Islamic or *mukhaḍram* composition boasting of a tribal victory, but in vv.9-10 we must discard this idea: Ḍirār boasts of the killing of Ḥamza and Muṣʿab, two fellow Qurashī individuals. He does not explain how and why these Qurashī men were fighting against their own tribe but simply goes on to describe the fierce battle with a series of customary images of well-aimed weapons and resolute riding animals in the middle of the chaos (vv.11-14). When in vv.12,14 the poet speaks of “we” vs. “you”, it is left to the audience to infer the precise identity of these groups and to understand that this was more than an ordinary tribal fight.

In his response, Ḍirār does not speak of any leaders on either side: it is a battle of all against all (vv.12,14). Nevertheless, the references to ʿAmr and ʿUtba as killed in the past and now avenged, as well as the fact that he specifically rejoices in the deaths of Ḥamza and Muṣʿab, seems to indicate that these four men played an important role among their respective groups. References to Muḥammad are also absent in other *mukhaḍram* compositions, which is a clear indication that for his contemporaries—especially his opponents—Muḥammad’s central role in nascent Islam and the establishment of the *umma* apparently was not as obvious as it would be in later times. In the present poem the omission of any reference to Muḥammad is all the more obvious, for in the poem by Kaʿb, to which this is a reply, we do find extensive references to “the Messenger”, whose authority, according to Kaʿb, derives from the fact that he brings the divine truth (KM02 vv.5,7,9-10). Contrary to the images of an afterlife in Kaʿb’s poem (KM02 vv.9,15-16), Ḍirār does not speak of the fate of the killed men on either side. Instead, he uses the pre-Islamic notion of blood vengeance to relieve the souls from his dead kinsmen in the past battle of Badr (vv.6-7).<sup>574</sup>

<sup>573</sup> For a similar use of the term, see the poem by Ibn al-Zibaʿrā in which he excuses his “kinsfolk” for reaching a compromise with their “brothers” (Z04; see also DK15 v.4).

<sup>574</sup> Homerin, ‘Echoes of a Thirsty Owl’.

In a fifth and final poem on Uḥūd, Ḍirār looks back on the battlefield and especially on his own role in the fight.<sup>575</sup>

[DK18 *basīṭ*]

1. الْقَوْمُ أَعْلَمُ لَوْلَا مُقَدِّمِي فَرَسِي - إِذْ جَالَتْ الْحَيْلُ بَيْنَ الْجِرْعِ وَالْفَاعِ
2. مَا زَالَ مِنَّا بِجَنْبِ الْعَجْرِ مِنْ أَحَدٍ - أَصْوَاتُ هَامٍ تَرْقَى أَمْرَهَا شَاعِي
3. وَفَارِسٍ قَدْ أَصَابَ السَّيْفُ مَفْرِقَهُ - أَفْلَاقُ هَامِيَةِ كَقَرْوَةِ الرَّاعِي
4. إِنِّي وَجَدْتُكَ لَا أَنْفَكَ مُنْتَطِقًا - بِصَارِمٍ مِثْلِ لَوْنِ الْمِلْحِ قَطَّاعٍ
5. عَلَى رِحَالَةٍ مِلْوَاكِ مُتَابِرَةٍ - نَحْوِ الصَّرِيخِ إِذَا مَا تَوَبَّ الدَّاعِي
6. فَلَا نُدِبْتُ إِلَى خُورٍ وَلَا كُشْفٍ - وَلَا لِئَامٍ غَدَاةَ الْبَأْسِ أَوْزَاعِ
7. بَلْ ضَارِبِينَ حَيِّكَ الْبَيْضِ إِذْ لَحِقُوا - شُمَّ الْعَرَائِينَ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ لُدَّاعِ
8. قَوْمٌ هُمْ يَضْرِبُونَ الْكَبِشَ ضَاحِيَةً - وَلَا يُرَاعُونَ عِنْدَ الْمَوْتِ لِلدَّاعِي
9. شُمَّ مَسَاعِيرُ مَحْمُودٍ لِقَاؤُهُمْ - وَسَعِيئُهُمْ كَانَ سَعِيًّا غَيْرَ دَعْدَاعِ
10. وَلَا يَضُنُّونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ قَدْ عَلِمُوا - لَكِنَّهُمْ عِنْدَ عَرْفٍ حَقُّ سَمَاعِ

1. The tribe knows that if I had not boldly brought forward my horse when the cavalry went around between the slope and the low ground,<sup>576</sup>
2. [Then] on the slopes of Uḥūd's mountain the voices of the owls shrieking would not have ceased among us – their cause well-known<sup>577</sup>
3. A horseman – the middle of his head hit, his skull split, like the [broken] wooden cup of a shepherd<sup>578</sup>
4. I – I swear by your grandfather – I did not stop being girded with my slicing sword, the colour of salt
5. On the saddle of a large and strong one [riding animal] going forward to the one calling out for help whenever the caller goes on [calling]
6. I was not called to [assist, or: to fight against] weaklings, unshielded, ignoble, the cowards, on the morning of the battle<sup>579</sup>

<sup>575</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 68–70 nr. 13; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 2:144–45; Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 1995, 11:418 vv.1-2; al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 140–41; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 413. The version in the *dīwān* as edited by Aslīm and the version in the *Sīra* edition by Ibn Hishām differ significantly. I follow here the reading of the *dīwān*.

<sup>576</sup> Variant: *imī wa-jadduka law-lā* ("I swear by your grandfather, had I not ...").

<sup>577</sup> Variant: *mā zāla minkun ... tazāqā*, ("among you ... shrieking").

<sup>578</sup> Variant: *ka-farwati* ("like the [torn] garment"). Perhaps: *wa-fārisin...* "how many a horseman...".

<sup>579</sup> Variant: *wa-mā ntamaytu* ("I am not a member of ...").

7. But to strikers of firm helmets when they reach them, people of nobility and high rank, facing death with disregard for it
8. A people that strikes leaders publicly, and who are not frightened of death when called [to fight]
9. Noble, kindling [war], their meeting in battle praised, their pace swift, not lagging behind<sup>580</sup>
10. They are not niggardly with good deeds – as such they are known. But for goodness they answer the call.<sup>581</sup>

Vv.1-2 set the tone: Ḍirār positions himself as the defender of his people (*al-qawm*). Had he not advanced among enemy lines, numerous kinsmen would have died, owls coming out of their skulls to shriek for blood vengeance.<sup>582</sup> In vv.2-3 Ḍirār graphically expresses how the slopes would have been strewn with corpses had it not been for his fighting. Ḍirār did not stop to rest nor did he seek refuge, despite the fierce battle: whenever he heard a cry for help he came to the rescue (vv.4-5).

In other poems by Ḍirār and other *mukhaḍram* poets the focus tends to lay on individual achievements and glory, and less on the fate of the group as a whole.<sup>583</sup> Also in this poem Ḍirār speaks of aiding his people (vv.1,5), and yet these statements serve first and foremost to underscore his personal fight and his individual honour and glory, for he was called to come to the rescue of others (v.6).

According to Aslīm b. Aḥmad, vv.6-10 are a description of the enemy ranks, reading v.6 in the sense of “I was not called to fight against weaklings...”.<sup>584</sup> In his praise of their nobility and heroism the poet, following the convention of *inṣāf* or equity, would at the same time bestow praise upon himself, for he withstood them in spite of their strength and determination.<sup>585</sup> It is true that Ḍirār employed this convention in other poems (DK13, DK14, DK16), but always in combination with words of praise directed at his own group—even in DK13, where only a section from the enemy is praised, namely, a group from his own tribe. In the present poem such a shift to focus on the own group is absent. Therefore, and contrary to Aslīm b. Aḥmad’s conclusion, to me it seems more plausible to read vv.6-10 as a description of Ḍirār’s own group from which the call to help reaches him (v.5). A variant of v.6 confirms this interpretation, or at least shows that the

<sup>580</sup> Variant: *shummun bahālīlu mustarkhin ḥamā’iluhum / yas’awna li-l-mawti say’an ...* (“Noble, leaders, carrying [long] swords to the battle, their pace swift in face of death ...”).

<sup>581</sup> This verse is not included in the *Sīra* edition by Ibn Hishām.

<sup>582</sup> On this belief, see chapter 2. The tribe and the *unma*.

<sup>583</sup> See DK12 and the comments.

<sup>584</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 69 n. 6.

<sup>585</sup> M. Arkoun, ‘Inṣāf’, *El2*, 3:1237-38; Agha, ‘Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History’, 14–15 n. 51; al-Baghdādi, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 8:327.

ambiguity of “I was not called to/against ...” already posed a problem in the past. In this variant reading ʿDirār asserts his lineage to a strong and noble group (“I am not a member of ...”), and from this it follows that the next verses are to be read as a proud description of this same group, probably his tribe the Quraysh (“but [a member of] strikers of firm helmets ...”).<sup>586</sup>

Indeed, it hardly seems probable that ʿDirār would describe the group around Muḥammad, and especially the members of his own tribe among them, as defenders of the “good”. In pre-Islamic times, it was good to follow the “path” (*sunna*) of the forefathers, to do what was “known” (*maʿrūf*) and to shun the “unknown” or bad (*munkar*).<sup>587</sup> If anything, the Qurashī Emigrants, in following Muḥammad and taking up the arms against their tribe, had infringed the inherited traditions and customs of old and, in fact, we find such accusations in other poems by ʿDirār (DK14, DK19, DK20).<sup>588</sup> In the problematic verses in DK13, with praise directed at specific Emigrants, we can still argue that (assuming that the verses are indeed by ʿDirār), these verses serve, among other things, the purpose of driving a wedge between the Emigrants and the Helpers. In the present poem, there is no such distinction between the enemy factions: if the verses are understood as a description of the opponents, they are praised as a whole in very lofty terms. All in all, this does not seem plausible, and another explanation is possible and more probable: the verses can be read as a characterisation of ʿDirār’s own group. As such, vv.6-9 are in line with his corpus: he praises his people as noble, heroic, strong, and well-prepared to fight (vv.6-7), steadfast and proudly independent, actively defending what they considered theirs, and fully committed to the fight (vv.8-10). In short, they are defenders of all that is good and known, of the traditions of old, against evil innovations (v.10).

As we see in this poem, the *murūwwa* values of pre-Islamic times still played an important role in ʿDirār’s discourse around the time of Islam. Individuals and groups are praised for their nobility and honour, for their heroism and steadfastness in times of trial, for their experience and readiness to fight, and for their unwillingness to submit to strangers. Not once does ʿDirār even allude to the deep split that the fight evinced within his own kin.

---

<sup>586</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:145.

<sup>587</sup> Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 148; Müller, *Ich bin Labid*, 82 n. 210.

<sup>588</sup> We may infer the accusation too from compositions like DK15, in which he praises his group, the Qurashī “Banū Fihri” (v.4)—who would have deserved praised if they had been fighting against a group that upheld “the known, the good” and shunned “the strange, the bad”.

*Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb on the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627)*

Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb is said to have participated in the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627), also known as the battle of the Trench, an expedition of the Quraysh and their allies against the town of Medina. The attempt to take the town was foiled, we are told, because of a trench (*al-Khandaq*) dug out around it. Some sources mention Ḍirār as one of the only four assailants who crossed the trench in a failed attempt to break the defence of the Muslims before being repelled.<sup>589</sup>

Ḍirār composed two poems on al-Khandaq. In the following poem, to which Ka'b b. Mālik replied with a response poem, Ḍirār speaks of the military supremacy of his group, which he does not further specify but which can be understood as being his tribe, the Quraysh:<sup>590</sup>

[DK19 wāfir]

1. وَمُشْفِقَةٍ تَظُنُّ بِنَا الظُّنُونَا – وَقَدْ فُذْنَا عَرْنَدَسَةً طَحُونَا
2. كَأَنَّ زُهَاءَهَا أُحَدُّ إِذَا مَا – بَدَتْ أَرْكَانُهُ لِلنَّاطِرِينَا
3. تَرَى الْأَبْدَانَ فِيهَا مُسْبِعَاتٍ – عَلَى الْأَبْطَالِ وَالْيَلْبِ الْحَصِينَا
4. وَجُرْدًا كَالْقِدَاحِ مُسَوَّمَاتٍ – نُوْمُ بِهَا الْعُوَاةُ الْخَاطِئِينَا
5. كَأَنَّهُمْ إِذَا صَلَّوْا وَصَلْنَا – بِبَابِ الْخَنْدَقِيْنَ مُصَافِحُونَا
6. أَنَاسٌ لَا تَرَى فِيهِمْ رَشِيدًا – وَقَدْ قَالُوا أَلَسْنَا رَاشِدِينَا
7. فَأَحْجَرْنَاهُمْ شَهْرًا كَرِيئًا – وَكُنَّا فَوْقَهُمْ كَالْقَاهِرِينَا
8. نُرَاوِحُهُمْ وَنَعْدُو كُلَّ يَوْمٍ – عَلَيْهِمْ فِي السَّلَاحِ مُدَجَّجِينَا
9. بِأَيْدِينَا صَوَارِمُ مُرَهَفَاتٍ – نَقْدُ بِهَا الْمَفَارِقَ وَالشُّؤُونَا
10. كَأَنَّ وَمِيضَهُنَّ مُعْرِيَاتٍ – إِذَا لَاحَتْ بِأَيْدِي مُصْلِتِينَا
11. وَمِيضُ عَقِيْقَةٍ لَمَعَتْ بِلَيْلٍ – تَرَى فِيهَا الْعَفَاقِ مَسْتَبِينَا
12. فَلَوْلَا خَنْدَقٌ كَانُوا لَدَيْهِ – لَدَمَّرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَا
13. وَلَكِنْ حَالٌ دُونَهُمْ وَكَانُوا – بِهِ مِنْ خَوْفِنَا مُتَعَوِّذِينَا

<sup>589</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, 'Khandaq', *EL2*, 4:-- . See Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 2:52.

<sup>590</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 90–92 nr. 25; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:254–55; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:251–52; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 2:131; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 470.

14. فَإِنْ نَزَحَلْ فَأَنَا قَدْ تَرَكْنَا – لَدَى أَيْبَاتِكُمْ سَعْدًا رَهِينًا
15. إِذَا جَنَّ الظَّلَامُ سَمِعْتَ نَوْحِي – عَلَي سَعْدٍ يُرَجِّعُنَ الْحَنِينَا
16. وَسَوْفَ نَزُورُكُمْ عَمَّا قَرِيبٍ – كَمَا زُرْنَاكُمْ مُتَوَارِرِينَ
17. بِجَمْعٍ مِنْ كِنَانَةَ غَيْرِ عَزْلٍ – كَأَسَدِ الْعَابِ قَدْ حَمَتِ الْعَرِينَا

Trans. AG:

1. Many a sympathetic woman has doubts about us, yet we led a great fore, crushing all before us
2. Its size was as Uḥud when one could see its whole extent
3. You could see the long mail upon the warriors and their strong leather shields
4. And the fine steeds like arrows which we discharged against the sinful wrongdoers<sup>591</sup>
5. When we charged the one the other, 't was as though at the gap in the trench men would shake hands
6. You could not see a rightly guided man among them though they said: 'Are we not in the right?'<sup>592</sup>
7. We besieged them for one whole month standing over them like conquerors<sup>593</sup>
8. Night and morning every day we attacked them fully armed
9. Sharp swords in our hands cutting through heads and skulls
10. 'T was as though their gleam when they were drawn, when they flashed in the hands of those that drew them
11. Was the gleam of lightning illuminating the night so that one could see the clouds clearly
12. But for the trench which protected them we would have destroyed them one and all
13. But there it stood in front of them, as they took refuge in it from fear of us
14. Though we withdrew we left Sa'd hostage to death in front of their tents<sup>594</sup>
15. When darkness came you could hear the keening women raising their lament over Sa'd
16. Soon we shall visit you again helping one another as we did before
17. With a company of Kināna<sup>595</sup> armed like lions of the jungle protecting their dens.<sup>596</sup>

According to Guillaume this poem should not be attributed to Ḍirār. He bases his argument on the Qur'anic influences on the poem, specifically Q 33: 10. He considers the composition to be a rhetorical device put in the mouth of Ḍirār to be a dart board of sorts for the sole purpose of being attacked in poems by followers of Muḥammad that Ibn Hishām and Ibn Kathīr include in their

<sup>591</sup> MC: "And excellent horses like arrows well-directed – We pursue with them the erring ones who intentionally do wrong".

<sup>592</sup> It should read: "We could not see ...".

<sup>593</sup> MC: "like subjugators". Cf. Q 7: 127.

<sup>594</sup> MC: "deposited as a pledge at your tents". Sa'd b. Mu'adh, from the Banū Aws. He was wounded by an arrow shot by Ḥibbān b. al-'Ariqa and died a month later of his wound. Al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 1:469; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:556.

<sup>595</sup> The Banū Kināna, relatives and allies of the Quraysh, fought alongside them at the battle of al-Khandaq.

<sup>596</sup> MC: "like lions from the plains protecting their dens".

material.<sup>597</sup> Against Guillaume's interpretation we may argue that the Qur'ānic influence on the poem is not as obvious as he puts it. The poem does not borrow from the Qur'ān specific terminology or metaphors that are tied to Muslim doctrine, nor do its topics reflect later notions or tendencies. Instead, the images used are in line with what we know of pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poems, especially those in praise of oneself and one's tribe.

In the opening verses the poet paints a picture of a terrifying and powerful army (vv.1-3). In v.4 he identifies himself with this group ("we") that advances against the enemy. In a poem on a pre-Islamic conflict such as DK07, as well as in poems like DK13, DK16, and DK17 on the battles of Badr and Uḥud, the opponents are characterised as a rival tribe that is to be subjugated. In this poem, on the other hand, the enemy is primarily a group of "erring" people (v.4; see also DK14). In the Qur'ān, the root *gh-w-y* (which appears 22 times) bears the negative connotation of error and deviation from the right course ordained by God.<sup>598</sup> However, its usage in this poem (v.4) is not anachronistic: the root appears in other pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poems as well.<sup>599</sup>

For the first time in the poems attributed to Ḍirār, we find in v.6 an allusion to the causes behind the conflict: a claim of truthfulness and rightfulness is put in the mouth of the enemy. This claim is immediately and plainly denied by Ḍirār: among the enemy there is none who follows a right course, let alone someone to guide them. For Ḍirār, there is no doubt: the enemy is led astray by those who should be guiding them. In Guillaume's translation, this characterisation seems to speak of the spiritual condition of the group and its leaders (see also v.4). However, if the poem is to be attributed to Ḍirār, it is more plausible to understand it in line with the existing notions of leadership and authority of a group. In tribal Arabia, a tribe is as wise as its leader(s), and a foolish and reckless leader must be removed from his position if the tribe is to survive.<sup>600</sup> Especially for nomadic groups, leading well or leading astray had a very practical meaning: access or not to water and pastures in safe areas. That the enemy is led by incapable individuals becomes clear in the following verses, where we see that this supposed right course and good leadership has not prevented the attack of Ḍirār's group (vv.7-13) nor has it resulted in their position of supremacy. Instead, the enemy has been forced to seek refuge behind a "trench" (vv.12-13). Ḍirār is not willing

<sup>597</sup> Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 470.

<sup>598</sup> Ruqayya Khan, 'Error', *EQ*, 2:43-44.

<sup>599</sup> See for example: DK04 and DK14.

<sup>600</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.



to admit that the trench could be a clever tactic. The portrayal of the enemy trembling behind it (v.13), unable and unwilling to face the opponent, shows that they lacked the prized virtues of their time, that is, heroic resignation and endurance even in the worst circumstances for scorn and shame were worse than death.<sup>601</sup> Perhaps the trench saved their lives, but in the eyes of Ḍirār this is no reason to be proud of, and certainly not a sign of true leadership and supremacy.

Instead of the open battlefield of which we read in Ḍirār's poems on Badr and Uḥud here we read of a siege because of the "trench" (vv.5,11-12) which lasted for "a month" (vv.7-8). Neither the enemy nor the group of the poet are mentioned by name except for the reference to the opponent Sa'd in v.14, identified as the Helper Sa'd b. Mu'adh,<sup>602</sup> and to the Kināna in v.17. Through the accounts in the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām and Ibn Kathīr, for example, the besieged town ("your tents", v.14) can be identified as Medina, and the siege is said to have lasted for a month and some days.<sup>603</sup> The enemy ("you, they", vv.7-9,12-13) must be the Yathribī tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj, and Ḍirār's group ("we, us", vv.4-7) can then be identified as the Quraysh, allied with the Kināna (v.17). Consciously or unconsciously, Ḍirār does not mention Qurashī individuals among the enemy.

The accounts in the *Sīra* books mention an extended siege, but no heavy fighting, as only some arrows were shot.<sup>604</sup> Ḍirār, however, speaks of a fierce battle (vv.8-11), although he mentions one single casualty (v.14) and refrains from evoking images of dead bodies and sorrow among the enemy lines. The body of the opponent Sa'd is left as "a pledge" among the enemies (v.14). In light of vv.16-17 this pledge, an image of the finality and irreversibility of his death, may also be taken as the promise of Ḍirār's group to return and finish what they started.

As said before, Walid 'Arafat argues that we must doubt the authenticity of those poems on the battles of Muḥammad and his followers against the Quraysh which are (too much) in line with the accounts in *sīra* and *maghāzī* books.<sup>605</sup> The detailed description of the course, duration, and end of the siege (vv.7-8,12-14) in this poem could raise suspicion since it follows closely the accounts of the battle of al-Khandaq in the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām, for example. In favour of

---

<sup>601</sup> As in the characterisation of Ḍirār's group in DK18 vv.6-10.

<sup>602</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:245ff.; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:440ff.; al-Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:564ff. See Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 91 n. 14.

<sup>603</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:222-23; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:201; al-Ṭabari, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:564ff. See Z19.

<sup>604</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:222-23; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:201.

<sup>605</sup> See the section Poetry in the *sīra* books.

its authenticity speaks, however, that in other poems by Ḍirār we find similar attention to details.<sup>606</sup> In addition, we could ask whether strong divergences between prose and poetry regarding one and the same event would support the authenticity of either genre. Finally, ‘Arafat seems to assume that prose would have influenced the poems, while we could turn the matter around and ask whether it is not possible that poems like the present one influenced accounts as found in *Sīra* books. In any case, I find no obvious reasons to classify this particular poem as spurious. Similarly, I find no obvious reasons not to attribute the poem to Ḍirār. The style and topic are in line with his corpus, as are the characterisations of his group and the enemy, and the images and language are not anachronistic. It is the only poem by Ḍirār in *wāfir*, but this could be a coincidence.

To the poem by Ḍirār (DK19) a reply is attributed to the Helper poet Ka’b b. Mālik, who ascribes to God’s power that what he considers a victory:<sup>607</sup>

[KM03 *wāfir*]

1. وَسَائِلُهُ تَسَائِلُ مَا لَقِينَا – وَلَوْ شَهِدْتُ رَأْتْنَا صَابِرِينَا
2. صَبْرُنَا لَا نَرَى لِلَّهِ عَدْلًا – عَلَى مَا نَابَنَا مُتَوَكِّلِينَا
3. وَكَانَ لَنَا النَّبِيُّ وَزِيرَ صِدْقٍ – بِهِ نَعْلُو الْبَرِيَّةَ أَجْمَعِينَا
4. نَقَاتِلُ مَعْشَرَ ظَلَمُوا وَعَقُّوا – وَكَانُوا بِالْعَدَاوَةِ مُرْصِدِينَا
- ...
9. فَوَارِسُنَا إِذَا بَكَرُوا وَرَاحُوا – عَلَى الْأَعْدَاءِ شُوسًا مُعْلَمِينَا
10. لِنَنْصُرَ أَحْمَدًا وَاللَّهِ حَتَّى – نَكُونَ عِبَادَ صِدْقٍ مُخْلِصِينَا
11. وَيَعْلَمُ أَهْلُ مَكَّةَ حِينَ سَارُوا – وَأَحْزَابٌ أَتَوْا مُتَحَزِّبِينَا
12. بِإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ لَهُ شَرِيكٌ – وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ مَوْلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَا
13. فَإِمَّا تَقْتُلُوا سَعْدًا سَفَاهَا – فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ خَيْرُ الْقَادِرِينَا

<sup>606</sup> For example: DK12, DK14, DK17, DK18.

<sup>607</sup> Ka’b b. Mālik al-Anṣārī, *Diwān*, 279–80 nr. 63; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:255–56; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:252–53; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 470–71.

- . 14 سَيُدْخِلُهُ جَنَّاتًا طَيِّبَاتٍ - تَكُونُ مُقَامَةً لِلصَّالِحِينَ
- . 15 كَمَا قَدْ رَدَّكُمْ فَلَا شَرِيدًا - بَعِظْكُمْ خَزَايَا خَائِبِينَ
- . 16 خَزَايَا لَمْ تَنَالُوا ثَمَّ خَيْرًا - وَكِدْتُمْ أَنْ تَكُونُوا دَامِرِينَ
- . 17 بِرِيحٍ عَاصِفٍ هَبَّتْ عَلَيْكُمْ - فَكُنْتُمْ تَحْتَهَا مُتَكَمِّهِينَ

Trans. AG:

1. Many a woman will ask of our fight. Had she been there she would have seen we were steadfast<sup>608</sup>
2. We were steadfast trusting in Him; we saw nothing equal to God in the hour of our danger.<sup>609</sup>
3. We have a prophet, a true helper, by whom we can conquer all men
4. We fought an evil disobedient people fully prepared in their hostile attack
- ...
9. Our horsemen when they charged night and morning looked disdainfully at the enemy as they wore their badges<sup>610</sup>
10. To help Aḥmad and God so that we might be sincere slaves of truth,
11. And that the Meccans might know when they came and the people of different parties<sup>611</sup>
12. That God has no partners, and that He helps the believers
13. Though you killed Sa'd<sup>612</sup> wantonly, God's decrees are for the best
14. He will admit him to goodly gardens the resting-place of the righteous
15. As He repulsed you, runaway fugitives, fruitless, disgraced, despite your rage
16. Disgraced, you accomplished nothing there and were all but destroyed
17. By a tempest which overtook you so that you were blinded by its force.

As is common in a poetical reply, Ka'b's poem mirrors phrases and images of that of Ḍirār, turning them around to support his perspective. With their compositions they continue, so to speak, the fight, scorning the opponents and accusing them of wrongdoing. Both poets consider their own group to be in the right, while the enemy errs and commits evil (DK19 vv.4,6; KM03 vv.4,7).

Like Ḍirār, Ka'b refers to his own group and to the enemy mainly through pronouns, verbal inflections, and personal suffixes, without specifying their identity. Once he calls the enemy "the people of Mecca", and once he mentions a killed individual from his own side, Sa'd (vv.11,13)—also mentioned by Ḍirār (DK19 v.14). The reference to "Aḥmad" in v.10 can be taken as a reference to

<sup>608</sup> Or: "Oh that woman, who will ask..."; see Wright, *Grammar*, ii 217d.

<sup>609</sup> Or: "We were steadfast against what afflicted us".

<sup>610</sup> Lit.: "the ones distinguished in war".

<sup>611</sup> "People of Mecca": the Quraysh. "Companies of men": reference to the clans and groups that fought alongside the Quraysh against Muḥammad and his followers.

<sup>612</sup> Sa'd b. Mu'adh. See DK19 v.14 and the comments.

Muḥammad, like the indications in v.3: “the prophet, aider of the truth”.<sup>613</sup> He mentions no other Qurashī men fighting among his people, but neither does he identify his group by their lineage. Perhaps the reference to the “help” in v.10 can be understood as words in praise of his group, the Helpers, for the verse is followed by an insult directed at “the people of Mecca” (v.11).

As for the causes for this fight, in vv.11-12 we are told that the enemy was forced to recognise the superiority of Ka‘b’s group and the truth of the power of God (v.13; see KM01 v.8). Clearly, this does not imply their conversion, for in vv.15-17 Ka‘b describes the defeat and heedless flight of the enemy. As in KM01 and KM02, Ka‘b speaks of the reward for those from his group who have been killed, in this case Sa‘d (v.14) but, contrarily to his other two poems discussed here, he does not allude to a punishment after this life for those who die in opposition to them: he only speaks of their destruction in this life (vv.15-17). Had Ḍirār characterised the leadership of Ka‘b’s group as unfit, Ka‘b speaks of Muḥammad, “the prophet”, who will lead him and his people to submit all others (v.3), which is a clear sign of Muḥammad’s good leadership and true authority. The enemy, on the other hand, is disbanded and disgraced.

Sa‘d’s reward in the afterlife is a show of God’s authority and supremacy over that of men. While the first half of the poem follows rather closely the conventions of a tribal praise poem (vv.1-9), in the second section the poet attributes the victory not to the valour of his group but to God, who plays an active role (vv.13-15). This is a shift from the pre-Islamic notion of the gods and Fate.<sup>614</sup> The idea of humans aiding or assisting God (*li-nanṣura*, v.10) might seem to diminish God’s power (v.13). However, Bravmann shows that in pre-Islamic poetry we find characterisations of groups that aid a leader and that consider it their “ineluctable duty to aid the *ḥalīm*, the serious-minded, prudent man, in the realization of his war obligations and his social ideals”,<sup>615</sup> and in this way it is also used in the Qur‘ān and in Muslim tradition: the form *Anṣār* (Helpers) would become the honourific epithet for the people of Medina—the poet Ka‘b b. Mālīk among them—who “aided” Muḥammad and offered him shelter (cf. Q 8: 72).<sup>616</sup>

<sup>613</sup> On the use of *Aḥmad* as a name or title for Muḥammad, see DK13 v.9, KM02 v.7 and the comments.

<sup>614</sup> Henninger, ‘Pre-Islamic Bedouin Religion’; M. Lecker, ‘Idol Worship in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)’, in *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, ed. Francis E. Peters (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), 129–44; Serjeant, ‘Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia’.

<sup>615</sup> Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 67.

<sup>616</sup> A similar expression is found, for example, in a poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit on the Helpers: *wa-akramanā llāhu lladhī laysa ghayrahu / ilāhun bi-rayyāmin maḍat mā lahu shaklu // bi-naṣri l-ilāhi wa-l-nabīyyi wa-dīnihi / wa-akramanā bi-smin maḍā mā lahu mithlu*; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:317–18 nr. 159 vv. 2-3.

Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb composed a second poem on al-Khandaq. More than a description of the past fight, it contains a threat directed at the enemy:<sup>617</sup>

[DK20 *munsariḥ*]

1. مَهْلًا بِنِي عَمَّنَا ظَلَامَتَنَا - إِنَّ بِنَا سَوْرَةً مِنَ الْعَلَقِ .1
2. لِمِثْلِكُمْ نَحْمِلُ السَّيْفَ وَلَا - تُعْمَزُ أَحْسَابُنَا مِنَ الرَّقِيقِ .2
3. إِنِّي لِأَنْعِي إِذَا انْتَمَيْتُ إِلَى - حَيِّ كِرَامٍ وَمَعَشَرَ صُدُقِ .3
4. بِيَضٍ جِعَادٍ كَأَنَّ أَعْيُنَهُمْ - تُكْحَلُ يَوْمَ الْهَيْجِ بِالْعَلَقِ .4
5. فَلَا لَعْمُرُ الَّذِي تَبَيَّتْ لَهُ - لَبَّاتُ بُدْنٍ يَنْصَحْنَ بِالذَّفَقِ .5
6. أَوْ تَيْكُمُ تَلِكُمُ الظُّلَامَةَ مَا اه - تَرَّتْ غُضُونُ الْعِضَاهِ بِالْوَرَقِ .6
7. أَوْ تُصَدَّرُ الْحَيْلُ وَهِيَ جَافِلَةٌ - عَن مَارِقٍ أَوْ جَمَاجِمٍ فُلُقِ .7
8. تَجَرَّعُوا الْغَيْظَ مَا بَدَا لَكُمْ - أَوْ أَرْتُوا الْحَرْبَ مِنْ فَتَى حَنْقِ .8

1. Hey cousins! Temper your rage against us – In us is also a force of anger<sup>618</sup>
2. [Only] To the likes of you [and you] we carry the swords, and our great deeds are not suspect of weakness<sup>619</sup>
3. When I assert my lineage I assert it to a tribe of noble people, a well-composed group,<sup>620</sup>
4. Pure, generous – Their eyes on the day of battle as if adorned with *kuḥl* of clotted blood<sup>621</sup>
5. No, I swear by the one for whom the throats of sacrificial animals abide one night [at Mekka] and that will gush abundantly [with blood]<sup>622</sup>
6. [That] I bring you your wrongdoing as long as the leaves of the fresh, big, thorny trees quiver<sup>623</sup>
7. Or the horses turn back, taking fright, away from someone who pierces and from split skulls
8. Swallow the anger [again and again] as you wish or provoke war from a wrathful hero.

<sup>617</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 75–76 nr. 16; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 19:139 vv. 1-4. It is not found in Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*. Some verses appear scattered throughout different sources; see the bibliography in the Aslim b. Aḥmad's edition of the *Dīwān*.

<sup>618</sup> Variant: *min al-qalaqi* ("of agitation").

<sup>619</sup> Variant: *min ad-daqaqi* ("of vileness").

<sup>620</sup> *Ma'shar šuduq*: composed, calm group, that is, people who face war and destruction with determination and strength. Variant: *ilā / 'izzin 'azīzin* ("to a high rank").

<sup>621</sup> The picture of red-eyed warriors is frequent in the descriptions of fights, and speaks of the fierceness of the fight, the anger, and the courage of the fighters.

Variant: *bayḍin sibāṭin* ("white-faced, generous").

<sup>622</sup> *Badna* pl. *budn*: animal (camel or cow) that is sacrificed in Mecca.

<sup>623</sup> According to Aslim, this verse contains an implicit negation of the first verb. He reads it as: "I won't accept your wrongdoing".

The poem is put in the context of al-Khandaq, but no names, geographical references, or the like in the text help us establish this relationship. The identity of the two contending factions is imprecise but it seems to be a conflict between relatives (v.1). In the eyes of the poet this infighting does not leave a stain on the honour of his own group (vv.2-3). On the contrary, the fact that his people confront their likes in battle is precisely a show of their own valour and determination (vv.2-4).<sup>624</sup>

In v.3 Ḍirār portrays his group as a *ma'shar šuduq*, that is, a group that, when faced with danger and death, does not lose its composure. But not only that: this characterisation also speaks of common goals and shared responsibilities. In this sense the phrase might be understood as an insult directed at the enemy faction, for the Emigrants, that is, fellow Qurashī individuals who have followed Muḥammad and joined the Yathribī tribes, have thus decided to ignore the common goals and responsibilities of their tribe. Since the pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* tribal system can be defined as a system of “mutual aid groups bound together by a notion of kinship”,<sup>625</sup> we can understand how turning against the shared liability of the tribe can be considered treason towards one's kin (see DK14, especially v.5).

Ḍirār asserts his lineage to his “tribe” (*ḥayy*, v.3), that is, the Quraysh, a noble and heroic group (vv.3-4), with an oath formula (v.5), and emphasises the threat in v.6.<sup>626</sup> The poem strongly resembles the verses Ḍirār directed at the two sons of ‘Abd b. Maʿīṣ in pre-Islamic times (DK04). In most other poems he composed on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers Ḍirār explicitly mentioned the Helpers, some individuals among them, or their town (DK13, DK14, DK15, DK16, DK17), but not in this poem. Directed at his “cousins” (v.1), the poem is in the first place an attack against the Qurashī Emigrants.

<sup>624</sup> In the following anecdote on the earlier battle of Badr we find a similar statement. Three Qurashī men, ‘Utba and Shayba sons of Rabīʿa, and Walid the son of ‘Utba, approached the opponents and challenged them to a fight man to man. Three Helpers answered to the challenge, but the Qurashī men refused. Instead, they asked for “peers of our own tribe” as opponents. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:623, 625. Previously, ‘Utba had called his group, the Quraysh, to retreat, for he wanted to avoid a fight against one's own relatives (*ibn ‘ammihī aw ibn khālihi*; cousin from paternal or maternal side). His fellow Qurashī leader Abū Jahl had called him a coward and blamed him for wanting to avoid his own son, an Emigrant, to be killed, and this was ‘Utba's response. See footnote 511.

<sup>625</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 113. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>626</sup> The formula used resembles similar formulae in contemporary poems. See Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, Ar. 72 Trans. 65 nr. 29 v.4. See ABO1 v.9 in 4. Ibn al-Zibāʿrā.

As the editor of ʿDirār's *dīwān* points out, an important theme of this poem is the fight over the leadership and prominence between the two factions.<sup>627</sup> The discursive strands of allegiance and authority are well-entangled in this poem: having turned their back on the tribe, the opponents are committing a “wrongdoing” that must be set right. Therefore their own tribe, a noble stock, will set out against them and overpower them. The final verse seems to leave the enemy with two options: either to suffer the on-going attacks of ʿDirār and his group, or to face them openly on the battlefield.<sup>628</sup>

#### *ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb's conversion*

Not much is known about ʿDirār's acceptance of Islam except that it is dated after the *Fath*, the Muslim conquest of Mecca (8/630).<sup>629</sup> Contrary to Ibn al-Zibā'ra's, his fellow Qurashī poet and opponent of Muḥammad, at the Conquest ʿDirār's name was not on the list of men and women that Muḥammad ordered to be killed. According to the editor of ʿDirār's *dīwān*, this may have been because in his poetical attacks ʿDirār had refrained from defaming or vilifying Muḥammad and his followers.<sup>630</sup> Had Muḥammad ordered the death of all those who had opposed and attacked him, it would have resulted in a brutal bloodshed in the recently conquered town. Instead, he seems to have focused on a few individuals to set an example. Since the “death list” differs across the sources, we cannot draw extensive conclusions about the reasons why some opponents were targeted and others were not.<sup>631</sup> It is noteworthy, however, that in spite of the different versions of

---

<sup>627</sup> ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 75–76.

<sup>628</sup> The editor of ʿDirār's *dīwān* and the compiler of the *Aghānī* both mention that the poem DK20 (or its first four verses) was cited in Muslim times by supporters and members of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib's household in times of war; it is even put in the mouth of 'Alī himself on occasion of the battle of Šiffin (al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 19:139.) It is added that none of those who quoted the verses survived the battle on occasion of which he recited them (ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 75; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 19:139.) Apparently the 'Alid faction (the later *shū'a*) identified with ʿDirār's lament and accusation: the memory of a common ancestry and nobility, and the reality of a deep division within the kin as the result of the wrongdoings of the enemy, which had to be set right.

<sup>629</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 7:285–86.

<sup>630</sup> Fārūq Aslīm b. Aḥmad, ed., 'Muqaddimat Dīwān ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri', in *Dīwān ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1996), 35–36.

<sup>631</sup> See 4. Ibn al-Zibā'ra. Al-Wāqidi mentions six men and four women: 'Ikrima b. Abī Jahl, Habbār b. al-Aswad, 'Abd Allāh b. Sa'd b. Abī Sarḥ, Miqyas b. Šubāba al-Laythi, al-Ḥuwayrith b. Nuqaydh, 'Abd Allāh b. Khaṭal al-Adramī, and Hind bt. 'Utba, Sāra a freedwoman from the Banū 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, and two singing

the list the names on it are mainly of men and women who did not belong to the highest and most prominent ranks and clans of the Quraysh, except perhaps for 'Ikrima, the son of Abū Jahl, from the Makhzūmī clan of the Banū al-Mughīra.

When Muḥammad entered Mecca Ḍirār reportedly converted, and one poem in his *dāvān* is related to the Conquest. We are told that Muḥammad ordered the Muslims not to fight unless they encountered resistance when they entered the town.<sup>632</sup> Nonetheless, when his troops approached the city, the Helper Sa'd b. 'Ubāda threatened to destroy the Quraysh. As an important supporter of Muḥammad in Medina and a prominent Khazrajī leader, Sa'd was the one who held the "banner of Messenger" (*rāyat al-nabī*)<sup>633</sup> or the "banner of the Helpers" (*rāyat al-Anṣār*)<sup>634</sup> and had led the army (or a section of it) against Mecca.

According to the accounts, Sa'd directed the threat at the Qurashī leader Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb, who had recently converted to Islam. It is unclear whether Sa'd did not know about his conversion or did not care to make a distinction between those of the Quraysh who supported Muḥammad and those who opposed him—although we may assume that he saw the group of Emigrants as a separate group not to be attacked.<sup>635</sup> Muḥammad was asked to confirm the threat by Sa'd: "O Prophet of God, have you ordered the killing of your tribe (*qawmika*)?". Muḥammad's response was categorical: Sa'd had lied, for it would not be a day of war, but a day of mercy.<sup>636</sup> He

girls of Ibn Khaṭal; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:825–26. For the same list see, among others: Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 2:103; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:60.

Ibn Hishām and Ibn Kathīr do not mention Habbār and Hind bt. 'Utba; this shorter list is also found in al-Ṭabarī's work next to al-Wāqidi's longer one. Ibn Kathīr also includes some shorter versions of the list; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:410–11; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:563–66; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 4:297–98; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:58–60.

In *Kāmil al-Tārīkh*, Ibn al-Athīr also mentions Ibn Khaṭal, al-Ḥuwayrith, Miqyas, Hind, Sāra, and the two singing girls, but omits the others from al-Wāqidi's list and adds the two poets Ibn al-Ziba'ra and Hubayra b. Abī Wahb, as well as Waḥshī, the killer of Ḥamza and Ḥuwayṭib b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 2:123. In *Usd al-Ghāba*, on the other hand, the same Ibn al-Athīr mentions a short list with only the names of 'Ikrima, Ibn Khaṭal, Miqyas, and Ibn Abi Sarḥ; 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), *Usd al-Ghāba fi Ma'rīfat al-Ṣaḥāba*, ed. 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwaḍ, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994), 431; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, 1994, 4:67.

<sup>632</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:407–8. See also paragraph Ibn al-Ziba'ra and the conquest of Mecca (8/630) in 4. Ibn al-Ziba'ra.

<sup>633</sup> al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:821.

<sup>634</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 4:295.

<sup>635</sup> al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:821; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:550–51; Fahmī, *Ḥusn al-Ṣaḥāba*, 1:33.

<sup>636</sup> al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:821; al-'Iṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 2:253; Fahmī, *Ḥusn al-Ṣaḥāba*, 1:33.



ordered that the banner Sa'd had been carrying be taken from him as a sign for all to see that he could no longer claim a position of military leadership.<sup>637</sup>

The following poem by ʿDirār refers to these events, asking Muḥammad to intervene. The poet may have feared for his tribe, but also for his own life, as in the past he not only had insulted Sa'd's group and fought against them, but also had personally attacked Sa'd (DK11). The poem he directed at Muḥammad reads:<sup>638</sup>

[DK21 *khafif*]

1. يَا نَبِيَّ الْهُدَى إِلَيْكَ لَجَا حَيٍّ - حِي قُرَيْشٍ وَلَاتَ حِينَ لَجَاءِ
2. حِينَ ضَاقَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ سَعَةُ الْأَرْضِ - ضِ وَعَادَاهُمْ إِلَهُ السَّمَاءِ
3. وَالتَّقَتِ حَلَقَتَا الْبِطَانِ عَلَى الْقَوْمِ - م وَنُودُوا بِالصَّيْلِمِ الصَّلْعَاءِ
4. إِنَّ سَعْدًا يُرِيدُ قَاصِمَةَ الظُّهْرِ - رِ بِأَهْلِ الْحَجُونِ وَالْبَطْحَاءِ
5. خَزْرَجِي لَوْ يَسْتَطِيعُ مِنَ الْعَبِيدِ - حِظَ رَمَانًا بِالنَّسْرِ وَالْعَوَاءِ
6. وَغُرِّ الصَّدْرِ لَا يُهْمُ بِشَيْءٍ - غَيْرَ سَفْكِ الدِّمَاءِ وَسَيْيِ النَّسَاءِ
7. قَدْ تَلَطَّى عَلَى الْبِطَاحِ وَجَاءَتْ - عَنْهُ هِنْدٌ بِالسُّوءَةِ السَّوَاءِ
8. إِذْ تَنَادَى بِذُلِّ حَيِّ قُرَيْشٍ - وَابْنُ حَرْبٍ بِذَا مِنَ الشُّهَدَاءِ
9. فَلَيْنَ أَقْحَمَ اللُّوَاءِ وَنَادَى - يَا حُمَاةَ اللُّوَاءِ أَهْلَ اللُّوَاءِ
10. ثُمَّ ثَابَتْ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ بُهْمِ الْحَزْرِ - رَجِ وَالْأَوْسِ أَنْجَمَ الْهَيْجَاءِ
11. لِتَكُونَنَّ بِالْبِطَاحِ قُرَيْشٍ - فَفَقَعَةَ الْقَاعِ فِي أَكْفِ الْإِمَاءِ
12. فَانْهَيْتَهُ فَإِنَّهُ أَسَدُ الْأُسْدِ - مِ لَدَى الْغَابِ وَالْغِ فِي الدَّمَاءِ
13. إِنَّهُ مُطْرِقٌ يُرِيدُ لَنَا الْأَمَّ - رَ سَكُوتًا كَالْحَيَّةِ الصَّمَاءِ

1. O prophet of the Guidance, to you [come to] take refuge the people of Quraysh, but the time is not to take refuge [anymore]!<sup>639</sup>

<sup>637</sup> al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:821–22; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:559; Fahmī, *Ḥusn al-Ṣaḥāba*, 1:33.

<sup>638</sup> ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 43–45 nr. 1; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb*, 1992, 2:598; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 3:559–60; Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka*, 1994, 4:114–17 vv. 1–4; Fahmī, *Ḥusn al-Ṣaḥāba*, 1:31–35; al-‘Iṣāmī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 2:253–54.

<sup>639</sup> For a similar construction with *wa-lāta*, see Q 38: 3. Variant: *wa-anta khayru lajā‘i* (“and you are the best refuge”).

2. When the width of the earth became narrow to them<sup>640</sup> and the God of the heaven was hostile towards them
3. And the two rings of the belly-girth met<sup>641</sup> for the tribe and they were called out with a loud voice by calamities and disasters
4. Indeed, Sa'd desired a great disaster for the people of al-Ḥajūn and al-Baṭḥā<sup>642</sup>
5. [He] a Khazrajī, if he could, in his hatred he would shoot at us with stars and constellations
6. A man with a rancorous heart, his bosom not filled with anything but [the desire of] bloodshed and taking captive the women
7. He burned with rage against [the people of] the Biṭāḥ; Hind came from him, [bringing] the vilest of evil [news]<sup>643</sup>
8. When he called for vileness against the Quraysh, and Ibn Ḥarb was one of the witnesses to this<sup>644</sup>
9. And so truly, if he advances foolishly with the banner and calls: O men of the banner, O people of the banner!
10. And then gather to him from the great horsemen of the Khazraj and the Aws, the most excellent of war
11. [Then,] the Quraysh will be in the Biṭāḥ [like] the worst kind of truffles from the plain in the hand of slave maids<sup>645</sup>
12. So refrain him [O Muḥammad], for he is a lion of the plain, thirsty for blood
13. He lowers the eyes and keeps quiet, silently seeking our disaster as the deadly snake.<sup>646</sup>

In the poem, Ḍirār presents Muḥammad as the only one who can possibly save the Quraysh from grave danger, that is, from Sa'd b. 'Ubāda (vv.1-4).<sup>647</sup> The importance of aiding one's kin in times of need, one of the main tasks of a tribal leader, is apparent in other poems by Ḍirār (DK05, DK08).<sup>648</sup> Thus, when Ḍirār expresses his trust and hope in Muḥammad as the aider of his kin, he is effectively recognising Muḥammad's authority and leadership among the Quraysh.

How Muḥammad, a leader among the Quraysh, can also be a leader over the Aws and the Khazraj is not explained by Ḍirār (v.10). It is clear that this authority does not derive from an alliance or a Qurashī victory, for Ḍirār speaks of their threat to his tribe. Although he does not

<sup>640</sup> I.e. "At a time when they were anxious".

<sup>641</sup> The belly-girth of a camel saddle. An expression used to indicate that a situation had become grave; i.e. "And the situation had become severe to the tribe".

<sup>642</sup> Sa'd b. 'Ubāda, a Khazrajī (see v.5). Al-Ḥajūn: a mountain in the vicinity of Mecca. *Al-baṭḥā*: "centre, middle course", perhaps the centre of Mecca. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 44 n. 4; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 2:225.

<sup>643</sup> Possibly: Hind bt. 'Utba, married to Abū Sufyān, who is mentioned in the following verse.

<sup>644</sup> Ibn Ḥarb: Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb.

<sup>645</sup> I.e. "weak and despised".

<sup>646</sup> *Al-ḥayya al-ṣammā*: lit.: "the deaf snake", indicating that it will not be deterred from its attack by charming words.

<sup>647</sup> In light of his earlier clash with Sa'd b. 'Ubāda after the 'Aqaba meeting, perhaps Ḍirār feared especially for his own life. The present poem could be an attempt to seek refuge with a now powerful kinsman, Muḥammad.

<sup>648</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

explain it, the fact alone that ʿDirār presents Muḥammad implicitly as leader over a group that does not follow the traditional boundaries of blood or alliances is a significant departure from the pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* tribal discourse on allegiance and authority.

Once again, we see how the discursive strands on allegiance and authority are entangled. In v.1 ʿDirār addresses Muḥammad as “prophet of the Guidance”, but in the rest of the poem he does not use the argument of shared ties of faith. For example, he does not use the argument against Sa’d that, as a Muslim, he should not threaten to kill his fellow Muslims among the Quraysh. Instead, ʿDirār portrays Sa’d’s wrongdoing in the light of a tribal conflict: the Quraysh are exposed to the thirst for blood of a Khazrajī man (vv.4-8). While Sa’d is commonly said to have carried “the banner of the Messenger”, ʿDirār speaks of a tribal banner under which the Aws and the Khazraj gather in their expedition against the Quraysh (vv.9-10). Muḥammad, himself a Qurashī, must come to the rescue of his kin against this stranger and his people, described by their tribal names (v.10). The focus of the poem lies on the ties of blood that bind ʿDirār and his people (“the Quraysh”, “we”, vv.8,11) to Muḥammad, the same ties that separate them from Sa’d and his tribe (vv.5,10). From this perspective it is understandable that, in spite of the prominent role Emigrants like Khālīd b. al-Walīd played in the Conquest, ʿDirār does not refer to fellow Qurashī individuals among the enemy troops.<sup>649</sup>

### *ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the Muslim conquests*

The following poem in ʿDirār’s *dīwān* should be dated after his conversion, probably after the death of Muḥammad and the election of Abū Bakr as his successor and caliph (r. 11-13/632-634). In the poem, ʿDirār praises Abū Bakr and wishes him well, while at the same time he asserts God’s authority and power. The poem reads:<sup>650</sup>

[DK22 *tawīl*]

1. أَتَبْلُغُ أَبَا بَكْرٍ إِذَا مَا لَقَيْتَهُ - بَانَ هَرْقَلًا عَنْكُمْ غَيْرُ نَائِمٍ
2. فَجَيْشُكَ لَا يُخْذَلُ وَأَمْرُكَ لَا يُهَنُّ - أَلَا رَبُّ مَوْلَى نَصْرُهُ غَيْرُ عَاتِمٍ
3. يَقِيكَ الْأَسَى اللَّهُ دُونَ غَيْرِهِ - وَحَسْبِي إِلَهٌ نَصْرُهُ خَيْرُ غَانِمٍ

<sup>649</sup> See, among others: Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:407-8.

<sup>650</sup> ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 88 nr. 23; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 1995, 24:394 vv.1,3.

1. Inform Abū Bakr when you meet him that Heraclius is not unaware of you
2. That your army may not be held back and your order not be disdained! – Many a protector, his aid was not tardy
3. God, and no one else, protect you from mourning – My sufficiency is in God, whose aid is the most successful.<sup>651</sup>

The text of the poem is poorly attested and the context in which it was composed is unclear, and consequently it is hard to derive any further conclusions from it.

In Ḍirār's *dīwān* we find three shorter poems related to the Muslim conquests, in which Ḍirār is said to have participated after his conversion. The three poems speak of one and the same battle, namely, the Muslim victory at Bahandaf, in the plain of Māsabadhān, an access route to Kūfa. The battle took place in times of the caliphate of 'Umar (r. 13-23/634-644). Al-Ṭabarī dates it in the year 16/637 and names Ḍirār as one of the military leaders of the Muslim army.<sup>652</sup> First I will present the full text of each poem, followed by a single analysis of all three combined. The first poem reads:<sup>653</sup>

[DK23 *ṭawīl*]

1. وَلَمَّا لَقِينَا فِي بَهْنَدَفَ جَمْعُهُمْ – أَنَاخُوا وَقَالُوا اصْبِرُوا آلَ فَارِسِ
2. فَقُلْنَا جَمِيعًا نَحْنُ أَصْبَرُ مِنْكُمْ – وَأَكْرَمُ فِي يَوْمِ الْوَعَى وَالْتِمَارِ
3. ضَرَبْنَاهُمْ بِالْبَيْضِ حَتَّى إِذَا انْتَنَتْ – أَقَمْنَا لَهَا مِثْلًا بِضَرْبِ الْقَوَانِسِ
4. فَمَا فَتِنَتْ خَيْلِي تَقْصُ طَرِيقَهُمْ – وَتَقْتُلُهُمْ بَعْدَ اشْتِيَاكِ الْحَنَادِسِ
5. فَعَادُوا لَنَا دِينًا وَدَانُوا بِعَهْدِنَا – وَعُدْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ بِالنُّهَى فِي الْمَجَالِسِ

1. When at Bahandaf we met a group of them, they halted and said: Be steadfast, people of Persia!
2. But we said altogether: We are more steadfast than you and nobler on the day of fight and struggle
3. We hit them with the white [swords] until these were bent, and we did the same with them with a blow to the heads<sup>654</sup>
4. My horses did not cease in their pursuit, and they killed them after the confusion [came] of the black-pitch nights

<sup>651</sup> The first hemistich is metrically incorrect. This second hemistich, with the change from third person sg. to first person sg., may be an invitation to Abū Bakr to imitate the poet in saying it.

<sup>652</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 4:37.

<sup>653</sup> Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 66–67 nr. 12; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 1:516. Cf. al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 4:37; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 5:41.

<sup>654</sup> Lit.: “we made them the likeness [of crookedness]”.

5. They returned to us in obedience, and submitted to our obligation, so we returned to them to speak of reason in the assemblies (?).

The second poem by ʿĪrār on the Muslim victory at Māsabadhān reads:<sup>655</sup>

[DK24 *ṭawīl*]

1. وَيَوْمَ حَبَسْنَا قَوْمَ آدِثِينَ جُنْدَهُ – وَقَطْرَاتِهِ عِنْدَ اخْتِلَافِ الْعَوَامِلِ
2. وَزُرْدٍ وَآدِثِينَ وَفَهْدًا وَجَمْعَهُمْ – غَدَاةَ الْوَعَى بِالْمُرْهَفَاتِ الْقَوَاصِلِ
3. فَجَاؤُوا إِلَيْنَا بَعْدَ غِبِّ لِقَائِنَا – بِمَا سَبَدَانٍ بَعْدَ تِلْكَ الرِّلَازِلِ

1. And that day we surrounded the people of Ādhīn, his army and his series of camels, with continuous blows of spears
2. And Zurd, and Ādhīn, and Fahd, and their troops, the morning of the fight, with sharp swords<sup>656</sup>
3. So they came to us at the end of the battle at Māsabadhān, after these violent convulsions.

The third poem by ʿĪrār on these events reads:<sup>657</sup>

[DK25 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَقُولُ لَهُ وَالرَّمْحُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُ – أأَذِينُ مَاذَا الْفِعْلُ مِثْلَ الَّذِي تُبْدِي
2. فَقَالَ وَلَمْ أَحْفَلْ لِمَا قَالَ: إِنِّي – أَدِينُ لِكَسْرِي غَيْرَ مُدَّخِرٍ جَهْدِي
3. فَصَارَتْ إِلَيْنَا السَّيْرَانُ وَأَهْلُهَا – وَمَا سَبَدَانُ كُلُّهَا يَوْمَ ذِي الرَّمْدِ

1. I said to him, the spears between me and him: ‘Ādhīn, what you do doesn’t agree with what you say, does it?’
2. And he spoke, but I didn’t consider what he said: I submit to Khosrau, without me considering the effort
3. Sirawān bent for us, and her people, and the whole of Māsabadhān, that day of destruction.<sup>658</sup>

The three short poems all refer to the victory of the Muslim army, reportedly led by ʿĪrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, over a certain Ādhīn b. al-Hurmuzān and his people in the plain of Māsabadhān, where Ādhīn had gathered a military force to attack the Muslims.<sup>659</sup>

<sup>655</sup> ʿĪrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 82 nr. 19; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 5:41.

<sup>656</sup> According to Aslīm, it seems that the names in this verse refer to leaders of the Persian army, although *Fahd* could be a misspelled Persian name. ʿĪrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 82 n.3.

<sup>657</sup> ʿĪrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, 56 nr. 6; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 3:296; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 5:41 v.3.

<sup>658</sup> Sirawān: a mountain close to the plain of Māsabadhān, in the mountain system now known as Zagros mountains, in present Iran. Cf. C. Jackson, M. Romanov, and A. Tavares, ‘al-Thurayyā Gazetteer Ver. 0.2’, Perseus Project, Tufts University, 2013, [http://maximromanov.github.io/projects/althurayya\\_02/](http://maximromanov.github.io/projects/althurayya_02/).

Besides Ḍirār, al-Ṭabarī mentions several men whom the caliph ‘Umar put in charge of sections of the army, none of them from the tribe of the Quraysh.<sup>660</sup> In his three poems, however, Ḍirār does not explicitly voice this plurality of men from different tribes fighting together. He speaks of one group (“we, us”) with one military goal and shared nobility (DK23 v.2). In the discourse of pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poets, especially the latter trait would be understood as applying to one tribal group, for nobility was inherited.<sup>661</sup> The circumstances of Ḍirār’s environment have changed and he is now as a military leader over an army composed of men from different tribes, and yet the language he uses to speak of this group does not differ significantly from the language he used in earlier—tribal—poems.

Unfortunately, in these three poems we cannot discern with what sort of group Ḍirār identified himself. Whether Ḍirār understood his group as an alliance of tribes or as individuals with a shared faith cannot be derived from these compositions. It might be telling, however, that the poet does not allude to belief and unbelief or to God’s authority and power, but only to nobility and military supremacy when characterising his group.<sup>662</sup>

Like in other poems, Ḍirār does not explain the reasons behind the conflict in the three compositions. What is it that has brought him to the plain of Māsabadhān, what enmity stands between him and Ādhīn? In the three compositions Ḍirār alludes to disobedience and rebellion now punished and rectified. Since it is the caliph ‘Umar who sent the army to fight Ādhīn and his people, the victory of which Ḍirār speaks must have resulted in the imposition of the caliph’s rule over the enemy. However, not once does Ḍirār allude to these higher authorities, and certainly not to the fact that he is in charge as by orders of ‘Umar, as al-Ṭabarī says (see DK25 v.1).<sup>663</sup>

<sup>659</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 4:37; Abū Ja’far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *The History of al-Tabari. Vol. XIII. The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt: The Middle Years of ‘Umar’s Caliphate A.D. 636-642/A.H. 15-21*, trans. G.H.A. Juynboll, vol. 13 (SUNY Press, 1989), 57.

<sup>660</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 4:37.

<sup>661</sup> See for example DK13 vv.13-14, DK18 vv.6-10, and see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>662</sup> In his analysis of the emergence of an Arab identity in early Islam, Webb argues that the groups gathered from different areas of the Arabian peninsula and involved in the early Muslim conquests would probably not yet have had an “awareness of shared Arabness”, a notion we indeed do not see in this poem by Ḍirār. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 130, 131. This corroborates Donner’s thesis that the rise of the Islamic state “was essentially a process of tribal integration carried out by a ruling elite of West Arabian townsmen”; Fred M. Donner, ‘The Bakr B. Wā’il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam’, *Studia Islamica*, no. 51 (1980): 8.

<sup>663</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 4:37.

All in all, these three poems dated after his conversion do not differ considerably from the poems ʔirār composed on the battles of the Quraysh against Muḥammad and his followers, which in turn, as we have seen, resemble his poems on pre-Islamic tribal feuds.

### 3.2 Recapitulation

Above I have signalled two broad and prominent themes in ʔirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb's corpus of poems as it has come down to us. As a child of his time, the themes that permeate ʔirār's poems are related to possessing, upholding, and defending the values and virtues that made a man into a *noble* man, that is, the values of *muruwwa*. In positive terms when speaking of his own group and in negative terms when characterising the enemy, these values include a strong attachment to the clan and tribe, and a proud independence of the individual and of the group, submitting others but never recognising foreign powers and their authority.

#### 3.2.1 Allegiance in the poems of ʔirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb

From his poems we do not learn anything about ʔirār's family or about the economic or social situation of his household. Likewise, his poems tell us little about his private life. When ʔirār speaks of himself, it is always in opposition to or in relationship with a larger group. The three pre-Islamic compositions in which he presents himself individually (DK04, DK09, DK10) all seem related to a personal attack, insult, or danger to which he was exposed, employing the poetical discourse to counterattack these personal enemies. Besides these more personal poems, the focus of his pre-Islamic compositions is primarily on the clan or tribe (DK02, DK03, DK07), with ʔirār exercising the public role of poet and spokesperson of his kin. In a poem like DK08 the personal reflection which serves as opening is followed by verses which must lead the tribe to reconsider a decision.

As for his relationship with his clan, the picture that emerges from ʔirār's poetry is that of a man proud of the Muḥārib b. Fihri, yet dissatisfied with their relegation to a secondary plane in Mecca in the literal sense of the geographical sphere, and in the figurative sense of the political sphere. ʔirār's poetical statements on the power of his clan (DK02, DK03) may have been attempts at changing the status quo. These attempts apparently were in vain, probably because ʔirār's

portrayal of his clan's position and power among the Quraysh did not match reality, at least not in all aspects, as we can infer from the poems DK04, DK08, and DK09 (which may refer to one and the same event).

Ḍirār's pride in and loyalty to his clan as found in some of his poems was extended to the larger tribe of the Quraysh. Under Ḍirār's leadership, at least once bands of the Muḥārib b. Fihr and their allies raided allies of the Quraysh, but it seems that Ḍirār never attempted to distance himself and his clan from the rest of the tribe and to seek the independence of the Muḥārib b. Fihr or to ally themselves to another group. Rather, with his poetry and with his sword he defended the Quraysh against enemies from inside and outside. He praised individuals and groups from the Quraysh (DK05, DK06), fought with his tribe on the battlefield, and put his poetical talents to the service of the tribe (DK07). Even the poem DK08, in which he rebukes his kin for wanting to settle for peace instead of avenging a wrongdoing, can be taken as a warning with the best interest of the tribe in mind. At the same time the account and the poems on this tribal conflict between the Quraysh and the Banū Jadhīma offer glimpses into the tensions between, on the one hand, the poetical discourse on tribal honour and nobility and, on the other, the pragmatic approach of the tribe to conflicts to prevent their escalation (DK08, DK09). In addition, the account and the poems related to it show that kinship relations and alliances could complicate matters when they became entangled with offences that had to be avenged.

With the emergence of Islam, the question of allegiance becomes more critical in Ḍirār's compositions. The earliest poems by Ḍirār on events related to Muḥammad are to be dated after the Emigration, even though the sources speak of intratribal tensions caused by Muḥammad's preaching already before it. Apparently, Ḍirār and his kinsmen who remained in Mecca struggled to define the split evinced by the Emigration, namely, that a group of the Quraysh had turned their back on their kin and had entered into an alliance with strangers.

In Ḍirār's poems against Muḥammad and his followers, the most-used solution is to ignore the Qurashī involvement on the enemy side. In his poems, the battles of Badr, Uḥud, and al-Khandaq are generally presented as tribal wars of the Quraysh against the Aws and the Khazraj (DK13, DK16, DK17) or against an unnamed group (DK12; see also DK15).



Ḍirār could not entirely avoid alluding to Qurashī enemies fighting against their own kin, but these opponents generally appear without further explanation as individuals among the Yathribī tribes (DK13 vv.9-11, DK17 vv.9-10). The presence of Qurashī men among the enemy did not, in Ḍirār's opinion, delegitimize the battles: he calls his group to face the enemy with heroism, to accept the losses with endurance and determination, and to avenge their slain (see for example: DK12). The poem DK20 resembles Ḍirār's pre-Islamic composition DK04: it is an attack and an insult directed at kinsmen of Ḍirār because of their treason and wrongdoing, an error that Ḍirār also points out for example in DK14.

Regarding Ḍirār's individual role and position in relation to the larger group after the emergence of Islam, we may note the following. First of all, in face of a common enemy, internal conflicts apparently were relegated to the background. In his poems that predate the emergence of Islam, Ḍirār at times defended his clan even if that went against the interests of the Quraysh as a whole. In the fight against Muḥammad and his followers, however, the focus lies less on his clan in contrast to the other Qurashī clans, and more on the Qurashī tribe as a whole and on individual achievements of men from different clans.

Ḍirār's position as an individual member of a larger group may also explain the following apparent contradiction. On the one hand we are told that he pledged not to kill any Qurashī, on the other he composed poems in which he seems to rejoice in the death of kinsmen among the enemy ranks (DK13, DK17). His individual *ḥasab wa-nasab* and the ensuing loyalty to his kin prevented him from killing a kinsman, and yet not only did he understand the need to stand up against the enemy, he also rejoiced in the communal honour for the Quraysh that derived from the battles. In the poem he composed in reaction to the pledge at 'Aqaba this same tension between the individual and communal honour can be seen (DK11). Ḍirār had wished to harm and possibly kill a Khazrajī enemy, but some Qurashī kinsmen came to the Khazrajī's rescue because of an alliance between them. Although this frustrated Ḍirār's plan, he did not rebuke his kinsmen for it, apparently recognising the sacredness of the duty of protecting the guest over his own desire to harm the stranger.

After the conquest of Mecca Ḍirār composed a poem in which he appealed to Muḥammad to defend him and his kinsmen from the vengeance of a Khazrajī enemy (DK21). This plea seems motivated, more than by a recognition of Muḥammad's position and authority, by the ties of

kinship that tie Ḍirār to him: Muḥammad must prevent the killing of the Quraysh by the hands of the Aws and the Khazraj because the Quraysh are his kin, not because (part of) the Quraysh have accepted him as prophet and now form one group together with the Aws and the Khazraj.

An account regarding Ḍirār and his fellow Qurashī poet Ibn al-Zibaʿrā in times of the caliph ʿUmar (r. 13-23/634-644) shows how (tribal) feuds of the past survived well into Muslim times. We are told that Ḍirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, both converted to Islam at the time, travelled to Medina looking for the poet Ḥassān b. Thābit to recite to him what they had composed about Ḥassān and to listen to what he had to say about them, “For your poetry is tolerated in Islam and ours is not”. Ḥassān agreed, and Ḍirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā recited in his presence all sorts of invective poems against him, but left before Ḥassān had the chance to reply to their insults. Ḥassān complained to the caliph who already had attempted to forbid the composition and recitation of invectives among Muslims. Considering that Ḥassān b. Thābit had been wronged, ʿUmar ordered Ibn al-Zibaʿrā and Ḍirār to return so that Ḥassān could also recite his poems against them.<sup>664</sup> Unfortunately, the poems recited on this occasion have not been transmitted.

### 3.2.2 Authority in the poems of Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb

In Ḍirār’s pre-Islamic poems, the discursive strands on allegiance and authority are well-entangled. His group, defined by ties of blood, occupies the most prominent and eminent rank, as shown in its supremacy on the battlefield (DK02, DK03). Individually, Ḍirār claims a high position, sometimes almost isolated (DK04), sometimes as the leader of a group (DK09).

In Ḍirār’s corpus we find no poems related to Muḥammad and his message predating the Emigration, but in light of his harsh verses against the men who participated in the pledge of ʿAqaba (DK11), and in light of his poems related to the ensuing battles, we may safely assume that Ḍirār agreed with the majority of the Quraysh in condemning the actions and words of his kinsman Muḥammad as contrary to the customs and ties of old and being a threat to the stability and unity of the Quraysh.

In the poems on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers Ḍirār mentions several enemies by name, among them the Emigrants Ḥamza b. ʿAbd al-Muṭṭalib and Muṣʿab b. ʿUmayr

<sup>664</sup> al-Jumāhī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:244–45; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 4:108–9. See also: Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 27; Bonebakker, ‘Religious Prejudice’, 82.

(DK13, DK14, DK17), but only once does he allude to Muḥammad (*Aḥmad*, DK13). The fact that these poems are not centred on the figure and role of Muḥammad adds credibility to their early dating and diminishes the plausibility that they were composed by a later Muslim author who, we may expect, would have focused the attention on Muḥammad and his close followers.

Like in his pre-Islamic poems, Ḍirār sometimes presents himself facing the enemy almost alone (DK11, DK15, DK16: with a brief reference to a Qurashī leader; DK18), while in other poems his tribe appears as unitedly fighting the enemy. The lowliness of the opponents is manifest not only in their despair and the chaos among their troops, but also in the lack of fit leadership (DK19). Interestingly, Ḍirār pays little attention to the leaders of his own group: almost no hierarchical distinction is made (DK13, DK14: a brief reference to one leader), and only in elegiac poems or fragments does he pay more attention to individual achievements and honour different from his own (DK12, DK17).

In two poems Ḍirār seems to praise the enemy, although only those from among the enemy who belong to his tribe (DK13, DK20). In the first of these poems he praises some individual Qurashī opponents. Not only is he thus able to explain the defeat suffered by his group as the result of a fierce fight and a strong opponent, implicitly praising his tribe, but he also may be attempting to sow discord among the enemy by pointing out the different blood groups among them. The second poem is a composition on an intratribal conflict in which he attacks the Qurashī enemies and characterises them as traitors and lowly men. Ḍirār is certain that his group will set this error right by attacking and submitting the “cousins” who have turned their back on their kin.

In Ḍirār’s poems after his conversion, the predominant themes are still a proud leadership and submission of the opponent without being submitted oneself. Ḍirār presents himself as a military leader who defeats and humiliates the enemy, but offers little to no details on the enemy or on the group under his command (DK23, DK24, DK25). Nor in the first poem after his conversion (DK21) nor in the later poems on the Muslim conquests (DK22, DK23, DK24, DK25) does Ḍirār manifest a deep piety or understanding of the community to which he now belongs through his conversion. All in all the themes and motives of these poems differ little from the poems Ḍirār composed before his conversion. If we can deduce anything from these short poems, it might be that Ḍirār’s worldview does not seem deeply affected by his acceptance of Islam and his recognition of Muḥammad’s position and leadership.





# Chapter 4

---

IBN AL-ZIBA'RĀ

## 4. IBN AL-ZIBA‘RĀ

‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Ziba‘rā b. Qays b. ‘Adī b. Sa’d b. Sahn b. Fihir, also known as Abū Sa’d, was a poet and warrior of the Quraysh around the turn of the 6<sup>th</sup> century who was born prior to the emergence of Islam and died after it, and thus belongs to the category of *mukhaḍram* poets.

Muslim tradition portrays Ibn al-Ziba‘rā as a fierce opponent to Muḥammad and his message.<sup>665</sup> We are told that after the Muslim conquest of Mecca in the year 8/630 Ibn al-Ziba‘rā fled the town to escape the wrath of Muḥammad. Eventually, he returned to Mecca, where he asked Muḥammad’s forgiveness and composed several poems in praise of him.

In the following verses, attributed by some to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā, the poet paints a self-portrait in his old age:<sup>666</sup>

[Zōi rajaz]

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| إِنِّي عَلَى مَا فِيَّ مِنْ تَخَدُّدٍ     | . 1 |
| وَدِقَّةٍ فِي عَظْمِ سَاقِي وَيَدِي       | . 2 |
| أُرْوَى عَلَى ذِي الْعُكْنِ الصَّفْنَدَدِ | . 3 |

1. I, despite having wrinkles
2. And thinness in the bones of my shank and my arm
3. I [still] restrain a fat and big man.

In spite of his advanced age, the poet still presents himself as one who leads others. The verb *rawīya* ‘alā (v.3) in the first place means “to draw water for” or “bring water to” people or animals, but is explained here by al-Jubūrī, following Ibn Durayd, in the sense of “binding sb. to the back of a camel lest he should fall” with a rope called *riwā*.<sup>667</sup> In both senses, however, it contrasts with the emaciated figure of the poet that emerges in vv.1-2: in spite of his age and apparent weakness, he still provides for others or is able to restrain them and protect them from danger.

The date of Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s birth is unknown, as is the date of his death, however, we know that he was alive in times of the caliph ‘Umar (r. 13-23/634-644). Renate Jacobi dates Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s

<sup>665</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, 1994, 3:76–77, 239; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb*, 1992, 3:901–4.

<sup>666</sup> Yahyā Wahīb al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r ‘Abd Allāh Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 2nd ed. (Beirut: Mu’assasat al-Risāla, 1981), 34 nr. 7; Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Azdi Ibn Durayd (837-933), *Jamharat al-Lugha*, ed. Ramzī Munir al-Ba‘labakkī, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-‘Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1987), 235; Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat al-Lugha*, 1987, 2: 1186.

<sup>667</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 34; Ibn Durayd, *Jamharat al-Lugha*, 1987, 1:235. See also Lane, s.v. *r-w-y*.

death during ‘Umar’s reign.<sup>668</sup> Ibn al-Athīr tells us that Ibn al-Zibā’rā’s son died and his bloodline ran out.<sup>669</sup> The mother of Ibn al-Zibā’rā was ‘Ātika bt. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Amīr (or: ‘Amr) b. Wahb b. Ḥudhāfa, from the Qurashī clan of the Banū Jumāh.<sup>670</sup> His father was al-Zibā’rā b. Qays b. ‘Adī b. Sa’d b. Sahn.<sup>671</sup> The name al-Zibā’rā’s is probably a nickname. The root *z-b-‘r* is rather uncommon; a *rajul zibā’rā* is glossed by the compiler of *Lisān al-‘Arab* as *shakisu l-khalaq*, that is, ill-tempered and evil, stubborn.<sup>672</sup>

### *The poems of Ibn al-Zibā’rā*

Ibn al-Zibā’rā is considered one of the best *mukhaḍram* poets of the Quraysh by classical critics. Both Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (368-463/978-1070) and Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī (d. 139/756) count him among the highest level of Meccan poets.<sup>673</sup> There is no entry on Ibn al-Zibā’rā in the literary encyclopaedia of Brockelmann, but he is included in the works of Blachère and Sezgin.<sup>674</sup> Ibn al-Zibā’rā was especially known for his concise compositions. Once asked why his poems were so short he reportedly answered: “Because the short penetrate the ear better and go around better at the gatherings”.<sup>675</sup>

No classical edition of Ibn al-Zibā’rā’s *dīwān* has been transmitted. His poems, scattered in different types of sources—*sīra* books, the *Aghānī*, etc.—, have been gathered and edited by al-Jubūrī and P. Minganti. The latter also offers an Italian translation of several of the poems.<sup>676</sup>

In seven of the 31 poems or fragments in Ibn al-Zibā’rā’s *dīwān* as edited by al-Jubūrī, the poet takes a stand against Muḥammad and his followers (nr. 1; 3; 12; 15; 17; 18; 20),<sup>677</sup> and in three he

<sup>668</sup> Jacobi, ‘Qaṣīda’. Minganti dates it in the year 73/692, but this seems rather late; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Zibā’rā’, 324–25; Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:309, 349.

<sup>669</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, 1994, 3:239.

<sup>670</sup> al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 402.

<sup>671</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 51; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 401–2.

<sup>672</sup> *Zabā’rā* means “hairy” and is said of men or camels with coarse and abundant (facial) hair; *Lisān al-‘Arab*, s.v. *z-b-‘r*; Abū Maṣūf Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Azharī (d. 980), *Tahdhīb al-Lughā*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Awd, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2001), 221.

<sup>673</sup> Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb*, 1992, 3:901–2 [1533]; al-Jumāhī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:233. Cf. al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r al-Mukhaḍramūn*, 128.

<sup>674</sup> Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:309; Sezgin, *GAS*, 2:275.

<sup>675</sup> Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan Ibn Rashīq (d. ca. 1070), *al-Umda fi Mahāsīn al-Shi’r wa-Ādābihi*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, 5th ed., vol. 1 (Dār al-Jil, 1981), 187.

<sup>676</sup> Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Zibā’rā’, al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r Ibn al-Zibā’rā*.

<sup>677</sup> Here respectively: Z19; Z14; Z16; Z17; Z18; Z21; Z15.



praises Muḥammad (nr. 10; 19; 26);<sup>678</sup> three other poems deal with events relating to nascent Islam but without an explicit reference to it (nr. 6; 23; and nr. 5).<sup>679</sup> Eight of his poems are—probably—pre-Islamic (nr. 2; 11; 14; 21; 28; 29; 30; 31),<sup>680</sup> while 10 poems or fragments cannot be dated (nr. 7; 9; 16; 22; 24; 27; and the poems nr. 4; 8; 13; 25).<sup>681</sup> The edition of Minganti contains 23 poems or fragments: it does not include nr. 2; 5; 7; 8; 14; 26; 27; 30; 31 of Edition al-Jubūrī but has one extra version of al-Jubūrī's nr. 10.<sup>682</sup> In the present analysis I exclude six poems from the Edition al-Jubūrī as their context is unclear, and in general they do not shed new light on the question of how Ibn al-Ziba'ra understood the themes of allegiance and authority.<sup>683</sup>

Of the 11 poems attributed to Ibn al-Ziba'ra in the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām, Ibn Hishām notes that authorities on poetry doubt the authenticity of three of them (Z14, Z15, Z24, resp. nr. 3, 20, 19 in Edition al-Jubūrī).<sup>684</sup> Guillaume adds another poem to the list of suspected attributions (Z16, nr. 12 in Edition al-Jubūrī). Walid 'Arafat questions the attribution of yet another poem (Z19, nr. 1 in Edition al-Jubūrī) as well as its poetical counterpart, a composition by Ḥassān b. Thābit (HbT04). Those compositions of Ibn al-Ziba'ra that are found in the *sīra* books as edited by Ibn Hishām, Ibn Kathīr, and others, are exposed to the type of criticism indicated in the introductory chapter.<sup>685</sup> In the *Sīra* by Ibn Hishām, six poems attributed to Ibn al-Ziba'ra are found in pair with a composition by a poet on the side of Muḥammad. Of these six, four are paired with a poem by the Helper poet Ḥassān b. Thābit.

<sup>678</sup> Here respectively: Z22; Z24; Z23.

<sup>679</sup> Here respectively: Z20; Z13. The single verse of poem nr. 5 is not included in this analysis. It seems that it was the beginning of a longer poem that has been lost, and as it stands it does not contribute to the discourse analysis.

<sup>680</sup> Here respectively: Z03; Z02; Z05; Z08; Z11; Z12; Z12I; the poem nr. 31 not included in this analysis; see footnote 776.

<sup>681</sup> Here respectively: Z01; Z09; Z10; Z07; Z04; Z06. The poems nr. 4; 8; 13; 25 are not included in this analysis. Lane presents a translation of the single verse of nr. 4, "Would that thy husband had gone hanging upon him a sword and bearing a spear"; Lane, s.v. *q-l-d*. Guillaume translates the single verse of nr. 25: "Lavish in hospitality, thrusting in battle, / *Zabāniya*, violent, coarse are their minds"; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 721 n. 188. The poems nr. 8 and 13 are in praise of the prominent Qurashī leader al-'Āṣī b. al-Wā'il al-Sahmī, but the specific occasion is unknown. The metre of nr. 8 (six verses) is very unstable and its meaning is doubtful. The poem nr. 13 (five verses), also in praise of al-'Āṣī, speaks of al-'Āṣī's loyalty to someone, but it is unclear to whom and on which occasion.

<sup>682</sup> See below, Z22.

<sup>683</sup> See footnotes 679, 680, 681.

<sup>684</sup> For the references, see the poems below.

<sup>685</sup> See chapter 1. Introduction.

### *Themes in Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poetry*

Most of Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poems which have been preserved are related to matters concerning the emergence of Islam. Whether or not this focus is the result of a (conscious or unconscious) process of selection by later Muslim compilers is impossible to determine.

In the poems by Ibn al-Ziba'ra that can be dated prior to the start of Muḥammad's prophetic career he speaks of Mecca as a prominent town, distinguished by its sanctuary and different cultic institutions. Although Mecca was a commercial centre, in Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poems the images used to praise his group are still rooted in the values and virtues of nomadic groups, somehow detached from the sedentary life that they were now actually living. At the same time, and seemingly against the value of loyalty to one's kin, Ibn al-Ziba'ra puts his poems to use in the intratribal struggles of the Quraysh over the division of power. Compared with Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ibn al-Ziba'ra is less concerned with the honour and nobility of the tribe as a whole; he is loyal first and foremost to his clan and their close relatives through marriages or alliances. Allegiance and authority are recurrent themes in his poems, but at least in pre-Islamic times his loyalty lies primarily with his clan and the Qurashī faction to which it belongs, and his aim is to change the status quo in Mecca regarding the division of power and influence in favour of his clan.

Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poetical attacks against Muḥammad are characterised by Ibn 'Abd al-Barr as of the most violent sort.<sup>686</sup> The concerns voiced by Ibn al-Ziba'ra in these poems are not so much related to Muḥammad's message as they are connected to the changes in society that he witnessed and rejected: people from his tribe were turning their back on Mecca to follow a man unfit to lead and were willing to relinquish to strangers the power over the institutions they had inherited from their forefathers.<sup>687</sup>

<sup>686</sup> Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, 1992, 3:901. Minganti suspects that the verses attributed to Ibn al-Ziba'ra as found in the *sīra* books underwent a process of censorship so as to eliminate or dissimulate the most scabrous parts because the poems as they have been transmitted do not justify, in Minganti's view, this characterisation. Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'ra', 333. While one vicious verse against Muḥammad indeed seems to have been omitted in some sources (see Z14), in general the suspicion of Minganti is impossible to prove; it is dangerous to base an argument upon that what the sources do not say.

<sup>687</sup> Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'ra', 333.

## 4.1 Ibn al-Zibaʿrā's poems

### 4.1.1 Ibn al-Zibaʿrā and his tribe

Ibn al-Zibaʿrā belonged to the Qurashī clan of the Banū Sahl, from the section of the *Ahlāf*.<sup>688</sup> In his time, Mecca was a sedentary town in which the inhabitants formed a patchwork of members of the Quraysh and individuals from other groups. The different factions within the Quraysh rivalled over the control of the institutions of Mecca.<sup>689</sup> In Ibn al-Zibaʿrā's corpus we find a series of poems related to events that illustrate the tensions and conflicts between the different Qurashī factions, as well as the policies of appeasement that sometimes were set in motion in order to prevent a looming conflict.

The following poem by Ibn al-Zibaʿrā and the account in which it is embedded shows how the Quraysh, in spite of the ideal of loyalty to the tribe, struggled with conflicting interests among the clans. We are told that one morning the people of Mecca woke up to find some scolding verses against the Quṣayy hanging at the *Dār al-Nadwa* (the House of consultation), an assembly house used for consultation on political affairs and official ceremonies.<sup>690</sup> The verses were anonymous, but the Meccans unanimously attributed them to Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, for he had attempted—possibly the day before—to enter the *Dār al-Nadwa*. Access to the assembly house was limited to the agnates of Quṣayy and male Qurashīs of 40 years and older,<sup>691</sup> and apparently Ibn al-Zibaʿrā was neither. He had been denied the entry, and this would have prompted him to compose this scolding poem:<sup>692</sup>

[Z02 *basīf*]

1. أَلْهَىٰ فُصَيًّا عَنِ الْمَجْدِ الْأَسَاطِيرُ – وَرَشَوَةَ مِثْلُ مَا تُرَشَى السَّفَاسِيرُ
2. وَأَكْلُهَا اللَّحْمَ بَحْتًا لَا خَلِيطَ لَهُ – وَقَوْلُهَا رَحَلَتْ عَيْرٌ أَتَتْ عَيْرُ
3. تَوَارَثُوا فِي نَصَابِ اللُّؤْمِ أَوْلَهُمْ – فَلَا يُعَدُّ لَهُمْ مَجْدٌ وَلَا خَيْرُ

<sup>688</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>689</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>690</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 32.

<sup>691</sup> Ibn Saʿd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 1:58; Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh*, 354. See Dostal, 'Mecca before the Time of the Prophet', 196 n.10.

<sup>692</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shiʿr Ibn al-Zibaʿrā*, 37 nr. 11; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Zibaʿrā', 326, 351 nr. 8 vv.1-2; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 342–43 vv.1,3; al-Jumāḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:235–36 vv.1-2. Trans. vv.1-2: El-Tayyib, 'Pre-Islamic Poetry', 75. Trans. v.3 (not included in Tayyib's translation): MC.

1. Lying tales have turned the Quṣayy from glory, and bribery like that given to brokers,<sup>693</sup>
2. And their eating the meat by itself unmixed with bread, and their saying: 'A trading caravan has set off, a caravan has arrived'
3. They inherited their origin in the beginning of baseness – their forefathers, glory and goodness is not attributed to them.

Quṣayy (v.1) was an ancestor of the Quraysh and as such the poem could be understood as an insult against the Qurashī tribe as a whole. However, the name *Quṣayy* was commonly used to refer to the Qurashī clans 'Abd al-Dār and 'Abd Manāf, at the time the clans that held the main cultic and political functions of Mecca.<sup>694</sup> According to the poet, the Quṣayy do not deal fairly with the benefits of these institutions, nor do they act according to the "glory" they once possessed (v.1). The lying and the bribes of which Ibn al-Ziba'rā speaks may be an accusation of a dishonest exploitation of the institution of the pilgrimage (v.1).

The eating of meat not mixed with bread (v.2) was a sign of excess and greediness that was frowned upon.<sup>695</sup> Being rich was only considered positive if one spent his wealth on the poor and the guests and if it came from the spoils of battle and raids. One's material wealth would be lost for the individual at his death, while honour and nobility, generosity and heroism would prevail. "The graves of the rich and the poor are equal", in words of Ibn al-Ziba'rā.<sup>696</sup> To add insult to injury, Ibn al-Ziba'rā pictures the Quṣayy as traders: they are focused on the coming and going of caravans (v.2).<sup>697</sup> Pre-Islamic Arab tribes generally despised the spirit of commerce and looked down upon manual workers and traders.<sup>698</sup> In the last verse, rather obscure and omitted in some sources, the

<sup>693</sup> The second hemistich is difficult, especially because of *sīfīsīr* (pl. *saḫāsīr*). Following one of the explanations of the word in *Lisān al-'Arab*, al-Jubūrī explains it as a synonym of *simsār* pl. *samāsīr*, "broker, commercial agent, intermediary". In the *Lisān* it is also glossed as "messenger, messenger on foot"; "servant"; "a skilful man (in working with iron)"; *Lisān al-'Arab* s.v. *s-f-s-r*.

Al-Jubūrī and Minganti mention a variant reading of the hemistich: *wa-mishyaton mithla mā tamshī* (or: *yanshī*) *al-shaqārīr*. The meaning of *shaqārīr* is also doubtful but may be related to the following saying: *jā'a bi-l-ṣuqar wa-l-buqar* (or: *bi-l-shuqārā wa-l-buqārā*), explained as "he came with lies and excitements of dissension", "with sheer and excessive lying". The translation of the hemistich could read: "and the pace like the pace of the ones excited with dissension"; Lane, s.v. *sh-q-r, ṣ-q-r*.

<sup>694</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 164–65; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 421. Cf. al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 37; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 4.

<sup>695</sup> One can be addicted to meat as one can be addicted to wine; Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāhīz (d. ca. 868), *al-Bukhalā'*, ed. Tāhā al-Hājirī (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2005), 108–9. See also the drinking of "unmixed wine", wine not mixed with water: Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:29–30.

<sup>696</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 41 nr. 15 v.3; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā', 353 nr. 13 v.3. Trans.

<sup>697</sup> Cf. Q 106: the Quraysh should be thankful to God for their wealth and fruitful trade.

<sup>698</sup> El-Tayib, 'Pre-Islamic Poetry', 75. See an epigram by Ibn al-Ziba'rā against Mawhab b. Riyāh, an ally or client of a Qurashī clan: "you evil son of a blacksmith", Z20 v.3.

accusation is repeated concisely: the present generation of the Quṣayy as well as their forefathers are base and ignoble (v.3).

This poem, despite its short length, caused uproar in Mecca. We must remember the role of poetry and poets at the time: an invective poem was an offence that had to be set right by the individual or the group insulted. According to Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245/860), it was Abū Ṭālib b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (a prominent Qurashī, member of the insulted group of the ‘Abd Manāf, and famous as the uncle and protector of Muḥammad) who called the Quṣayy not to act rashly against Ibn al-Ziba‘rā. As a strong clan among the Quraysh, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s clan of the Sahm were a group to be taken into account.<sup>699</sup> In case of a conflict between the two Qurashī factions of the *Aḥlāf* and the *Muṭayyabūn*, the Sahm were the group that had pledged to attack Abū Ṭālib’s clan, the ‘Abd Manāf.<sup>700</sup> Perhaps fearing that any action taken against Ibn al-Ziba‘rā could spark an intratribal conflict, Abū Ṭālib thought it wise to inquire first whether the Sahm had been involved or supported Ibn al-Ziba‘rā, and what they planned to do.<sup>701</sup>

The Quṣayy followed Abū Ṭālib’s advice and went to the Banū Sahm to request justice; the Sahm agreed to hand over Ibn al-Ziba‘rā, and the poet was tied and beaten by those he had insulted.<sup>702</sup> At the same time, the Sahm made clear that anyone who would compose an invective against them would receive the same punishment as Ibn al-Ziba‘rā.<sup>703</sup>

---

<sup>699</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 111.

<sup>700</sup> Within the group of the *Aḥlāf* the different clans had decided which of their clan would attack which in case of a conflict with the *Muṭayyabūn*: the Sahm would attack the ‘Abd Manāf, the ‘Abd al-Dār would attack the Asad, the Makhzūm would attack the Taym, the ‘Adī would attack the al-Ḥārith b. Fihri; Ibn Ḥabīb, 33–34, 51–52, 272, 343. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*, and al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 44.

<sup>701</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 343.

<sup>702</sup> According to Ibn Ḥabīb, the decision to hand over Ibn al-Ziba‘rā was taken by al-‘Āṣī b. Wā’il, a Sahmī and one of the leaders of the Quraysh; Ibn Ḥabīb, 344; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 408.

<sup>703</sup> al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:236–37; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 344.

From the reactions to the poem Zo2 the philologist al-Jumaḥī concludes that Ibn al-Ziba‘rā had infringed a—tacit—prohibition of the town of Mecca: “among the things disliked by the Quraysh, and punished by them, was making *hijā’* (invective) between them”. That Ibn al-Ziba‘rā was pardoned in the end was, according to al-Jumaḥī, because of the Qurashī tribal solidarity for a fellow kinsman (al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:236). Based on al-Jumaḥī’s statement Shahid infers that the genre of invectives was unpopular in Mecca and that they refrained from insulting each other in poems (Irfan Shahid, ‘Another Contribution to Koranic Exegesis the Sūra of the Poets (Xxvi)’, *Journal of Arabic Literature* 14, no. 1 (1 January 1983): 7–8 n. 16). Against al-Jumaḥī and Shahid, Van Gelder states that restraint in composing or using invectives against kinsmen is not to be attributed to a moral aversion against invectives among the Quraysh, but rather to a fear of intratribal conflicts that could be sparked by such compositions, as indeed was in danger of happening in the aftermath of Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s composition against the Quṣayy. Van Gelder points to the use of invective poetry by the Quraysh as a weapon of war in the later conflict with Muḥammad and his followers, which he

We are told that Ibn al-Ziba'rā composed the following poem in praise of the Quṣayy in the aftermath of his invective:<sup>704</sup>

[Z03 *tawil*]

1. أَلَا أُبْلِغَا عَنِّي فُصَيًّا رِسَالَةً - فَأَنْتُمْ سَنَامُ الْمَجْدِ مِنْ آلِ غَالِبِ
2. وَأَنْتُمْ ثِمَالُ النَّاسِ فِي كُلِّ شَتْوٍ - إِذَا عَضَّهُمْ ذَهْرٌ شَدِيدُ الْمَنَاكِبِ
3. وَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ عَلِيًّا مَعَدًّا بِأَنْكُمُ - ثِمَالُهُمْ فِي الْمُضْلِعَاتِ النَّوَائِبِ
4. فَإِنْ تُطْلِقُونِي تُطْلِقُوا ذَا قَرَابَةٍ - وَمُتْنٍ عَلَيْكُمْ صَادِقًا غَيْرَ كَاذِبِ
5. فَأُبْلِغْ أَبَا سُفْيَانَ عَنِّي رِسَالَةً - وَأُبْلِغْ أُسَيْدًا ذَا النَّدَى وَالْمَكَاسِبِ
6. وَأُبْلِغْ أَبَا الْعَاصِي وَلَا تَنْسَ زَمْعَةً - وَمُطْعِمَ لَا تَنْسَ لِبِجَامِ الْمَشَاغِبِ
7. بِأَنْكُمُ فِي الْعُسْرِ وَالْيُسْرِ خَيْرِنَا - إِذَا كَانَ يَوْمٌ مُزْمَهْرُ الْكَوَاكِبِ

1. Woe! Give Quṣayy a message from me: You are, in respect of glory, the highest of the people of Ghālib<sup>705</sup>
2. You are the aider of the people in winter, when fate hits them hard<sup>706</sup>
3. The highest of Ma'add<sup>707</sup> have learned that you are their aiders in hard circumstances
4. If you set me free you set free a relative, one who praises you truthfully and is not a liar<sup>708</sup>
5. So, send Abū Sufyān a message from me, and Usayd the bountiful and wealthy one<sup>709</sup>
6. And, send a message to Abū al-'Aṣī and do not forget Zam'a and do not forget Muṭ'im, the restrainer of conflicts<sup>710</sup>

takes as an indication that the Quraysh were not inexperienced in composing such poems (Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 15).

<sup>704</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 30–31 nr. 2; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 345–46.

<sup>705</sup> Ghālib: an ancestor of the whole of Quraysh

<sup>706</sup> 'Aḍḍa: "to bite, to snatch with the teeth". The combination of the verb "to bite" with *manākib* (shoulders) does not make much sense: "when fate bites with a strong shoulder (thrust)". Instead of *manākib* we would expect the plural of *nāb*, "teeth, fangs", but its most common plural forms do not fit the metre. The form *anāyib*, which would fit, is rare, but attested in a description of the hunting dog by the early 'Abbasid poet Aḥmad b. Ziyād b. Abi Karīma: *Tadīru 'uyūnan rukkibat fi barāṭīlin / ka-jamri l-ghaḍā khuzran dhirābu l-anāyibu*, "Turning eyes, glancing, fixed in a strong head, as live charcoal of hardwood, of strong fangs"; Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāhiz (d. ca. 868), *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 2nd ed., vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003), 445. Changing *shadīdu l-manākibu* for *dhirābu l-anāyib* would render the verse more plausible: "when fate sinks its teeth into us with strong fangs".

<sup>707</sup> Ma'add: Collective name for the northern Arab tribes, among them the Quraysh. I.e.: all the Arabs, everyone; Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 72.

<sup>708</sup> Lit. "one with [ties of] kinship".

<sup>709</sup> Abū Sufyān: Ṣakhr b. Ḥarb b. Umayya b. 'Abd Shams, one of the Qurashī leaders at the time. Usayd: Usayd b. Abi al-'Aṣ b. Umayya b. 'Abd Shams.

7. In ease and hardship you are the best of us, on a day when the stars shine intensely bright.<sup>711</sup>

Whether Ibn al-Ziba‘rā composed the poem as a plea for his release or as a plea for forgiveness is unclear—although v.4 seems to indicate that he was still captive when he recited it. According to al-‘Aynī, it was thanks to this poem that the Quṣayy released him.<sup>712</sup>

The opening of the poem (v.1) follows the convention of pre-Islamic poetry of introducing two unnamed—and possibly fictional—men who are to transmit the message to an audience. After this opening verse Ibn al-Ziba‘rā praises the Quṣayy (v.1) by attributing to them equally conventional values and virtues: they defend and aid those around them in difficult times (vv.2-3,7), and as such they are known by all (v.3).<sup>713</sup>

Right in the middle of the poem we find the reason for the previous praise: the poet had plead to be released, probably using the same argument as here, namely, the ties of kinship that bind him to the Quṣayy (v.4). In the same verse, his promise or statement on the trustworthiness of his praise is related to these ties of blood: closely related to them, his praise of some individuals from his tribe in the second part of the poem is certainly reliable. The role of the men mentioned (vv.5-6) is not entirely clear. The poetical insult of Zo2 against the Quṣayy targeted in the first place the clans ‘Abd Manāf and ‘Abd al-Dār. To the ‘Abd Manāf belonged the prominent leader Abū Sufyān, as well as Usayd, Abū al-‘Āṣī, and Muṭ‘im (of these, all but Muṭ‘im were members of its subgroup ‘Abd Shams). Zam‘a, however, belonged to the clan of the Asad, allies of the ‘Abd Manāf

<sup>710</sup> Because of the altered word order perhaps we have to read: “do not forget Zam‘a and Muṭ‘im, and do not forget the restrainer of conflicts”. In that case, “the restrainer of conflicts” would not be an epithet of Muṭ‘im but a reference to a fourth person.

Abū al-‘Āṣī: Abū al-‘Āṣī b. Rabī‘ b. ‘Abd Shams, related to Muḥammad through his wife. Zam‘a: Zam‘a b. al-Aswad b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Asad. Muṭ‘im: Muṭ‘im b. ‘Adī b. Nawfal b. ‘Abd Manāf.

<sup>711</sup> I.e., when it is very cold, in the winter. The bombastic tone of the poem, and especially of the last verse, and the paradox of stars shining in the middle of the day, lead to suspect an ironical tone or at least an intended ambiguity, an important rhetorical device in Arabic (Islamic) thought, as Bauer shows in his brilliant study on this phenomenon, Thomas Bauer, *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams* (Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011).

<sup>712</sup> al-‘Aynī, *Kitāb al-Maqāṣid al-Nahwīyya fi Sharḥ Shawāhid Shurūḥ al-Alfiyya*, found in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Suhaylī (d. 1185), *al-Rawḍ al-Unuḥfi Sharḥ al-Sira li-Ibn Hishām*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, 2000), 56–57. Cf. Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 326–27.

<sup>713</sup> See footnote 707.

in the *Muṭayyabūn* faction. As descendants of a man known as Quṣayy,<sup>74</sup> the Asad perhaps also had felt insulted by Ibn al-Ziba'rā.

In this poem, Ibn al-Ziba'rā takes back his former invective against the Quṣayy (Z02). He praises them as a group as well as individually, going as far as attributing to them a higher rank than his own clan, for he speaks of them as “the best of us”, that is, of the Quraysh (v.1,7). He takes back his former accusation that the Quṣayy could claim no share in the inherited glory (Z02 v.1 - Z03 v.1); the proclamation of his trustworthy praise undermines his former characterisation of the Quṣayy as liars (Z02 v.1 - Z03 v.4); and his emphasis on their generosity and aid in hard times challenges his former allegation of them being greedy (Z02 v.2 - Z03 v.2-3,7).

Although it was an adulatory attempt to appease the anger of the Quṣayy, Ibn al-Ziba'rā's words of praise, especially those directed at individuals, did to some extent reflect real characteristics of the praised group and individuals. Muṭ'im, if the apposition in the second hemistich of v.6 indeed refers to him (see footnote 710), is pictured by Ibn al-Ziba'rā as a man not only keen on avoiding the escalation of conflicts but also invested with the power to act on such occasions. This picture of Muṭ'im is corroborated by the following accounts: in *sīra* and *aḥādīth* books, Muṭ'im and Zam'a are named among the small group of the Quraysh that agreed on annulling the Qurashī boycott against their clans of the Banū Hāshim and Banū Muṭṭalib in the early period of Muḥammad's prophetic career. In addition, Muṭ'im is said to have offered protection to Muḥammad in Mecca when he returned from his failed expedition to Thaḳīf.<sup>75</sup>

### *Ibn al-Ziba'rā and his clan*

The account of Ibn al-Ziba'rā's clash and reconciliation with the Quṣayy is supplemented by the following addition, which sheds more light on the poet's relation with his clan and the tribe as a whole. We are told that an unnamed opponent confronted Ibn al-Ziba'rā with the attitude of his clan, scorning him for the apparent failure of the Sahn in protecting him against the Quṣayy. Although he had been willing to praise the Quṣayy and assert their superiority among the tribe (Z03)—in order to save his skin, we may presume—, Ibn al-Ziba'rā did not tolerate such an insult

<sup>74</sup> Their descended from Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Zayd; Zayd was also known as Quṣayy. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 4, 19.

<sup>75</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 11:553. Cf. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:376, 380–81; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī*, 398.



against his clan by a non-Sahmī. Unfortunately, it is not mentioned who provoked Ibn al-Ziba‘rā, a detail that could have shed further light on the rivalries between the different Qurashī clans. Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s response to the confrontation reads:<sup>716</sup>

[Z04 *tawil*]

1. لَعَمْرُكَ مَا جَاءَتْ بِنُكْرٍ عَشِيرَتِي - وَإِنْ صَالَحَتْ إِخْوَانَهَا لَا أَلُومُهَا .1
2. يَوَدُّ جُنَاةُ الْعَيِّ أَنْ سُوِّفَنَا - بِأَيْمَانِنَا مَسْلُولَةً لَا نَشِيْمُهَا .2
3. فَإِنَّ فَصِيًّا أَهْلُ مَجْدٍ وَعِزَّةٍ - وَأَهْلُ فَعَالٍ لَا يُرَامُ قَدِيمُهَا [ .3]
4. هُمْ مَنَعُوا يَوْمِي عُكَاظَ نِسَاءِنَا - كَمَا مَنَعَ الشَّوَلُ الْهَبْجَانَ قُرُومُهَا [ .4]

1. By your life, my kinsfolk has not produced evil; I don't blame her [my kin] if she reached a compromise with her brothers
2. The evil offenders hoped that our swords would be in our right hands, drawn, and that we would not sheath them again<sup>717</sup>
3. [Quṣayy is a people of glory and might, a people of liberality – its reputation is not under attack]
4. [They defended our women on the two days of ‘Ukāz like their masters protect the well-bred she-camels.]

In the poem Ibn al-Ziba‘rā excuses his clan, the Sahm, for how they treated him. Through the agreement they reached with the Quṣayy, their opponents as well as their relatives (v.1), the Sahm avoided the large-scale conflict within the Quraysh that others may have wished (v.2).

Vv.3-4 are found in the *Umda* of Ibn Rashīq but not in the earlier *Ṭabaqāt* of al-Jumaḥī.<sup>718</sup> They do not entirely fit the occasion on which Z04 is said to have been composed, nor do they fit the verses that precede them. While vv.1-2 are in defence of his clan, vv.3-4 are words of praise directed at the Quṣayy. In addition, in v.4 we find a reference to the *Yawm ‘Ukāz*, a pre-Islamic battle of the long conflict known as the *Ḥarb al-Fijār* (the Sacrilegious War) between the Kināna and the Quraysh on the one hand and the Qays ‘Aylān (without the Ghaṭafān) on the other.<sup>719</sup> In

<sup>716</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 50 nr. 24; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 359 nr. 23; al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:237. Al-Jubūrī and Minganti follow the version of al-Jumaḥī, which only has the first two verses. A version with the two additional verses (vv.3-4) is found in: Ibn Rashīq, *al-Umda*, 1981, 1:65. This version is followed by Jawād ‘Alī, with a slight variation in v.3, first hemistich (‘izzin wa-najdatin): Jawād ‘Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-‘Arab Qabl al-Islām*, vol. 17 (Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 2001), 115–16.

<sup>717</sup> *Aymān* is the plural form of *yanīn*, “oath, covenant confirmed with an oath”, but here it must be understood as “right hands”. For such a use, see for example Q 16: 71.

<sup>718</sup> Ibn Rashīq, *al-Umda*, 1981, 1:65.

<sup>719</sup> See below, Z08.

the *Aghānī* there is a poem of three verses by a certain Ḥuraym b. al-Ḥārith al-Taymī, a *mukhadḍram* poet, in which the first two verses are almost identical to vv.3-4 of Z04.<sup>720</sup> Such close resemblances are not uncommon in pre-Islamic and *mukhadḍram* poems.<sup>721</sup> In this case, however, perhaps vv.3-4 were a later addition to Z04; the same metre and rhyme of two different compositions could explain the confusion and fusion of two different poems.

The accounts of Ibn al-Ziba'ra's invective (Z02) and its aftermath show that both parties, the group of the offended and that of the offender, agreed that Ibn al-Ziba'ra had gone too far with his short but biting poem against the Quṣayy.<sup>722</sup> Both parties also agreed on the need to set the balance right and punish the offender, but made sure to set in motion policies of appeasement so as to avoid a conflict that would engulf the Quraysh as a whole, as well as to avoid their own dishonour. Thus, both camps took steps to ensure on the one hand that they would not lose face and, on the other, that the conflict would not escalate. By taking Ibn al-Ziba'ra prisoner the Quṣayy showed that they did not tolerate offences against them. By singling out Ibn al-Ziba'ra as the only offender, the Quṣayy left the Sahn and their allies out of the retaliation. None of their own composed a poem insulting Ibn al-Ziba'ra and his clan. Thus they avoided sparking a chain reaction of poetical insults and even open warfare between the clans and their respective factions.<sup>723</sup>

<sup>720</sup> According to al-İṣfahānī, Ḥuraym would have composed it on occasion of *Yawm dhī Qār*, a battle between the Bakr b. Wā'il and the Persians. Ḥuraym praised the Banū Lujaym, from the Bakr b. Wā'il. Instead of *fā-inna Quṣayyan* the first verse opens with *wa-inna Lujayman*; al-İṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 24:47–48.

<sup>721</sup> See footnote 338.

<sup>722</sup> See Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'ra', 328.

<sup>723</sup> In some accounts, Ibn al-Ziba'ra's release by the Quṣayy is explained not because of his adulatory poem but because the Quṣayy feared that one of theirs would cross the Sahn and spark a conflict. They thought that the poet al-Zubayr b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, not in Mecca at the time, would compose invectives against Ibn al-Ziba'ra or the Sahn in general at his return to the town. Al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:236–37; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 344. Not much is known about al-Zubayr b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib b. Hāshim (paternal uncle of the prophet Muḥammad); Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:307; al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:245–46; Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh b. Muslim Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), *al-Ma'ārif*, ed. Tharwat 'Ukāsha (Cairo: al-Hay' al-Miṣriyya al-'Āma li-l-Kitāb, 1992), 118, 120.

In the *Umda* we find a poem of three verses that al-Zubayr presumably composed against the Sahn at his return to Mecca. More than as a response to Z02 this poem reads as a praise poem on al-Zubayr's group: there is no explicit reference to Ibn al-Ziba'ra or to the Sahn, let alone an insult directed against them. In addition, it does not have the same rhyme and metre as Z02, as we would expect in a response poem. It is probable, therefore, that this poem by al-Zubayr was composed on a different occasion, only to be connected to Z02 in later literary commentaries because it fit the narrative of the accounts. Ibn Rashīq, *al-Umda*, 1981, 1:66. See also 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 2001, 17:115–16, who follows Ibn Rashīq's version of these events.

The Sahm, in turn, handed over Ibn al-Ziba‘rā and thus showed that they had not been involved in the individual offence of the poet. At the same time, they threatened anyone who would dare compose an invective against them, thus showing that they were ready to protect their group and that they had not handed over Ibn al-Ziba‘rā out of weakness.

As said, if war were to break out between the *Ahlāf* and the *Muṭayyabūn*, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s clan of the Sahm was bound to attack the fellow Qurashī clan of the ‘Abd Manāf. It is in the context of speaking about the *Ahlāf* and *Muṭayyabūn* division that Ibn Ḥabīb includes the following lines by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā. Like Z02, the poem speaks of the intratribal rivalries and tensions in Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s time: the poet praises his group and implicitly attacks the opponent, the ‘Abd Manāf and the *Muṭayyabūn* as a whole.<sup>724</sup>

[Z05 *tawīl*]

1. أَنَا ابْنُ الْأُمِّيِّ جَاؤُوا مَنَافًا بَعِزًّا هَا – وَجَارُ مَنَافٍ فِي الْعِبَادِ قَلِيلُ .1
2. لِقَاءٌ لِقَاءً إِنْ لَقُوا وَوَفَادَةٌ – وَوَفْعَلًا بِفِعْلِ وَالْكَفِيلُ كَفِيلُ .2

1. I am the son of those who surpass the ones driven away [or: the Manāf] in their might – the protector of the ones driven away [or: of the Manāf] is little among humankind<sup>725</sup>
2. A meeting demands a meeting, if it comes to it, even more: a welcome – one deed follows another deed: a honest man’s word is as good as his bond.

The poem is not easy. In v.1 the verb *jāza* poses a problem, for it is generally combined with an adverbial phrase of place (“to pass through, to traverse”); here, in the meaning “to pass by and beyond a thing”, it may be used in the more metaphorical sense of “to surpass”.<sup>726</sup> In the same verse, al-Jubūrī vocalises *munāf* (“the ones driven away”) in both hemistichs instead of *manāf*.<sup>727</sup> This is a rather uncommon term and may be taken as a wordplay; a reference to the Qurashī clan ‘Abd Manāf, the group that the Sahm had vowed to attack. In a more explicit allusion it is also possible to vocalise it as *Manāf*, as we find it in other sources. Read in the context of the tensions within the Quraysh, the “protector of the Manāf” can be understood as the *Muṭayyabūn* faction as a

<sup>724</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 40 nr. 14; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 51–52.

<sup>725</sup> *Jāzū*: Jubūrī reads: *jārū*: “those that protect Munāf with their might”.

<sup>726</sup> al-Jubūrī reads: *jārū*; *ajārū* (“they helped, they aided”), which would seem to fit the context better, but does not fit the metre.

<sup>727</sup> In *al-Munammaq* the poem is not vocalised.

whole (v.1). In v.2 Ibn al-Zibā'rā emphasises and corroborates what he has just said with some conventional images that all seem to say: "if you test us, you will see that we do as we said we would".

Ibn al-Zibā'rā praises the might of his group, the Sahn, over the weakness of the 'Abd Manāf (v.1), and scorns the submissiveness of those who are supposed to protect them. In that light, and in combination with the poems Z02 and Z04, it shows how in Ibn al-Zibā'rā's poems the discursive strands of allegiance and authority are entangled. His invective against the Quṣayy (Z02) seems motivated by his desire to alter the status quo in Mecca regarding the division of power and influence in favour of his clan. Even when in Z04 he has to admit that his clan has come to an agreement to avoid fighting, he still presents it as an honourable decision, not as a sign of weakness and submission to others. In Z05 he reasserts the supremacy of the Banū Sahn over other clans, especially the 'Abd Manāf; through the ties of blood ("I am a son of...") that bind him to this powerful group Ibn al-Zibā'rā himself can claim a position of authority.

### *Ibn al-Zibā'rā in praise of Qurashī relatives of the Banū Sahn*

It seems that Ibn al-Zibā'rā did not seek again such a confrontation with fellow Qurashīs as he did with his invective against the Quṣayy (Z02)—at least, not until Muḥammad started to preach and gained followers among his kin. Instead, in his corpus we find several short poems in which he praises Qurashī groups or individuals who do not belong to his clan. As we will see, however, the men praised in these poems are all relatively close relatives or associates of his clan.

In a first composition Ibn al-Zibā'rā praises some unnamed men from the Banū Makhzūm, more specifically, from the "people of al-Mughīra" (v.2), the descendants of al-Mughīra b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Makhzūm, at the time a prominent and numerous group within the Quraysh.<sup>728</sup> The Banū al-Mughīra were related to Ibn al-Zibā'rā's clan through their female ancestor Rayṭa bt. Sa'īd b. Sahn, indicated in the *Aghānī* as "the mother of the Banū al-Mughīra,"<sup>729</sup> and the two groups belonged to the same Qurashī faction, the *Ahlāf*.<sup>730</sup> The poem reads:<sup>731</sup>

<sup>728</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 111.

<sup>729</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:63–64; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 299–300. See below the poems Z07 and Z08.

<sup>730</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

[Zo6 *mutaqārib*]

1. وَفَتِيَانِ صِدْقِ حِسَانِ الْوُجُوْ - هِ لَا يَجْدُوْنَ لِشَيْءٍ أَلَمٌ  
 2. مِنْ أَلِ الْمُغَيَّرَةِ لَا يَشْهَدُوْ - نَ عِنْدَ الْمَجَازِرِ لَحْمَ الْوَضْمِ

1. How many good heroes of beautiful faces - they are never hurt by anything painful
2. [And how many] From the people of al-Mughīra do not see at the slaughter places meat of the butcher block (?).

The “good heroes” (or: “young men”) to whom Ibn al-Ziba‘rā directs his praise (v.1) cannot be further identified than as belonging to the prominent Makhzūmī group of the “people of al-Mughīra” (v.2). The poet characterises the men as handsome (v.1). In classical Arabic poetry, the physical appearance of someone is commonly associated with his character, with ugliness being a sign of baseness and immorality while beauty being a sign of nobility and honour.<sup>732</sup> The second verse is more enigmatic. Perhaps it is to be understood in the sense that the descendants of al-Mughīra, heroic and distinguished as they are, will not become prey to the enemy and be cut into pieces on the battlefield.

One verse has been transmitted in which Ibn al-Ziba‘rā praises an individual from the same group as the men from Zo6, namely, Baḥīr b. Abī Rabī‘a b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī, thus also related to the poet’s clan through his grandmother on father’s side, Rayṭa bt. Sa‘īd b. Sahn. According to the compiler of the *Aghānī*, in pre-Islamic times the Quraysh would clothe the Ka’ba every year. One year Baḥīr al-Makhzūmī—whom Muḥammad would give the more pious name ‘Abd Allāh<sup>733</sup>—clothed the Ka’ba all by himself, without others contributing to it and for it he became known as al-Idl, since he alone had been “the like of” the Quraysh as a whole. The verse by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā in praise of him reads:<sup>734</sup>

<sup>731</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 51 nr. 27; Abū ‘Uthmān ‘Amr b. Baḥr al-Jāḥiḻ (d. ca. 868), *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1997), 108.

<sup>732</sup> Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 57–59; I. Goldziher, ‘Der Diwān des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej’a. III’, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, no. 3 (1892): 502–3. We will also see this in the invective poems of al-Ḥuṭay‘a, in which he frequently points to the ugliness of the insulted individual or group.

<sup>733</sup> al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:63; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 317.

<sup>734</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 49 nr. 22; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 357 nr. 19; al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:63–64. Minganti translates the single verse of nr. 22 as: “*Baḥīr ibn dhū l-Rumḥayni mi ha onorato, ed è tornato a noi, senza tardare, il suo favore*” (“Baḥīr b. Dhū l-Rumḥayn has honoured me and his favour, without delay, has come back to us”); Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 332.

[Z07 *ṭawīl*]

1. بَحِيرُ ابْنِ ذِي الرُّمَحَيْنِ قَرَّبَ مَجْلِسِي - وَرَاحَ عَلَيَّ فَضْلُهُ غَيْرَ غَاتِمِ

1. Baḥīr son of Dhū l-Rumḥayn gave me an honourable place – his favour returned to me without delay.<sup>735</sup>

The precise occasion for which this verse was composed is unknown, and the allusions to the “honourable place” that Ibn al-Ziba’rā received and the “favour” that his group obtained are obscure. The line may have been part of a longer *marthiya* (elegy) at the death of Baḥīr.<sup>736</sup>

A third poem extolling the Banū Makhzūm has been transmitted in Ibn al-Ziba’rā’s corpus. Towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century the Quraysh, siding with the Kināna, were involved in the so-called *Ḥarb al-Fijār* (the Sacrilegious War) against the Qays ‘Aylān (without the Ghaṭafān). Ibn al-Ziba’rā composed the following poem in the aftermath of the *Yawm ‘Ukāz*, one of the battles of this long conflict, in which he praised three sons of al-Mughīra b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Makhzūmī, who belonged to the same Qurashī group as the individuals praised in Z06 and Z07 and were thus closely related to his clan of the Banū Sahn through their female ancestor Rayṭa. The poem in the aftermath of the *Yawm ‘Ukāz* reads:<sup>737</sup>

[Z08 *hazaj*]

1. أَلَا لِلَّهِ قَوْمٌ وَ - لَدَتْ أُخْتُ بَنِي سَهْمِ
2. هِشَامٌ وَأَبُو عَبْدِ - مَنَافٍ مِدْرَهُ الْخَصْمِ
3. وَذُو الرُّمَحَيْنِ أَشْبَاكَ - عَلَى الْقُوَّةِ وَالْحَزْمِ
4. فَهَذَا يَدُودَانَ - وَذَا مِنْ كَثَبٍ يَرْمِي
5. أُسُودٌ تَزْدَهِي الْأَفْرَا - نَ مَنَّاوُونَ لِلْهَضْمِ
6. وَهُمْ يَوْمَ عُكَاطَ مَ - نَعُوا النَّاسَ مِنَ الْهَزْمِ

<sup>735</sup> Variant: *wa-rāḥa ‘alaynā faḍluhu*, “his favour came to us”. Dhū l-Rumḥayn: nickname of Abū Rabī’a b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī. The nickname was because of his stature, “like he was walking on two lances”, or because he killed someone with two lances. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:62.

<sup>736</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, 1:63; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 299–300.

<sup>737</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r Ibn al-Ziba’rā*, 47–49 nr. 21; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 331, 357–58 nr. 20; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:62–63, 65; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 300. See the comments to Z04: in vv.3-4 of that poem there is a reference to the *Yawm ‘Ukāz*.

- .7 وَهُمْ مَنْ وَلَدُوا أَشْبُوا – بِسِرِّ الْحَسَبِ الضَّخْمِ
- .8 فَإِنْ أَحْلِفُ وَيَيْتِ اللّٰهَ – لَآ أَحْلِفُ عَنْ إِثْمِ
- .9 لَمَّا مِنْ إِخْوَةٍ بَيْنَ – قُصُورِ الشَّامِ وَالرَّدْمِ
- .10 بِأَزْكَى مِنْ بَنِي رَيْطَ – تَ أَوْ أَوْزَنَ فِي الْجَلْمِ

1. Praise be to God, what a people whom the sister of the Banū Sahn has brought forth<sup>738</sup>
2. Hishām and Abū ‘Abd Manāf, a protector against the enemy<sup>739</sup>
3. And Dhū l-Rumḥayn, who has enough strength and good judgement for you<sup>740</sup>
4. Those two defend – And this one shoots from close by
5. They are lions, despising their rivals, defending the plain
6. And they, the day of ‘Ukāz, warded off defeat from the people.
7. They are the ones who, when they have children, have great children through the lineage of great deeds<sup>741</sup>
8. If I swear, saying: By the house of God, I do not swear on a misdeed
9. Truly, there are no brothers between the fortifications of Syria and al-Radm<sup>742</sup>
10. Better than the sons of Rayṭa, or mightier in forbearance.

In Zo6 Ibn al-Ziba‘rā had spoken of the “people of al-Mughīra”, and here he refers explicitly to their mother Rayṭa, a woman from the Banū Sahn (vv.1,10) through whom they are related although they belong to different clans.<sup>743</sup> Only after introducing them as descendants of the “sister of the Banū Sahn” (v.1) Ibn al-Ziba‘rā mentions them by name. Hishām b. al-Mughīra (v.2) is said to have been one of the leaders of the Makhzūm in the *Yawm Ukāz*, while the sources do not tell us much about the role and position of his two brothers (vv.2-3).<sup>744</sup> Their picture painted by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā is equally generic and along the lines of the *muruwwa* values of their time.

As is common in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poems, the poem does not describe in detail the event to which it refers but rather reflects the feeling and attitude of the poet and his group, their view of the event and its effect. Looking back on the military victory of his tribe, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā

<sup>738</sup> The “sister of the Banū Sahn”: Rayṭa bt. Sa‘īd b. Sahn. Al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 299–300.

<sup>739</sup> Hishām: Hishām b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī. Abū ‘Abd Manāf: according to Ibn Durayd he is to be identified as al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, while al-Iṣfahānī identifies him as al-Fākih b. al-Mughīra; Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqāq*, 99; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:63. The latter seems to be right, for contrary to al-Walīd, al-Fākih was a son of Rayṭa bt. Sa‘īd b. Sahn, see v.1,10; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 300.

<sup>740</sup> Dhū l-Rumḥayn: nickname of Abū Rabī‘a b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī; see Zo7 v.1.

<sup>741</sup> *Sūrr*: the marrow or the middle of anything, the purest part of anything. Also: secret; marriage; reproductive organs, umbilical cord. The *ḥasab* are the great deeds inherited and uphold.

<sup>742</sup> A place near Mecca; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 3:40.

<sup>743</sup> See footnote 729.

<sup>744</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:531.

attributes it to the men from Makhzūm. Their strength, good judgement (v.3), heroism (v.4), loyalty to their kin (v.5), and nobility (v.7) are beyond doubt, and no one can be compared to them (v.9-10). In this poem, and less clearly also in the shorter composition Z06, the discursive strands on allegiance (also visible in Z07) and authority are closely entangled. The military supremacy of the praised ones seems to derive from their noble lineage, which Ibn al-Ziba'rā presents here as the bloodline of the Banū Sahn, thus including himself and his kin in the words of praise.

The attribution of Z08 to Ibn al-Ziba'rā is contradicted by an account by al-Iṣfahānī in the *Aghānī*. He mentions the following report: in Muslim times, a certain Abū Bakr b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Ḥārith b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī came to the son of the poet Abū Nahshal (a maternal uncle of the Makhzūmī) and tried to bribe him with 4 000 dirham so that he would recite four verses (not quoted in the source) and say that Ḥassān b. Thābit had recited them to Muḥammad. Abū Nahshal's son refused: "I take refuge in God, that I would forge falsehood (*aftari*) against God and his messenger!". He would be willing to say that he had heard the lines from 'Ā'isha, but that was not what the Makhzūmī wanted. In the end, the Makhzūmī requested some verses in praise of his great-grandfather Hishām b. al-Mughīra and his family. The poet's son came up with the poem Z08 and was willing to say that his father had composed it; the Makhzūmī, however, wanted him to say that it was a poem of Ibn al-Ziba'rā, and as such it was transmitted.<sup>745</sup> I have not found other sources that corroborate this account, and the poem fits Ibn al-Ziba'rā's corpus, for to him are attributed two other poems in praise of the Banū Makhzūm (Z06, Z07) with references to Rayṭa and the Sahn.

Standing on their own, neither of these three poems (Z06, Z07, Z08) provides us much to work with regarding Ibn al-Ziba'rā's discourse on allegiance and authority. The context in which they were composed is unknown, and the texts do not offer many details to connect them to events in the life of Ibn al-Ziba'rā or to the Quraysh as a whole. Taken together, however, they shed light on Ibn al-Ziba'rā's understanding of allegiance and authority. As a member of the Quraysh, he did not refrain from insulting fellow Qurashī groups (Z02), only to retract it and make amends by extolling those he had insulted when his clan left him to fend for himself (Z03). In general, in his pre-Islamic poems praise is directed at fellow Sahnī men or at the clan in general (Z04, Z05). Although seemingly out of place, the three poems fit Ibn al-Ziba'rā's corpus as words of praise

<sup>745</sup> al-Iṣfahānī also mentions an attribution of the poem Z08 to 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:63.



directed at men who, one way or the other, are related to the Sahm. As such, the poems are a way for him and his clan to claim, through their common ancestor Rayṭa, their share in the honour and glory of the powerful Makhzūmī group of the descendants of al-Mughīra, not only their relatives but also their allies in the *Ahlāf* faction.

Perhaps these three poems by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā are related to the following. We are told that in his lifetime among the Quraysh there was bad blood between the Makhzūm and the Banū Umayya, a group or clan from the ‘Abd Manāf. Ibn Ḥabīb mentions two *munāfarāt* (contentions) between members of the groups, a first between al-Walid b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī and Usayd b. Abī al-‘Aṣṣ b. Umayya, and a second (which Ibn Ḥabīb introduces as a *munāfara* between the Makhzūm and the Quṣayy) between Abū Rabī‘a b. al-Mughīra (Dhū l-Rumḥayn) and Usayd b. Abī al-‘Aṣṣ b. Umayya. They contended over the prominence of their respective groups, and at least in the second case also over the control of the political and cultic institutions of Mecca.<sup>746</sup> We may venture to speculate whether Ibn al-Ziba‘rā al-Sahmī, with his invective against the Quṣayy (Z02) and now these three poems in praise of the Makhzūm (Z06, Z07, Z08), took a side in this intratribal contention in favour of the latter (relatives and allies of the Sahm) and against the Banū Umayya and the Quṣayy as a whole, who belonged to the *Muṭayyabūn* faction. Noteworthy may also be the mention of Usayd in the poem in which Ibn al-Ziba‘rā asks forgiveness for his poetical insult (Z03), as well as the references to Dhū l-Rumḥayn in Z07 and Z08.

In a following short poem Ibn al-Ziba‘rā eulogises “the sons of Khālida” (v.1). It is plausible that this refers to Khālida bt. Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf b. Quṣayy, the wife of Asad b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā, who bore him five children—among them Umm Ḥabīb, who would become Muḥammad’s maternal greatgrandmother. She received the nickname *Qubbat al-dibāj*, which can be translated as “decorated dome”. The descendants of ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā b. Quṣayy and Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s clan of the Banū Sahm were related through marriages: several descendants of Asad b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzzā were married to Sahmī women; besides Khālida, one of the other wives of Asad was a daughter of Sa‘īd b. Sahm, to whom was married Asad’s sister ‘Ātika (‘Ātika’s offspring, through Rayṭa bt. Sa‘īd, is praised in Z06, Z07, Z08).<sup>747</sup> Ibn al-Ziba‘rā said on these men:<sup>748</sup>

---

<sup>746</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 104–7.

<sup>747</sup> al-Zubayrī, 206–7, 218.

<sup>748</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 35 nr. 9; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 333, 350 nr. 9.

[Z09 *mutaqārib*]

1. لَا يُعِيدُ اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعِبَادِ – وَالْمَلِجِ مَا وَلَدَتْ خَالِدَهُ .1
2. وَهُمْ يُطْعَمُونَ صُدُورَ الْكُمَاةِ – وَالْخَيْلُ تُطْرَدُ أَوْ طَارِدَهُ .2
3. فَإِنْ يَكُنْ الْمَوْتُ أَفْنَاهُمْ – فَلِلْمَوْتِ مَا تَلَدِ الْوَالِدَهُ .3

1. May God, the Lord of the sacred bond and men, not make fade away those born of Khālida(h)<sup>749</sup>
2. They strike the chests of the heroes when the horsemen are pursued or pursue<sup>750</sup>
3. If, then, death has destroyed them, to death belongs whom the mother bore.

The identity of the eulogised men remains unknown, and we do not know how they died. Before the topical wisdom of v.3 that death will come to all, Ibn al-Ziba'rā praises the men (v.1) and honours them for their valour on the battlefield, as they remained steadfast (v.2) whether their group had the upper hand or not..

Not necessarily do the terms *Allāh* and *rabb* (v.1) indicate that the poem was composed after the emergence of Islam and after Ibn al-Ziba'rā's conversion: these terms were already used in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry, as was the term *'ibād* (servants) for humankind (see Z15, HbT02). In addition, the resigned attitude towards Fate and an almost personified death (v.3) manifest a rather pre-Islamic outlook on life.

In the context of Mecca on the eve of Islam, and following the customs of tribal society, marriages between members of different clans from the same tribe were common.<sup>751</sup> In this poem, however, we find again the general predilection of Ibn al-Ziba'rā to praise people who either belong to his clan (Z04, Z05) or who are closely related to it through alliances and marriages (Z06, Z07, Z08, Z09).

In yet another poem by Ibn al-Ziba'rā he praises Khalaf b. Wahb b. Ḥudhāfa al-Jumaḥī. The poet was related to the Jumaḥ through his mother, and his clan and the Jumaḥ were both part of the Qurashī *Ahlāf* faction. In addition, the Sahn and the Jumaḥ were related: the ancestors whose name they bore had been brothers. While the larger and more influential Qurashī clans like the

<sup>749</sup> On the meaning of *lā tab'ad* and its derivatives, a common element in elegies, see G.J.A. Borg, 'Ammā Ba'du: The Meaning of "Lā Tab'ad"', *Zeitschrift Für Arabische Linguistik* 37 (1999): 13–24.

<sup>750</sup> I.e. always, regardless of the turns the battle would take, in favour or against them.

<sup>751</sup> As we see for example in genealogical works like: al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 17, 22, 92, 218, 266, 299, 312, 328.

‘Abd al-Dār, ‘Abd Shams, and Makhzūm belonged to the branch of Murra b. Ka’b b. Lu’ayy b. Fihr, the Sahm and Jumaḥ descended from ‘Amr b. Huṣayṣ b. Ka’b b. Lu’ayy b. Fihr.<sup>752</sup> The poem in praise of Khalaf reads:<sup>753</sup>

[Zīo kāmīl]

1. خَلَفُ بْنُ وَهَبٍ كُلِّ آخِرِ لَيْلَةٍ – أَبْدَأُ يُكْتَرُ أَهْلُهُ بِعِيَالٍ .1
2. سَقِيًّا لَوْهَبٍ كَهْلِهَا وَوَلِيدِهَا – مَا دَامَ فِي أَتْيَاتِهَا الذِّيَالُ .2
3. نِعَمَ الشَّبَابِ شَبَابُهُمْ وَكُهُولُهُمْ – صِيَابَةٌ لَيْسُوا مِنَ الْجُهَالِ .3

1. Khalaf b. Wahb, at the end of every night, will always increase his family with young children<sup>754</sup>
2. Good fortune to [Āl] Wahb, [to] its middle aged people and its youth, as long as there is this stallion in its houses<sup>755</sup>
3. Excellent above all youth are their youth, and their middle aged ones are of the best breeding – They are not among the coarse ones.<sup>756</sup>

The motive for this poem is unknown. Ibn al-Ziba’rā does not praise Khalaf for his nobility and great deeds in agreement with the values and virtues of *murūwwa* (*ḥasab wa-nasab*), but presents him as a man with a great and ever increasing offspring (v.1), comparing him to a studhorse (v.2). In *Nasab Quraysh* we find the names of ten sons of Khalaf, born of three different women.<sup>757</sup> We also know the name of two daughters, Kharmā’ and Imma (?), while a third is simply mentioned as “daughter of Khalaf b. Wahb”.<sup>758</sup> With at least five of his sons bearing him offspring, Khalaf indeed stood at the head of a large family.<sup>759</sup> We do not know how big his household was in times of Ibn al-Ziba’rā, but the poet praises the “[people of] Wahb” (v.2,3) and wishes them well (v.2).

Analysing the poems by Ibn al-Ziba’rā that we have seen until now we may conclude that, although a member of the Quraysh, he speaks first and foremost as a member of the clan of the

<sup>752</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 4, 24-5; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 386, 400.

<sup>753</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r Ibn al-Ziba’rā*, 43 nr. 16; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 332, 355 nr. 14; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 7:87; al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 386.

<sup>754</sup> Khalaf b. Wahb b. Ḥudhāfa al-Jumaḥī.

<sup>755</sup> “Good fortune”: the image used is that of a cloud full of rain. For the change of rhyming vowel (from *u* to *i*, a fault known as *iqwā’*) see footnote 336.

<sup>756</sup> Or: “foolish ones”.

<sup>757</sup> al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 386–87.

<sup>758</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*, 22; Ibn Sa’d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 8:230; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-Nasab*, 1:129.

<sup>759</sup> al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 387–93. Cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 24.

Sahm. Although not made explicit in these poems (except for Z02),<sup>760</sup> through this strong emphasis on his clan and its close relatives, in these poems Ibn al-Ziba'rā also develops the discursive strand on authority: their nobility, heroism, and steadfastness, among other honorific traits, certainly indicate that they are fit to lead the tribe.

### *Ibn al-Ziba'rā and the power division within the Quraysh*

To Ibn al-Ziba'rā is attributed a rather obscure poem on the Quraysh and the public institutions of Mecca. The poem poses a problem, because two versions exist with the same metre but different rhyme, and in addition it has also been attributed to Ḥassān b. Thābit from the Yathribi tribe of the Banū Khazraj, who would have composed it in pre-Islamic times.<sup>761</sup>

If the following poem is a composition of Ibn al-Ziba'rā, the praise of the 'Abd al-Dār is understandable and is probably related to the rivalry among the Quraysh over the control over the cultic and political institutions of the town.<sup>762</sup> The Sahm and the 'Abd al-Dār both belonged to the Qurashī faction of the *Ahlāf*. As the strongest clan within this confederation, the glory of the 'Abd al-Dār must have reflected in a way on Ibn al-Ziba'rā's clan. On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine for what purpose the Khazrajī Ḥassān b. Thābit would compose such a poem in pre-Islamic times, detailing the power relationships in Mecca and praising a specific group of the Quraysh. Al-Jubūrī and Minganti argue, in agreement with early Muslim critics, that Ibn al-Ziba'rā's authorship is more plausible than that of Ḥassān.<sup>763</sup>

The first version of the poem, attributed to Ḥassān b. Thābit and Ibn al-Ziba'rā, reads:<sup>764</sup>

[Z1 *kāmil*]

1. كَانَتْ قُرَيْشٌ بِيضَةً فَتَفَلَّقَتْ - فَالْمُحُّ خَالِصُهُ لِعَبْدِ الدَّارِ  
 2. وَمَنَاةَ رَبِّي خَصَّهُمْ بِكَرَامَةٍ - حُجَابُ نَيْتِ اللَّهِ ذِي الْأَسْتَارِ

<sup>760</sup> And perhaps also in the poems in praise of the Makhzūmī group of the Banū al-Mughīra (Z06, Z07, Z08), see footnote 746.

<sup>761</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:291 nr. 143.

<sup>762</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*; Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 4ff.

<sup>763</sup> al-Jubūrī states that Z11 might be related to his invective against the Quṣayy (Z02); al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 52.

<sup>764</sup> al-Jubūrī, 52 nr. 28; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā', 329, 351 nr. 9; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:291 nr. 143; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 328–29 nr. 224; al-Bakrī, *al-Tanbīh*, 75. On the attribution to Ḥassān, see the note by al-Jubūrī; al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 52.

- أَهْلُ الْمَكَارِمِ وَالْعَلَاءِ وَنَدْوَةُ الْ – سَنَادِي وَأَهْلُ لَطِيمَةِ الْجَبَّارِ .3
- وَلِيُوَى قُرَيْشٍ فِي الْمَشَاهِدِ كُلِّهَا – وَبِنَجْدَةٍ عِنْدَ الْقَنَا الْخَطَّارِ .4

1. Quraysh was an egg – it split, and the best of the egg-yolk was on ‘Abd al-Dār<sup>765</sup>
2. By Manāt, my Lord distinguished them with nobility – [they are] guardians of the House of God with veils<sup>766</sup>
3. A people of great deeds and eminence, a place of gathering, a people of the caravan of the All-powerful (?)<sup>767</sup>
4. And the banners of the Quraysh at all the places of pilgrimage,<sup>768</sup> and with help at the cutting lances.

In these verses the poet praises the Quraysh and, more specifically, the clan of the ‘Abd al-Dār. They are the purest part of the tribe, the “egg-yolk” of the tribe (v.1). In addition, they are the “guardians” of the Ka‘ba (v.2), an honour they have received from their “Lord”. A people of great deeds (v.3), they lead the Quraysh in times of battle and pilgrimage (v.4). Manāt, by whom the poet swears (v.2), was one of the female deities of the Arabs that was venerated in the Ka‘ba.<sup>769</sup>

A second version of the poem, attributed to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā or to an unnamed poet (*qāla al-shā‘ir*, “the poet said ...”), but not specifically to Ḥassān b. Thābit, reads:<sup>770</sup>

<sup>765</sup> Egg (of an ostrich): used in praise or dispraise of someone. In dispraise it is used as the image of an egg out of which has come a young male ostrich and that has now been abandoned to be trampled upon, representing ignobility and unknown lineage, someone without protection. As words of praise it is the image of an egg protected by a male ostrich because of the bird in it, that is, an image of nobility, of chieftom and high reputation and fame. This latter applies to this verse, since the *muḥḥi*, the egg-yolk, is used to indicate the most noble or purest part of something, in this case, a group.

<sup>766</sup> I.e. the Ka‘ba.

<sup>767</sup> *Jabbār*: an epithet of God, cf. Q 59: 23. Minganti suspects that this second hemistich has undergone a change over time to adapt the content to *jabbār* as a divine epithet instead of applied to individuals in the sense of “strong one, proud one”. The hemistich could have read, as Minganti proposes: “a people that the strong one obeys” (*ahlu li-ṭā‘ati l-jabbāri*), i.e. a people to which strong, proud men submit. This usage of *jabbār* to characterise a man is evident in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry. In a verse by al-Mutalammis al-Ḍubā‘ī we read, for example: “When the proud one turned his cheek [out of pride], we set right his crookedness, and it was set right” (*wa-kunna idhā al-jabbāru ṣa‘ara khaddahu ... aqamnā lahu min dar‘ihi fa-taqawwamā*), *Lisān al-‘Arab* s.v. *d-r-‘*. Perhaps we can read *aẓīma* instead of *laṭīma*: “the salvation of who calls for help [in the fight] and those who bring adversity to the tyrant”. Or we can read *latīmati l-tujjārī*, “the caravan of the traders”.

<sup>768</sup> Or: “the places of fighting”.

<sup>769</sup> Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821), *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Pasha, 4th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 2000), 14–15; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, 5:205.

<sup>770</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 52–53 nr. 29; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 328, 352–53 nr. 11; al-Bakrī, *al-Tanbīh*, 75–76 v.1; Abū ‘Ubayd ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Bakrī (d. 1094), *Simṭ al-La‘ālī fi Sharḥ Amālī al-Qālī*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-Maymani, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, n.d.), 549 v.1.

[Z<sub>12</sub> *kāmil*]

1. كَانَتْ قُرَيْشٌ بَيْضَةً فَتَفَلَّقَتْ - فَالْمُحُّ خَالِصُهَا لِعَبْدِ مَنَاةٍ
2. وَالْخَالِطِينَ فَقِيرَهُمْ بَعْنِيهِمْ - وَالظَّاعِنِينَ لِرِحْلَةِ الْأَصْيَافِ
3. الرَّائِشِينَ وَلَيْسَ يُوجَدُ رَائِشٌ - وَالْقَائِلِينَ هَلُمَّ لِلْأَصْيَافِ
4. عَمَرُو الَّذِي هَشَمَ الثَّرِيدَ لِقَوْمِهِ - وَرِجَالُ مَكَّةَ مُسْنِتُونَ عِجَافٌ

1. Quraysh was an egg – it split, and the best of the egg-yolk was on ‘Abd Manāf<sup>771</sup>
2. Who hold together their poor and their wealthy ones, journeying for the summer journeys
3. Who offer aid when there is no one who offers aid, and who say to the guests: Come!
4. ‘Amr it is who crumbled [bread for] the broth for his people when the men of Mecca were suffering from drought, emaciated.<sup>772</sup>

The first hemistich of the poem is identical to that of Z<sub>11</sub> except for the rhyme word, which also changes the praised group: the purest part of the Quraysh is the Qurashī clan of the ‘Abd Manāf, not the ‘Abd al-Dār (Z<sub>11</sub> v.1). The ‘Abd Manāf are praised for protecting and uniting their own people (v.2), the strangers in need of help, and the travellers seeking hospitality (v.3). In v.4 the poet praises one of their ancestors, ‘Amr b. ‘Abd Manāf b. Quṣayy, who reportedly became known as *Hāshim* after he had brought bread to Mecca to feed the townsmen and the pilgrims in times of scarcity, crumbling the bread (*hashama*) for a broth (*tharīd*).<sup>773</sup> The poem offers a romanticised image of the Bedouin life and of the hardship and nobility of those who travel through the desert.

That Ibn al-Zibār would praise the clan of the ‘Abd Manāf is surprising. The Sahn and the ‘Abd Manāf did not belong to the same faction within the Quraysh; in fact, in case of a conflict between the *Ahlāf* and *Muṭayyabūn* the Sahn had pledged to attack the ‘Abd Manāf.<sup>774</sup> According to Minganti, Z<sub>12</sub> is a later alteration of Z<sub>11</sub>.<sup>775</sup> It is not difficult to imagine a short poem in praise of one group being altered over time in order to praise another group. The praise of the ‘Abd Manāf in Z<sub>12</sub> is in accordance with the focus in Muslim times on Muḥammad, his family, and his clan, the Banū Hāshim b. ‘Abd Manāf. By transforming the reference to the ‘Abd al-Dār into a reference to

<sup>771</sup> On the egg and egg-yolk, see n. 765.

<sup>772</sup> ‘Amr b. ‘Abd Manāf. Notice the change of the vowel following the rhyming consonant (called *al-majrā*) in this verse (from *i* to *u*). Although considered a fault by critics, in classical Arabic poetry such a change occurs frequently. A change to *a* is not acceptable; Wright, *Grammar*, ii 199a.

<sup>773</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 42; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 228 n. 2.

<sup>774</sup> See footnote 700; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 33–34, 51–52. Ibn al-Ziba’rā insulted the ‘Abd Manāf in Z<sub>05</sub>.

<sup>775</sup> Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 328–29.

the ‘Abd Manāf, the pre-Islamic panegyric of Z<sub>11</sub> could be turned into a poem acceptable to Muslim ears, perhaps complemented with existing verses by another poet: Z<sub>12</sub> strongly resembles a longer and more elaborate poem in praise of the Quraysh, and particularly of the clan ‘Abd Manāf, attributed to a certain Maṭrūd b. Ka‘b al-Khuzā‘ī, a pre-Islamic poet.<sup>776</sup>

An account transmitted by the Andalusian geographer, theologian and philologist al-Bakrī (d. 487/1094) indicates that doubts concerning the two variants (Z<sub>11</sub> and Z<sub>12</sub>) existed already at an early stage, resulting in accounts in favour of one or the other. Al-Bakrī tells the anecdote that one day Muḥammad was walking through the streets of Mecca when he heard the verse “Quraysh was an egg—it split, and the egg-yolk was on ‘Abd al-Dār” (Z<sub>11</sub> v.1). Muḥammad asked his companion Abū Bakr whether this was the correct rendering of the poem. Abū Bakr denied it, and said that it should be: “Quraysh was an egg—it split, and the egg-yolk was on ‘Abd Manāf” (Z<sub>12</sub> v.1), which was more to Muḥammad’s liking. Reportedly, he then declared: “Indeed, and the affection (*mayl*) of a man towards his people (*ilā ahlihi*) is not party spirit (*‘aṣabiyya*)”.<sup>777</sup> Whether truly uttered by Muḥammad or put in his mouth, this statement served to sanction the affection for one’s kin and to differentiate it from *‘aṣabiyya*, the disruptive zeal and pride in one’s kin condemned in Islam. As such, it reinforces the hypothesis of an alteration of Z<sub>11</sub> to bring it into conformity with Muslim doctrine.

A third poem is attributed to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā and to Maṭrūd b. Ka‘b al-Khuzā‘ī, which closely resembles Z<sub>11</sub>.<sup>778</sup> It reads:<sup>779</sup>

<sup>776</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 54 nr. 3; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 27–28; Ṣadr al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Abī al-Faraj b. al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 1261), *Kitāb al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*, ed. ‘Ādil Sulaymān Jamāl, vol. 1 (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1999), 479–80 nr. 338. Maṭrūd composed more than one poem in praise of the Banū ‘Abd Manāf or individuals from this clan; see Z<sub>12l</sub> and *Tāj al-‘Arūs*, s.v. *gh-z-z*; Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 940), *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985), 333.

We may even venture to think whether it is possible that Ibn al-Ziba‘rā himself, after his conversion, altered his earlier poem Z<sub>11</sub> into Z<sub>12</sub> so as to praise Muḥammad and his close relatives, like in his compositions Z<sub>22</sub>, Z<sub>23</sub>, Z<sub>24</sub>.

<sup>777</sup> al-Bakrī, *al-Tanbīh*, 75–76. Al-Bakrī also gives a second version of the account, in which the outcome is the same: al-Bakrī, *Simṭ al-La‘ālī*, 1:549. On the condemnation of *‘aṣabiyya* within the Muslim *umma*, see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>778</sup> See footnote 776. This composition is included in Edition al-Jubūrī but not in Edition Minganti, where it is only mentioned in the introduction.

<sup>779</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 53–54 nr. 30; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 330; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:251–52.

[Z12I *kāmil*]

1. عَمْرُو الْعُلَى هَشَمَ الثَّرِيدَ لِقَوْمِهِ – وَرِجَالُ مَكَّةَ مُشْتَبُونَ عَجَافٌ .1
2. وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَنَّ الرِّجِيلَ لِقَوْمِهِ – رِحْلَ الشِّتَاءِ وَرِحْلَةَ الْأَصْيَافِ .2

1. ‘Amr the highest crumbled [bread for] the broth for his people when the men of Mecca were afflicted with drought and emaciated<sup>780</sup>
2. He is the one who drove forth the camels for his people in the winter and in the summer journeys.<sup>781</sup>

The same metre and rhyme as in Z12 and the similarity between v.2 of this poem and v.4 of Z12 lead to the suspicion that, instead of being a poem on its own, Z12I should be taken as part of Z12, being v.2 of Z12I a variant of Z12 v.4. The resemblance between Q 106 and this verse, v.2 of Z12I, and v.4 of Z12, is striking.

All in all, the attribution of Z11 to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā is plausible, considering that his clan and the group praised in that poem, the ‘Abd al-Dār, belonged to the same faction within the Quraysh, the *Ahlāf*. Reading it in the light of the intratribal disputes over the control of the political and cultic institutions of Mecca, we discern the discursive strand on authority: Ibn al-Ziba‘rā uses his position as a poet to contribute to the competition over the institutions of Mecca and to enhance the prominence of his clan and their relatives and allies among the Quraysh. Z12 (in combination with Z12I and some verses by the pre-Islamic poet Maṭrūd b. Ka‘b), could be a later variant of Z11, either by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā or by others (see footnote 776), to align Z11 with the later Muslim regard for Muḥammad, his family, and his clan.

#### 4.1.2 Ibn al-Ziba‘rā and the umma

Before his conversion, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā was a harsh opponent of Muḥammad and his message.<sup>782</sup>

When Muḥammad’s power started to increase the poet showed a similar poetic hostility towards a

<sup>780</sup> Variant: *‘Amru lladhī ...*, “Amr is the one who ...”.

<sup>781</sup> Variant: *sunnat ilayhi l-riḥlatāni kilāhumā / safari l-shitā’i wa-riḥlata l-ṣayfi*, “The two journeys are led well by him [‘Amr], both the winter travelling and the summer journey”. This variant to v.2 is found in Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 330; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:136; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 1:185. On the change of vowel after the rhyming consonant, see footnote 772.

<sup>782</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, 1994, 3:76–77, 239; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī‘āb*, 1992, 3:901–4. According to al-Wāqidi, after the battle of Badr Ibn al-Ziba‘rā was sent, together with ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ, Hubayra b. Abi Wahb, and Abū ‘Azza al-Jumāhī, as a delegation to the Banū ‘Abd Manāt and other confederates of the Quraysh to



large group of his tribe as he formerly had shown in his pre-Islamic invective against the Quşayy (Z02). Whether he actually fought against Muḥammad and his followers or not is unclear, but he put his poems to use by attacking and insulting the opponent and defending and praising his group. In the section that follows we will see how Ibn al-Zibaʿrā presents himself and his group in relation to Muḥammad and his followers.

*Ibn al-Zibaʿrā and Muḥammad – the first confrontations*

Besides a composition on the pre-Islamic *Ḥarb al-Fijār* (the Sacrilegious War) in which the Quraysh had been involved because of their alliance with the Kināna (Z08), Ibn al-Zibaʿrā only seems to have composed one other poem on a pre-Islamic tribal conflict. This poem is on the so-called event of the Elephant, the expedition of the Southern Arabian king Abraha against Mecca in the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>783</sup> Both al-Jubūrī and Minganti consider it to be a composition from a later period, from after the start of Muḥammad’s prophetic career and maybe even after the Emigration to Medina.<sup>784</sup> In the poem, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā speaks of Mecca’s sanctity and prominence and boasts of its power:<sup>785</sup>

[Z13 *kāmil*]

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| تَنَكَّلُوا عَن بَطْنِ مَكَّةَ إِنَّهَا – كَانَتْ قَدِيمًا لَا يُرَامُ حَرِيمَهَا         | . 1 |
| لَمْ تَخْلُقِ الشَّعْرَى لِيَالِي حُرْمَتِ – إِذْ لَا عَزِيرَ مِنَ الْأَنَامِ يَرُومَهَا  | . 2 |
| سَائِلُ أَمِيرِ الْحَبَشِ عَنْهَا مَا رَأَى – وَلَسَوْفَ يُنْبِي الْجَاهِلِينَ عَلِيمَهَا | . 3 |
| سُتُونَ أَلْفًا لَمْ يُؤُوبُوا أَرْضَهُمْ – وَلَمْ يَعِشْ بَعْدَ الْإِيَابِ سَقِيمَهَا    | . 4 |

request their assistance against Muḥammad and his followers. True or not, this report shows that in early Muslim tradition Ibn al-Zibaʿrā was remembered as a leading figure in the opposition to Muḥammad; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 1:200; J.W. Fück, ‘Ibn al-Zibaʿrā’, *Elz*, 3:975-76.

<sup>783</sup> Kister, ‘Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam’, 6iff.

<sup>784</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shiʿr Ibn al-Zibaʿrā*, 9–10; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Zibaʿrā’, 336. Al-Jubūrī and Minganti conclude this based on the use of *ʿibād* in v.5. The verb *ʿabada* and its derivatives are indeed prominent in the Qurʾān, but not unknown in pre-Islamic times. See for example a verse by the pre-Islamic poet and hero ʿAbd Yaghūth al-Ḥārithī, v.15, in: al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 2:200. The *mukhadḍam* poet ʿAbid b. al-Abraṣ also uses *ʿibād* in the sense of “people”: Lyall, *The Dīwāns of ʿAbid Ibn al-Abraṣ and ʿAmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl*, 2 (Ar. text). See also Denny, ‘Religio-Communal Terms’, 42–43.

<sup>785</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shiʿr Ibn al-Zibaʿrā*, 49–50 nr. 23; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Zibaʿrā’, 336, 358–59 nr. 22; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:57–58; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira*, 1976, 1:39; Guillaume, *The Life of Muḥammad*, 28.

كَانَتْ بِهَا عَادٌ وَجُرْهُمُ قَبْلَهُمْ – وَاللَّهُ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْعِبَادِ يُقِيمُهَا .5

1. So, avoid the hollow of Mecca, for from old her sacred place was not hoped for<sup>786</sup>
2. The star Sirius had not yet been created in the nights that were declared sacred because not a mighty among men sought [to attack] her<sup>787</sup>
3. Ask the chief of the Abyssinians about her, about what he saw<sup>788</sup> – the man who knows will tell the ignorant<sup>789</sup>
4. Sixty thousand [men] did not return to their land; their sick did not survive after the return
5. ‘Ād and Jurhum were in it before them – God has put it above [all] men.

The story of the expedition of Abraha against Mecca to destroy the sanctuary of the town is taken as a given in Muslim sources.<sup>790</sup> There, it is described in full detail: with the army led by Abraha came one single elephant. The people of Mecca were convinced that, if not for a miracle, they would be overpowered. That miracle did occur, for when the enemy reached the outskirts of the town, the elephant kneeled down and refused to advance any further. In addition, a swarm of birds threw stones upon the enemy and killed many, forcing the others to flee. Mecca and, more importantly, the Ka’ba, were saved from destruction. That miraculous “year of the Elephant” is said to have been the year in which Muḥammad was born.<sup>791</sup>

The dating of Abraha’s expedition against Mecca is uncertain.<sup>792</sup> Non-Muslim scholars have long doubted the historicity of these events and considered this story of the elephant and the army

<sup>786</sup> A short syllable is missing at the beginning of the verse. Although not uncommon in the *ṭawīl* metre, this is uncommon in the *kāmil*. In the corpus of the *Mufaḍḍaliyāt* Stoetzer discovered only one occurrence of a *kāmil* verse with a short syllable instead of either two short syllables or one long. Stoetzer, ‘Theory and Practice in Arabic Metrics’, 133–35, 158–60.

<sup>787</sup> Trans. AG: “When it was sanctified, Sirius had not been created – No mighty man ever attacked it”; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 28.

<sup>788</sup> Reading *ḥabshi* for *jayshi*; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 336; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 28.

<sup>789</sup> We would expect here the substantive *al-Ḥabash* (“Abyssinians”), but this does not fit the metrical scheme. This explains the existence of the less specific variant *al-jaysh* (“the army”) as a substitution for the uncommon form *al-Ḥabsh*.

<sup>790</sup> C.J. Robin, ‘L’Arabie Dans Le Coran. Réexamen de Quelques Termes à La Lumière Des Inscriptions Préislamiques’, in *Les Origines Du Coran, Le Coran Des Origines*, ed. F. Déroche, C.J. Robin, and M. Zinz (Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2015), 39–40, 43; Uri Rubin, *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995), 196.

<sup>791</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 70ff.; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:43ff.; Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad Ibn Ishāq, *Kitāb al-Sīyar wa-l-Maghāzī*, ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978), 61ff.; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 2:170ff.

<sup>792</sup> Kister dated it back to 552, based on an inscription by Abraha dated in that year; M.J. Kister, ‘The Campaign of Ḥulubān. A New Light on the Expedition of Abraha’, *Le Muséon* 78 (1965): 425–36. Robin argues against this dating because of a recently found inscription attributed to Abraha from around the end of the year 552 in which Abraha celebrates the submission of the whole peninsula, and especially Yathrib, to

of Abraha as a later invention to explain the otherwise enigmatic chapter of Q 105, the *Sūra* of the Elephant, in which we find a reference to a divine punishment carried out against the “companions of the Elephant”. Outside Muslim tradition, the sources’ silence on this expedition of Abraha did not help to do away with these suspicions. However, as Robin reminds us, not failures but “only the achievements are mentioned in inscriptions”.<sup>793</sup> In addition, in recent times three images of a single elephant with its mahout or driver were discovered to the north-east of Najrān. The images cannot be dated precisely but to connect them to Abraha’s expedition is an attractive hypothesis.<sup>794</sup> Finally, not only this poem by Ibn al-Ziba’rā but also other pre-Islamic or *mukhaḍram* compositions speak of an Abyssinian expedition, sometimes with a reference to a role played by a disobedient elephant.<sup>795</sup>

The opening of the poem presents a metrical<sup>796</sup> and syntactical difficulty.<sup>797</sup> The poet speaks of enemies from the present (unnamed) and from the past (the Abyssinians) who seek to destroy Mecca. Ibn al-Ziba’rā’s group, then, can be understood as the inhabitants of Mecca. In the first place these must be the Quraysh, but it is striking that we find no allusion to blood ties or tribal nobility and glory in the poem. Finally, Ibn al-Ziba’rā makes no attempt at employing the conventions and *topoi* of the classical odes, with the images of the nomadic life: contrary to what we see in other poems (Z14, Z16, Z19), here he speaks of Mecca as a fixed sanctuary.

To substantiate his warning against those who might consider attacking his town, Ibn al-Ziba’rā points to the sacredness of Mecca (vv.1-2,5).<sup>798</sup> Contrary to what we might expect, the poem

---

his rule; Robin, ‘L’Arabie Dans Le Coran’, 42–43; C.J. Robin, ‘Ḥimyar, Aksūm, and Arabia Deserta in Late Antiquity. The Epigraphic Evidence’, in *Arabs and Empires Before Islam*, ed. Greg Fisher (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 151–52.

<sup>793</sup> Robin, ‘L’Arabie Dans Le Coran’, 44.

<sup>794</sup> Robin, 46–48. See the representations on p. 47 of Robin’s article.

<sup>795</sup> Robin, 45–46.

<sup>796</sup> See footnote 786.

<sup>797</sup> The meaning of the verb *tanakkalū* is unclear. The first form of the root (*nakala*) means “to recoil, to withdraw”, a synonym of *nakaṣa*, according to *Lisān al-‘Arab* (cf. Q 2: 66, *nakāl*). The fifth form is unattested in the major dictionaries and lexicographical works. In the poem, the reading of the verb is unstable and we find the variant readings *fa-nakkabū* and *tanakkabū*; al-Jubūrī, *Shi’r Ibn al-Ziba’rā*, 49; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 358. Minganti translates the first hemistich of v.1 as: “*State lontani dalla valle della Mecca*” (“Stay away from the valley of Mecca”), and Guillaume, as: “Withdraw from the vale of Mecca”; Minganti, 336; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 28.

<sup>798</sup> The star Sirius (v.2) is said to have been worshipped in pre-Islamic times; it is mentioned in a *talbiya* or invocation of pre-Islamic times of the cultic union of the *Ḥums*, in which God is addressed as “the Lord of Sirius” and as the Lord of the Ka’ba and of the deities al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā, and Manāt. Kister, ‘Labbayka,

contains no images of fighting and submission, of steadfastness and heroism. Instead, Ibn al-Ziba'rā attributes the failure of the Abyssinians (vv.3-4) to this almost eternal sacredness of Mecca.

Pointing to the fate of past enemies, the poem reads as a warning against an unnamed opponent in the present who might consider attacking the town. It is plausible then to connect this poem to the threat that Muḥammad and his followers posed to Mecca after the Emigration, as al-Jubūrī and Minganti do, as we do not know of any other large threat to Mecca in Ibn al-Ziba'rā's lifetime except for the threat posed by Muḥammad and his followers.<sup>799</sup>

If the poem was composed after the Emigration, v.3, which speaks of the informed informing the ignorant, could even be read as a pun and an insult directed at Muḥammad and his followers seeking to attack Mecca. The verb "to inform" has the same root as the substantive *nabī* (messenger, prophet). Ibn al-Ziba'rā could thus be reversing the insult of ignorance levelled by Muḥammad against those who rejected his message, presenting instead Muḥammad as ignorantly seeking to attack a town that had proven its distinguished position in the past. However, to assume that Ibn al-Ziba'rā intentionally and mockingly used this vocabulary we must accept that he was conscious of the Qur'ānic contrast between *jāhiliyya* and *islām*, between ignorance and knowledge of the true religion. This is somewhat problematic, for his knowledge of Muḥammad's preaching probably will have been elementary at the time. In any case, it is not necessary to read v.3 as a word play in order to understand it. The terms Ibn al-Ziba'rā uses are not Qur'ānic neologisms; before it received the Qur'ānic connotation of "ignorance" as opposed to Islam, the concept of *jahl* (foolishness) was usually contrasted to *ḥilm* (perseverance, prudence), and the verb employed in v.3 was a general term meaning "to inform".<sup>800</sup>

In Ibn al-Ziba'rā's corpus we also find more overt attacks against Muḥammad and his followers. One of these is a response poem to a composition attributed to the Emigrant Abū Bakr, an early

---

Allāhumma, Labbayka. On a Monotheistic Aspect of a Jāhiliyya Practice', 36–37. In Q 53: 49 we read: "it is He who is the Lord of Sirius". On the *Ḥums*, see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>799</sup> The fact that the poem does not refer explicitly to Muḥammad and his followers does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that it was composed before the emergence of Islam. In many poems by Ibn al-Ziba'rā and contemporaries that are clearly related to events surrounding Muḥammad there is no reference to Muḥammad. In fact, explicit mentions and detailed descriptions of Muḥammad and his role in supposed *mukhadram* poems can be suspicious: his impact and significance not always would have been clear for his contemporaries.

<sup>800</sup> Izutsu, *God and Man in the Qur'an*, 216ff.; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 192; al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r al-Mukhadramīn*, 19–20.

follower of Muḥammad who would become his first successor or caliph after his death. The two poems are related to a raid at Thaniyyat al-Murra, said to have been the first armed clash between the Quraysh and an expedition of followers of Muḥammad after the Emigration.<sup>801</sup> We are told that the Quraysh faced a group composed solely by Emigrants—no Helpers from the Aws and the Khazraj had joined them. The Emigrants were led by ‘Ubayda b. al-Ḥārith b. Muṭṭalib, from the clan of the ‘Abd Manāf.<sup>802</sup> For some reason the confrontation did not go further than a single arrow being shot (“the first arrow to be shot in Islam”),<sup>803</sup> and unharmed, the two parties returned to Mecca and Medina, respectively.

In the poem attributed to Abū Bakr, the poet recognises the ties of blood that exist between him and the opponent, but he emphasises what separates them now that the opponent denies the authority of Muḥammad as a prophet. The poem reads:<sup>804</sup>

[*ABOī ṭawīl*]

1. أَمِنْ طَيْفِ سَلْمَى بِالْبَطَاحِ الدَّمَائِثِ - أَرِقْتُ وَأَمْرٌ فِي الْعَشِيرَةِ حَدِيثِ
2. أَرَى مِنْ لُؤْيٍ فِرْقَةً لَا يَصُدُّهَا - عَنِ الْكُفْرِ تَذَكِيرٌ وَلَا بَعَثُ بَاعِثِ
3. أَنَاهُمْ رَسُولٌ صَادِقٌ فَتَكَذَّبُوا - عَلَيْهِ وَقَالُوا لَسْتَ فِينَا بِمَا كِثِ
4. إِذَا مَا دَعَوْنَاهُمْ إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَذْبَرُوا - عَنِ الْحَقِّ إِذْ بَارَ الْكِلَابِ اللَّوَاهِثِ
5. فَكَمْ قَدْ مَتَيْنَا فِيهِمْ بِقِرَابَةٍ - وَتَرَكْتُ النَّفْسَ شَيْءٌ لَهُمْ غَيْرُ كَارِثِ
6. فَإِنْ يَرْجِعُوا عَنْ كُفْرِهِمْ وَعُفُوقِهِمْ - فَمَا طَيِّبَاتُ الْحِلِّ مِثْلُ الْخَبَائِثِ
7. وَإِنْ يَرَكَّبُوا طُعْيَانَهُمْ وَصَلَّاهُمْ - فَلَيْسَ عَدَابُ اللَّهِ عَنْهُمْ بِلَا بِثِ
8. وَنَحْنُ أَنَا مِنْ ذُرَابَةٍ غَالِبٍ - لَنَا الْعِزُّ مِنْهَا فِي الْفُرُوعِ الْأَثَائِثِ
9. فَأُولِي بَرِّ الرَّاقِصَاتِ عَشِيَّةً - حَرَاجِيحٌ تُحْدَى فِي السَّرِيحِ الرَّثَائِثِ
10. كَأَدْمٍ ظَبَاءٍ حَوْلَ مَكَّةَ عُطْفٍ - يَرِدْنَ حِيَاضَ الْبَيْرِ ذَاتِ النَّبَائِثِ

<sup>801</sup> Or the second, see Watt, *Muhammad at Medina*, 339–40.

<sup>802</sup> Abū Bakr (d. 634), *Dīwān Abi Bakr al-Ṣiddīq*, ed. Muḥammad Shafīq al-Bayṭār (Damascus: Shirā’, 1993), 20.

<sup>803</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:591. Thus it is mentioned in the *Awā’il* literature, for example in Abū Bakr Aḥmad Ibn Abi ‘Āṣim (d. 900), *al-Awā’il*, ed. Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-‘Ajāmī (Kuwait: Dār al-Khulafā’ li-l-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.), 71.

<sup>804</sup> Abū Bakr, *Dīwān*, 20–24 nr. 2; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:592–93; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:357; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:243–44; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 281–82.

11. لَمَّ لَمْ يُفِيقُوا عَاجِلًا مِنْ ضَلَالِهِمْ – وَلَسْتُ إِذَا آتَيْتُ قَوْلًا بِحَانِثٍ
12. لَتَبْتَدِرْنَهُمْ غَارَةٌ ذَاتُ مَصْدَقٍ – تُحَرِّمُ أَطْهَارَ النِّسَاءِ الطَّوَامِثِ
13. تُغَادِرُ صَرَخَى تَعْصِبُ الطَّيْرَ حَوْلَهُمْ – وَلَنْ تَرَافَ الْكُفَّارُ رَأْفَ ابْنِ حَارِثِ
14. فَأَبْلَغَ بَنِي سَهْمٍ لَدَيْكَ رِسَالَةً – وَكُلَّ كَفُورٍ يَبْتَغِي الشَّرَّ بَاحِثِ
15. مَتَى تَشَعُّنُوا عَرَضِي عَلَى سُوءِ رَأْيِكُمْ – فَإِنِّي مِنْ أَعْرَاضِكُمْ غَيْرُ شَاعِثِ

Trans. AG:

1. Could you not sleep because of the spectre of Salmā in the sandy valleys, and the important event that happened in the tribe?
2. You see that neither admonition nor a prophet's call can save some of Lu'ayy from unbelief<sup>805</sup>
3. A truthful messenger came to them and they gave him lie, and said, 'You shall not live among us'<sup>806</sup>
4. When we called them to the truth they turned their backs, they howled like bitches driven back panting to their lairs<sup>807</sup>
5. With how many have we ties of kinship, yet to abandon piety did not weigh upon them;<sup>808</sup>
6. If they turn back from their unbelief and disobedience (for the good and lawful is not like the abominable);
7. If they follow their idolatry and error, God's punishment on them will not tarry;<sup>809</sup>
8. We are men of Ghālib's highest stock from which nobility comes through many branches<sup>810</sup>
9. I swear by the lord of camels urged on at even by singing, their feet protected by old leather thongs,<sup>811</sup>
10. Like the red-backed deer that haunt Mecca going down the well's slimy cistern<sup>812</sup>
11. I swear, and I am no perjurer, if they do not quickly repent of their error
12. A valiant band will descent upon them, which will leave women husbandless<sup>813</sup>

<sup>805</sup> MC: "I see, ... will make a group of the Lu'ayy turn away from unbelief". Lu'ayy: a reference to the Quraysh or to the most prominent Qurashī clans.

<sup>806</sup> On my decision to alter Guillaume's translation of *rasūl* and *nabī* (which he renders both as "apostle") to "messenger" and "prophet", respectively, see paragraph A note on the translation and interpretation of poetry in chapter 1. Introduction.

<sup>807</sup> AG follows the variant *idhā mā da'awnāhum ilā l-ḥaqqi adbarū / wa-harrū harīra l-mujharāti l-lawāhith*. The variant in the text above (MC): "When we called them to the truth they turned away, turning away from the truth like panting dogs".

<sup>808</sup> AG follows the variant *fa-kam qad matatnā fihimu bi-qirābatin*. The variant in the text above (MC): "with how many have we walked closely".

<sup>809</sup> MC: "their disobedience and error".

<sup>810</sup> Ghālib: one of the sons of Fihr. I.e. the Quraysh. Cf. v.2.

<sup>811</sup> MC: "I swear by the Lord of the trotting, big camels driven on by singing in the evening, parches of old leather on their feet". Such oath formulae were common in pre-Islamic times. Ḥusain explains it by pointing to the duty of the pilgrims to race towards the sanctuary. They continued to be used in *mukhadram* and Muslim poetry; Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, xxxix, 65 nr. 29 v.4.

<sup>812</sup> I.e. the well Zamzam, Abū Bakr, *Diwān*, 22.

<sup>813</sup> MC: "which will leave their menstruating and non-menstruating young women husbandless". A common construction in poetry to include two mutually exclusive groups in order to refer to "all".

13. It will leave dead men, with vultures wheeling round, it will not spare the infidels as Ibn Ḥārith did.<sup>814</sup>
14. Give the Banū Sahn with you a message and every infidel who is trying to do evil;<sup>815</sup>
15. If you assail my honour in your evil opinion I will not assail yours.

Abū Bakr appeals to the ties of blood (v.5): in denying Muḥammad's authority the Quraysh are blameful in double degree, according to Abū Bakr: not only is Muḥammad their kinsman, he is also the divine messenger (v.3). The divine punishment (v.7) with which the poet threatens the enemy probably is their defeat in a future battle (vv.11-13). The poet seems to position those who obey Muḥammad as "the most noble" of the Quraysh (v.8); it is unclear if he is speaking of a specific Qurashī clan within the group of Emigrants or of the Emigrants in general, but what is clear is that he himself belongs to them ("we", v.8). Thus, he distinguishes between two groups within the Quraysh: on the one hand "the most noble", those who follow Muḥammad and on the other hand those who disobey him (vv.2,7,11). Having insulted the opponents by comparing them to dogs (v.4) and looking down on them (v.8), and having threatened the "infidels" with destruction (vv.11-13), the statement at the end (v.15), which probably must show self-restraint and moral superiority, is somewhat paradoxical.

To this poem by Abū Bakr Ibn al-Ziba'rā replied:<sup>816</sup>

[Z14 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَمِنْ رَسْمِ دَارٍ أَفْقَرْتَ بِالْعَنَائِثِ - بَكَتَيْتَ بَعَيْنٍ دَمْعُهَا غَيْرَ لَابِثٍ
2. وَمِنْ عَجَبِ الْأَيَّامِ وَالذَّهْرِ كُلُّهُ - لَهُ عَجَبٌ مِنْ سَابِقَاتِ وَحَادِثِ
3. لَجَيْشٍ أَتَانَا ذِي عُرَامٍ يَقُودُهُ - عُيَيْدُهُ يُدْعَى فِي الْهَيْجَاجِ ابْنَ حَارِثِ
4. (لِيَنْتَبِرِعُوا أَحْلَامَنَا عَنْ مَكَانِهَا - وَيُتَّبِعَ صَابٍ فَعْلُهُ فَعْلُ عَابِثِ)
5. لِنَتْرُكَ أَصْنَامًا بِمَكَّةَ عَكْفًا - مَوَارِيثَ مَوْرُوثٍ كَرِيمٍ لَوَارِثِ
6. فَلَمَّا لَقِينَاهُمْ بِسَمْرِ رُدَيْنَةَ - وَجُرْدِ عَتَاقٍ فِي الْعَجَاجِ لَوَاهِثِ
7. وَيَبِضُّ كَانَ الْمِلْحَ فَوْقَ مُتُونِهَا - بِأَيْدِي كُمَاةٍ كَاللُّبُوثِ الْعَوَائِثِ

<sup>814</sup> Ubayda b. al-Ḥārith, the leader of the Muslim raid.

<sup>815</sup> Banū Sahn: Ibn al-Ziba'rā's clan.

<sup>816</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 31–32 nr. 3; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā', 335-6, 348-9 nr. 2; Abū Bakr, *Dīwān*, 24–28; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:592–93; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra*, 1976, 2:357–58; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:344; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 282–83.

8. نَقِيمُ بِهَا إِصْعَارَ مَنْ كَانَ مَائِلًا – وَنَشْفِي الدُّحُولَ عَاجِلًا غَيْرَ لَابِثٍ
9. فَكَفَّوْا عَلَى خَوْفٍ شَدِيدٍ وَهَيْبَةٍ – وَأَعْجَبَهُمْ أَمْرٌ لَهُمْ أَمْرٌ رَائِثٍ
10. وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ لَمْ يَفْعَلُوا نَاحَ نِسْوَةٍ – أَيَامِي لَهُمْ، مِنْ بَيْنِ نَسَاءٍ وَطَامِثٍ
11. وَقَدْ غَوَدَرْتُ قَتْلِي يُخْبِرُ عَنْهُمْ – حَفِيِّي بِهِمْ أَوْ غَافِلٌ غَيْرُ بَاحِثٍ
12. فَأَبْلِغْ أَبَا بَكْرٍ لَدَيْكَ رِسَالَةً – فَمَا أَنْتَ عَنْ أَعْرَاضِ فَهْرٍ بِمَا كِثِّ
13. وَلَمَّا تَجِبَ مِنِّي يَمِينٌ غَلِيظَةٌ – تُجَدِّدُ حَرْبًا حَلْفَةً غَيْرَ حَانِثٍ

Trans. AG (except v.4):

1. Does your eye weep unceasingly over the ruins of a dwelling that the shifting sands obscure?<sup>817</sup>
2. And one of the wonders of the days (for time is full of wonders, old and new)<sup>818</sup>
3. Is a strong army which came to us led by ‘Ubayda, called Ibn Ḥārith in times of war,
4. [To take away our reason and make us follow a silly one<sup>819</sup> whose deeds are stupid deeds]<sup>820</sup>
5. That we should abandon images venerated in Mecca, passed on to his heirs by a noble ancestor<sup>821</sup>
6. When we met them with the spears of Rudayna,<sup>822</sup> and noble steeds panting for the fray
7. And swords so white they might be salt-strewn in the hands of the warriors, dangerous as lions
8. Wherewith we deal with the conceited and quench our thirst for vengeance without delay<sup>823</sup>
9. They withdrew in great fear and awe, pleased with the order of him who kept them back
10. Had they not done so the women would have wailed, bereft of their husbands all of them<sup>824</sup>

<sup>817</sup> MC: “Do you weep unceasingly over a dwelling deserted with an eye whose tears will not stop”.

<sup>818</sup> MC: “Fate indeed is full of wonders, old and new”.

<sup>819</sup> Or: “foolish youngster”. I.e.: Muḥammad. The Quraysh (and the Jews) used to call somebody who converted to Islam *ṣābin*, i.e., he had become youthfully ignorant, foolish, for he abandoned their *dīn* (customs, habits) to follow another. Cf. *Lisān al-‘Arab* s.v. *ṣ-b-ā*.

<sup>820</sup> This verse is only found in the *Dīwān* of Abū Bakr, in the poetical reply of Ibn al-Zibār to Abū Bakr. Ibn Hishām mentions in his *Sīra* that he has left out one verse of the poem (Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:594.) According to the editor of Abū Bakr’s *Dīwān* this omission was probably due to the fact that in this verse, Muḥammad is portrayed as youthful and irrational; Abū Bakr, *Dīwān*, 25.

<sup>821</sup> MC: “that we should abandon deities”; “a noble inheritance to the inheritor”. Variant: *aṣnāban*, “stone altars”. Variant: *mawāritha mawrūth in li-akram wārith*, “an inheritance inherited by the most noble inheritor”.

<sup>822</sup> Rudayna and her husband Samhar were famous spear-makers and vendors in ancient Arabia. Schwarzlose, *Die Waffen der Alten Araber*, 218; Abū Bakr, *Dīwān*, 26.

<sup>823</sup> MC: “With them [the swords] we set right the turned cheek and we quickly relieve the call for blood vengeance”. Lane, s.v. *ṣ-‘-r* II: to turn away one’s cheek in contempt, out of pride. Q 31: 18: “Turn not thy cheek away from men in scorn, and walk not in the earth exultantly; God loves not any man proud and boastful” (*wa-lā tuṣa ‘ir khaddaka li-l-nāsi wa-lā tamshi fi l-‘arḍi maraḥan – inna Allāha lā yuḥibbu kulla mukhtālīn fakhūrin*). Trans. AG: “wherewith we deal with the conceited”.

<sup>824</sup> MC: “their young women being left husbandless”. Lit. “pregnant women and menstruating women” or “women whose menstruation is late, leading to the suspicion of pregnancy, as well as their menstruating women”. I.e., “all” of their young women; their husbands having passed away at a too young age. See footnote 813.



11. The slain would have been left for those concerned and those utterly heedless to talk about<sup>825</sup>
12. Give Abū Bakr with you a message: You have no further part in the honour of Fihr
13. No binding oath that cannot be broken, that war will be renewed is needed from me.<sup>826</sup>

Whether Z14 is a poetical response to AB01 or vice versa is unclear and in any case the order does not affect their interpretation. Like AB01, this poem opens like a classical *qaṣīda* (ode), with the amatory opening known as the *nasīb* (v.1), the sorrowful memories of the past at the sight of an abandoned and ruined campsite (*aṭlāl*, “traces”), and especially the memory of a beloved now distanced by the seasonal transhumance of the groups.<sup>827</sup> As a customary opening of pre-Islamic odes, the *nasīb* continued to be used by sedentary groups like Quraysh as a literary *topos*.<sup>828</sup> As often in pre-Islamic poetry, Fate (v.2) is presented as the unavoidable and dangerous force that turns and turns and will eventually bring everyone to his end.<sup>829</sup>

After the customary lines, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā centres the attention on what has distressed him: a “strong” or “evil army” (v.3) came to them. He mentions their leader by name, and the audience must have known that this ‘Ubayda is a kinsman of the poet who, as member of the Qurashī clan of the ‘Abd Manāf, now has set out to fight against his close relatives. In spite of the high ideal of loyalty and fidelity to one’s kin, the reality in pre-Islamic tribal Arabia was that feuds and wars occurred at times between groups from the same tribal stock.<sup>830</sup> In Mecca in times of Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, on the other hand, we do hear of tensions between the Qurashī clans but not of such open warfare—not until the Emigration of Muḥammad and his followers to Medina. Not surprisingly, poets like Ibn al-Zibaʿrā and ʿĪrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb voice the uneasiness and agitation caused by these wars against their relative Muḥammad and his followers. In the present poem, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā refers

<sup>825</sup> MC: “left for those who cared for them and those not interested in them”.

<sup>826</sup> MC: “And even before I implemented a binding oath, the renewing of war was already an oath not to be broken.”.

<sup>827</sup> Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 24; Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs*, 77–78; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shiʿr wa-l-Shuʿarāʾ*, 1:75–76.

<sup>828</sup> Jacobi, ‘Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik’, 14–15. The use of the amatory opening in *mukhaḍḍram* poems, which do not follow the structure of the classical ode except for this customary introductory verses, is yet to be studied in more depth. For its usage in later Muslim poetry, see for example R. Jacobi, ‘Omajjadische Dichtung (7.-8. Jahrhundert)’, in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. H. Gätje, vol. 2, 3 vols, 1987, 32–40; R. Jacobi, ‘Abbasidische Dichtung (8.-13. Jahrhundert)’, in *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, ed. H. Gätje, vol. 2, 3 vols, 1987, 41–63; Salma Khadra Jayyusi, ‘Umayyad Poetry’, in *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston et al., *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 387–432.

<sup>829</sup> Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam*, 29–30; al-Jubūrī, *Shiʿr al-Mukhaḍḍramīn*, 19; Lyons, *Identification and Identity*, 30.

<sup>830</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

to two enemy individuals who can be identified as his kinsmen, although in the case of Abū Bakr Ibn al-Zibā'rā states that he cannot claim a share in the honour and nobility of his tribe any longer. (vv.3,12). Whether the whole army led by 'Ubayda is from the Quraysh is left in the middle.

In the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām, v.4 is missing, most certainly because the compilers or editors interpreted it as an insult against Muḥammad. In it, Ibn al-Zibā'rā rejects the authority and leadership of the enemy chief, whom he presents as a youthful and silly man, that is, one who lacks the wisdom and experience that define a good leader.<sup>831</sup> On a side note, the fact that v.4 is included in the poem as found in Abū Bakr's *Dīwān* speaks to its authenticity. It is hard to imagine a later Muslim forger including such a verse in a poem, even with the aim of putting them in the mouth of a well-known enemy of Muḥammad.

At the time, Muḥammad was not really young anymore, but in the eyes of Ibn al-Zibā'rā he was inexperienced and unfit to lead. *Ḥasab wa-nasab* were the two main characteristics according to which a leader was to be judged: his deeds (*ḥasab*) were to be great and his ancestry (*nasab*) was to be noble. Ibn al-Zibā'rā does not attack the ancestry of this fake leader, but he does attack him for his actions (his “deeds are stupid deeds”, v.4). We could be inclined to think that Ibn al-Zibā'rā withheld from insulting Muḥammad's ancestry because of the shared ties of blood. Against this hypothesis speaks the fact that in his invective against the Quṣayy (Z02) he had not recoiled from attacking the supposed nobility and glory of this group from his own tribe. In addition, Muḥammad and Ibn al-Zibā'rā did not belong to the same clan, so the poet could have insulted Muḥammad's clan without attacking his own.

While Abū Bakr explained the withdrawal of the group led by 'Ubayda as a show of “mercy” to the enemy (AB01, v.13), in the eyes of Ibn al-Zibā'rā 'Ubayda and his group had shown weakness and fear, and wisely so: had they not retreated, they would have suffered a heavy defeat (Z14, vv.9-11). The image of the wailing widows emphasises the breach between the two groups: the poet speaks of “their women” (v.10), as if there are no ties of blood between them anymore. Not that the poet has forgotten their shared past, but he considers it a closed chapter: Abū Bakr must be told that he has forsaken the honour of his kin (v.12), which is a harsh accusation in tribal society. The difficult final verse (v.13) perhaps emphasises the implicit and explicit threats and accusations of

<sup>831</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

the preceding verses. Similar assurances of one's trustworthiness are common in pre-Islamic and *mukhadram* poems.

Throughout the poem, we see how Ibn al-Ziba'ra frames his allegiance and his understanding of true leadership, and how the discursive strands on allegiance and authority are entangled. The leader of the opponents is not a true chief, and therefore Ibn al-Ziba'ra is not going to follow his orders to abandon the inherited customs of his people (v.5). On the contrary, he and his people have proven their willingness to fight the opponent (vv.6-7). According to the pre-Islamic unwritten rules, blood revenge was to be taken against the offender himself or against his kin. In the case of the Qurashi followers of Muḥammad, they came from different clans, and retaliation against such a diverse group was problematic. The fact that Ibn al-Ziba'ra threatens them with blood vengeance (v.8) may indicate that he considered the ties of blood as cut and that he saw the group around Muḥammad as a sort of tribe. Since we are told that the raid at Thaniyyat al-Murra, to which this poem is related, ended without casualties (see vv.9-10), v.8 must be read as a threat: Ibn al-Ziba'ra and his kinsmen are ready to retaliate any casualty caused by the enemy.

*Ibn al-Ziba'ra on the battle of Badr (2/624)*

A whole series of poems in the corpus of Ibn al-Ziba'ra deals with the battles of his group against the group around Muḥammad. One of his compositions is an elegy for the fallen heroes at Badr (2/624), where those who opposed Muḥammad from among the Quraysh were defeated by Muḥammad and his followers from the Emigrants and the tribes of Medina. Ibn al-Ziba'ra does not mention the reason behind the battle nor does he identify the opponent. Were it not for the reference to "Badr" in v.1, the poem could be read as a pre-Islamic elegy for the victims of a tribal feud. The poem reads:<sup>832</sup>

[Z15 *kāmil*]

1. مَاذَا عَلَيَّ بَدْرٍ وَمَاذَا حَوْلُهُ – مِنْ فِتْيَةٍ بِيضِ الْوُجُوهِ كِرَامِ
2. تَرَكُوا نُبْيَهَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَمُنْبَهَا – وَأَبْنِي رَبِيعَةَ خَيْرِ خَصْمٍ فَنَامِ
3. وَالْحَارِثَ الْفَيَاصَ يَبْرِقُ وَجْهُهُ – كَالْبَدْرِ جَلَى لَيْلَةَ الْإِظْلَامِ

<sup>832</sup> al-Jubūri, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'ra*, 46–47 nr. 20; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'ra', 337,356-7 nr. 18; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:15–16; al-Suhayli, *al-Rawḍ al-Unuf*, 2000, 5:234; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 345.

4. وَالْعَاصِي بِنَ مُنَبِّهِ ذَا مِرْوَةٍ - رُمَحًا تَمِيمًا غَيْرَ ذِي أَوْصَامٍ
5. تَنَمِي بِهِ أَعْرَافُهُ وَجُدُودُهُ - وَمَائِزُ الْأَخْوَالِ وَالْأَعْمَامِ
6. وَإِذَا بَكَى بَاكِ فَاعْوَلْ شَجْوَهُ - فَعَلَى الرَّئِيسِ الْمَاجِدِ ابْنِ هِشَامِ
7. حَيَّا الْإِلَهَ أَبَا الْوَلِيدِ وَرَهْطَهُ - رَبَّ الْأَنْامِ، وَخَصَّصَهُمْ بِسَلَامِ

Trans. AG:

1. What noble warriors, handsome men, lie round Badr's battlefield
2. They left behind them Nubayh and Munabbih, and the two sons of Rabī'a, best fighters against odds,<sup>833</sup>
3. And the generous Ḥārith, whose face shone like the full moon illuminating the night<sup>834</sup>
4. And al-'Āṣī b. Munabbih, the strong, like a long lance without a flaw<sup>835</sup>
5. His origin and his ancestors and the glory of his father's and his mother's kin raise him high<sup>836</sup>
6. If one must weep and show great grief, let it be over the glorious chief Ibn Hishām,<sup>837</sup>
7. God, lord of creatures, save Abū al-Walid and his family, and grant them special favour.<sup>838</sup>

In vv.2-3 the poet mentions several men by name or by affiliation. All are Qurashis: the majority belongs to the Sahm, Ibn al-Ziba'rā's clan (vv.2-4), while the Makhzūmī Ibn Hishām, that is, Abū Jahl (v.6), is closely related with and associated to the Sahm.<sup>839</sup> "The two sons of Rabī'a" and Abū al-Walid, mentioned in vv.2,7, belonged to the 'Abd Shams. In the past, Ibn al-Ziba'rā and one of the sons of Rabī'a, 'Utba, had found themselves on opposing sides in a conflict within the Quraysh,<sup>840</sup> but those past tensions seem forgotten and 'Utba is eulogised like the others. All are heroes, strong and courageous defenders of their people, distinguished by their nobility (vv.2-6).

According to Farrukh, the use of the term *Allāh*, which appears in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry, became rather rare in the compositions of non-monotheistic and non-Muslim poets after the Emigration; he mentions v.7 of this poem as one of the few instances in which it still

<sup>833</sup> Nubayh and Munabbih: brothers, sons of al-Ḥajjāj b. 'Āmir al-Sahmī. The two sons of Rabī'a: 'Utba and Shayba, sons of Rabī'a b. 'Abd Shams, from the 'Abd Manāf.

<sup>834</sup> Ḥārith: possibly al-Ḥārith b. Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj b. 'Āmir al-Sahmī.

<sup>835</sup> Al-'Āṣī b. Munabbih: al-'Āṣī b. Munabbih b. al-Ḥajjāj b. 'Āmir al-Sahmī.

<sup>836</sup> MC: "In him his origin and his ancestors and the generous qualities of his father's and his mother's kin grow".

<sup>837</sup> Ibn Hishām: Abū Jahl 'Amr b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra al-Makhzūmī.

<sup>838</sup> Abū al-Walid: 'Utba b. Rabī'a b. 'Abd Shams, from the 'Abd Manāf.

<sup>839</sup> See above, the section: Ibn al-Ziba'rā in praise of Qurashī relatives of the Banū Sahl.

<sup>840</sup> According to the compiler of the *Munammaq*, it was 'Utba b. Rabī'a who had been sent by his group to the Banū Sahl to demand an explanation for Ibn al-Ziba'rā's invective against the Quṣayy (Z02); Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 343.

does occur.<sup>841</sup> The term *rabb* (“lord”) is also found in pre-Islamic poems; it may be a reference to a person or an epithet to a divine being, frequently further specified: *rabbī* (“my Lord”) or, like in v.7, *rabb al-anām* (“Lord of all creatures”). According to Farrukh, the use of *rabb* as “the Lord”, equivalent to *Allāh* as “the God” was not common until Muslim times.<sup>842</sup>

Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s group can be understood as the Quraysh, for he mentions men from different clans by name. The enemy army, on the other hand, was composed not only of the Medinan tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj who sided with Muḥammad (the Helpers), but also of his Qurashī followers, the Emigrants. In Z14 he had accused the Emigrant Abū Bakr of insulting the honour of his tribe. In this poem Ibn al-Ziba‘rā does not say a word about the identity of the enemy, which could be taken to be an enemy tribe. In a tribal elegy for the fallen heroes of the Quraysh, he leaves it to the audience to understand the tensions that had been stirred by Muḥammad’s preaching, had been manifest with the Emigration of him and his followers, and now came to an outburst on the battlefield in a fight between relatives.

To Ḥassān b. Thābit is attributed a poem in response to Z15. Had Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s poem been an expression of grief, the response by Ḥassān is a triumphant and expectant call for more distress upon the side of the enemy, as well as an exhortation to praise the men from his camp:<sup>843</sup>

[*HbT*oī *ṭawīl*]

1. اِبْكُ بَكَتْ عَيْنَاكَ ثُمَّ تَبَادَرْتَ - بِدَمٍّ يُعَلُّ غُرُوبَهَا بِسِجَامِ
2. مَاذَا بَكَيْتَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ تَتَابَعُوا - هَلَّا ذَكَرْتَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَقْوَامِ
3. وَذَكَرْتَ مِنَّا مَا جِدَّا ذَا هِمَّةٍ - سَمَحَ الْخَلَائِقِ صَادِقِ الْإِفْدَامِ
4. أَعْنِي النَّبِيَّ أَخَا الْمَكَارِمِ وَالنَّدَى - وَأَبْرَ مَنْ يُوَلَّى عَلَى الْإِفْسَامِ
5. فَلِمِثْلِهِ وَلِمِثْلِهِ مَا يَدْعُو لَهُ - كَانَ الْمُمَدِّحَ ثُمَّ غَيْرَ كَهَامِ

Trans. AG (except for v.2):

1. Weep! May your eyes weep blood, their rapid flow ever renewed

<sup>841</sup> Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 10–11, 18–19.

<sup>842</sup> Farrukh, 16–17, 18–19.

<sup>843</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:160–61 nr. 55; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 270–71 nr. 166; al-Barqūqī, *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī*, 385–86; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:15–16; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 345. The edition of Ḥasanayn presents some minor variant readings that do not alter the meaning significantly.

2. What [or: why] do you weep for those who followed one another – Didn't you mention the virtues of the peoples?<sup>844</sup>
3. And our glorious, purposeful, tolerant, courageous one,
4. The prophet, soul of virtue and generosity, the truest man that ever swore an oath?
5. One who resembles him and does his teaching was the most praised one there not without effect.<sup>845</sup>

In the eyes of Ḥassān, Ibn al-Zibārā did wrong in eulogising men who “followed one another” into destruction or error, as we may understand the verb *tatābaʿa* (v.2),<sup>846</sup> or who at least erred in their rejection of “the prophet” Muḥammad (v.4). In their poems, both Ibn al-Zibārā and Ḥassān focus the attention on their people: Ḥassān’s call to “mention the virtues of the peoples” (v.2) must refer to the group who have sided with Muḥammad in the battle.

The words of praise that Ḥassān directs at Muḥammad do not differ significantly from similar verses directed at pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* heroes and leaders (vv.4-5). The virtues that he mentions are the ones that were expected from a tribal leader: nobility, generosity, and courage. He is a man of his word, who fulfils his duty towards his kin and his allies.<sup>847</sup> Only the allusion to him as a “prophet” (*nabī*; v.4)<sup>848</sup> points to his divine calling, but as it stands, his authority derives from his virtues and leadership qualities rather than from his status as messenger of God.<sup>849</sup>

While Ibn al-Zibārā had eulogised his kinsmen and omitted speaking of the enemy, among whom were men from the Quraysh, in referring to Muḥammad as a man “from among us” (v.3), Ḥassān reaffirms the divide between those from the Quraysh who followed Muḥammad and those

<sup>844</sup> Variant: *tatāyaʿū*, “who threw themselves into destruction”; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:16.; *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. *t-y-ʿ*. AG: “Why weep for those who ran to evil ways? Why have you not mentioned the virtues of our people?”

<sup>845</sup> MC: “For who is like him, and like that what he summons [to do] is the praised one and is no longer weak”.

<sup>846</sup> See the variant reading of the verse, above.

<sup>847</sup> See the definition of the pre-Islamic virtue of *bīrr* by Müller in his explanation of the *murawwa* values and virtues given in chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*. In Islam, the root *b-r-r* would receive the added connotation of righteousness inspired by the fear of God (Q 2: 177). Because of the lack of any reference to God here, it seems that Ḥassān uses the elative *abarr* in the pre-Islamic sense. Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 95–96; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʾān*, 209.

<sup>848</sup> Like *rasūl* (messenger), *nabī* was a common title for Muḥammad from early times on; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 36–41.

<sup>849</sup> To interpret the call by Ḥassān to imitate Muḥammad as a reference to the *sunna*, that is, the “way” of the prophet, is probably reading too much into it. In the aftermath of Badr (2/624), the doctrinal concept of the *sunna* as the example of Muḥammad to be followed, complementing the Qurʾān as the source on doctrinal and legal matters, would not yet have been developed in Muslim tradition. The lack of any clear Qurʾānic references or pious expressions in line with later Muslim doctrine in this poem by Ḥassān b. Thābit is an argument in favour of its authenticity and early dating.

who did not. Muḥammad and he did not belong to the same tribe, but apparently there are ties other than those of blood that unite them.

*Ibn al-Ziba'ra on the battle of Uḥud (3/625)*

After their defeat at Badr (2/624), the unbelievers from among the Quraysh regarded the battle of Uḥud (3/625) as a victory. In the following poem Ibn al-Ziba'ra looks back on this fight:<sup>850</sup>

[Z16 *tawil*]

1. أَلَا ذَرَفَتْ مِنْ مُقْلَتَيْكَ دُمُوعٌ – وَقَدْ بَانَ مِنْ حَبْلِ الشَّبَابِ قُطُوعٌ
2. وَشَطَّ بِمَنْ تَهْوَى الْمَزَارُ وَفَرَقَتْ – نَوَى الْحَيِّ دَارٌ بِالْحَبِيبِ فَجُوعٌ
3. وَلَيْسَ لِمَا وَلَّى عَلَى ذِي حَرَارَةٍ – وَإِنْ طَالَ تَذْرَافُ الدُّمُوعِ رُجُوعٌ
4. فَذَرَا ذَا وَلَكِنْ هَلْ أَتَى أُمَّ مَالِكٍ – أَحَادِيثُ قَوْمِي وَالْحَدِيثُ يَشِيعُ
5. وَمُجْتَنِبًا جُرْدًا إِلَى أَهْلِ يَثْرِبٍ – عَنَاجِيحٍ مِنْهَا مُتَلَدٌ وَنَزِيعُ
6. عَشِيَّةَ سِرْنَا فِي لُهُامٍ يَفُودُنَا – ضَرُورُ الْأَعَادِي لِلصَّادِقِ نَفُوعُ
7. نَشُدُّ عَلَيْنَا كُلَّ رَغْفٍ كَانَهَا – غَدِيرٌ بِضُوحِ الْوَادِيَيْنِ نَقِيعُ
8. فَلَمَّا رَأَوْنَا خَالَطَتْهُمْ مَهَابَةٌ – وَعَايَنَهُمْ أَمْرٌ هُنَاكَ فَطِيعُ
9. وَوَدُّوا لَوْ أَنَّ الْأَرْضَ يَنْشَقُّ ظَهْرَهَا – بِهِمْ وَصَبُورُ الْقَوْمِ نَمَّ جَزُوعُ
10. وَقَدْ عَرِيَتْ بَيْضٌ كَأَنَّ وَمِضْهَهَا – حَرِيقٌ تَرَقَّى فِي الْآبَاءِ سَرِيعُ
11. بِأَيْمَانِنَا نَعْلُو بِهَا كُلَّ هَامَةٍ – وَمِنْهَا سِمَامٌ لِلْعَدُوِّ ذَرِيعُ
12. فَغَادَرْنَا قَتَلَى الْأَوْسِ عَاصِبَةً بِهِمْ – ضِبَاعٌ وَطَيْرٌ يَعْتَقِفِينَ وَفُوعُ
13. وَجَمْعُ بَنِي النَّجَّارِ فِي كُلِّ تَلَعَةٍ – بِأَبْدَانِهِمْ مِنْ وَقَعِهِنَّ نَجِيعُ
14. وَلَوْلَا عُلُوُّ الشَّعْبِ غَادَرْنَا أَحْمَدًا – وَلَكِنْ عَلَا وَالسَّمْهَرِيُّ شَرُوعُ
15. كَمَا غَادَرَتْ فِي الْكَرِّ حَمَزَةٌ ثَاوِيًا – وَفِي صَدْرِهِ مَاضِي الشَّبَاةِ وَقِيعُ

<sup>850</sup> al-Jubūri, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'ra*, 37–39 nr. 12; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'ra', 338–39, 351–52 nr. 10; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:141–42; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 411–12.

16. وَنُعْمَانَ قَدْ غَادَرْنَ تَحْتَ لَوَائِهِ – عَلَى لَحْمِهِ طَيْرٌ يَجْفَنُ وَفُوقُ  
 17. بِأُحْدٍ وَأَرْمَاحِ الْكُمَاةِ يُرْدُنَهُمْ – كَمَا غَالَ أَشْطَانَ الدَّلَائِ نُرُوعُ

Trans. AG:

1. Surely tears flowed from your eyes when youth had fled and the loved one was far away<sup>851</sup>
2. Far off and gone is she whom you love and the camp, now removed, has robbed me of a dear one<sup>852</sup>
3. The ardent lover cannot recover what is gone however long he weeps<sup>853</sup>
4. But let be: Has Umm Mālik news of my people – since news spreads far and wide
5. Of our bringing horses to the men of Medina, fine handsome horses, some reared with us, some outborn,<sup>854</sup>
6. The night we went forth in great force led by one, the dread of his enemies, the hope of his friends?
7. All were clad in coats of mail which looked like a well-filled pool where two valleys meet
8. When they saw us they were filled with awe, a dreadful plight confronted them;
9. They wished that the earth would swallow them, their stoutest hearted warriors were in despair.<sup>855</sup>
10. When our swords were drawn they were like a flame that leaps through brushwood
11. On their heads we brought them down bringing swift death to the enemy<sup>856</sup>
12. They left the slain of Aws with hyaenas hard at them and hungry vultures lighting on them<sup>857</sup>
13. The Banū Najjār on every height were bleeding from the wounds on their bodies
14. But for the height of the mountain pass they would have left Aḥmad dead, but he climbed too high though the spears were directed at him<sup>858</sup>
15. As they left Ḥamza dead in the attack with a lance thrust through his breast.<sup>859</sup>
16. Nu'mān too lay dead beneath his banner, the falling vultures busy at his bowels<sup>860</sup>
17. The spears of our warriors came on them in Uḥud (as swiftly) as a well devours the ropes of the bucket.<sup>861</sup>

<sup>851</sup> MC: "Ah! Tears flow from your eyes now that cuts in the rope of youth have appeared".

<sup>852</sup> MC: "The place of visit [where we met] has taken away the one you love, and the present camp has taken the absence of the tribe far away, painful to me because of the beloved".

<sup>853</sup> MC: "There is no way back for what it puts on the shoulder of a suffering person ...".

<sup>854</sup> MC: "against the men of Yathrib".

<sup>855</sup> MC: "even the steadfast of the tribe was distressed".

<sup>856</sup> MC: "With our right hands ...".

<sup>857</sup> MC: "They [the swords] left the victims of Aws with the swords in their hands; among them the hyaenas and vultures were feasting".

<sup>858</sup> According to Muslim tradition, at some point the enemy army came close to killing Muḥammad. The word spread that he had been killed, but he was helped up a mountain slope to escape the heavy combat; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:77ff.

<sup>859</sup> Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the uncle of Muḥammad. He was killed by Waḥshī, an Abyssinian slave of Jubayr b. Muṭ'im. Waḥshī was very skilled in throwing the javelin. His master had sent him into the battle to kill Ḥamza to seek revenge for his uncle Ṭu'ayma b. 'Adī, killed at Badr. Jubayr had promised Waḥshī his freedom if he killed Ḥamza. Ibn Hishām, 2:61,69.

<sup>860</sup> Several men by this name are mentioned among the Muslim victims at Uḥud (3/625): Nu'mān b. 'Abd 'Amr, from the Banū Dīnār b. Najjār and Nu'mān b. Mālik from the Banū 'Awf b. al-Khazraj. The latter is the more probable, since Ibn al-Zibārā seems to refer to him again in Z18 v.1.



As is often the case in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* circumstantial poems on wars and feuds, the reasons behind the conflict are not explained. Like Z14, this poem opens with the topical image of an abandoned camping place and the sorrowful memories of a now absent beloved of the classical ode (vv.1-3). Similarly conventional is the transition in v.4 (“But let be”, i.e. “let’s leave this!”)<sup>862</sup> from the amatory opening to the next section.

Vv.6-17 are a description of the battle through the eyes of Ibn al-Ziba‘rā. *Aḥmad* (v.14) can be understood as a reference to Muḥammad, who sometimes was referred to by this name.<sup>863</sup> Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s portrayal of Muḥammad is not that of an ideal leader because he flees and leaves his people behind instead of heroically facing the enemy and defying death in the true spirit of pre-Islamic *murūwwa* values. In fact, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā does not even attempt at emphasizing Muḥammad’s role in the event: his name is just one of the names mentioned. Of the other men mentioned by name in the poem, Nu‘mān (v.16) probably belonged to the Aws or the Khazraj,<sup>864</sup> while Ḥamza, Muḥammad’s uncle, was a Qurashī Emigrant (v.15).

In spite of the presence of at least two kinsmen among the enemy, namely, Ḥamza and Muḥammad, in speaking of marching against “the people of Yathrib” (v.5) Ibn al-Ziba‘rā presents the conflict in the first place as a conflict between his town and that of Yathrib (vv.5,12-13). He makes no attempt at explaining the hostilities in any other way than as a tribal war between the Quraysh and the Aws and Khazraj (through their subgroup Najjār, v.13). He does not even allude to Muḥammad’s message, while the fact that men from the Quraysh sided with the enemy against their own tribe is neither made explicit nor explained: Muḥammad and Ḥamza are not presented as traitors to their kin but simply named among the opponents. The way Ibn al-Ziba‘rā speaks of

---

<sup>861</sup> MC: “At Uḥūd the spears of the heroes were prepared to destroy them as those who pull up water from the well wear out the ropes of the buckets”. An image of a frequent habit and duty, i.e. the heroes had to fight until the spears would break. Compare the verse of ‘Uthmān b. Abū Ṭalḥa, standard bearer of the Qurashī army at Uḥūd: *Inna ‘alā ahli l-liwa’i ḥaqqan / an yakhḍibū l-ṣa’data aw tandaqqā* (trans. AG: “It is the duty of standardbearers / to blood their spears until they are broken to pieces”); Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:74; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 377.

<sup>862</sup> Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 24–25, 30. See a similar wording in the transition from the *nasīb* to the section of *fakhr* in a poem by the pre-Islamic Mālik b. Zughba al-Bāhili: *fa-da‘ dhā wa-lākin hal atāhā mughārūnā / bi-dhāt al-‘arāqī yawma jā’a nadhīruhā*; “So leave that [now]; but did she get the news of our raid with [an army] bringing disaster [to our enemies] on the day when her messenger came?”. Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, 35–38 nr. 9 v.8.

<sup>863</sup> On the use of *Aḥmad* as a name or title for Muḥammad, see the poem DK13 in 3. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri.

<sup>864</sup> See footnote 860.

the killing of Ḥamza (v.15) is similar to his description of the death of the Yathribī Nu'mān (v.16), even though Ḥamza was reportedly killed by a slave of a Qurashī man.<sup>865</sup> The unwritten rules of retaliation of Arabia on the eve of Islam would have it that such a killing of a Qurashī man at the hands of a slave of another Qurashī was a serious offence that needed to be set right through blood revenge or the payment of blood money. Ibn al-Ziba'rā, on the contrary, rejoices in the death of his kinsman (v.15), as apparently the ties of blood between them are already cut.

Ibn al-Ziba'rā does not mention any leader from among his group nor does he specify any clan that stood out: he speaks consistently of “we, us”.<sup>866</sup> The enemy army, on the other hand, is composed of people from the Aws and the Najjār, and the opponents have witnessed the killing of several of their prominent men and the flight of others. Among these, “Aḥmad” is just one of them. Without even the need to state it explicitly, Ibn al-Ziba'rā paints the picture of his group that unitedly has defeated and submitted the enemy.

To Ḥassān b. Thābit is attributed a poetical reply to Z16 in which the Helper poet attempts to turn the defeat of Muḥammad and his followers at Uḥud into a victory:<sup>867</sup>

[HbT02 *tawīl*]

1. أَشَاقَكَ مِنْ أُمِّ الْوَلِيدِ رُبُوعٌ – بَلَاقِعُ مَا مِنْ أَهْلِيَنَّ جَمِيعٌ
2. عَفَاهُنَّ صَيْفِي الرِّيَاحِ وَوَآكِفٌ – مِنْ الدَّلْوِ رَجَّافِ السَّحَابِ هُمُوعٌ
3. فَلَمْ يَبْقَ إِلَّا مُوقِدُ النَّارِ حَوْلَهُ – رَوَاكِدُ أَمْثَالِ الْحَمَامِ وَقُوعٌ
4. فَدَعُ ذِكْرَ دَارٍ بَدَدَتْ بَيْنَ أَهْلِهَا – نَوَى فَرَّقَتْ بَيْنَ الْجَمِيعِ قُطُوعٌ
5. وَقُلْ إِنْ يَكُنْ يَوْمًا بِأُحُدٍ يَعُدُّهُ – سَفِيهِه فَاِنَّ الْحَقَّ سَوْفَ يَشِيْعُ

<sup>865</sup> For the accounts of Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's death see the poem DK14.

<sup>866</sup> The reference in v.5 to horses that have been long in possession of the tribe (*mutlad*) and horses from a strange origin (*nazīr*) might be an implicit reference to the composition of the army that set out to attack “the people of Yathrib” (v.5), as the Quraysh joined forces with other tribes to attack Muḥammad and his followers; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā’, 338. In light of the conventional vv.1-4, v.5 perhaps can be read as a camel section (*rahīl*), the section following the amatory opening of the classical ode. As its name indicates, the *rahīl* conventionally revolves around the image of travelling by camel: after lamenting the separation from his beloved, brought to the memory by the sight of the abandoned campsite, the poet sets forth through the desert. Jacobi, ‘Die Altarabische Dichtung’, 23–26; Jacobi, ‘Qasīda’.

<sup>867</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:337–38 nr. 173; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 97–100 nr. 6; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:142–43; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 412–13. Guillaume follows the reading of Ibn Hishām, while I follow the version of 'Arafat; see the footnotes. The translation is my own.

6. فَقَدْ ضَارَبَتْ فِيهِ بَنُو الْأَوْسِ كُلَّهُمْ - وَكَانَ لَهَا ذِكْرٌ هُنَاكَ رَفِيعٌ
7. وَحَامَى بَنُو النَّجَّارِ فِيهِ وَضَارَبُوا - وَمَا كَانَ مِنْهُمْ فِي اللَّقَاءِ جَزُوعٌ
8. أَمَامَ رَسُولِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْذُلُونَهُ - لَهُمْ نَاصِرٌ مِنْ رَبِّهِمْ وَشَفِيعٌ
9. وَفَوْا إِذْ كَفَرْتُمْ يَا سَخِينِ بِرَبِّكُمْ - وَلَا يَسْتَوِي عَبْدٌ عَصَى وَمُطِيعٌ
10. بِأَيْمَانِهِمْ بِيضٌ إِذَا حَسِرَ الرَّغَى - فَلَا بُدَّ أَنْ يَرْدَى بِهِنَّ صَرِيعٌ
11. كَمَا غَادَرْتَ فِي النَّفْعِ عُثْمَانَ ثَاوِيًّا - وَسَعْدًا صَرِيعًا وَالرَّشِيعَ شُرُوعٌ
12. وَقَدْ غَادَرْتَ تَحْتَ الْعِجَاجَةِ مُسْنَدًا - أُيُّيًّا وَقَدْ بَلَ الْقَمِيصِ نَجِيعٌ
13. يَكْفُ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ حَتَّى تَلْفَقَتْ - عَلَى الْقَوْمِ مِمَّا قَدْ يُثِرْنَ نَفُوعٌ
14. أَوْلِيكَ قَوْمِي سَادَةٌ مِنْ فُرُوعِهِمْ - وَمِنْ كُلِّ قَوْمٍ سَادَةٌ وَفُرُوعٌ
15. بِهِنَّ نِعْرُ اللَّهِ حِينَ يُعْرُنَا - وَإِنْ كَانَ أَمْرٌ يَا سَخِينِ فَطَلِيعٌ
16. فَإِنْ تَذَكَّرُوا فَتَلَى وَحَمْرَةٌ فِيهِمْ - فَتَيْلٌ تَوَى لِلَّهِ وَهُوَ مُطِيعٌ
17. فَإِنَّ حِثَانَ الْخُلْدِ مَنْزِلُهُ بِهَا - وَأَمْرٌ الَّذِي يَقْضِي الْأُمُورَ سَرِيعٌ
18. وَقَتْلَاكُمْ فِي النَّارِ أَفْضَلُ رِزْقِهِمْ - حَمِيمٌ مَعًا فِي جَوْفِهَا وَضَرِيعٌ

1. Do the spring camps make you yearn for Umm al-Walid, the vacant lands emptied of their people?
2. The pouring rain and winds of summer effaced the traces, the clouds full of water, pouring
3. Nothing remains but a fireplace and the three cooking stones around it like pigeons who have fallen on the ground
4. Leave this memory of the camp, which distanced its people; the strokes have caused distance among the group<sup>868</sup>
5. Say: If there was a battle at Uḥud which a fool deemed good,<sup>869</sup> the truth certainly will spread
6. Indeed, the Banū Aws fought as a whole that day, and high fame was theirs
7. The Banū Najjār stood guard and fought, in the encounter they were not distressed
8. In the presence of the messenger of God they did not forsake him – they have a helper and intercessor from their Lord
9. They were faithful when you, gobblers of *sakhīna*,<sup>870</sup> denied your Lord – The rebellious slave isn't equal to the obedient one

<sup>868</sup> Variant: *li-matniyāti l-ḥibālī qutū'u*: "a distance that cuts the strongest cords".

<sup>869</sup> I.e. "a victory".

<sup>870</sup> *Sakhīna* was a type of food made of flour, eaten only in times of famine (cf. Lane s.v. *s-kh-n*), or a mixture of flour, small strips of meat, milk, and butter (Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 98). "Gobblers of *sakhīna*" (vv.9,15) was an insult or mocking nickname used for the Quraysh as a whole. In Ḥasanayn's edition of Ḥassān's *dīwān* we

10. In their right hands swords when the clamour of war faded, the one slain by them certainly died<sup>871</sup>
11. Thus they left lying in the dust ‘Uthmān, and Sa’d slain, and the spears directed to pierce<sup>872</sup>
12. They left Ubayy lying on his back under a cloud of dust, while blood [from his belly] [already] had wetted his garment<sup>873</sup>
13. [Slain] by the hand of the messenger of God,<sup>874</sup> until the dust, stirred up, wrapped the people
14. Those are my people, the leaders over their branches – in every tribe there are leaders and branches<sup>875</sup>
15. With them we strengthen God when he strengthens us – even in front of a distressing affair, you gobblers of *sakhīna*!<sup>876</sup>
16. Even if you mention the slain, and Ḥamza among them, killed for God and now dwelling in the grave, for he was obedient.<sup>877</sup>
17. And even if gardens of eternity are his dwelling place – the decree of Him who decrees is quick
18. But your dead are in the fire together, and their best food there is burning charcoal with disgusting plants.<sup>878</sup>

Like Ibn al-Zibār in Z16, in this poem Ḥassān b. Thābit employs the structure and *topoi* of a classical ode: the amatory opening with the motif of an abandoned campsite (vv.1-3) and the transition from this section to the next through the topical exhortation to leave the sorrow behind (v.4).<sup>879</sup>

find a different interpretation: *sakhīna* would refer to pork meat with clarified butter and milk, eaten only by the Quraysh (and by a certain Mujāshī‘ b. Dārim, from Ḥanzala; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 98.) However, this explanation seems based on mistakenly reading *khazīr* and *khazīra* (a type of food similar to *sakhīna* and *‘asīda*) for *khinzīr*, “pork” in the entries of classical lexicons, for the relation between *sakhīna* and pork meat is not attested anywhere else.

<sup>871</sup> Variant: *bī-aydhimū biḍun idhā ḥasira al-waghā* “in their hands”. On the usage of *aymān* for “right hands”, see Z04 v.2 and footnote 717.

<sup>872</sup> Sa’d: Sa’d b. Abī Ṭalḥa. AG follows the variant *fi l-naq’i ‘Utba*, “in the dust ‘Utba”, a name that is explained as applying to the same man as in the variant followed here, namely ‘Uthmān b. Abī Ṭalḥa (not to be confused with his nephew ‘Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa b. Abī Ṭalḥa, who would play a role in the seizure of Mecca; see below, the poem Z21 and its context). ‘Uthmān was killed by Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib; Sa’d was killed by Sa’d b. Abi Waqqāṣ. Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 2:241; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:143.

<sup>873</sup> Ubayy b. Khalaf al-Jumaḥī.

<sup>874</sup> It is said that Muḥammad himself killed Ubayy b. Khalaf al-Jumaḥī. Ubayy had announced before the Emigration that he would kill Muḥammad, upon which Muḥammad had stated that he would be the one to kill Ubayy. It is said that during the battle of Uḥud Muḥammad pierced his chest with a small spear. Although not more than a scratch, Ubayy died of the wound. Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 99.

<sup>875</sup> This verse is omitted by Ḥasanayn in his edition. AG follows the variant *ūlā’ika qawmun sādātun min furū’ikum*, “These were chiefs from your leading families, for every army has chiefs”.

<sup>876</sup> Trans. AG: “By them we help God when He helps us, even if things are terrible, o Quraysh”.

<sup>877</sup> Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib.

<sup>878</sup> Lane, s.v. *ḍ-r-’*: *ḍarī’*: “a certain thing in Hell, more bitter than aloes, and more stinking than the carcass, and hotter than fire, the food of the inmates of Hell”.

<sup>879</sup> Perhaps v.4 can be read as an implicit characterisation of the present conflict: the ties of the past have been cut and are to be disregarded (see Z16 vv.1-2, where the poet also speaks of the cut ties of youth).

Ibn al-Ziba‘rā had shouted victory over the battle (Z16 vv.8-17). According to Ḥassān, however, only fools would believe that the opponents had defeated Muḥammad (v.5). Speaking of his people, Ḥassān mentions the Aws and the Najjār, the latter being the subgroup of the Khazraj to which he belonged (vv.6,7). He omits any reference to the Qurashī Emigrants fighting by their side as a group, alluding only to the individuals Muḥammad and his paternal uncle Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (v.16).<sup>880</sup>

Perhaps surprising in a poem by a follower of Muḥammad, the words in praise of his own group (*qawmī*, “my people”, v.14) as well as the insults against the Quraysh have a strong tribal connotation (vv.9,15). Ḥassān does not even attempt to explicitly exclude Muḥammad, Ḥamza, and other Emigrants from the mocking words he directs at the Quraysh as a whole. Had Ḥassān spoken, for example, of the “infidels” or “unbelievers”, he would have saved the Emigrants—and Muḥammad—the insult.

Contrary to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā, Ḥassān does allude to the cause behind the battle: the Aws and Najjār defended “the messenger of God” (vv.8,13) while the opponent (“you”) denied their Lord (v.9). According to Ḥassān, this is precisely why God gave the victory to his group (v.15). The use of *‘abd* (slave, servant) in v.9 is surprising. In pre-Islamic times, the plural *‘ibād* could be used in the sense of “humankind”,<sup>881</sup> but Ḥassān uses it here to positively refer to himself and his group as “obedient slaves” or “servants” as opposed to the “rebellious” ones, thus departing from the pre-Islamic ideal of proud independence.<sup>882</sup> A similar departure from pre-Islamic concepts can be found in the final verses in which the poet expresses a belief in an afterlife in which individuals are rewarded or punished for their deeds and beliefs in the present life (vv.16-18).<sup>883</sup> Again, the reward or punishment derives from one’s obedient or disobedient attitude, which in this poem can be

<sup>880</sup> On the accounts of Ḥamza’s killing, see DK14 and the comments.

<sup>881</sup> See Z13 v.5 and footnote 784.

<sup>882</sup> In pre-Islamic Arabia, to refer to someone as a slave or born of a slave woman was a serious insult. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*. In the Qur’ān, *‘abd* and concepts derived from the same root are frequent and are commonly used to indicate the correct attitude of humankind towards God: man has to worship him and to submit to him. Jonathan E. Brockopp, ‘Servants’, *EQ*, 4:576-80; Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*, 65; Müller, *Ich bin Labid*, 82 n. 204.

<sup>883</sup> In pre-Islamic and *mukhadram* compositions by pagan poets, the notion of and concern for life after death is almost absent. After one’s death only one’s great deeds and nobility would remain and be inherited by his descendants; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 51ff.; Homerin, ‘Echoes of a Thirsty Owl’. See also chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

understood as the recognition or rejection of Muḥammad's authority as a divine messenger and of God's authority as Lord.

To Ibn al-Ziba'rā is attributed a second poem in the aftermath of Uḥūd (3/625):<sup>884</sup>

[Z17 *ramal*]

1. يَا غُرَابَ الْبَيْنِ أَسْمَعْتَ فَقُلْ - إِنَّمَا تَنْطِقُ شَيْئًا قَدْ فُعِلْ
2. إِنَّ لِلْخَيْرِ وَلِلشَّرِّ مَدَى - وَكِلَا ذَلِكَ وَجْهٌ وَقَبْلٌ
3. وَالْعَطِيَّاتُ خِسَاسٌ بَيْنَهُمْ - وَسَوَاءٌ قَبْرٌ مُثْرٌ وَمُقْبَلٌ
4. كُلُّ عَيْشٍ وَنَعِيمٍ زَائِلٌ - وَبَنَاتُ الدَّهْرِ يَلْعَبْنَ بِكُلِّ
5. أْبْلُغْنَ حَسَانَ عَنِّي آيَةً - فَفَرِيضُ الشَّعْرِ يَشْفِي ذَا الْعُلْبُلِ
6. كَمْ تَرَى بِالْجَرِّ مِنْ جُمُجْمَةٍ - وَأَكْفٌ قَدْ أَثْرَتْ وَرَجُلٌ
7. وَسَرَائِيلَ حَسَانٍ سُرِيَتْ - عَنْ كُفَاةٍ أَهْلِكُوا فِي الْمُنْتَزِلِ
8. كَمْ قَتَلْنَا مِنْ كَرِيمٍ سَيِّدٍ - مَا جِدَ الْجَدَّيْنِ مِقْدَامٍ بَطْلٌ
9. صَادِقِ النَّجْدَةِ قَرْمٍ بَارِعٍ - غَيْرِ مُلْتَاثٍ لَدَى وَقْعِ الْأَسْلِ
10. فَسَلِ الْمَهْرَاسَ مَنْ سَاكِنُهُ - بَيْنَ أَقْحَافٍ وَهَامٍ كَالْحَجَلِ
11. لَيْتَ أَشْيَاخِي بِيَدْرِ شَهْدُوا - جَزَعَ الْخَزْرَجِ مِنْ وَقْعِ الْأَسْلِ
12. حِينَ حَكَّتْ بِقُبَاءٍ بَرَكَهَا - وَاسْتَحَرَّ الْقَتْلُ فِي عَبْدِ الْأَسْلِ
13. ثُمَّ خَفُوا عِنْدَ ذَاكُمْ رُقَصًا - رَقَصَ الْحَفَّانِ يَعْلو فِي الْجَبَلِ
14. فَفَتَلْنَا الضَّعْفَ مِنْ أَشْرَافِهِمْ - وَعَدَلْنَا مَيْلَ بَدْرِ فَاَعْتَدَلِ
15. لَا أَلُومَ النَّفْسِ إِلَّا أَنَا - لَوْ كَرَرْنَا لَفَعَلْنَا الْمُفْتَعِلِ
16. بِسُيُوفِ الْهِنْدِ تَعْلُو هَامُهُمْ - عَلَلَّا تَعْلُوهُمْ بَعْدَ نَهْلِ

Trans. AG:

1. O raven, you have made men hear, then speak. You can say only what has happened.<sup>885</sup>

<sup>884</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 40–43 nr. 15; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā', 339–40, 353–54 nr. 13; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 15:121 vv. 1-2, 4, 3; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:136–37; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 408.

2. (To good and evil there is an end and both befall men.
3. Gifts are mean among them and the graves of the rich and the poor are equal<sup>886</sup>
4. Every comfortable and pleasant life comes to an end and the blows of fate play with us all.)<sup>887</sup>
5. Give Ḥassān a message from me, for composing poetry cures inward pain.<sup>888</sup>
6. How many skulls on the mountain slope<sup>889</sup> did you see, how many hands and feet cut off,
7. Fine armour stripped from the brave who had perished in the battle?
8. How many noble chiefs did we slay, their descent doubly glorious, intrepid warriors;
9. Truly courageous, noble, conspicuous, no weaklings when the spears fell<sup>890</sup>
10. Ask al-Mihrās<sup>891</sup> who inhabits it, between skulls and brains, like partridges (?)
11. Would that my leaders at Badr had seen the fear of Khazraj when the spears fell;<sup>892</sup>
12. When (war) rubbed its breast in Qubā'<sup>893</sup> and the slaughter waxed hot among the 'Abd al-Ashhal<sup>894</sup>
13. Then they were nimble in flight like young ostriches running up a hill
14. We killed a double number of their nobles and adjusted the inequality of Badr<sup>895</sup>
15. I do not blame myself, but had we returned, we should have made a clean sweep of them,
16. With Indian swords above their heads delivering blow after blow.

In the amatory opening Ibn al-Zibā'rā uses the conventional image of the carrion crow as an ill omen to allude to the abandoned campsite where once the group of the beloved alighted (v.1).

What follows are three verses of customary wisdom: one has to accept his fate for everything and everyone will once face their end (vv.2-4).<sup>896</sup> Ibn al-Zibā'rā wants Ḥassān b. Thābit—and others—to hear his view on the battle at Uḥud. He centres the attention on the dead bodies, weapons, and mail-coats as scattered remains of the now abandoned battlefield (vv.5-7,10).

Once again Ibn al-Zibā'rā does not mention the reasons behind the fight. In speaking of the opponents, he identifies them as the Yathribi tribe of the Khazraj (vv.11-12; omitting the role of the

<sup>885</sup> MC: "O bird of ill omen".

<sup>886</sup> Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 408.

<sup>887</sup> MC: "Even if comfortable, every pleasant life comes to an end – the events of fate play their games with us all".

<sup>888</sup> MC: "the verses of poetry heal one with quenching thirst".

<sup>889</sup> MC: or: "at al-Jarr", a proper name; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 2:124.

<sup>890</sup> Variant: *qawmin bārī'in*: "an excelling tribe".

<sup>891</sup> Water next to Uḥud where the battle took place; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 5:232; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 1:240,249.

<sup>892</sup> The repetition of the rhyming words *waq' i l-asl* in vv.9,11 is a serious fault (known as *tā'*) and therefore suspicious; see Wright, *Grammar*, ii 357c.

<sup>893</sup> The first hemistich presents many variant readings; their meaning is more or less similar. Al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Zibā'rā*, 42. The image is that of a camel scratching its chest or belly, here applied to war. Qubā': A small village at the outskirts of Medina. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:218; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 4:301-2.

<sup>894</sup> MC: "when the killing became fierce". The Banū 'Abd al-Ashhal b. Jusham b. al-Ḥārith b. al-Khazraj.

<sup>895</sup> MC: "adjusted the wrong of Badr, making it even".

<sup>896</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 218-19.

Aws, commonly mentioned together with the Khazraj). He omits any mention of Qurashī Emigrants among them, and he does not explain Muḥammad’s role. Instead, he boasts: “How many noble chiefs did *we* slay” (v.8), and “*We* killed a double number of *their* nobles” (v.14). As in Z16, Ibn al-Ziba’rā presents the enemy as a hostile tribe opposed to his (vv.11,12).<sup>897</sup>

The past defeat of his group at Badr (2/624) has now been set right by crushing the enemy (vv.11,14). Following the convention of *inṣāf* (equity), the enemy as a whole is described as noble, strong, and heroic (vv.8-9,14), thus underscoring the hard-fought battle and highlighting the bravery and superiority of the own group.<sup>898</sup> In this case it also may be a backwards justification of the past defeat of Ibn al-Ziba’rā’s people at Badr: they had been defeated by a truly powerful and noble group. This characterisation does not imply warm feelings for the enemy, as is evident in Ibn al-Ziba’rā’s complaint that at Uḥud his group failed to destroy the enemy completely (vv.15-16).

Again, we see how Ibn al-Ziba’rā presents the battle as a fight between hostile tribes: the “descent doubly glorious” (v.8), that is, from father’s and mother’s side, must apply to the Banū Khazraj (vv.11-12). In this poem, Ibn al-Ziba’rā does not identify his group or individuals from among it, nor does he speak of his allegiance to it in terms of kinship. In light of the context and his corpus, we can identify it as his clan or as his tribe for he refers to the past battle of Badr (v.11) where they were defeated. With the present victory not only have they set it right and have they avenged their dead, but they also can reclaim their rightful position of authority and supremacy.

The following reply to Z17 is attributed to Ḥassān b. Thābit, the Helper from the Banū Khazraj.<sup>899</sup>

[HbT03 ramal]

1. ذَهَبَتْ بِأَبْنِ الرَّبْعَرِيِّ وَقَعَةً – كَانَ مِنَّا الْفَضْلُ فِيهَا لَوْ عَدَلُ
2. وَلَقَدْ نَلِئْتُمْ وَنَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ – وَكَذَلِكَ الْحَرْبُ أَحْيَانًا دُولُ

<sup>897</sup> In the variant reading of v.9 Ibn al-Ziba’rā speaks of the enemy as a tribe (*qawm*), see footnote 890.

<sup>898</sup> On the theme of equity in poetry, see poem DK13 in 3. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihrī. However, while in this poem by Ḍirār the theme of equity is applied specifically to Qurashī Emigrants fighting on the other side, to whom Ḍirār attributes the enemy’s victory, Ibn al-Ziba’rā characterises the whole enemy army as noble and courageous.

<sup>899</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:67–70 nr. 11; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 93–96 nr. 3; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:137–38; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:111–12; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 408–9. The verse order in the edition of Ḥasanayn is slightly different and presents some variant readings that do not alter the meaning radically. I follow here the verse order and reading of ‘Arafat’s edition. The translation is my own except when indicated for specific verses.



...

10. لَمْ يُفُوتُونَا بِشَيْءٍ سَاعَةً - غَيْرَ أَنْ وُلُّوا بِجُهْدٍ وَفَشَلُوا
11. ضَاقَ عَنَّا الشَّعْبُ إِذْ نَجَزَعُهُ - وَمَلَأْنَا الْفُرْطَ مِنْهُمْ وَالرَّجَلَ
12. بِرِجَالٍ لَسْتُمْ أَمْثَالَهُمْ - أُيِّدُوا جِبْرِيْلَ نَصْرًا فَنَزَلَ
13. وَعَلَوْنَا يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ بِالتُّقَى - طَاعَةَ اللَّهِ وَتَصَدِيقَ الرُّسُلِ
14. وَتَرَكْنَا فِي قُرَيْشٍ عَوْرَةً - يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ وَأَحَادِيثَ مِثْلَ
15. وَرَسُولِ اللَّهِ حَقًّا شَاهِدٌ - يَوْمَ بَدْرٍ وَالتَّنَائِيلِ الْهَيْلِ
16. وَتَرَكْنَا مِنْ قُرَيْشٍ جَمْعَهُمْ - مِثْلَ مَا جُمِعَ فِي الْخِصْبِ الْهَمَلُ
17. وَقَتَلْنَا مِنْكُمْ أَهْلَ اللَّوَى - إِذْ لَقَيْنَاكُمْ كَأَنَّا أُسْدٌ طَلَّ
18. وَقَتَلْنَا كُلَّ رَأْسٍ مِنْهُمْ - وَقَتَلْنَا كُلَّ جَحْجَاحٍ رَفَلُ
19. كَمْ قَتَلْنَا مِنْ كَرِيمٍ سَيِّدٍ - مَا جَدِ الْجَدِّيْنَ مَقْدَامٍ بَطَلُ
20. وَشَرِيفٍ لِشَرِيفٍ مَا جَدٍ - لَا نُبَالِيهِ لَدَى وَقَعِ الْأَسَلُ
21. حِينَ أَعْلَنْتُمْ بِصَوْتٍ كَاذِبٍ، - وَأَبُو سُفْيَانَ، كَيْ يَعْلوْ هَيْلُ
22. نَحْنُ لَا أَنْتُمْ، بَنِي أَسْتَاهِبَهَا، - نَحْنُ فِي الْبَأْسِ إِذَا الْبَأْسُ نَزَلَ

1. The battle has carried Ibn al-Ziba'rā away – had he been just he would have recognised our superiority
2. You inflicted loss on us and we on you. The fortunes of war often change<sup>900</sup>
- ...
10. They had no escape from us at that time other than turning away with utmost effort,<sup>901</sup> in vain
11. The road became narrow when we took it, as we filled the hills and water courses with them,
12. With men you can't compare to, strengthened to the victory by Gabriel coming down<sup>902</sup>

<sup>900</sup> Trans. AG.

<sup>901</sup> Variant: *bi-jahlin wa-fashal*, "foolishly and in vain".

<sup>902</sup> Grammatically this sentence is weak. One would not expect an agent complement (*Jibrila*) with a verb in the passive voice (*uyyidū*). In a footnote to the edition of the *Sira* by Ibn Kathir and Ibn Hisham it is said that it should be read as: *uyyidū bi-Jibrila*, which metrically is incorrect. Hasanayn proposes *ayyadū Jibrila naşran fa-nazal*, "they strengthened (or: aided) to the victory Gabriel, who came down". The metre in this case is correct, but the image of men aiding Gabriel does not seem appropriate.

A more logical reading would be with the verb in active voice and Gabriel as the subject (*ayuddūhum Jibrilu*, "Gabriel aided them"), but the metre then is still incorrect.

13. By piety, we raised high at the Day of Badr [in respect of?] the submission to God and the belief in the messengers<sup>903</sup>
14. We left among the Quraysh a naked shame at the Day of Badr, stories as example<sup>904</sup>
15. The messenger of God was truly a witness of the Day of Badr, as well as the short, fat [stupid?] people (?)<sup>905</sup>
16. We left the groups of the Quraysh scattered as camels without rein [which] are to be gathered in the pasture
17. We killed your people of the hill as we came up to you like lions appear
18. We killed all their leaders, we killed all their men of high rank<sup>906</sup> wearing long robes
19. How many noble chiefs did we slay, their descent doubly glorious, intrepid warriors;<sup>907</sup>
20. Nobles and more nobles, we do not care for them when the spears come down
21. When you announced in a lying voice, and you, Abū Sufyān, that Hubal would show his superiority<sup>908</sup>
22. We and not men like you, children of your mother's arse, meet the fighters when adversity comes.<sup>909</sup>

Contrary to Ibn al-Zibārā (Z17), Ḥassān skips the customary opening of a classical ode and goes right to the point. Both poets address each other directly. Ḥassān makes sure that he is understood: his group defeated Ibn al-Zibārā's, not the other way around (vv.2-12). The description of the fight is exhaustive. As is characteristic of pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍḍam* circumstantial poems, it develops

<sup>903</sup> Form I of the root 'l-w has mainly intransitive meanings, while in this verse we find a direct complement in the second hemistich. Form II can mean, among other things, "to raise sth. up" (in a literal sense), while form IV has the more figurative meaning of "to exalt sth. or sb". The use of any of these two forms would render the metre incorrect. Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, ed. Saqā: *wa-'alawnā yawma Badrin bi-l-tuqā / fā'ati llāhi wa-taṣḍiqi l-rusul*, "We exceeded the Day of Badr by piety, [by] submission to God and [by] believing the messengers".

<sup>904</sup> 'Awra: lit. the pudenda of a man and woman. 'Arafat mentions the variant 'abra, "a tear, sobbing", which might be an attempt to render it more chaste. "Stories as example": i.e. "stories to be talked of".

<sup>905</sup> *Al-hubul, al-hubal, al-hibal* (see Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, ed. Saqā): "fat people" or "people bereft of their children". It is presumably a reference to the enemy, the Quraysh (v.14). The conjunctive adverb connecting the messenger to the Quraysh is missing. Another option is to read *al-tanābila al-hubal* (acc.): "The messenger of God was truly a witness of the Day of Badr and of [the defeat of] the short, fat people (or: short people, bereft of their children)". This verse is missing in the edition of Ḥasanayn.

<sup>906</sup> Lit. "machos".

<sup>907</sup> Trans. AG. 'Arafat includes this verse, identical to Z17 v.8. Although it is not included in Ibn Hishām's edition of the *Sīra* or in Guillaume's translation of it, I include it here in Guillaume's translation of Z17 v.8.

<sup>908</sup> Hubal: one of the deities worshipped in Mecca, eclipsing others in popular deity, according to Fahd; T. Fahd, 'Hubal', *EL2*, 3:536-37. Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥarb, of the Qurashī clan of the Banū 'Abd Shams. An allusion to an account described in the *sīra*: at some point during the battle at Uḥud, Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥarb claimed victory for the Quraysh, reportedly shouting to his people: "You have done a fine work; victory in war goes by turns. Today in exchange for the day [of Badr]! Show your superiority, Hubal!" Upon orders of Muḥammad, the Emigrant 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb answered him: "God is most high and most glorious. We are not equal. Our dead are in paradise; your dead in hell!" Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:93-94. Trans. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 386. See: al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:521, 526; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 2:49.

<sup>909</sup> Trans. AG.

along a series of images and statements whose first purpose is not so much to inform the audience about “what really happened” at Uḥud but rather to convey Ḥassān’s perspective.

The enemy (“you”, “they”) fled when they were attacked by Ḥassān and the men on his side (“we”, “us”, v.10). Throughout the poem the pronouns and verbs in the first person pl. are contrasted to the second (and sometimes third) person pl., highlighting the opposition and hostility between the two factions. Ibn al-Ziba‘rā had identified Ḥassān’s group as the Banū Khazraj but had not explicitly stated the identity of his own group. Ḥassān, on the contrary, identifies it as the “Quraysh” (vv.14,16) and does not further define his own group. Like Ibn al-Ziba‘rā in Z17, Ḥassān’s tone is that of a tribal poet in the aftermath of a war between tribes: he does not mention Qurashī Emigrants fighting with the Aws and the Khazraj against their kin.

Towards the end of the composition Ḥassān uses some pious terms and references (vv.12-15). These lines present some grammatical and syntactical problems. Especially v.15 is difficult and the many variants do not help to elucidate the meaning. Perhaps the verse is a later insertion in order to ensure a role for Muḥammad in the poem, but in that case one would expect a more pious and straightforward verse. It could also be the result of the process of transmission, with the alterations rendering it now practically unintelligible. In any case, Ḥassān seems to explain the claimed victory at Uḥud as the result of piety and submission of his group to God (vv.12-15).<sup>910</sup>

The enemy may have shouted victory (Z17), but Ḥassān points to their heavy losses, especially among their leaders, leaving the chiefless survivors scattered in all directions (vv.16-20). Contrary to Ibn al-Ziba‘rā in Z17, Ḥassān does not employ the convention of equity to describe the enemy: cowardly and base as they were, they could not be compared to Ḥassān’s group (v.12). Only in vv.19-20 he devotes some positive words to the leaders of the Quraysh, but those pale beside the coarse words in other verses (vv.9,14,22).<sup>911</sup>

In a third poem composed in the aftermath of Uḥud, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā does not refrain from boasting of the killing of fellow tribesmen who sided with the “people of Yathrib”:<sup>912</sup>

---

<sup>910</sup> A similar explanation is found in HbT02.

<sup>911</sup> Such rude and foul-mouthed lines were not uncommon in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* invectives, and would survive the attempts of pious Muslims to forbid them. Bonebakker, ‘Religious Prejudice’; Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*.

<sup>912</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shī‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 43–44 nr. 17; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 355 nr. 15; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:166–67; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 424.

[Zī8 *ṭawīl*]

1. قَتَلْنَا ابْنَ جَحْشٍ فَأَغْتَبَطْنَا بِمَقْتَلِهِ - وَحَمْرَةَ فِي فُرْسَانِهِ وَابْنَ قَوْقَلٍ  
 2. وَأَفْلَتْنَا مِنْهُمْ رِجَالٌ فَأَسْرَعُوا - فَلَيْتَهُمْ عَاجُوا وَلَمْ نَتَّعَجَلِ  
 3. أَقَامُوا لَنَا حَتَّى تَعَضُّ سَيْوفُنَا - سَرَاتِهِمْ وَكَلْنَا غَيْرَ عَزَلِ  
 4. وَحَتَّى يَكُونَ الْقَتْلُ فِينَا وَفِيهِمْ - وَيَلْقُوا صَبُوحًا شَرَّهَ غَيْرَ مُنْجَلِي

Trans. AG:

1. We killed Ibn Jaḥsh and rejoiced at his death. And Ḥamza with his horsemen and Ibn Qawqal<sup>913</sup>
2. Some men escaped us and got quickly away. Would that they had stopped and we had not been hasty,
3. That they had stood so that our swords their best men might have cut down, for all of us were fully armed;
4. And that there might have been a fight between us when they would have a morning draught whose evil would not pass away.

As in other poems, Ibn al-Ziba'rā does not delve into the roots of the conflict or the precise nature of the two parties involved in the fighting. Were it not for the names of the individuals mentioned in the first verse, the opposition between “us” (v.1) and “them” (vv.2,3) could be understood as the result from a conflict between tribes. Already in the first verse, however, it becomes clear that this was not the case: Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, paternal uncle of Muḥammad, was a kinsman of Ibn al-Ziba'rā. He belonged to the clan of the Banū Hashim, a subgroup of the 'Abd Manāf. Ibn Jaḥsh al-Asadī was a client of the Qurashī clan of the Banū Umayya and through his mother Umayma bt. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, a sister of Ḥamza, he was related to Muḥammad.<sup>914</sup> Ibn Qawqal seems to be Nu'mān b. Mālik, from the Khazraj (see Z16 v.16).<sup>915</sup>

Because of the unwritten rules of blood relations and protection it was unlawful for Qurashī men to kill Ḥamza and Ibn Jaḥsh, and yet Ibn al-Ziba'rā is proud of it (v.1) and wishes that his group had killed more of their group (v.2). In other poems on the conflict with Muḥammad and his followers he avoids the thorny subject of Qurashī men fighting on both sides, speaking instead of the Quraysh attacking the tribes from Yathrib, only to allude at times to Qurashī individuals

<sup>913</sup> Ibn Jaḥsh: 'Abd Allāh b. Jaḥsh al-Asadī. Ḥamza: Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. Ibn Qawqal: probably Nu'mān b. Mālik, from the Banū 'Awf b. al-Khazraj, see Z16 v.16.

<sup>914</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-Muḥabbab*, 173; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 11:190–91.

<sup>915</sup> al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, 1996, 1:252.

allied with the enemy (Z15, Z16, Z19). The tone of this poem is different: Ibn al-Zibaʿrā rejoices in the death of men who once belonged to his kin.<sup>916</sup>

In a poem on the first raid of the followers of Muḥammad against the Quraysh of Mecca after the Emigration, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā had accused his kinsman Abū Bakr of having turned his back on the honour of his kin (Z14). Now he does not allude to the past ties and shared nobility; instead, men like Ḥamza and Ibn Jaḥsh are to be killed just like the rest of the enemies. Thus we find a shift in Ibn al-Zibaʿrā's discourse on allegiance: in the eyes of the poet the ties of blood between the Quraysh and the Emigrants have been cut. It is difficult to discern to which group ("we") Ibn al-Zibaʿrā attributes the victory: it may be the Quraysh and their allies, understanding then that the Qurashī individuals mentioned among the enemy no longer can claim, in Ibn al-Zibaʿrā's opinion, allegiance to this tribe. Having forsaken their part of the duties and responsibilities towards their kin, their kin is no longer bound to uphold their part.

### *Ibn al-Zibaʿrā on the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627)*

A final poem attributed to Ibn al-Zibaʿrā on the series of conflicts between the Quraysh and the followers of Muḥammad is related to the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627), when an expedition of the Quraysh and their allies set out to take the town of Medina but failed because of the trench dug out around the town.<sup>917</sup> Ibn al-Zibaʿrā's poem reads:<sup>918</sup>

[Z19 *kāmil*]

1. حَيِّى الدِّيَارِ مَحَا مَعَارِفَ رَسْمِهَا - طُولُ الْبَلَى وَتَرَاوُحِ الْأَحْقَابِ
2. فَكَأَنَّمَا كَتَبَ الْيَهُودُ رُسُومَهَا - إِلَّا الْكَنِيفَ وَمَعْقِدَ الْأَطْنَابِ
3. قَفْرًا كَأَنَّكَ لَمْ تَكُنْ تَلْهُو بِهَا - فِي نِعْمَةٍ بِأَوَانِسِ أَتْرَابِ
4. فَاتْرُكْ تَذَكُّرَ مَا مَضَى مِنْ عَيْشَةٍ - وَمَحَلَّةِ خَلْقِ الْمَقَامِ يَبَابِ
5. وَادْكُرْ بَلَاءَ مَعَاشِرٍ وَاشْكُرْهُمْ - سَارُوا بِأَجْمَعِهِمْ مِنَ الْأَنْصَابِ

<sup>916</sup> The tone resembles that of HbT01, in which Ḥassān remains unmoved by the tears of the opponent and wishes to increase their grief.

<sup>917</sup> See 3. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri.

<sup>918</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shiʿr Ibn al-Zibaʿrā*, 29–30 nr. 1; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Zibaʿrā', 341–2, 348 nr. 1; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:257–58; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 471–72.

6. أَنْصَابِ مَكَّةَ عَامِدِينَ لِيَثْرِبِ - فِي ذِي غَيَاطِلَ جَحْفَلِ جَبْجَابِ
7. يَدْعُ الْحُرُونَ مَنَاهَجًا مَعْلُومَةً - فِي كُلِّ نَشْرِ ظَاهِرٍ وَشِعَابِ
8. فِيهَا الْجِيَادُ شَوَازِبَ مَجْنُوبَةً - قُبُ الْبُطُونِ لَوَاحِقِ الْأَقْرَابِ
9. مِنْ كُلِّ سَلْهَبَةٍ وَأَجْرَدٍ سَلْهَبِ - كَالسَّيْدِ بَادَرَ غَفْلَةَ الرُّقَابِ
10. جَيْشُ عُيَيْنَةَ قَاصِدٌ بِلَوَائِهِ - فِيهِ وَصَخْرٌ قَائِدُ الْأَحْزَابِ
11. قَرْمَانَ كَالْبَدْرَيْنِ أَصْبَحَ فِيهِمَا - غَيْثُ الْفُقَيْرِ وَمَعْقِلُ الْهُرَابِ
12. حَتَّى إِذَا وَرَدُوا الْمَدِينَةَ وَارْتَدَوْا - لِلْمَوْتِ كُلِّ مُجَرَّبٍ قَضَابِ
13. شَهْرًا وَعَشْرًا قَاهِرِينَ مُحَمَّدًا - وَصِحَابَهُ فِي الْحَرْبِ خَيْرِ صِحَابِ
14. نَادَوْا بِرِحْلَتِهِمْ صَبِيحَةَ قُلْتُمْ - كِدْنَا نَكُونُ بِهَا مَعَ الْحَيَّابِ
15. لَوْلَا الْخَنَادِقُ غَادَرُوا مِنْ جَمْعِهِمْ - قَتَلَى لَطِيْرٍ سُعْبٍ وَذَنَابِ

Trans. AG:

1. Salute the dwellings whose vestiges long decay and time's changes have effaced
2. 'T is as though their remains were the writings of Jews except the zarebas and (marks of) tentpegs
3. A desert as though you did not find diversion in it happily with young girls of one age
4. But speak no more of a life that has passed and a place become ruined and deserted,
5. And gratefully remember the gallantry of all who marched from the sacred stones<sup>919</sup>
6. The stones of Mecca, making for Yathrib, with a loud-throated mighty force;
7. Leaving the high ground well used paths in every conspicuous height and pass;
8. The fine lean steeds led beside them thin in belly, lean of flank
9. Foaled from long-bodied mares and stallions, like a wolf who attacks careless watchmen
10. 'Uyayna marched with the banner of the army; Şakhr led the confederates;<sup>920</sup>
11. Two chiefs like the moon in its splendour, the help of the poor, the refuge of the fugitive
12. Until when they came to Medina and girt themselves for death their sharp swords drawn
13. For forty days they had the best of Muḥammad though his companions in war were the best
14. They called for withdrawal the morning you said 'We are almost done for'.
15. But for the trench they would have left them corpses for hungry birds and wolves.

<sup>919</sup> MC: "And gratefully remember the trials of ...".

<sup>920</sup> 'Uyayna: 'Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn b. Ḥudhayfa al-Fazārī, a leader of the Ghaṭafān group at the Battle of al-Khandaq. Şakhr: Abū Sufyān Şakhr b. Ḥarb, leader of the Quraysh.

*Al-Aḥzāb*: confederates. See Q 33, *Sūrat al-Aḥzāb*, which is considered as referring to the events surrounding the Battle of al-Khandaq and to the confederation of groups that set out to attack Muḥammad and his followers; F.M. Denny, 'Community and Society in the Qur'an', in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, ed. Jane D. McAuliffe, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2001), 380; G.R. Hawting, 'Parties and Factions', *EQ*, 4:24-27.

Once again, in this composition Ibn al-Zibaʿrā follows the conventions of the pre-Islamic ode, opening with topical amatory lines expressing sorrow over a now deserted camping place (vv.1-3). The traces left are like the writing of the Jews: unintelligible drawings in the sand, signs of a vanished people (v.2).<sup>921</sup> Similarly conventional is the transition verse to the next section (v.4): an unnamed individual—or perhaps the poet himself—is urged to abandon these memories of what once was and has irreversibly come to an end, and to focus on the present instead (v.5).

The poet then moves on to these present events: an army has set forth against Yathrib (vv.5-6), so large that it has left the previously rocky, impassable places as open and broad roads (v.7). Its place of origin are the “sacred stones” (*anṣāb*) of Mecca (vv.5-6). These might be the idols or altars of the Kaʿba,<sup>922</sup> but the term was frequently used for the stones that demarcated the sacred area (*anṣāb al-ḥaram*).<sup>923</sup> In either case, such a reference to the distinguished position of his hometown Mecca is prominent in the discursive strand on authority in Ibn al-Zibaʿrā’s corpus (Z11, Z13, Z14, Z21).

Ibn al-Zibaʿrā mentions two leaders of the army: ʿUyayna b. Ḥiṣn and Ṣakhr b. Ḥarb, better known as Abū Sufyān (v.10). Abū Sufyān belonged to the Qurashī clan of the ʿAbd Shams. The mention of ʿUyayna is noteworthy because he did not belong to Ibn al-Zibaʿrā’s tribe but to the powerful and numerous tribe of the Fazāra, a group from the Ghaṭafān, whose pasture grounds lay relatively close to Medina in the central Arabian area of Najd. Together with groups from other tribes, the Fazāra had joined the Quraysh in the fight against Muḥammad and his followers in the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627).<sup>924</sup> Although it was a matter of pride for a tribe not to submit to anyone and not to need other groups to defend themselves,<sup>925</sup> Ibn al-Zibaʿrā is not ashamed to mention this alliance between the Quraysh and the Fazāra. Nonetheless, he puts his kinsman Abū Sufyān, as “head of the confederates” (*qāʿid al-aḥzāb*; v.10), above ʿUyayna, for he presents Abū Sufyān as the chief of the whole army, consisting of Qurashī and non-Qurashī troops, including the Fazārī men led by ʿUyayna.

<sup>921</sup> On the recurrent topic of writing in the *aṭlāl* section as a symbol and trace of vanished people of the past: Müller, *Ich bin Labīd*, 178–80 n. 92.

<sup>922</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*, 33; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 134. See the use of the substantive pl. *aṣnām* in Q 5: 3, 90, where it is understood as “stone altars”.

<sup>923</sup> Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka*, 1994, 2:258–61.

<sup>924</sup> W. Montgomery Watt, ‘Fazāra’, *EL2*, 2:873.

<sup>925</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

The two leaders are praised as pre-Islamic heroes: handsome, ready to help those in need (v.11), and prepared to fight the enemy (v.12). In v.6 the poet had spoken of “Yathrib” (see also Z16 v.5), now he speaks of Medina (v.12). The change of names from Yathrib to Medina, as short for *Madīnat al-Nabī*, “the town of the prophet”, is dated after the Emigration, but it is uncertain when the latter name replaced the former completely and definitively, and they may have been used side by side for some time. Here, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā could also be using *madīna* in the general sense of “town, city”.<sup>926</sup> According to the poet, his group withdrew after an extended siege. Whether “a month and ten days” is a specific time indication or used here in the sense of “a long period” is unclear (v.13).<sup>927</sup>

After the boastful description of the army and its leaders, the final verses of the poem come as a surprise. Instead of victory chants, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā describes the retreat of his group (vv.13-15). Nevertheless, he attempts to minimise the failure: it was not the strength and determination of the enemy that had forced his people to withdraw, for the enemy had been about to give up (v.14) and was saved only by the trenches dug around the town (v.15).

The description of the opponents as “the best companions” in war of Muḥammad (v.13) stands out against the rest of the poem and against earlier poems by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā on the wars of Badr and Uḥud. Here, subduing Muḥammad seems to have been the aim of the attack; implicitly Muḥammad is presented as—one of—the leaders of the enemy group. In contrast, in previous poems on the conflict with Muḥammad and his followers, only once does Ibn al-Ziba‘rā possibly refer to Muḥammad (Z16 v.14). Regarding this shift in Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s representation of authority we could formulate the following hypotheses. (a) Perhaps by now, some years after the Emigration, Muḥammad’s role as an ideological and military leader was more obvious to his opponents than before. (b) Perhaps Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s relative silence on him in the past had been an attempt at downplaying Muḥammad’s importance and at limiting his influence. Finally, (c) this verse could be the result of a later insertion or alteration.<sup>928</sup>

<sup>926</sup> This general use of *madīna* is attested in the Qur’ān (Q 7: 123; 12: 30, all Meccan chapters); al-Madīna is used as the proper name for the town in the Medinan chapter Q 9: 101, among others.

<sup>927</sup> In Muslim sources, the siege of Medina is said to have lasted one month and some days; a lack of food for men and animals forced the assailants to abandon their attempt at taking the town by force. Al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:564ff.

<sup>928</sup> According to ‘Arafat, the poem as a whole is a later forgery, as is the response by Ḥassān b. Thābit to it; see the discussion below, HbT04.



The latter hypothesis might explain the praise directed at Muḥammad's companions in that same v.13. Such positive characterisations of the enemy are not uncommon in pre-Islamic poetry,<sup>929</sup> but then they are usually preceded or followed by—even bigger—praise directed at the own group. That is not the case here. Al-Jubūrī assumes an early dating for the verse but suspects that the words of praise are a later emendation of the text so as to eliminate a negative portrayal of Muḥammad's companions; as a possible original reading he proposes *sharru ṣiḥābi*, “the worst companions”.<sup>930</sup> Nevertheless, even then the verse continues to be rather stiff and inelegant.

To this poem by Ibn al-Zibā'ra on al-Khandaq Ḥassān b. Thābit is said to have replied:<sup>931</sup>

[HbT04 kāmīl]

1. هَلْ رَسُمٌ دَارِسَةِ الْمَقَامِ يَبَابٍ - مُتَكَلِّمٌ لِمُسَائِلِ بَجَوَابٍ
2. قَفَّرَ عَفَا رِهِمُ السَّحَابِ رُسُومُهُ - وَهُبُوبٌ كُلُّ مُطَلَّةٍ مَرْبَابٍ
3. وَلَقَدْ رَأَيْتُ بِهَا الْحُلُولَ يَزِينُهُمْ - بِيضُ الْوُجُوهِ ثَوَاقِبِ الْأَحْسَابِ
4. فَدَعِ الدِّيَارَ وَذَكَرْ كُلَّ خَرِيدَةٍ - بَيْضَاءِ آنَسَةِ الْحَدِيثِ كَعَابِ
5. وَأَشْكُ الْهُمُومَ إِلَى الْإِلَهِ وَمَا تَرَى - مِنْ مَعْشَرٍ مُتَالِبِينَ غِضَابِ
6. أَمْوًا بَغَزَوْهُمْ الرَّسُولَ وَالنَّبِيَّ - أَهْلَ الْقُرَى وَبَوَادِي الْأَعْرَابِ
7. جَيْشٌ عُيِينَتْهُ وَأَيْنُ حَرْبٍ فِيهِمْ - مُتَحَمِّطِينَ بِحَلْبَةِ الْأَحْرَابِ
8. حَتَّى إِذَا وَرَدُوا الْمَدِينَةَ وَارْتَجَوْا - قَتَلَ النَّبِيَّ وَمَعَنَمَ الْأَسْلَابِ
9. وَعَدَوْا عَلَيْنَا فَادْرِينِ بِأَيْدِهِمْ - زُدُّوا بِغَيْظِهِمْ عَلَى الْأَعْقَابِ
10. بِهُبُوبٍ مُعْصِفَةٍ تُفَرِّقُ جَمْعَهُمْ - وَجُنُودَ رَبِّكَ سَيِّدِ الْأَرْبَابِ
11. فَكَفَى الْإِلَهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ قِتَالَهُمْ - وَأَتَابَهُمْ فِي الْأَجْرِ خَيْرَ ثَوَابِ
12. مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا قَنَطُوا فَفَرَّجَ عَنْهُمْ - تَنْزِيلُ نَصْرِ مَلِيكِنَا الْوَهَّابِ
13. وَأَقْرَعَ عَيْنَ مُحَمَّدٍ وَصِحَابِهِ - وَأَذَلَّ كُلَّ مُكْذَبٍ مُرْتَابِ

<sup>929</sup> The convention of equity, see Z17.

<sup>930</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Zibā'ra*, 30.

<sup>931</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:80–81 nr. 14; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 119–21 nr. 25; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:258–59; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 472–73.

14. مُسْتَشْعِرٌ لِلْكَفْرِ دُونَ تِيَابِهِ – وَالْكَفْرِ لَيْسَ بِطَاهِرٍ الْأَنْوَابِ
15. عَلِقَ الشَّقَاءُ بِقَلْبِهِ فَأَرَانَهُ – فِي الْكَفْرِ آخِرُ هَذِهِ الْأَحْقَابِ

Trans. AG:

1. Can the vanished traces of a deserted place answer one who addresses it?
2. A desert where clouds of rain have effaced its traces and the constant blowing of every high wind?<sup>932</sup>
3. Yet I have seen their dwellings adorned by shining faces, heirs of a glorious past<sup>933</sup>
4. But leave the dwellings, the talk of lovely maidens with soft breasts, sweet in converse
5. And complain to God of cares and what you see – an angry people who wronged the messenger<sup>934</sup>
6. Who marched with their company against him and collected townsmen and desert dwellers,<sup>935</sup>
7. The army of ‘Uyayna and Ibn Ḥarb mingled with the horsemen of the confederates<sup>936</sup>
8. Until they came to Medina and hoped to slay the prophet’s men and plunder them,
9. And attacked us in their strength. They were put to flight in their fury
10. By a tempest which dispersed their company and armies of thy Lord the Lord of lords
11. God averted battle from the believers and gave them the best of rewards<sup>937</sup>
12. When they had abandoned hope, our bounteous Kind sent down his aid
13. Gave ease to Muḥammad and his companions and humiliated every lying doubter
14. Hard-hearted, suspicious, doubtful, not men of pure life, unbelievers<sup>938</sup>
15. May misery cling to their hearts, for in unbelief they persisted to the very end.<sup>939</sup>

As in Ibn al-Ziba’rā’s poem (Z19), the opening of Ḥassān’s reply is conventional (vv.1-4). What follows is a description of the enemy army, composed by groups from different towns and from the desert (vv.5-6) to attack “the messenger” (*al-rasūl*, v.6). In a verse similar to Z19 v.10, Ḥassān mentions the same enemy leaders as Ibn al-Ziba’rā, namely the Fazārī ‘Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn and the Qurashī Abū Sufyān (v.7). Similarly, v.8 closely resembles Z19 v.12, although both poets obviously present a different outcome: according to Ḥassān, the hostile army came to overpower “the prophet” (*al-nabī*) and his men (vv.8-9), but they received divine assistance (vv.9-10) when a strong wind dispersed the enemy. Contrary to his poem HbT03 on Uḥud, it is not the power of Ḥassān’s group that forces the opponents to retreat, but God’s intervention.

<sup>932</sup> This verse is missing in Ḥasanayn’s edition.

<sup>933</sup> Two characterisations of women. The white faces might also be an indication of faces now without kohl because of the crying.

<sup>934</sup> MC: “a people gathered wrathfully”. The messenger is mentioned in v.7.

<sup>935</sup> MC: “They directed their course of attack against the messenger”.

<sup>936</sup> ‘Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī and Abū Sufyān, *kunya* of Ṣakhr b. Ḥarb b. Umayya b. ‘Abd Shams.

<sup>937</sup> Almost identical to Q 33: 25.

<sup>938</sup> MC: “conscious of the unbelief without clothes – unbelief is not a clean garment”.

<sup>939</sup> MC: “and may the last of these days cover his heart in unbelief”.

In the final verses Ḥassān contrasts his group with the opponent: the latter are liars (v.13) and naked unbelievers (v.14) who persist in their error (v.15). His group, on the other hand, are the “believers” (*mu’minūn*, v.11), Muḥammad and his “companions”, and they will be rewarded for their faithfulness. In spite of the retreat, Ibn al-Ziba’rā had spoken of his people in boastful words; Ḥassān, however, portrays his group as having “despaired” (v.12)—even Muḥammad had to be comforted (v.13)—and helpless against the powerful and wrathful enemy (vv.9,12), only to be saved by God’s intervention. Interestingly, in Ḥassān’s poem there is no allusion to noble lineage: the two groups that face each other are distinguished not by tribal allegiance but by their adherence or not to Muḥammad and God.

According to W. ‘Arafat, editor of Ḥassān b. Thābit’s *dīwān*, the poems Z19 and HbT04 are later forgeries by one and the same poet, and not a very skilled one, in his opinion. According to the editor, these poems and others were included in later times in the *sīra* material to embellish and dramatise the accounts of the early Muslim community.<sup>940</sup> Regarding Z19 and HbT04, ‘Arafat points to their exact same length and to the recurrence of themes and topics in both of them in a very similar manner (see Z19 v.10 and HbT04 v.7).<sup>941</sup> This is a common feature in such pairs of poems, in which one poet responds to the poetical challenge of another, but according to ‘Arafat in this case “they are not in any way arguments advanced by one and refuted by the other”. Rather, they are “merely the same material available to one person who is trying to present it from both points of view”.<sup>942</sup>

In addition, ‘Arafat argues that the description of the battle of al-Khandaq fits almost too perfectly the way it is described in Muslim sources, again indicating, in his eyes, that the forger put the material he had at hand in verse form.<sup>943</sup> This argument by ‘Arafat is problematic, as it assumes the pre-existence of the *sīra* material upon which the poems would have been based. If the close resemblance between poetry and *sīra* material causes ‘Arafat to be suspicious of the poems, the conclusion could also be the other way around: the details in the *sīra* accounts could have been taken from the poems transmitted. It seems that this argument is a dead-end; if the poems do not fit the accounts of the battle their authenticity would be questioned too. Leaving out of the

---

<sup>940</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:28–31; ‘Arafat, ‘The Forger’s Art’.

<sup>941</sup> ‘Arafat, ‘The Forger’s Art’.

<sup>942</sup> ‘Arafat, 481–82.

<sup>943</sup> ‘Arafat, 477–78, 482.

discussion Ḥassān's poem, for I have not studied his corpus in detail, in the case of Z19 we can see that at least it fits Ibn al-Ziba'rā's corpus in terms of its themes, topics, and structure, as well as in terms of its portrayal of Ibn al-Ziba'rā's group and the opponent. I see thus no obvious reason to exclude it from Ibn al-Ziba'rā's corpus.

*Ibn al-Ziba'rā in defence of his kinsmen against the attack of an outsider*

Besides his poems on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers, Ibn al-Ziba'rā would compose a harsh poem following a conflict among the Quraysh caused by Muḥammad's preaching and the Emigration. While the wars, although a threat to his tribe, were also an opportunity to boast of the noble lineage and the might of the Quraysh, in this case it would prove more difficult, for it was a conflict between Qurashī clans.

According to Ibn Hishām, in the year 6/628 a settlement was reached between the Quraysh from Mecca on the one hand and Muḥammad and his followers on the other. It was known as the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya, and in it they agreed, among other things, that those Qurashī individuals and Qurashī slaves who had joined Muḥammad in Medina without the consent of their tribe or of their masters were bound to return to Mecca.<sup>944</sup>

It is said that, before the treaty of al-Ḥudaybiyya, a certain Abū Baṣīr 'Utba b. Usayd b. Jāriya, a *ḥalīf* of the Qurashī clan of the Banū Zuhra who had previously been imprisoned in Mecca for his sympathies for Muḥammad, had fled to Medina. Following the treaty, Muḥammad sent him back, but Abū Baṣīr managed to escape by killing one of the two men sent by the Quraysh to escort him, a man from the clan of the Banū 'Āmir b. Lu'ayy. When this information reached Suhayl b. 'Amr, from the same clan as the victim, he reclined his back against the Ka'ba and swore that he would stay there until blood-wit had been paid.<sup>945</sup>

<sup>944</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:323ff.; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:624–25; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 507–9.

<sup>945</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:324; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:628; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 2:639–40. Reclining one's back against a structure (*asnada zahrahu ilā ...*) is a recurrent formula in the context of oaths and promises; cf. Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 8:197. Lecker mentions an account in which a man swears that he will sit in the sun until he has been done right; M. Lecker, *People, Tribes, and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muḥammad* (Ashgate, 2005), 33–34. Seeking publicity must have been a common way to seek attention for and approval of one's vow—and perhaps help in executing it too.

Mawhab b. Rabāḥ al-Ash‘arī,<sup>946</sup> a *ḥalīf* of the Banū Zuhra just like the killer Abū Baṣīr, composed a poem attacking Suhayl b. ‘Amr, a poem to which Ibn al-Ziba‘rā would react with some harsh verses, as we will see below. Mawhab’s poem reads:<sup>947</sup>

[*Moī wāfir*]

1. أَنَانِي عَن سُهَيْلٍ ذَرُّهُ قَوْلٍ - فَأَيْقُظَنِي وَمَا بِي مِنْ رُقَادٍ
2. فَإِنْ تَكُنِ الْعِتَابَ تُرِيدُ مِنِّي - فَعَاتِبْنِي فَمَا بَكَ مِنْ بَعَادِي
3. أَتَوَعِدُنِي وَعَبْدٌ مَنَافٍ حَوْلِي - بِمَخْزُومٍ أَلْهَمَّا مَنْ تُعَادِي
4. فَإِنْ تَعْمُزُ قَنَاتِي لَا تَجِدْنِي - ضَعِيفَ الْعُودِ فِي الْكُرْبِ الشَّدَادِ
5. أَسَامِي الْأَكْرَمِينَ أَبَا بَقْوَمِي - إِذَا وَطِئَ الضَّعِيفُ بِهِمْ أُرَادِي
6. هُمْ مَنَعُوا الظُّوَاهِرَ غَيْرَ شَكٍّ - إِلَى حَيْثُ الْبَوَاطِنُ فَالْعَوَادِي
7. بِكُلِّ طِمْرَةٍ وَبِكُلِّ نَهْدٍ - سَوَاهِمَ قَدْ طُوِينَ مِنَ الطَّرَادِ
8. لَهُمْ بِالْخَيْفِ قَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَعَدًّا - رَوَاقُ الْمَجْدِ رُفِعَ بِالْجَمَادِ

Trans. AG (except for v.3):

1. A brief word from Suhayl reached me and woke me from my sleep<sup>948</sup>
2. If you wish to reproach me then reproach me, for you are not far from me<sup>949</sup>
3. Do you threaten me with evil, while ‘Abd Manāf is around me against Makhzūm? Woe to you who threaten me<sup>950</sup>
4. If you put me to the test you will not find me a weak support in grave circumstances<sup>951</sup>
5. I can rival in birth the best of my people. When the weak are ill-treated I protect them<sup>952</sup>
6. They defend the heights of Mecca without doubt as far as the valleys and the wadi sides
7. With every blood mare and fiery horse grown thin from long fighting<sup>953</sup>
8. Ma‘add know they have in al-Khayf a pavilion of glory exalted high.<sup>954</sup>

<sup>946</sup> Ibn Sa‘d, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 1:72; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 6:186–87. See a poem of Ḥassān b. Thābit against Mawhab, Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:413–14 nr. 233. Or: Mawhab b. Riyāḥ, Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:324–25; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:628.

<sup>947</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:324–25; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:628 vv.1-2, 4-5; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 508.

<sup>948</sup> MC: “although I wasn’t asleep”.

<sup>949</sup> MC: “From my side you won’t hear reproof”.

<sup>950</sup> Trans. AG: “Would you threaten me when ‘Abd Manāf is round me with Makhzūm? Alas, whom are you attacking?”.

<sup>951</sup> Lit. “if you test my spear”; “you will not find me weak of wood”.

<sup>952</sup> Variant: *yusāmi l-akramīna bi-‘izzi qawmin / humu l-ra’su l-muqaddamu fi l-‘ibādi*, “they can rival in birth the nobles of a people / they are the foremost leader among humankind”.

<sup>953</sup> Or: “with all [the] swift mares and all [the] strong horses”; cf. Bauer’s analysis of the use of *kull* in ancient Arabic poetry, Bauer, ‘The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry’, 709–12.

The opening of the poem (“some words ... reached me”, v.1) might allude to Suhayl's demand of blood vengeance—or perhaps to a lost poem against the Banū Zuhra. In v.2 the poet presents himself as the victim of a vile attack and unfounded blame. To this he adds an implicit threat, for he is certain that he will be backed by others (v.3). We are told that Mawhab composed these lines in defence of the Zuhra, but there is no allusion to them as the larger group to which he is attached. Instead of praising the Zuhra, Mawhab points to the ‘Abd Manāf as his defenders in times of need. Perhaps this is a reference to the attitude of the Qurashī leader Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb, from the clan of the ‘Abd Shams, a subgroup of the ‘Abd Manāf. We are told that at Suhayl's demand for blood money Abu Sufyān stated: “By God, this is a sheer folly. It will not be paid”.<sup>955</sup>

Guillaume translates *bi-Makhzūm* in v.3 as “with Makhzūm”. In light of the relations between the *Ahlāf* and the *Muṭayyabūn*, I have chosen to translate it as “against Makhzūm”: the two clans mentioned in the verse did not belong to the same faction and, for what we may distil from the accounts, the clans of both factions found themselves on opposed sides: the ‘Abd Manāf, whose chief Abū Sufyān rejected the claim for blood vengeance of the ‘Āmir b. Lu’ayy, and the Zuhra, whose *ḥalīf* was the killer, both belonged to the *Muṭayyabūn* (later the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*). The Makhzūm, on the other hand, were part of the *Ahlāf*.<sup>956</sup> Although the ‘Āmir b. Lu’ayy, the clan of the victim, did not belong to either faction, they seem to have been closer to the *Ahlāf*.<sup>957</sup> Mawhab knows himself and his group backed by the ‘Abd Manāf and their allies against the Makhzūm.

After boasting of his determination and noble lineage (vv.4-5), in the final verses Mawhab seems to speak of the Banū Zuhra, although in a rather vague manner and without mentioning any of their leaders by name (vv.6-8). All in all, Mawhab's poem contains more words of praise on himself than of vilification of the opponent. He reproves Suhayl and his people and implicitly presents them as weak (v.3), but this is nothing compared with the harsh response by Ibn al-Ziba'ra.<sup>958</sup>

<sup>954</sup> Al-Khayf: a place near al-Minā. On Ma'add: see footnote 707.

<sup>955</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:324. Trans. Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 508.

<sup>956</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>957</sup> The fact that the Sahmi Ibn al-Ziba'ra would defend Suhayl in a poem in response to Mawhab substantiates this (see below).

<sup>958</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'ra*, 33 nr. 6; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'ra', 349 nr. 4; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:325; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 508. Compare it with Ibn al-Ziba'ra's reaction to someone mocking him when the Sahm had delivered him up to the Quṣayy: he did not allow an outsider to attack his group.

[Z20 *wāfir*]

1. وَأَمْسَى مَوْهَبٌ كَحِمَارٍ سُوءٍ – أَجَارَ بِنْدَةَ فِيهَا يُنَادِي .1  
 2. فَإِنَّ الْعَبْدَ مِثْلَكَ لَا يُنَاوِي – سُهَيْلًا ضَلَّ سَعْيِكَ مَنْ تَعَادِي .2  
 3. فَأَقْصِرْ يَا بَنَ قَتِينَ السُّوءِ عَنْهُ – وَعَدَّ عَنِ الْمَقَالَةِ فِي الْبِلَادِ .3  
 4. وَلَا تَذْكَرْ عِتَابَ أَبِي يَزِيدٍ – فَهَيْهَاتَ الْبُحُورُ مِنَ الثَّمَادِ .4

Trans. AG:

1. Mawhab has become like a poor donkey braying in a village as he passes through it
2. A man like you cannot attack Suhayl – vain is your effort. Whom are you attacking?<sup>959</sup>
3. Shut up, you son of a blacksmith, and stop talking nonsense in the land.<sup>960</sup>
4. Don't mention the blame of Abū Yazid. There's a great difference between oceans and puddles.<sup>961</sup>

The language and images of the poem do not leave much to the imagination as to Mawhab's low position. At the time, the occupation of craftsmen was considered low; the weavers, tanners, blacksmiths, etc. usually were Jews or slaves from outside of Arabia. To be called a craftsman, then, was a gross insult (v.3).<sup>962</sup> Ibn al-Ziba'ra thus targets the foundations of the honour of the individual and the group: the inherited noble lineage (*nasab*) paired with great deeds and virtues (*ḥasab*). A lowlife himself, Mawhab should desist from attacking a noble man like Suhayl.

Why did Ibn al-Ziba'ra feel the need to compose a poem against Mawhab? The most plausible explanation seems to be that Ibn al-Ziba'ra did not want a non-Qurashī to attack a fellow Qurashī. The alliances and conflicts between the Qurashī factions of the *Ahlāf* and the *Muṭayyabūn* (the later *Ḥilfal-Fuḍūl*) may have played a role too, the same tensions that had led Ibn al-Ziba'ra to compose his invective against the Qusayy (Z02) and that can be perceived in his discourse on allegiance and authority especially in his poems that predate the emergence of Islam.

Turning the focus from this seemingly purely intratribal conflict back to Muḥammad, in the *Maghāzi* of al-Wāqidi the following is added to the account. According to Abū Sufyān, if blood-wit was to be paid for the man killed by Abū Baṣīr, it was upon the Banū Zuhra, because they had sent

<sup>959</sup> MC: "A slave like you...".

<sup>960</sup> MC: "So refrain, you evil son of a blacksmith, from him".

<sup>961</sup> Abū Yazid: the *kunya* of Suhayl b. 'Amr; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 3:177.

<sup>962</sup> Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs*, 117–18.

the two men to bring Abū Baṣīr back, and also because “the killer is from among them”.<sup>963</sup> The Zuhra refused to pay, for, as one of their leaders said: “We did not kill him [the ‘Āmirī], nor did we order his killing. A man who disagrees with our customs (*mukhālif li-dīnā*)<sup>964</sup> and who follows Muḥammad (*muttabi‘ Muḥammad*) killed him”. Those who once had been their ally, the Zuhra, now rejected Abū Baṣīr as one of theirs. This way, they also rejected any claims that could derive from the so-called passive solidarity, which determined that the clan of the victim could kill any member of the Zuhra as the clan of the offender or demand blood money from them in retaliation.<sup>965</sup> According to the Zuhra, however, if anyone was responsible it was Muḥammad; only if the whole of Quraysh contributed to the blood money they would pay their share.<sup>966</sup> This last condition may have been an attempt to spread responsibilities and to involve the whole tribe in the matter, falling in the category of policies of appeasement. In the end, it is said that blood-wit was not paid until the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad, although the compiler of the *Maghāzī* does not mention the individual or group who paid it.<sup>967</sup>

### *Ibn al-Zibarā and the conquest of Mecca (8/630)*

Among the compositions by Ibn al-Zibarā stands out the short poem directed towards the Qurashī ‘Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa b. Abī Ṭalḥa, from the Banū ‘Abd al-Dār. In the *Sīra* edited by Ibn Hishām, this poem is dated shortly after the battle of al-Khandaq (5/627) and is presented as a reaction of the poet to ‘Uthmān’s conversion, who reportedly went to Medina together with two fellow Qurashīs, ‘Amr b. al-‘Āṣ al-Sahmī and Khālid b. al-Walid al-Makhzūmī, where the three of them converted to Islam.<sup>968</sup> I will argue, however, that it is more plausible to place this poem in the context of the later conquest of Mecca (8/630). Before discussing the variant accounts of this conquest and the place of the poem in the event, I will briefly analyse the poem itself.

<sup>963</sup> I have not found this addition in any other source. Al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:628.

<sup>964</sup> On the meaning of *dīn* in pre-Islamic times as “habits, customs”, see footnote 226.

<sup>965</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>966</sup> al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:628.

<sup>967</sup> al-Wāqidī, 2:627–28.

<sup>968</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:278; al-Wāqidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:661. See also al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 251; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 275.



Ibn al-Ziba‘rā addressed the following verses to his kinsman ‘Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa, recalling past ties that now apparently had been broken.<sup>969</sup>

[Z21 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَنشُدْ عُثْمَانَ بْنَ طَلْحَةَ حِلْفَنَا – وَمَلَقَى نِعَالِ الْقَوْمِ عِنْدَ الْمُقَبَّلِ .1  
 2. وَمَا عَقَدَ الآبَاءُ مِنْ كُلِّ حَلْفَةٍ – وَمَا خَالِدٌ مِنْ مِثْلِهَا بِمُحَلَّلٍ .2  
 3. أَمَفْتَا حَ بَيْتِ غَيْرِ بَيْتِكَ تَبَنَعِي – وَمَا يُبْتَعَى مِنْ مَجْدِ بَيْتِ مُؤْتَلٍ .3  
 4. فَلَا تَأْمَنَنَّ خَالِدًا بَعْدَ هَذِهِ – وَعُثْمَانَ جَاءَ بِالدُّهَيْمِ الْمُعْضَلِ .4

Trans. AG:

1. I adjure ‘Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa by our oath of friendship and by the casting of the sandals at the stone of kissing<sup>970</sup>
2. And by every alliance our fathers made, Khālid not being exempt from such<sup>971</sup>
3. Do you want the key of a house other than yours, and what can be more desirable than the glory of an ancient house?<sup>972</sup>
4. Trust not Khālid and ‘Uthmān after this; they have brought a great disaster.<sup>973</sup>

Ibn al-Ziba‘rā exhorts ‘Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa to remember and be faithful to the oath of his people (v.1-2), but he does not specify the contents of this oath, assuming that ‘Uthmān and Khālid b. al-Walid al-Makhzūmī (vv.1-2), as well as the larger audience addressed in v.4, would know what he was referring to. It is plausible to assume that Ibn al-Ziba‘rā is speaking of the alliance of different Qurashī in the *Ahlāf* faction, to which Ibn al-Ziba‘rā as well as ‘Uthmān and Khālid belonged. Ibn Ḥabīb, who indeed includes this poem in his explanation of the *Ahlāf* and *Muṭayyabūn* factions, mentions that the former, after they had pledged allegiance to each other at the Ka‘ba, “mixed

<sup>969</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 44 nr. 18; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 355 nr. 16; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 51, 275; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:278; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 484–85. The version in the *Munammaq* differs from the other versions, and omits the last verse.

<sup>970</sup> The Black Stone, located at the eastern corner of the Ka‘ba and considered sacred already before Islam.

<sup>971</sup> Khālid b. al-Walid b. al-Mughīra, from the Makhzūm.

<sup>972</sup> The verb *yubtaghā* is in 3<sup>rd</sup> p. sg. passive voice. The second hemistich presents some variant readings: “But, what do you want from the longstanding glory of a house?” (*wa-mā tabtaghī min bayti majdin mu‘aththalin*), with the verb in 2<sup>nd</sup> p. sg. active voice; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 3:272. “But without it [the key] the whole of the thing [the house?] is not closed” (*wa-mā dūnahā min sā‘iri al-amri muqfali*); Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 51. “But the door you wish for is closed to the affair” (*fa-bābu alladhī tabghī min al-amri muqfalu*); Ibn Ḥabīb, 275.

<sup>973</sup> MC: “he has brought a great disaster”.

their shoes" (*khalatū ni'ālihim*) in the courtyard of the Ka'ba—apparently as a symbol of the pledge of protection and solidarity (see v.1).<sup>974</sup>

ʿUthmān apparently has turned his back on these ties: in v.3 Ibn al-Ziba'rā reproves ʿUthmān and portrays him as someone who seeks glory among a strange group, giving up the ancient and venerable glory of his own people. Implicitly the poet calls him a traitor, for he has rejected the pledge of his forefathers. His actions will not only have a negative repercussion on himself (v.3) but will also affect his people, whom Ibn al-Ziba'rā warns against ʿUthmān and Khālid, likewise untrustworthy (v.4).

In this poem we see again the importance of the institutions of his hometown Mecca for Ibn al-Ziba'rā's discourse on allegiance and authority. By joining a different group ʿUthmān (and Khālid) have jeopardised the unity and therefore the prominence of their kin. For this reason the poet not only reproves them but also warns others against them. The warning in the first place must be for the *Ahlāf* faction, to which the clans of all three men belong, but the warning is probably meant in a broader sense for the rest of the Quraysh, for, as I will argue, the poem can be put in the context of the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad and his followers, a situation that affected all the groups and clans of the Quraysh who had opposed him.

As I have mentioned, Ibn al-Ziba'rā's poem against ʿUthmān and Khālid can be best understood if we read it in the context not of the moment of their conversion and adherence to Muḥammad but of the later conquest of Mecca, in which the two men participated. In the following paragraphs I will offer first a brief summary of the conquest following the account of Ibn Hishām's *Sira*, followed by the variant versions of the conquest in other sources. As we will see, the poem may offer some clues in favour of one of these variants, shedding light on the roles played by the Qurashis Khālid and ʿUthmān in the events.

In Ibn Hishām's account, we are told that Khālid b. al-Walid al-Makhzūmī was one of the military leaders of the Muslim army at the time of the conquest of Mecca, and that he led part of

<sup>974</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 50–52. Goldziher suggests that taking off a shoe (or another piece of garment) was in general a symbolic act related to the dissolution of a pact or oath. He points to the ancient Hebrew legal custom of taking off a shoe as a symbol of transferring possessions (Ruth 4: 7). Goldziher, *Abhandlungen Zur Arabischen Philologie*, 1:47. Cf. Theodoor Willem Juynboll, *Over Het Historische Verband Tusschen de Mohammedaansche Bruidsgave En Het Rechtskarakter van Het Oud-Arabische Huwelijk* (Leiden: Brill, 1894), 34.

the army into the city. Muḥammad had ordered the Muslims not to fight unless they encountered resistance. The seizure was relatively peaceful, but a short skirmish, with several casualties, took place between a Qurashī group and the men under Khālid's command, who put the opponents to flight and entered the town.<sup>975</sup> Once the entrance had been secured, Muḥammad summoned 'Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa, from the Banū 'Abd al-Dār and at the time the key-keeper of the Ka'ba, to hand him the key of the Ka'ba. Muḥammad received the key, had the door opened for him, and prayed inside. It is not said whether 'Uthmān gave the key willingly or not.<sup>976</sup> Afterwards, the Emigrant 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib—the later caliph and cousin of Muḥammad—, from the Banū 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, asked Muḥammad to be put in charge of the Ka'ba and the institution of watering the pilgrims (*siqāya*). Muḥammad refused and gave the key back to 'Uthmān, granting this right to him and his descendants forever.<sup>977</sup>

This account in the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām contains the details all reports seem to agree on, namely that Muḥammad went to the Ka'ba and received the key from 'Uthmān b. Ṭalḥa. It does not offer details, however, on the issues on which other sources disagree, namely whether 'Uthmān gave the key willingly and what happened with the key afterwards. I therefore do not count Ibn Hishām's report as one variant but as the draft to which the following three variant accounts exist:<sup>978</sup>

(1) According to the first variant, upon the conquest of Mecca, 'Uthmān—already a Muslim—was ordered to bring the key and proceeded to willingly open the door of the Ka'ba for Muḥammad,<sup>979</sup> who prayed there together with 'Uthmān and the freedmen Bilāl and Usāma b. Zayd. Afterwards, 'Uthmān was granted the right of key-keeper, a right that would remain within his family.<sup>980</sup>

---

<sup>975</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:407–8.

<sup>976</sup> Ibn Hishām, 2:411–12.

<sup>977</sup> Ibn Hishām, 2:412. 'Uthmān's descendants, the Banū Shayba, are in charge of the Ka'ba until the present day; M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, 'Shayba', *EL2*, 9:389–91.

<sup>978</sup> Some minor differences are reported regarding each variant, see for example footnote 986.

<sup>979</sup> It is not mentioned whether he had the key in his possession or not; see variant (2).

<sup>980</sup> Different traditions mention Muḥammad's first prayer in the Ka'ba together with 'Uthmān and some others, sometimes detailing the exact spot where he prayed but not the number of *rak'āt* of the prayer, since the one who interrogated Bilāl about the event forgot to inquire about it. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, 1992, 3:1034; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, 1994, 3:572; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:834–35; Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, n.d., 2:966ff.

(2) According to a second version, ‘Uthmān, already a Muslim, was ordered to go and fetch the key, at the time in possession of his mother. She refused to hand it over when he requested it, exclaiming: “I seek protection by God for you [‘Uthmān], that you will not be he that hands over the glory of his people”. Her son warned her that if she did not give the key to him someone else would come and take it, but she hid it in the waistband of her pants and said: “Which man would dare put his hand here?”. At that point the Emigrants Abū Bakr and ‘Umar came to the house— impatient because of the delay. When ‘Uthmān’s mother heard them calling out for her son and threatening to kill her, ‘Uthmān’s brother, and ‘Uthmān himself, she exclaimed: “My little son, take the key, for you taking it is better than having the Taym [the clan of Abū Bakr] and ‘Adi [the clan of ‘Umar] take it”.<sup>981</sup> ‘Uthmān proceeded to open the Ka’ba, where Muḥammad prayed together with him.<sup>982</sup> Someone from the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (perhaps ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, although he is not mentioned by name) asked for the right of keeping the key, but Muḥammad granted it instead to ‘Uthmān and his descendants.<sup>983</sup>

(3) The third and final version differs significantly from the other two. According to it, ‘Uthmān was not a Muslim at the time of the conquest. Refusing to open the Ka’ba for Muḥammad, he climbed on its rooftop and shouted that he did not consider Muḥammad a true prophet. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib managed to climb onto the roof, grabbed the key by force, and opened the door for Muḥammad, who proceeded to pray inside.<sup>984</sup> With ‘Alī as the hero in this last account, his request to be granted the right of the key is understandable.<sup>985</sup> According to al-Wāḥidī,

<sup>981</sup> Nūr al-Dīn ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad al-Ḥalabī (d. 1635), *Insān al-‘Uyūn fī Sirat al-Amīn al-Ma’mūn: al-Sīra al-Ḥalabīyya*, ed. ‘Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad al-Khalīlī, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2002), 141.

<sup>982</sup> al-Ḥalabī adds that when ‘Uthmān was close to Muḥammad he tripped and fell, letting go of the key. Muḥammad then bent and reached for it. Al-Ḥalabī, 3:141.

<sup>983</sup> al-Wāḥidī, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:833; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 8:181.

<sup>984</sup> al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīra al-Ḥalabīyya*, 2002, 3:140; Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Aḥmad al-Wāḥidī (d. 1076), *Kitāb Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, ed. Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghlūl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1990), 161–62; Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), *Ṣubḥ al-A’shā fī Ṣinā’at al-Inshā’*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1988), 269.

<sup>985</sup> According to al-Wāḥidī, ‘Alī took the key but the one who requested it was al-‘Abbās b. ‘Abd Muṭṭalib, half-brother of Muḥammad’s father, whose son ‘Abd Allāh would become the founder of the ‘Abbāsīd dynasty; al-Wāḥidī, *Kitāb Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 162. See also al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīra al-Ḥalabīyya*, 2002, 3:143. Some reports add that ‘Uthmān had to be convinced by Muḥammad to open his hand and give the key to him, since ‘Uthmān did not wish for al-‘Abbās to receive it; ‘Imād al-Dīn Ismā‘īl b. ‘Umar Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1998), 300; Muhammad b. Yūsuf Abū Ḥayyān (d. 1344), *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fī l-Tafsīr*, ed. Ṣidqī Muḥammad Jamīl, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1999), 683.

Muḥammad then received the revelation of Q 4: 58, “God commands you to deliver trusts back to their owners”, and ordered that the key be returned to ‘Uthmān. ‘Uthmān was confused: “First you came against me and hurt me, and now you are friendly?”, but when he heard about the revelation which had come down in relation to him, he converted.<sup>986</sup>

All three versions agree on the fact that, although ‘Alī or someone else from the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib asked for the right of the guardianship of the Ka‘ba, Muḥammad returned it to ‘Uthmān, granting it to him and his descendants. Perhaps Muḥammad understood the intratribal rivalries between the *Ahlāf* and *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl* and did not wish to rub the powerful clan ‘Abd al-Dār and their confederates of the *Ahlāf* faction the wrong way so shortly after the conquest of the town.

In the following table I summarise the variants on the situation at the time of the conquest:

	Ibn Hishām	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3
‘Uthmān is Muslim	?	✓	✓	✗
‘Uthmān has the key	?	?	✗	✓
‘Uthmān gives the key willingly	?	✓	✓	✗
Who asks for the key and other rights	‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib	-	A man from the Banū ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib (‘Alī?)	‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib
Who receives the key and other rights	‘Uthmān and his descendants	‘Uthmān and his descendants	‘Uthmān and his descendants	‘Uthmān and his descendants

Table 5 - ‘Uthmān and the key at the conquest of Mecca

Let us now consider the context in which Ibn Hishām places the poem by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā (Z21), namely, the conversion of ‘Uthmān before the conquest of Mecca.<sup>987</sup> As a fierce opponent of Muḥammad, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā could have composed the verses as an angry reaction to ‘Uthmān’s conversion and departure to Medina. However, the poem does not seem to fit this account. In the first place, there is no reference in it to ‘Amr b. al-‘Aṣ al-Sahmī, even though in the accounts of their conversion he is always mentioned together with Khālid b. al-Walīd and ‘Uthmān, with a

<sup>986</sup> al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīra al-Ḥalabīyya*, 2002, 3:140; al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fi Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā’*, 4:269. See Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 8:373; al-Wāḥidī, *Kitāb Asbāb al-Nuzūl*, 161–3. Al-Ḥalabī mentions yet another variant of version (3): it was Muḥammad himself who took the key from ‘Uthmān’s hand. Al-Ḥalabī, *al-Sīra al-Ḥalabīyya*, 2002, 1:257.

<sup>987</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:278; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:661. Cf. al-Zubayrī, *Nasab Quraysh*, 251; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 275.

focus on the conversion of the former two.<sup>988</sup> Since ‘Amr and Ibn al-Ziba’rā belonged to the same clan one would expect that, had Z21 been composed on this occasion, the poet would have reproved ‘Amr as well.

Secondly, the explicit mention in the poem of the “key of the house” (v.3) points to the context of the seizure of Mecca by Muḥammad and his followers. In the accounts of these events ‘Uthmān as the key-keeper of the Ka’ba plays a prominent role, contrary to the accounts of the conversion of ‘Uthmān and the other two men.

Thirdly, both Khālid and ‘Uthmān, but not ‘Amr, played a role in the opening of the Ka’ba for Muḥammad after the conquest: ‘Uthmān as the guardian of the house who opened the door for Muḥammad—voluntarily or involuntarily, and Khālid as a military commander who, in one account, is said to have guarded the door of the Ka’ba while Muḥammad prayed inside.<sup>989</sup>

It is therefore more plausible to read the poem in the context of the seizure of Mecca. These accounts all agree on Khālid’s conversion before the conquest and on the role he played in it. The parallel mention of Khālid and ‘Uthmān in Z21 suggests that their role in the events must have been comparable in the eyes of Ibn al-Ziba’rā, and thus that at the time ‘Uthmān, just like Khālid, must have sided with Muḥammad.

This assumption rules out version (3), in which, overpowering a resisting ‘Uthmān, ‘Alī is portrayed as a hero for opening the Ka’ba. In *tafsīr* (exegesis) works the opening of the Ka’ba is given as an occasion of the revelation of Q 4: 58, but this is just one of the possible occasions of revelation through which the verse is explained; in other cases it is understood as referring to the need to give a position of authority only to those worthy and capable of it.<sup>990</sup>

Having ruled out version (3), we are left with two in which ‘Uthmān, as a Muslim, co-operated voluntarily with Muḥammad. Z21 condemns this action as an act of treason by ‘Uthmān to his tribe and clan (vv.3-4). In account (2) a similar sentiment is put in the mouth of ‘Uthmān’s mother, who does not want her son to hand over the inheritance of their forefathers to others. Faced with the inevitable, however, she prefers ‘Uthmān to be the one to give the key to Muḥammad rather than having two men from a different clan come and take it.

<sup>988</sup> In his edition of the *Sīra*, Ibn Hishām only mentions ‘Uthmān in passing; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:278. This focus of Muslim scholars on Khālid and ‘Amr can be explained in light of the prominent role they would play in the history of early Islam.

<sup>989</sup> al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:835.

<sup>990</sup> See for example: al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 2002, 8:490–94 esp. 491.

As we have seen in other poems, the institutions of Mecca and the power divisions between the clans and factions of the Quraysh are recurrent themes in Ibn al-Ziba'ra's corpus (Z02, Z11, Z13, Z14). In this light, we might understand the seriousness of 'Uthmān's act of treason in the eyes of the poet (vv.1-2). In handing over the key of the Ka'ba, 'Uthmān had betrayed the inherited glory of the *Ahlāf*, a faction that, we are told, originated precisely as a result of intratribal rivalries among the Quraysh and disputes over the control of the political and cultic functions in Mecca, among them the custody of the Ka'ba.<sup>991</sup> It is this covenant, sealed at the Ka'ba and symbolised with the "mixing of shoes" (v.1), which 'Uthmān has betrayed (v.3). Giving the key to Muḥammad, the guardianship of the Ka'ba came into the hands of someone from the rival faction of the *Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl*, the successor of the *Muṭayyabūn*.<sup>992</sup> The fact that the *Ahlāf* only recovered the right thanks to Muḥammad's goodwill underscored their weakness and his authority; once an inherited right of the *Ahlāf*, a matter of honour and pride, now it was a favour received from the rival faction.

### *Ibn al-Ziba'ra's conversion*

After the Muslim conquest of Mecca Ibn al-Ziba'ra fled to Najrān to escape Muḥammad, who reportedly wanted him dead for the poems he had composed against him. Muslim sources mention several names on Muḥammad's "death list", mainly people from Mecca who had opposed him strongly and openly.<sup>993</sup> At his flight, Ibn al-Ziba'ra was accompanied by Hubayra b. Abī Wahb al-Makhzūmī, a fellow Qurashī poet and opponent of Muḥammad, and also a member of the *Ahlāf* faction.<sup>994</sup>

We are told that, while in Najrān, some words of the poet Ḥassān b. Thābit reached Ibn al-Ziba'ra. It would have been because of this poem that Ibn al-Ziba'ra decided to return to Mecca and plead forgiveness to Muḥammad, but this seems an embellishment of the account: as it stands,

---

<sup>991</sup> Watt distinguishes three groups within the Quraysh at the time of Muḥammad: the 'Abd al-Dār and the Sahn both belong to what I have labelled Group A; see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 32–33; Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, 4ff.

<sup>992</sup> Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, 52–55, 186–89; Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*, 1990, 1:103; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 1:133–35.

<sup>993</sup> al-Wāqidi and al-Ṭabarī do not include Ibn al-Ziba'ra's name in the list, but mention his flight to Najrān; al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:825–26, 847; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:60, 64. On the death list and the different versions thereof, see paragraph Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb's conversion in 3. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri.

<sup>994</sup> Later both belong to what I have labelled Group A; see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

the verses contain little that could lead a man fearing for his life to give up the safety of exile for an insecure destiny in his hometown.<sup>995</sup>

[HbT05 *kāmil*]

1. لَا تَعْدَمَنَّ رَجُلًا أَحَلَّكَ بُغْضُهُ – نَجْرَانَ فِي عَيْشٍ أَحَدًا لَيْتِمٍ  
 2. (بُلَيْتٌ فَتَأْتِكَ فِي الْحُرُوبِ فَأَلْفَيْتُ – حَمَانَةٌ جَوْفَاءَ ذَاتِ وُصُومِ)  
 3. غَضَبُ الْإِلَهِ عَلَى الزَّبَعْرِىِّ وَابْنِهِ – وَعَذَابُ سُوءِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ مُتِمِّمِ

Trans. AG (only v.1):

1. Do not be without a man, hatred of whom has made you live in Najrān in utmost misery!<sup>996</sup>
2. [You spear was tested in the wars – and it was found hollow, weak, and full of baseness]
3. [The wrath of God is against al-Ziba'rā and his son, and the everlasting punishment in this life.]<sup>997</sup>

The poem is short, but not easy. While v.1 seems a friendly appeal to Ibn al-Ziba'rā to give up his resistance and return home, the tone of vv.2-3 is rather sharp. In v.2 Ḥassān pictures Ibn al-Ziba'rā as a failure, in v.3 he threatens with God's wrath against "al-Ziba'rā and his son". At the time, Ibn al-Ziba'rā's father must have been dead, but Ḥassān sometimes speaks of "al-Ziba'rā" when the commentators assume that he means "Ibn al-Ziba'rā".<sup>998</sup> Whether he is alluding to a long-lasting wrath of God against Ibn al-Ziba'rā and his progenitor(s) or against Ibn al-Ziba'rā and his offspring is unclear, but in any case the tone is menacing. The wrath, however, is limited to this life and does not seem to include eternal damnation in the afterlife. Ḥassān does not speak of Ibn al-Ziba'rā's "unbelief" (*kufū*) or denial of the truth. Rather, the negative portrayal of Ibn al-Ziba'rā is in line with pre-Islamic invectives: he is a weak and base man.

Whether it consisted of one verse (v.1) or more,<sup>999</sup> the poem does not contain an appealing invitation to Ibn al-Ziba'rā to return to Mecca, even though tradition has used HbT05 to explain

<sup>995</sup> al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:847–48; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:64. Ibn Ishāq quotes, in the *Sīra* as edited by Ibn Hishām, the son of Ḥassān b. Thābit in saying that the poem directed at Ibn al-Ziba'rā consisted of only one verse (v.1). Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:287–88 nr. 140; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 100–101 nr. 7; 'Arafat, 'Early Critics', 455; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:418–19; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 556. Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 131; al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 17; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā', 343.

<sup>996</sup> MC: "Don't you be deprived of [or: separated from] a man whose hate ...". Tr. Farrukh: "Gib den Mann [d.h. Muhammad] nicht auf, dessen Haß dich nach Nağrān geführt, zu einem mühsamen, niedrigen Leben"; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 131.

<sup>997</sup> Trans. vv.2-3: MC.

<sup>998</sup> Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1971, 1:251–52 nr. 120; Ḥassān, *Dīwān*, 1983, 116–17 nr. 22.

<sup>999</sup> See footnote 995.



Ibn al-Ziba'rā's change of heart. To a surprised and angry Hubayra, who could not believe that Ibn al-Ziba'rā was willing to "follow" (*an tatba'ahu*) Muḥammad, Ibn al-Ziba'rā reportedly explained: "Thus it is. Why do we stay with the Banū al-Hārith b. Ka'b [in Najrān] and do I leave my relative[s] (*ibn 'ammī*), the best of people and most pious (*khayr al-nās wa-abarrihīn*), my people (*qawmī*) and my house (*dārī*)?"<sup>1000</sup> While Hubayra stayed in Najrān and "died an infidel",<sup>1001</sup> Ibn al-Ziba'rā returned to Mecca.

Several poems of Ibn al-Ziba'rā are mentioned in relation to his conversion and repentance, asking Muḥammad for forgiveness for his former opposition. The following poem is traditionally presented as the first he composed after his conversion:<sup>1002</sup>

[Z22 *khafī*]

1. يَا رَسُولَ الْمَلِيكِ إِنَّ لِسَانِي - رَاتِقٌ مَا فَتَقْتُ إِذْ أَنَا بُورٌ
2. إِذْ أَبَارِي الشَّيْطَانَ فِي سُنَنِ الْعَدَا - يِّ وَمَنْ مَالَ مَيْلَهُ مَثْبُورٌ
3. أَمَّنَ اللَّحْمُ وَالْعِظَامُ لِرَبِّي - ثُمَّ قَلْبِي الشَّهِيدُ أَنْتَ النَّذِيرُ
4. إِنِّي عَنْكَ زَاجِرٌ ثُمَّ حَيًّا - مِنْ لُؤْيِي وَكُلُّهُمْ مَغْرُورٌ
5. إِنَّ مَا جِئْنَا بِهِ حَقٌّ صِدْقٍ - سَاطِعٌ نُورُهُ مُضِيءٌ مُبِيرٌ
6. جِئْنَا بِالْبَيِّنِ وَالْبَرِّ وَالصِّدْقِ - وَفِي الصِّدْقِ وَالْبَيِّنِ سُورٌ
7. أَذْهَبَ اللَّهُ ضَلَّةَ الْجَهْلِ عَنَّا - وَأَتَانَا الرَّحَاءُ وَالْمَيْسُورُ

1. O messenger of the King, my tongue will amend what I destroyed when I was in a state of corruption
2. When I imitated Satan on the ways of error – whoever deviates like he deviates will be destroyed
3. Flesh and bones believe in my Lord, and my heart acknowledges: you are the warner
4. With my voice I kept myself away from you, and also a group of the Lu'ayy<sup>1003</sup> – all of them deceived.
5. You've brought us the very truth, the radiance of its light shining, illuminating
6. You've brought us certainty, righteousness, and truth – in truth and certainty there is happiness
7. God made us go away from the error of ignorance, and apleness and easiness came to us.

<sup>1000</sup> al-Wāqidi, *al-Maghāzī*, 1989, 2:848.

<sup>1001</sup> al-Wāqidi, 2:849; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:420.

<sup>1002</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 35–36 nr. 10; Minganti, 'Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba'rā', 344, 350–51 nr. 6; 7; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra*, 1955, 2:419–20 vv.1-4; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 556 vv.1-4.

<sup>1003</sup> A descendant of Fihri, ancestor of the Quraysh.

This single poem in Edition al-Jubūrī (7 verses) is divided in two poems in Edition Minganti, one of four verses (vv.1,2,3,4 of Edition al-Jubūrī), and one of six (vv.1,2,3,5,6,7 of Edition al-Jubūrī, with a slight variation in v.2: *ujārī* for *ubārī*, i.e. “I competed with Satan and did like him”).

For a composition by a recent convert the vocabulary of the poem is surprisingly in tone with Muslim doctrine. This could be an argument to reject the composition as a later forgery, but before we decide to do so we should consider the poem as a whole and in combination with the other two compositions attributed to Ibn al-Zibaʿrā after his conversion. An experienced poet like him could be expected to be able to improvise such a short poem using the terms and topics of the other party.<sup>1004</sup>

Regarding the vocabulary of the poem, the use of *rabb* (lord, the Lord) in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry has already been discussed (Z15). The substantive *rasūl* (v.1) was used in pre-Islamic times in the general sense of “messenger”, without the specifically religious connotation that it would receive from early times onward in Muslim times as a common title used for Muḥammad, the “Messenger of God” (*rasūl Allāh*; HbT02, HbT03 HbT04).<sup>1005</sup> *Malik* (King) appears only once in the Qurʾān as a reference to God (Q 54: 55), without the definitive article; other terms from the same root are more frequent in the Qurʾān in reference to God and his attributes. According to Farrukh, *al-Malik* as a divine name was relatively common in pre-Islamic times, but disappeared almost completely in later Muslim times.<sup>1006</sup> This is a strong argument in favour of the early date of the poem. Two other roots that appear in the poem (*n-dh-r*, *ʿ-m-n*, v.3) were also in use in pre-Islamic poetry, although they would receive a different connotation with the emergence of Islam.<sup>1007</sup>

Ibn al-Zibaʿrā states that he once deviated from the right course (v.2), wrecking destruction (v.1), but that he now believes in his “Lord” (v.3). With his “tongue” (v.1) and his “voice” (v.4), that is,

<sup>1004</sup> At pre-Islamic poetical contests or emulations (*naqāʿid*, *munāfarāt*, *muʿāraḍāt*, *mufaḵkarāt*), for example, the poets involved had to show their ability to improvise and respond to the composition of the opponent, using the same metre and rhyme but often also similar topics and themes. The purpose was to surpass the other composition in beauty and sophistication, in the sharpness of the images, or in the ability of finding new and obscure rhyming words at the end of every verse.

<sup>1005</sup> Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 35, 37–41.

<sup>1006</sup> Farrukh, 18–19, 26–28. See its usage in the poem by the Helper poet Kaʿb b. Mālik in response to Ḍirār, poem KM02 v.9 and the comments in 3. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri.

<sup>1007</sup> The active participle *muʿmin* (applied once to God as the “granter of security”, Q 59: 23) is considered to be the earliest title for the “believers” as the followers of Muḥammad. Farrukh, 37.

with his poetry, Ibn al-Ziba'ra kept not only himself away from Muḥammad but also others from “the Lu'ayy”.

This is followed by a sort of a confession of faith: Ibn al-Ziba'ra recognises Muḥammad as a bringer of “truth”, “light” (v.5), and “certainty” (v.6). The poet does not speak of God's favour or eternal bliss, but of “happiness” or “joy” (v.6).<sup>1008</sup> In v.4 it is the poet who led the people astray; here it is God who leads away from error of ignorance into the truth, causing the people to have “ampleness” and “easiness” (v.7). Both terms speak of an absence of restraints or bonds. Like the “happiness” in v.6, nothing in the poem indicates that we should understand these two terms as applying to anything else than to material possessions in this present life.

God and Satan play opposed roles in the poem: Satan leads into error, God leads away from it. We might draw a parallel between this and the roles of Ibn al-Ziba'ra and Muḥammad: the poet had led his people into deceit while the prophet led people into truth. In light of this opposed parallelism between his role and that of Muḥammad, it seems plausible that Ibn al-Ziba'ra, when speaking of the group (“us”) to which Muḥammad brought the truth (vv.5-6), was thinking of his tribe. This is more plausible than to assume that he thought of Muḥammad's prophetic mission in the broader sense, as a prophet to the Aws and Khazraj, to the other tribes of his environment, and even in the universal sense of the “seal of the prophets” to humankind. At the same time, and in spite of this idea of allegiance still based on kinship, the picture he draws of Muḥammad as a leader is different from that of a tribal chief. The latter was expected to lead in times of war and hardship, to take wise decisions for the benefit of the group and for the preservation of the inherited nobility and traditions. Here, Muḥammad is portrayed as a bringer of something new, different from the inherited *sunna* of the forefathers and the error of the past.

At the same time, due to the parallel portrayal of Muḥammad and himself, the poem is the self-conscious manifestation of a poet aware of his position and role among his people as a leader and spokesperson. He has led his people astray and it seems that only now that he has recognised Muḥammad they will too—as if they needed his permission.

---

<sup>1008</sup> See Q 76: 11, where “happiness” is promised to the believers on the Day of Judgement, and Q 3: 134; 84: 9. In Q 7:95 and 84: 13 it is used in a warning against those who turn away from God.

In another poem after his conversion Ibn al-Ziba'rā expresses his repentance over his errors in the past:<sup>1009</sup>

[Z23 *kāmil*]

- سَرَّتِ الْهُمُومُ بِمَنْزِلِ السَّهْمِ - إِذْ كُنَّ بَيْنَ الْجِلْدِ وَالْعَظْمِ .1  
 نَدَمًا عَلَى مَا كَانَ مِنْ زَلَلٍ - إِذْ كُنْتُ فِي فِتْنٍ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ .2  
 حَيْرَانَ يَعْمُهُ فِي ضَلَالَتِهِ - مُسْتَوْرِدًا لِشَرَائِعِ الظُّلْمِ .3  
 عَمَّهُ يُزَيِّنُهُ بَنُو جُمَحٍ - وَتَوَازَرَتْ فِيهِ بَنُو سَهْمٍ .4  
 فَالْيَوْمَ آمَنَ بَعْدَ قَسْوَتِهِ - عَظْمِي وَآمَنَ بَعْدَهُ لَحْمِي .5  
 بِمُحَمَّدٍ وَبِمَا يَجِيءُ بِهِ - مِنْ سُنَّةِ الْبُرْهَانِ وَالْحَكْمِ .6

1. Among the Banū Sahn worries went around at night between skin and bones
2. From repentance over the faults because I was in all sorts of offences
3. A man walking blindly in his error, quenching his thirst from the wells of injustice
4. A confused man which the Banū Jumaḥ adorned and in which the Banū Sahn assisted one another
5. But today – after its stubbornness – my bone believes, as does my flesh
6. [They believe] in Muḥammad and in what he brings of the way of proof and wisdom.

The poem opens with the topical image of a sleepless night because of worries and sorrows (v.1). The confession of guilt that follows (v.2) is less conventional: not the grief over a deceased or the departure of a beloved, but remorse or fear lies at the root of the insomnia. The poet is aware that he has committed “all sorts of offences” (v.2). In the Qurʾān, *ithm* and its derivatives are used primarily in the sense of “sin”, offences against God (Q 4: 48; 6: 120), but it also bears the more general connotation of “offence that deserves punishment, crime, fault”.<sup>1010</sup>

Ibn al-Ziba'rā describes himself as having wandered in error (v.3). In this he was not alone, since the Banū Jumaḥ as well as his own clan, the Sahn, strengthened each other in it (v.4): group pressure, so to speak, led him into error. The clans of the Sahn and the Jumaḥ both belonged to the faction of the *Aḥlāf*—whether Ibn al-Ziba'rā mentions them because of this relation between them is unknown.<sup>1011</sup> In any case, besides this allusion to the other clan, the focus of the poem is on the poet himself. Contrary to Z22, Ibn al-Ziba'rā does not confess responsibility for the error and

<sup>1009</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi'r Ibn al-Ziba'rā*, 51 nr. 26; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *al-Istī'āb*, 1992, 3:903.

<sup>1010</sup> A. Kevin Reinhart, 'Ethics and the Qurʾān', *EQ*, 2:55-79.

<sup>1011</sup> Later both belong to what I have labelled Group A; see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

confusion of others. Similarly, what he now proclaims as his belief and recognition of the position of Muḥammad is his own (vv.5-6), and whether the Jumah and the Sahm continue in error is a question left unanswered.

In later Muslim doctrine, *sunna* (v.6) would receive the connotation of “ways, example” of Muḥammad and the Companions. In pre-Islamic Arabia it referred to the example and standard of the forefathers that was to be imitated. Here, it is used in the more general sense of “ways, manners” (see HbT01). As in Z22, allegiance is still defined by kinship, but authority is different from that of pre-Islamic times: like in Z22, Muḥammad is not portrayed so much as a man capable of defending and preserving the material and immaterial goods of his kin, but as the bringer and announcer of something new to which his people have to listen.

Yet a third and longer poem has been attributed to Ibn al-Ziba’rā after his conversion:<sup>1012</sup>

[Z24 *kāmil*]

1. مَنَعَ الرَّقَادَ بَلَابِلٌ وَهُمُومٌ - وَاللَّيْلُ مُعْتَلِجُ الرِّوَاقِ بَهِيمٌ
2. مِمَّا أَتَانِي أَنْ أَحْمَدَ لَأَمْنِي - فِيهِ فَيْتٌ كَأَنِّي مَحْمُومٌ
3. يَا خَيْرَ مَنْ حَمَلَتْ عَلَيَّ أَوْصَالِهَا - عَيْرَانَهُ سُرْحُ الْيَدَيْنِ غَشُومٌ
4. إِنِّي لَمُعْتَذِرٌ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الَّذِي - أَسَدَيْتُ إِذْ أَنَا فِي الضَّلَالِ أَهِيمٌ
5. أَيَّامَ تَأْمُرُنِي بِأَعْوَى خُطَّةٍ - سَهْمٌ وَتَأْمُرُنِي بِهَا مَحْرُومٌ
6. وَأَمْدٌ أَسْبَابَ الرَّدَى وَيَقُودُنِي - أَمْرُ الْعَوَاةِ وَأَمْرُهُمْ مَشُومٌ
7. فَالْيَوْمَ آمَنَ بِالنَّبِيِّ مُحَمَّدٍ - قَلْبِي وَمُخْطِئِي هَذِهِ مَحْرُومٌ
8. مَضَّتِ الْعَدَاوَةُ وَأَنْقَضَتْ أَسْبَابُهَا - وَدَعَتْ أَوَاصِرُ بَيْنَنَا وَحُلُومٌ
9. فَاعْفُرْ فِدَى لَكَ وَالِدَايَ كِلَاهُمَا - زَلَّيِي، فَإِنَّكَ رَاحِمٌ مَرْحُومٌ
10. وَعَلَيْكَ مِنْ عِلْمِ الْمَلِيكِ عَلَامَةٌ - نُورٌ أَعْرُ وَخَاتَمٌ مَخْتُومٌ
11. أَعْطَاكَ بَعْدَ مَحَبَّةٍ بُرْهَانُهُ - شَرَفًا وَبُرْهَانُ الْإِلَهِ عَظِيمٌ

<sup>1012</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba’rā*, 45–46 nr. 19; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba’rā’, 344–45, 356 nr. 17; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 2:419–20; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Isti‘āb*, 1992, 3:903–4; Ibn al-Athīr, *Usd al-Ghāba*, 1994, 3:239; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 1:77; Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad*, 556–57.

- . 12 وَلَقَدْ شَهِدْتُ بِأَنَّ دِينَكَ صَادِقٌ - حَقٌّ وَأَنَّكَ فِي الْعِبَادِ جَسِيمٌ
- . 13 وَاللَّهُ يَشْهَدُ أَنَّ أَحْمَدَ مُصْطَفَى - مُسْتَقْبَلٌ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ كَرِيمٌ
- . 14 قَرَمٌ عَلَا بُنْيَانُهُ مِنْ هَاشِمٍ - فَرَعٌ تَمَكَّنَ فِي الذَّرَا وَأُرُومِ

Trans. AG:

1. Cares and anxiety withheld sleep from me and night pitch black was agitated above me
2. Because I heard that Aḥmad had blamed me; I passed the night like a man with fever
3. O best of those, a swift light-footed straight running camel ever carried,
4. Forgive me for what I said and did when I went wandering in error,<sup>1013</sup>
5. What time Sahm gave me most misleading orders,<sup>1014</sup> and Makhzūm did the same,
6. When I supported evil courses led by those who erred, whose way was ill-omened
7. Today my heart believes in the prophet Muḥammad. He who misses this is a loser<sup>1015</sup>
8. Enmity has passed, its ties are ended; kinship and reason call us together<sup>1016</sup>
9. Forgive me my mistakes – my parents be thy ransom, for you are compassionate having found mercy
10. Upon you is the sign of God's knowledge,<sup>1017</sup> a light most bright and a seal imprinted
11. After His love He gave you His proof to honour you and God's proof is great
12. I testify that your religion is true<sup>1018</sup> and that you are great among men
13. And God testifies that Aḥmad is the chosen, the noble one, cynosure of the righteous<sup>1019</sup>
14. A prince whose lofty house is from Hāshim, strong from top to bottom.<sup>1020</sup>

Like Z23, this poem opens with the topical image of sleepless nights (vv.1-2). Again, the reason for these worries and sorrow is not the passing of a close relative or the departure of a beloved.

Instead, the poet is disquieted because of the reproof of Muḥammad (*Aḥmad*, v.2).<sup>1021</sup>

Ibn al-Ziba'rā asks forgiveness for his individual error in the past (v.4). However, he blames it on the collective (vv.5-6): his own clan and the clan of the Makhzūm were the cause of his confusion. In Z22 he had claimed responsibility for leading others into error; now he states that he has been led astray by others. He said something similar in Z23, but there he blamed, besides the Sahm, the Jumaḥ. The Qurashī clans of the Jumaḥ and the Makhzūm appear frequently in his pre-Islamic poems, generally in a positive light: not only were they close relatives of the Sahm, but they

<sup>1013</sup> MC: "when I was confused by error".

<sup>1014</sup> MC: "ordered me to error".

<sup>1015</sup> MC: "whoever declares these things as wrong is very wrong".

<sup>1016</sup> MC: "ties of kinship and forbearance".

<sup>1017</sup> MC: "the King's knowledge". On the use of *al-Malik* as a common pre-Islamic name for God, see Z22.

<sup>1018</sup> MC: "truthful and true".

<sup>1019</sup> MC: "first among the righteous, noble".

<sup>1020</sup> MC: "A chief whose house rises high up among the Hāshim – its branches well rooted from the upper parts till the roots".

<sup>1021</sup> On the use of this name or title, see Z16 v.14.

also belonged to the same faction within the Quraysh, the *Ahlāf*. Now, he blames the two groups in two different poems for their negative influence on him.

The composition then reaches a turning point: no longer does the poet walk in error, for he now believes in “the prophet” (*al-nabī*) Muḥammad (v.7).<sup>1022</sup> In his words of praise directed at Muḥammad in v.3 Ibn al-Zibaʿrā did not characterise him primarily in pious terms, and here the focus still lies on the “ties of kinship” that have put an end to the enmity of the past (v.8) and have driven him to believe in Muḥammad. He emphasises this bond between him and Muḥammad with the promise: “My parents be thy ransom!” (v.9), followed by a renewed appeal for pardon and a confession. While the past error was collective and perhaps forced upon the poet (vv.4-5), the present turning around to the right path seems to be an individual action (vv.7,12). As in Z23, it is unclear whether the rest of the Sahn and Makhzūm persevere in their error.

V.10 is a rather elaborate confession of faith: the poet speaks of Muḥammad as a man distinguished by God with knowledge, light, and a seal.<sup>1023</sup> In addition, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā says that Muḥammad received from God “love” and irrefutable “proof” (v.11; see Z22), and the poet “has testified” (v.12) of this truth he now recognises. Both the seal and the act of bearing witness would become important notions in Muslim doctrine, but it is difficult to determine whether Ibn al-Zibaʿrā uses them here in that specific meaning or more in general as statements on Muḥammad’s distinction, perceived and recognised by Ibn al-Zibaʿrā.<sup>1024</sup> Similarly, in v.12 it is unclear whether *dīn* is to be understood as “religion”, as Guillaume translates it, or more generally as “habits, customs”.

What is clear, however, is that Ibn al-Zibaʿrā now recognises Muḥammad’s claim to leadership and prominence.<sup>1025</sup> At the same time, the poet’s understanding of his group is still based on kinship. Although dated after his conversion, in this poem and in Z22 and Z23 there is no sign of an understanding of a nascent *umma* as a group of followers of Muḥammad that transcends

---

<sup>1022</sup> On the use of *nabī*, see HbT01.

<sup>1023</sup> Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 27.

<sup>1024</sup> The seal reminds us of the title in Muslim doctrine of Muḥammad as “seal of the prophets” (Q 33: 40). The *shahāda* would become the term for the Muslim profession of faith, but it is then commonly introduced by the imperfect 1<sup>st</sup> p. sg. *ashhadu ʿan* (“I testify that ...”). In the Qurʾān the verb *shahida* is sometimes used in its judicial connotation: God “bears witness” of the wickedness of men (Q 9: 107), and unbelievers (men and *jinn*) bear proof in themselves of their unbelief and will “bear witness” of their guilt (Q 6: 130). In other instances it is used for the believers of the past and the present who “bear witness” of the truth of God’s revelation (Q 46: 10, see v.13 in the poem). In that sense it could be understood here.

<sup>1025</sup> As Webb indicates, the early understanding of the group of followers around Muḥammad was that of a “community where guidance was expressed through the person of the Prophet”; Webb, ‘The Hajj before Muhammad’, 12.

tribal boundaries. Instead, Ibn al-Zibā'rā pledges allegiance to Muḥammad precisely because of the ties of kinship that bind them together.<sup>1026</sup> Indeed, when in v.13 God is said to “bear witness” of *Aḥmad*<sup>1027</sup> being “the chosen one” (*muṣṭafān*), the high rank which Ibn al-Zibā'rā attributes to Muḥammad is the more earthly, pre-Islamic notion of a noble lineage. This is confirmed by vv.13-14, where he openly speaks of Muḥammad's lineage as a distinguishing feature: his “house” raises high among his clan, the Hāshim. Like in Z22 and Z23, in this poem there is nothing that indicates that Ibn al-Zibā'rā understood Muḥammad's prophethood in a universal sense. Instead, he seems to struggle to position Muḥammad as a man of authority in the social structure that he knew, the one of the tribe. In characterising him as a noble, righteous, and great man, it is only fitting that he would occupy a position of leadership among the Quraysh. Not only are the discursive strands on allegiance and authority well-entangled in the three poems, but we also see that Ibn al-Zibā'rā's understanding of these is still in line with the discourse found in his poems pre-dating his conversion as well as in those of contemporaries like ʿUṣayb b. al-Khaṭṭāb.

The last thing we hear about Ibn al-Zibā'rā is an anecdote that reinforces this image of a poet for whom Islam has not completely erased the tribal divisions and conflicts of the past. During the caliphate of ʿUmar (r. 13-23/634-644), Ibn al-Zibā'rā is said to have travelled to Medina together with his fellow Qurashī poet ʿUṣayb b. al-Khaṭṭāb to recite scolding poems against against Ḥassān b. Thābit. While the caliph ʿUmar considered invectives against fellow Muslims a threat against the unity of the *umma*,<sup>1028</sup> Ibn al-Zibā'rā, ʿUṣayb, and Ḥassān were not so easily convinced of the need to leave behind tribal rivalries and conflicts. The ties of faith that should have united them did not prevent them from insulting one another as the rivalries of old had not been forgotten.

An interesting final note on Ibn al-Zibā'rā is the fact that his poetry remained popular in Muslim times, especially his invectives, and not, as we might expect, the poems that he composed after his conversion in praise of Muḥammad. In spite of the ideal of the *umma* as the community superseding tribal ties, in later Muslim times the ties of blood would continue to play an important

<sup>1026</sup> See this argument put in the mouth of Abū Bakr (AB01 v.5) to underscore the error of the Quraysh who reject Muḥammad: their close bonds have not made them reconsider it.

<sup>1027</sup> On the use of *Aḥmad* as a title for Muḥammad, see Z16 v.14.

<sup>1028</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 4:108; Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 27. See paragraph 5.1.1 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and his close relatives in 5. Al-Ḥuṭay'a: the poet is said to have run into trouble in times of ʿUmar because of his invectives.



role in conflicts and sectarianism.<sup>1029</sup> Thus, for example, the Umayyad caliph Yazīd b. Mu‘āwiya (r. 60-64/680-683), from the Quraysh, is said to have quoted a verse by Ibn al-Ziba‘rā on Uḥud (Z<sub>17</sub> v.11, “Oh, that my leaders at Badr had witnessed the distress of al-Khazraj when the spears came down”)<sup>1030</sup> when he heard the news that his troops had submitted the rebellious town of Medina.<sup>1031</sup>

## 4.2 Recapitulation

Through the analysis of Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s poetical corpus we are able to assemble a picture of the man and his environment. Living in the sedentary context of Mecca around the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, the *murūwwa* values and virtues of the pre-Islamic times still pervaded his poems. The ties of kinship were to be upheld and defended against attacks and insults from the outside, and loyalty to one’s kin was a central feature for the noble and free men. In this way Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s poems resemble those of his contemporary and kinsman Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb.

Nevertheless, and contrary to Ḍirār, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā displays much interest in the intratribal struggles over power within the Quraysh. The town of Mecca, with its sanctuary and the rituals and institutions associated to it, play a prominent role in his poems and the accounts of his life. In addition, and more than in Ḍirār’s corpus, in Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s we learn of the Quraysh as a sedentary group concerned with trade and material profit.

### 4.2.1 Allegiance in the poems of Ibn al-Ziba‘rā

Information on Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s direct family and household cannot be distilled from his poetical discourse and is scarce in other sources. Similarly rare is the information on his circumstances of life: as in Ḍirār’s poems, we find no references to his economic situation or that of his close relatives. The focus of his poems dated before the emergence of Islam lies on the relations between individuals and clans within the Quraysh.

The intratribal struggles that broke out in Mecca at the death of the Qurashī ancestor Quṣayy evinced the persistence of tribal allegiance in a sedentary context. Even though the roots of

---

<sup>1029</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r al-Mukhaḍramīn*, 39,255.

<sup>1030</sup> al-Jubūrī, *Shi‘r Ibn al-Ziba‘rā*, 40–43 nr. 15 v.11; Minganti, ‘Il Poeta Ibn az-Ziba‘rā’, 339-40,353-4 nr. 13 v.11.

<sup>1031</sup> Fück, ‘Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’; Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, *al-Iqd al-Farid*, 5:344.

the conflicts were often power struggles or commercial interests, the struggles were mainly between different Qurashī clans or alliances of clans. In Ibn al-Ziba'rā's poems, these tensions are a prominent theme: when he praises people from the Quraysh, he either praises his clan or their close relatives and allies through the *Ahlāf* faction (Z05, Z09, Z10, Z11),<sup>1032</sup> especially the clan of the Makhzūm (Z06, Z07). Even in the single poem from his corpus which speaks of a tribal war in which the Quraysh as a whole were involved, he singles out the clans from the *Ahlāf* faction (Z08).

Once Ibn al-Ziba'rā ruthlessly insulted a group from the Quraysh (Z02). The poem had the potential of compromising the tribal unity of the Quraysh: as a poet and spokesperson of his group Ibn al-Ziba'rā's attack could be understood as more than an individual expression of anger. However, it seems that both the poet and his group agreed that Ibn al-Ziba'rā's individual safety was subordinate to tribal peace and solidarity. The Sahm did not back him, and left to fend for himself Ibn al-Ziba'rā tried to amend his error. He retracted his insult (Z03), and accepted and even defended his clan's decision to reach a compromise with the group he had wronged, not allowing an outsider to ridicule his clan (Z04). The attitude of Ibn al-Ziba'rā's clan and their opponents in this conflict illustrates a society in transformation: the tribal values were kept alive, but in the sedentary context of Mecca preference was given to appeasement policies, a "fiction of kinship", in words of Eric R. Wolf, instead of blood feuds and large-scale conflicts.<sup>1033</sup>

Ibn al-Ziba'rā's invective against the Quṣayy seems to have stood on its own. Even though at times his compositions in praise of the Sahm or their allies contain an implicit criticism of the faction of the *Muṭayyabūn* (Z05), no other poems in his corpus can compare to this poetical insult.

With the start of Muḥammad's prophetic career, Ibn al-Ziba'rā is said to have become one of his fiercest opponents among the Quraysh.

One of the first poems attributed to Ibn al-Ziba'rā after the Emigration of Muḥammad and his followers out of Mecca is found in a pair with a poem attributed to Abū Bakr in the aftermath of the raid at Thaniyyat al-Murra (AB01, Z14). It was a clash between two groups of the Quraysh, but both poets seem to consider the ties of blood as broken, at least for the moment: Ibn al-Ziba'rā threatens with blood revenge if the enemy dares attack his group again, and states that they have

<sup>1032</sup> See also nr. 8; 13 in Edition al-Jubūrī, not included in the present analysis: in these poems Ibn al-Ziba'rā praises a man from the Banū Sahm.

<sup>1033</sup> Wolf, 'The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam', 335.

abandoned the honour of his kin. In later confrontations between the followers of Muḥammad and his opponents from among the Quraysh, the problem of two Qurashī groups fighting each other was less prominent than at the raid of Thaniyyat al-Murra. At the clashes that followed both sides would be aided by individuals and groups from other tribes, turning what until then could be considered an intratribal conflict of the Quraysh into a conflict involving different tribes and individuals.

In his poems against Muḥammad and his followers, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā does not address the Emigrants or the Helpers as “Muslims”: the conflict is presented as a tribal conflict between the groups of Mecca and those of Yathrib, not as a conflict caused by ideology or religion. Ibn al-Zibaʿrā does not shy away from boasting of the death of Qurashi individuals slain by their own kinsmen (Z16). In the past he had insulted a Qurashī group only to back down when he was faced with the danger of causing an intratribal conflict (Z02). The present opponents, on the other hand, do not fear this danger and instead have left their tribe and town to associate themselves with strange groups in a different city. In Ibn al-Zibaʿrā’s eyes, therefore, it is legitimate to insult and attack with his sword and his tongue the group around Muḥammad: they have cut the ties that bound them to the Quraysh. In the poems on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers, once Ibn al-Zibaʿrā singles out from among his group the men from his own clan and individuals closely related to it (Z15), but in general he omits references to specific individuals or groups, perhaps to emphasise the unity of the Quraysh against the common enemy (Z16, Z17). This is quite different from his predilection for his clan and the faction of the *Ahlāf* in his pre-Islamic poems.

At the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad and his followers, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā fled the town to escape Muḥammad’s wrath. Reportedly, he justified to his companion in exile his return to Mecca as a return to his kin and his town, not as an acceptance of Muḥammad’s message. In the poems he composed afterwards, however pious in tone, it is interesting to see that Ibn al-Zibaʿrā does not seem to recognise Muḥammad’s prophetic mission to any other group than the Quraysh (Z22, Z23, Z24). In the past Ibn al-Zibaʿrā had composed poems in which he attacked the Aws and Khazraj for siding with Muḥammad (Z16, Z17), but in the poems following his conversion he omits any mention of these tribes. In addition, he points to the tribal ties as one of the reasons why Muḥammad should forgive him (Z24 v.8), and he praises the lineage of Muḥammad in rather pre-Islamic terms (Z24 vv.13-14), thus mirroring the tone of his past invectives against Muḥammad.

### 4.2.3 Authority in the poems of Ibn al-Ziba'rā

Through his compositions and the accounts in which they are embedded Ibn al-Ziba'rā appears as a man well-aware of and participating in the power-play within the Quraysh. In his corpus the discursive strands on allegiance and authority are well-entangled: authority derives from a noble lineage, nobility entails authority. I have argued that the poetical discourse not only describes reality but also shapes it. In that light the poems by Ibn al-Ziba'rā on Mecca can be understood as attempts at changing the status quo with which he was dissatisfied. Claiming a position of authority and prominence for his clan as well as for its allies and relatives through the *Ahlāf* faction, and defending their rights to the cultic and political institutions associated to the Ka'ba (Z02, Z11, and perhaps also Z06, Z07, Z08), Ibn al-Ziba'rā takes up the public role of the poet as spokesperson and defender of his kin and its allies. In Z04 the poet admits that his clan reached an agreement to avoid fighting, but still presents it as an honourable decision, not as a sign of weakness and submission to others. In Z05, Z06, Z07, and Z08 we see the interplay between the discourse on allegiance and authority: the power of a group derives from its noble lineage and vice-versa: a noble lineage entails military supremacy. Through the ties of blood ("I am a son of...", Z05) that bind him to this powerful group of the Sahm and their faction of the *Ahlāf*, Ibn al-Ziba'rā himself can claim a position of authority.

While in pre-Islamic times the focus of Ibn al-Ziba'rā's poems was on the division of power within Mecca, with the emergence of Islam his poems became more tribal in tone. Those of the Quraysh who followed someone who, in his eyes, was a silly and unqualified leader, abandoned the traditions and idols inherited from the forefathers, and neglected the honour of the Quraysh (Z13, Z14).

In Ibn al-Ziba'rā's poems on the battles of the Quraysh of Mecca against Muḥammad and his followers only on a few occasions does he allude directly to Muḥammad ("a silly one", Z14; "Aḥmad", Z16; "Muḥammad", Z19). His main concern seems to be the defence of his tribe and especially of his town and its institutions as a sacred place (Z13, Z14, Z19). At the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad and his followers, Ibn al-Ziba'rā composed a poem in which he accused the key-keeper of the Ka'ba of forsaking the inherited honour of his people (Z21). This invective in a way resembles Ibn al-Ziba'rā's poem against the Quṣayy (Z02). In both cases, Ibn al-Ziba'rā's rage was

sparked by what he saw as neglect and disrespect towards the most important institutions of his town, and both poems seem motivated by his desire that his faction within the Quraysh, the *Ahlāf*, would receive or would preserve the power over certain institutions.

Before his return from his exile in Najrān following the conquest of Mecca, he reportedly justified to his companion in exile his return to Mecca as a return to his kin and his town, not as an acceptance of Muḥammad's message. Nonetheless, in the poems he composed afterwards Ibn al-Ziba'ra once and again professed his recognition of Muḥammad as a figure of authority (Z22, Z23, Z24), a focus on Muḥammad's role and position that had been absent in Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poems until then.

In two of the poems after his conversion (Z23, Z24) Ibn al-Ziba'ra confesses his past error, but attributes it to his kin. At the same time, the professed recognition of Muḥammad's high position is presented as an individual action of Ibn al-Ziba'ra that contrasts with the collective error and deviation of the Quraysh in the past. While in Z22 he presented himself as a leader of his people and apologised for the fact that he had led his people astray, in Z24 he states that he had been led astray by his group, not the other way around. Unfortunately, we do not know the precise circumstances in which he composed these three poems, nor do we know in which order he composed them.

When he was forced to retract his invective against the Quṣayy (Z02), a single poem apparently was enough (Z03). In Z03 Ibn al-Ziba'ra extols the noble ancestry of the Quṣayy and their willingness and ability to aid those in need. In it, he does not claim responsibility for the invective (Z02) nor does he openly ask forgiveness for it. This poem, then, is less a confession of guilt and more an attempt to set right the balance between Ibn al-Ziba'ra's group and the wronged group, just like blood revenge or blood-wit were to re-establish the proper order after a killing.

The fact that we find three poems with an apology directed at Muḥammad seems to indicate that, without the backing of his clan, Ibn al-Ziba'ra had to make a great effort to regain Muḥammad's favour. Most of the Quraysh had converted and recognised Muḥammad's authority and leadership after the conquest of Mecca, and at his return from Najrān Ibn al-Ziba'ra found himself more or less in the position of a *ṣu'lūk* (outcast): pledging allegiance to Muḥammad was the only way to be readmitted into the larger group.





# Chapter 5

---

AL-ḤUṬAY'Ā



## 5. AL-ḤUṬAY'A

Al-Ḥuṭay'a (d. ca. 30 or 41/650 or 661) is remembered as a wandering poet with a "fault in his lineage" (*maghmūz al-nasab*), born out of wedlock (*zinā*).<sup>1034</sup> His real name was Jarwal b. Aws, while his nickname al-Ḥuṭay'a probably meant "ugly, contemptible", or "ugly in aspect and small in body".<sup>1035</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's mother was al-Ḍarrā', a slave woman of Aws b. Mālik, from the tribe of the 'Abs. The identity of al-Ḥuṭay'a's father is unclear: it was either his mother's master Aws or al-Afqam b. Riyāḥ b. 'Amr b. 'Awf. Al-Afqam, the brother of Aws' legitimate wife. Al-Afqam belonged to the Banū Dhuhl, a group from the tribal confederation Bakr b. Wā'il. According to the compiler of the *Aghānī*, al-Afqam was a rather ugly man. Since al-Ḥuṭay'a was not handsome either, al-Ḍarrā's claim that he was the son of al-Afqam was credible, although it may also have been an attempt of al-Ḍarrā' to avoid the anger and jealousy of Aws' wife.<sup>1036</sup>

Aws b. Mālik's tribe, the Banū 'Abs, was a Northern Arabian group that belonged to the large group of the Ghaṭafān. Their tribal region was north of Yathrib. The Dhuhl, al-Afqam's tribe, probably lived in the north-eastern part of the Arabian peninsula. When the sources refer to al-Ḥuṭay'a's lineage they call him "son of Aws b. Mālik, al-'Abs"<sup>1037</sup>—nowhere have I found that they refer to him as "son of al-Afqam" or "al-Ḥuṭay'a al-Dhuhli".<sup>1038</sup>

At the death of Aws b. Mālik, al-Ḍarrā' and al-Ḥuṭay'a were set free, and al-Ḍarrā' married a man from the Banū Jaḥsh, a group of the Banū 'Abs, with whom she had two sons.<sup>1039</sup> Her husband's

<sup>1034</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102, 105. *Maghmūz al-nasab*: "with a fault in his ascendancy". A variant reading: *maghmūr al-nasab*, "with an obscure ascendancy"; 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 2001, 18:422. See Lane, s.v. *gh-m-r*.

<sup>1035</sup> Lane, s.v. *ḥ-t-'*. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:310. Al-Ḥuṭay'a is also known by the patronymic Abū Mulayka, by the name of his daughter; Ibn Qutayba, 1:310.

<sup>1036</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:103.

<sup>1037</sup> Or fully: "son of Aws b. Mālik b. Ju'ayya b. Makhzūm b. Mālik b. Ghālib b. Quṭay'a b. 'Abs b. Baghīd b. al-Rayth b. Ghaṭafān b. Sa'd b. Qays 'Aylān b. Muḍar b. Nizār". Al-Jāhīz, *al-Hayawān*, 2003, 7:450.

<sup>1038</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:101; al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:97. This might be related to the following: according to Goldziher, in pre-Islamic times, "a child whose father remained unknown because of the mother's freedom in sexual intercourse was allotted to one or other of those who could have been the father, who was then obliged to recognise the child as his"; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:126.

<sup>1039</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102–3.

name was al-Kalb b. Kunays b. Jābir b. Qaṭan b. Nahshal, and we are told that he was born out of adultery just like al-Ḥuṭay'a.<sup>1040</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭay'a was the transmitter (*rāwī*) of the pre-Islamic poet Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā.<sup>1041</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a himself was a travelling poet. He traversed the Arabian peninsula and directed his praise and his insults against many, among them key figures of tribal and sedentary life of his time. He made a living out of it<sup>1042</sup> and was known and feared for his sharp tongue, and groups and individuals were willing to receive him and his family with hospitality and generosity in order to be praised by him or at least avoid his insults.<sup>1043</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a would have been aware of the power of poetry, of its persuasive or performative power, in terms of P. Bourdieu, or at least aware of its effects.<sup>1044</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭay'a was convinced of his poetical talent: when once he was asked who he considered the "best poet of the people" (*man ash'ar al-nās*), he put out his tongue "like the tongue of a serpent" (*ka-annahu lisān ḥayyatin*) and said: "This, if it covets" (*h ādhā idhā ṭami'a*).<sup>1045</sup> Indeed, in spite of the dark picture painted of his physical appearance and character, al-Ḥuṭay'a's poetry is appreciated by both classical and modern critics.<sup>1046</sup>

The general picture of al-Ḥuṭay'a as depicted by his contemporaries and later literary critics is not flattering. Besides his ugly appearance he is described as a greedy and avaricious man, his later conversion to Islam as weak, and his temper as vile.<sup>1047</sup> In the words of the literary critic al-Aṣma'ī (d. 213/828), al-Ḥuṭay'a was "a greedy beggar, a vile soul with many vices and very few virtues, of avaricious character and ugly appearance, a shabby aspect, questionable lineage

<sup>1040</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:104.

<sup>1041</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:143, 310.

<sup>1042</sup> He was not alone in this practice: other professional poets at the time did the same; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 35–36.

<sup>1043</sup> As did the inhabitants of Medina in Muslim times, when they heard that al-Ḥuṭay'a was approaching the town, al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:106; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 24.

<sup>1044</sup> Pierre F. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, ed. John Brookshire Thompson, trans. Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 69–70 etc.

<sup>1045</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:110; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:312. On other occasions, when asked for the best poet of the Arabs al-Ḥuṭay'a pointed to others: Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā and Abū Dawīd al-Ibādī, for example; Ṭāhā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 327; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:108.

<sup>1046</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 1:101; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 41–42; I. Goldziher and Ch. Pellat, 'al-Ḥuṭay'a', *EL*, 3:641.

<sup>1047</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:310.

(*maghmūz al-nasab*), and a corrupt religiousness”.<sup>1048</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay’a’s bad character is illustrated by the following anecdote: one day, wishing to make *hijā’* on someone, he did not run into anyone to insult. Seeing his own face reflected in a body of water, he proceeded to insult himself for his ugliness and depravation.<sup>1049</sup>

[AH01 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَبَتْ شَفَتَايَ الْيَوْمَ إِلَّا تَكَلَّمًا بِشَرٍّ – بِشَرٍّ فَمَا أَدْرِي لِمَنْ أَنَا قَائِلُهُ .1
2. أَرَى لِي وَجْهًا سَوَّهُ اللَّهُ خَلْقَهُ – فَفُجِحَ مِنْ وَجْهِهِ وَفُجِحَ حَامِلُهُ .2

1. My lips refused today [anything] but to speak evil, but I don’t know who to say it to
2. I saw [staring] at me a face that God created ugly – Abominable the face, and abominable its bearer!<sup>1050</sup>

Having long opposed Muḥammad and the message he preached, al-Ḥuṭay’a converted eventually. Nothing is known about the occasion and the reasons for his conversion, but following the death of Muḥammad al-Ḥuṭay’a was among those who rebelled against Abū Bakr and rejected his authority and leadership as caliph and successor of Muḥammad in the so-called *Ridda* wars (wars of apostasy). Al-Ḥuṭay’a was imprisoned by the caliph Abū Bakr (r. 11-13/632-634), gave up his resistance, and reconverted.<sup>1051</sup> Again, we do not know much about the reasons and the occasion of this reconversion.

According to many literary critics, al-Ḥuṭay’a was not a pious man. In his poetry, neither his opposition against Muḥammad, his conversion, his opposition during the *Ridda*, or his reconversion seem driven by religious motives.<sup>1052</sup> His conversion made no real difference in his attitude and the themes of his poems. After the emergence of Islam, on at least one occasion al-Ḥuṭay’a ran into trouble because of his invectives when al-Zibriqān b. Badr, a leader of the Banū Tamīm and prominent Muslim, complained to the caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (r. 13-23/634-644)

<sup>1048</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:105. See al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 2:406–7.

<sup>1049</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 282 nr. 69; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:105–6; Goldziher, ‘Dīwān al-Hutej’a. I’, 17. Goldziher, 17. On the idea of one’s physical appearance as a reflection of one’s character—and vice versa—, see below, the poems AH14, AH13.

<sup>1050</sup> The verse is translated by Van Gelder and Schoeler: “I see I have a face that is malformed by God’s creation: / shame on that ugly face and on its carrier!”; Abū al-‘Alā’ al-Ma’arrī (d. 1058), Schoeler, Gregor, and Geert Jan van Gelder. *The Epistle of Forgiveness: Volume Two: Hypocrites, Heretics, and Other Sinners* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 246–7.

<sup>1051</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:247–48.

<sup>1052</sup> Goldziher, ‘Dīwān al-Hutej’a. I’, 12.

about al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems against him.<sup>1053</sup> Trying to downplay the situation, the caliph asked for the professional opinion of the poet Ḥassān b. Thābit. Ḥassān's verdict was crystal-clear: "He [al-Ḥuṭay'a] has shat on him" (*salaḥa 'alayhi*).<sup>1054</sup> After a short imprisonment, al-Ḥuṭay'a was released, but not after the caliph admonished him: "Beware from making *hijā'* on people! (*iyāka wa-hijā' al-nās*)". Al-Ḥuṭay'a reportedly responded: "But then my family will starve! It is my source of income and my livelihood (*hādihā maksabī wa-mīn hu mā 'āshī*)."<sup>1055</sup> The caliph 'Umar is then said to have paid al-Ḥuṭay'a 3,000 dirham to protect "the honour of all Muslims (*a'rāḍ al-muslimīn jamī'an*)", that is, to try and stop him from reciting more invectives against the Muslims.<sup>1056</sup>

### The poems of Al-Ḥuṭay'a

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān* is the most extensive of the three poets selected for this thesis. It contains over 100 poems, some very short, others of considerable length. There are several modern editions of al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān*, among them those by I. Goldziher (1892-3) and N.A. Ṭāhā (1958).<sup>1057</sup> For his edition, Ṭāhā makes use of classical compilations by Ibn al-Sikkīt (ca. 186/802 - 244/858), al-Sukkarī (d. 275/888) and al-Sijistānī (d. between 248/862 and 255/869); Goldziher's edition is based on the compilation by al-Sukkarī.<sup>1058</sup>

To al-Ḥuṭay'a is attributed the statement: "The best poem is the year-long (*ḥawli*), refined (*muḥakkak*)".<sup>1059</sup> *Madīḥ* (panegyric) and *hijā'* (lampoon, invective) make up the largest part of al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems. According to Van Gelder, in al-Ḥuṭay'a's corpus, as well as in those of other *mukhaḍram* poets like Ḥassān b. Thābit, we find the *hijā'-qaṣīda*, a polythematic ode different from

<sup>1053</sup> One verse in particular seems to have enraged al-Zibriqān: "Never mind noble deeds! Do not go and look for them! Stay, you are one who [merely] eats and gets dressed" (*da'ī l-makarīma lā tarḥal li-bughyatiḥā / wa-q'ud fa-īmakā anta l-ṭā'imu l-kāsī*); Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 283–93 nr. 71 v.13; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. III', 497–501 nr. 20; Ḥamdu Ṭammās, ed., *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a* (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2005), 84–86. Trans. Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 25.

<sup>1054</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:120. See: Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 28; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 126; Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 25–26.

<sup>1055</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:121. Trans. Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 26. See also AH03.

<sup>1056</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:123; al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Awā'il*, 160. Van Gelder considers this report as not credible. Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 26–27.

<sup>1057</sup> I. Goldziher, ed., 'Der Dīwān des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, no. 46:1-3; 47:1-2 (1893 1892); Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*.

<sup>1058</sup> Nu'mān Muḥammad Amīn Ṭāhā, ed., *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a bi-Riwāyat wa-Sharḥ Ibn al-Sikkīt* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1987); Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*.

<sup>1059</sup> Schoeler, *The Oral and the Written*, 94.

the short *hijā'* epigrams and from the classical pre-Islamic ode, generally with an amatory opening (*nasīb*) and sometimes other elements, but in which "*hijā'* is the main theme".<sup>1060</sup>

The individuals addressed in his poems belong to many different tribes. Some individuals and groups are extensively praised, others are insulted, and on more than one occasion we find *hijā'* and *madiḥ* against one and the same person or group.

Because of the large number of poems in his *dīwān* I had to make a preliminary selection of al-Ḥuṭay'a's compositions for their translation and analysis in this thesis. I have made a selection of 35 poems based on the broad topic of the poems and the context in which they are embedded, focusing on the topics of allegiance and authority and poems related to nascent Islam. The selection is not exhaustive, but from it emerges a representation of al-Ḥuṭay'a in his environment, his understanding of himself in relation with his close relatives, his kin, those who depended on him and those upon whom he depended.

### *Themes in Al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems*

Al-Ḥuṭay'a is remembered first and foremost for his biting invectives, especially against those who did not receive him and his family as guests or who did not treat them as he wished. While he demanded hospitality and generosity from the people he encountered on his travels, al-Ḥuṭay'a reviled those who came to him asking for his assistance. "Not a guest (*dayf*) ever came to al-Ḥuṭay'a [seeking hospitality] and was not vilified in a poem".<sup>1061</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's general attitude towards his kin as reflected in his poems was not in line with the common expectations and duties of tribal society of his time. He identified himself as a man from the Banū 'Abs, the tribe of his alleged father Aws b. Mālik, but on several occasions he also attempted to be accepted among the Banū Dhuhl, al-Afqam's tribe, as one of their own. In addition, he did not refrain from insulting his closest relatives. However, in his introduction to the edition of al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān* Goldziher points out that the focus on al-Ḥuṭay'a's invectives against his closest kin may obliterate other characteristics of the poet: al-Ḥuṭay'a as a loving husband and caring father who was accompanied by his family on his travelling, who sought to provide for

---

<sup>1060</sup> Van Gelder, 'Genres in Collision', 14–15.

<sup>1061</sup> *wa-lam yakun yanzil bi-l-Ḥuṭay'a aḥadun illā hajāhu*; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 317; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:111.

them, and who was concerned about the good name of his daughter.<sup>1062</sup> The art of poetry was his source of income, and the fear his invective inspired was profitable—al-Ḥuṭay'a had to cultivate this fear among his contemporaries to be able to continue to reap its benefits and provide for his family.

Concerning the question of authority in al-Ḥuṭay'a's discourse, we can be brief: he rebels against the unwritten code of values and virtues of his time, and does not recognise the authority of his close relatives and certainly not that of larger groups. With the emergence of Islam and his conversion he would become part of a supratribal community, but we will see that in his case that did neither automatically entail his recognition of the authority of other members of the same community nor of the values and precepts related to it.

One characteristic of al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān* may strike us as odd for a man who lived around the time of nascent Islam: in spite of his extensive *oeuvre*, he does not direct any poem to Muḥammad, nor does he speak of him in a composition. It is not until the *Ridda* in times of the caliph Abū Bakr that al-Ḥuṭay'a supports the rebels in a few poems. After the *Ridda*, he again does not address any theme that in retrospect appears as crucial to the development of early Islam. However, the scarce influences and traces that Islam left in al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān* are not that odd if we consider the following: for Muḥammad's contemporaries, the importance and impact of Muḥammad was not as obvious as it would be for later generations, Muslims and non-Muslims. The fact that al-Ḥuṭay'a's poetical corpus sheds light on the circumstances of life and the outlook on life on the Arabian peninsula of his time without a full focus on Muḥammad and nascent Islam speaks to its authenticity, as well as to its importance for our understanding of Muḥammad's context and his reception by his contemporaries.

Although al-Ḥuṭay'a's poetical discourse may not reflect the high ideals of his time, mocking the values and virtues that other poets would try to uphold, a close reading of his poems and the accounts in which they are embedded sheds light on this particular individual and on his environment. His poems can serve as a mirror to the lived reality of the values and virtues expressed by contemporaries.

<sup>1062</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 37–40.

## 5.1 Al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems

### 5.1.1 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and his close relatives

To descend from a slave woman was a disgrace in the society of pre-Islamic Arabia, worsened in the case of al-Ḥuṭay'a because his father's identity was uncertain, and highlighted by the attitude of the poet himself towards his close relatives. Instead of keeping quiet about his faulty lineage or inventing a glorious past for himself, al-Ḥuṭay'a drew attention to it and preserved it for the generations to come by composing poems like the following, in which he reviled his family. In the poem al-Ḥuṭay'a exposes the licentious past of his mother al-Ḍarrā' and the questions about his origin. Possibly at some point he had pressed his mother to reveal his father's identity:<sup>1063</sup>

[AḤo2 *tawīl*]

- تَقُولُ لِي الضَّرَاءُ لَسْتَ لِوَاحِدٍ – وَلَا اِثْنَيْنِ فَانظُرْ كَيْفَ شَرِكُ اَوْلِيَاكَ . 1  
 وَاَنْتَ اِمْرُؤٌ تَبْغِي اَبًا قَدْ ضَلَلْتَهُ – هَبِلْتَ اَلْمَا تَسْتَفِقُ مِنْ ضَلَالِكَا . 2

1. Al-Ḍarrā' tells me: You are not from one or two, so find out how this sharing of those two [happened]
2. You are a man seeking for a father you have already lost, you are heedless! Have you still not recovered from your foolishness?<sup>1064</sup>

In v.1 al-Ḥuṭay'a quotes his mother in an answer to the question about his father. Perhaps al-Ḍarrā' truly did not know who the father was, perhaps she did not want to tell her son, but the second part of v.1 seems to point to a dishonourable and dissolute past of al-Ḍarrā'.<sup>1065</sup>

The words of v.2 can be put in the mouth of al-Ḍarrā' or be read as words the poet addresses to himself. In the first case his mother reproves him, in the second case al-Ḥuṭay'a rebukes himself for his foolishness and his vain desire to know his father, a father that he has lost already, for neither Aws nor al-Afqam recognised him as their son. The only option for al-Ḥuṭay'a, then, is to "recover" and move on with his life. The basic meaning of the root *ḍ-l-l* (v.2) is related to

<sup>1063</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 276 nr. 63; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 3; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2103.

<sup>1064</sup> Trans. Goldziher: "al-Ḍarrā' sagt mir: Du gehörst weder einem noch zweien an; sie zu, wie die Gemeinsamkeit beider (nämlich die Aus und des Afqam) möglich sei! / Du bist ein Narr, der vergeblich nach einem Vater forschst; wirst du denn nicht von deiner Thorheit erwachen?". Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 3. The most frequent meaning of the verb *habila* is: "to be bereaved of a son" (said of a woman). Ibn Fāris, *Maqāyīs al-Luḡha*, also glosses it as: "to be heedless, to be unmindful", and in the *Lisān al-'Arab* we read that it can also mean: "to loose one's mind (over the loss of one's son)".

<sup>1065</sup> See footnote 1036.

error, to a deviation from the right course, but may also speak of a loss of something or someone. In this case both connotations apply.

We are told that at some point during his caliphate, 'Umar (r. 13-23/634-644) decided to imprison al-Ḥuṭay'a (or: to cut his tongue) for his invective poems following the complaint of the poet al-Zibriqān b. Badr, whom al-Ḥuṭay'a had insulted.<sup>1066</sup> In an attempt to defend and justify himself, al-Ḥuṭay'a reportedly said: "But caliph, I have made *hijā'* against my father and mother, my wife, and myself". 'Umar was amused (*fa-tabassama*, he smiled) and asked al-Ḥuṭay'a to recite what he had said against his mother, upon which al-Ḥuṭay'a recited v.1 of AH14 and verses of AH04.<sup>1067</sup> The composition that follows, also a harsh invective by al-Ḥuṭay'a against his mother, is not recorded as being recited on that occasion:<sup>1068</sup>

[AH03 *wāfir*]

- جَزَاكَ اللَّهُ شَرًّا مِنْ عَجُوزٍ - وَلَقَّاكَ الْعُقُوقَ مِنَ الْبَنِينَ .1  
 فَقَدْ سُوِّسَتْ أَمْرَ بَنِيكَ حَتَّى - تَرَكَتِهِمْ أَذَقَّ مِنَ الطَّحِينَ .2  
 لِسَانُكَ مَبْرَدٌ لَمْ يُبْقِ شَيْئًا - وَدَرَكُ دَرِّ جَاذِبَةٍ دِهِينِ .3  
 وَإِنْ تُخَلِّي وَأَمْرُكَ لَا تُصُونِي - بِمُشْتَدِّ قُوَاهُ وَلَا مَتِينِ .4

1. May God repay you with evil, old woman, and make you experience the disobedience of [your] sons
2. You were put in command over the affairs of your sons until you left them more crushed than milled flour
3. Your tongue is a file that leaves nothing [undamaged], your milk is the milk of a she-camel scant of milk, not yielding a drop of milk
4. If you are left on your own, you will not protect me with someone powerful in his strength and solid.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a wishes al-Ḍarrā' nothing but evil: the problems of old age worsened by the disobedience of her sons (v.1). In his case this disobedience is already manifest in the verses against her. Their rebellion is justified, in his eyes, because the authority she held over them (as their mother?, v.2) brought them nothing but evil: he blames her for not treating her sons well, for her

<sup>1066</sup> The caliph 'Umar is remembered in Muslim tradition as opposing poetry, and especially invective, out of pious reasons; Bonebakker, 'Religious Prejudice', 81.

<sup>1067</sup> al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Awā'il*, 159.

<sup>1068</sup> Ṭāhā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 278–79 nr. 65; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. III', 514–15 nr. 26; Ṭammās, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 144–45; al-Iṣfahāni, *al-Aghāni*, 2008, 2:105.



sharp tongue, and for not providing for them (vv.2-3). In v.4 we find a more general statement: she is of no avail to him. Against the predominant discourse on allegiance and nobility of his time, al-Ḥuṭay'a accuses al-Ḍarrā' of not protecting him and of not providing him with practical support or with honour and nobility to inherit. Instead, her dishonour and shame cast a shadow over him.

In another invective against his mother al-Ḥuṭay'a distances himself from her and even wishes her dead:<sup>1069</sup>

[AHo4 wāfir]

1. تَنْحَيِّ فَاجْلِسِي مِنَّا بَعِيدًا – أَرَاخَ اللَّهُ مِنْكَ الْعَالَمِينَ .1
2. أَغْرَبَالًا إِذَا اسْتُودِعْتَ سِرًّا – وَكَأَنُونًا عَلَى الْمُتَحَدِّثِينَ .2
3. أَلَمْ أُوضِحْ لَكَ الْبَعْضَاءَ مِنِّي – وَلَكِنْ لَا إِخَالِكَ تَعْقِلِينَا .3
4. حَيَاتِكَ مَا عَلِمْتُ حَيَاةً سُوءٍ – وَمَوْتِكَ قَدْ يَسُرُّ الصَّالِحِينَ .4

1. Move aside and sit far from us! May God relieve the human beings from your presence<sup>1070</sup>
2. Are you not like a sieve when intrusted a secret, and like a fire-place to the slanderers?<sup>1071</sup>
3. Did I not make clear to you my hatred for you? But I don't think that you are intelligent
4. Your life is, for all I know, a life of evil – your death may well rejoice the good ones.

This poem is found across many different literary, lexicographical, and historical sources but the number of the verses as well as their order differ considerably, in addition to some textual variants within the verses. Its attribution to al-Ḥuṭay'a, however, is not doubted.

In the segmentary tribal system of pre-Islamic Arabia, the smaller the unit, the more obvious were the relations of shared liability in case of conflicts, necessity, or blood vengeance. We know of individuals who were cast out by their clan or tribe (*ṣu'lūk* pl. *ṣa'ālūk*), cut off from the protection as well as from the honour and nobility of the group. Here, it is al-Ḥuṭay'a who cuts the ties between him and his mother: he wishes her to be removed far away from him (and others, if

<sup>1069</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 277 nr. 64; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. III', 513–14 nr. 25; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 144 vv.[1], 1-4; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2105 vv.1-2,4; al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Awā'il*, 159 vv.1,3,2; Abū al-'Abbās Muḥammad b. Yazid al-Mubarrad (d. 900), *Kitāb al-Kāmil fi l-Lughā wa-l-Adab*, ed. Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1997), 144 vv.1-2; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 8:97 vv.1,2,[1]. Ṭammās includes a first verse (also found in *al-Bidāya*, in a different order) which is identical to AHo3 v.1 except for the end rhyme; it is omitted by Ṭāhā and Goldziher, for, according to Ṭāhā, it is considered to be an erroneous insertion. I omit it here.

<sup>1070</sup> Variant: *fa-jlisi minni bā'dan* "sit far from me".

<sup>1071</sup> Or: "and like someone the slanderers hide their words from".

we follow the variant "us" in v.2) so that her presence will no longer disturb the others (v.1). In AH03 he condemned al-Ḍarrā' for her sharp tongue and bad motherhood, but now he blames her for her disloyalty: she is unable to keep secrets and with her rumours she ignites the slander of others (v.2).<sup>1072</sup> After the rhetorical question of v.3 the final blow comes in v.4: al-Ḍarrā''s death will please the good ones.

The following poem by al-Ḥuṭay'a is directed against his half-brothers, sons of Aws b. Mālik. We are told that, after he and his mother al-Ḍarrā' had been set free by Aws b. Mālik's widow, al-Ḥuṭay'a stayed with Aws' family. Still, his position among them would have been that of a freed slave, not that of a full family member. When he claimed his full share of Aws' inheritance as his son, his half-brothers refused, apparently not wanting to recognise his claim of common descent. Although they did offer to support him, al-Ḥuṭay'a composed these lines reviling them, in passing also insulting their parents. There are two variants of the poem, but in both cases the intention is unmistakable.<sup>1073</sup>

[AH05 *kāmil*]

1.                   أَمْرُ مَآئِي أَنْ أُقِيمَ عَلَيْكُمْ   —  كَلَّا لَعَمْرُ أَيْبِكُمْ حَبَّاقٍ .1  
2.                   عَبْدَانِ خَيْرُهُمَا يُشَلُّ بِضَبْعِهِ   —  شَلَّ الْأَجِيرِ فَلَا يَنْصُ الْوَرَّاقِ .2

1. Did you order me to stay with you? By no means! By the life of your father the flatulent  
2. [You,] two slaves, the best of the two, his right arm is crippled<sup>1074</sup> like the unsoundness of the hireling [not herding well] the young camels of a rich man.<sup>1075</sup>

[AH05I *kāmil*]

1.                   لَا تَجْمَعَا مَالِي وَعِرْضِي بَاطِلًا   —  كَلَّا لَعَمْرُ أَيْبِكُمْ حَبَّاقٍ .1  
2.                   وَكِلَاكُمَا جَرَّتْ جَعَارِ بَرِّجِلِهِ   —  نَشِيئِينَ بَيْنَ مَشِيمَةٍ وَمَلَاقٍ .2

<sup>1072</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. III', 514. If we follow the translation as given in footnote 1071 others would avoid her because of her bad reputation.

<sup>1073</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 281 nr. 68 AH05, AH05I; I. Goldziher, 'Der Diwān des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. V', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 47, no. 2 (1893): 189 nr. 91 AH05I; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 102 AH05I; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:103 AH05.

<sup>1074</sup> I.e. he is useless.

<sup>1075</sup> Variant: 'abdāni sayruhumā yasallu bi-ḍab'ihī | salla l-aǧīri qalā'īša l-warrāqī, "two slaves, their course is to steal, like the stealing of the young camels of a rich man by the hireling". *Al-warrāq*: explained by Ṭāhā as *ṣāḥib al-wirq*, that is, someone with possessions, rich; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 281.

1. Don't gather my property and my honour falsely – By no means! By the life of your father [the] flatulent
2. You two! The she-hyena pulled you out, coming out legs first, appearing between the placenta and the junctures.<sup>1076</sup>

Because of the identical metre and rhyme we may assume that these are two variants of one poem or that it was a single composition in the past. In strong terms al-Ḥuṭay'a rejects the "order" given by the two men (AH05 v.1). The text of the poem offers no direct clues to identify the two insulted individuals, but at a first recitation the audience probably would have understood against whom it was directed and why; if the poem was repeated on a later occasions and in a different context, the poet or transmitter could explain otherwise obscure allusions and references. In addition, in the oral tradition of Arabic poetry such generic insults or praises would allow for a composition to be used—by the same poet or by others—on a different occasion and in a different context. The editors of al-Ḥuṭay'a's corpus tell us that these two men are sons of Aws b. Mālik. In the eyes of al-Ḥuṭay'a, they are slaves, and useless, for that matter (AH05 v.2); their father is mortified as "flatulent" (AH05 and AH05I v.1). How could they claim any authority over him, ordering him what he should do (AH05 v.1)?

In the second variant it seems that al-Ḥuṭay'a has to defend himself against the injustice of his half-brothers (AH05I v.1). In his eyes, he is entitled to the honour and possessions sharing in Aws' inheritance; the fact that Aws's two sons reject his claim is nothing less than robbery (AH05I v.1). This accusation is followed by a harsh verse in which he insults the men and their mother, depicting them as despicable and disgraceful (AH05I v.2). Contrary to v.1 in both versions, the parent mentioned in AH05I v.2 is not directly related to al-Ḥuṭay'a: he also claimed to be the son of Aws b. Mālik, but born not of his legitimate wife but of Aws' slave woman al-Ḍarrā'.

According to the editors of al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān*, the following poem is an invective against his father, cursed and characterised as an unfit leader, foolish and disgraceful:<sup>1077</sup>

<sup>1076</sup> *Nashibayn*: variant: *yatinayn*, "born with the legs first", an insult. Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 102.

*Malāqīn*: an obscure word. *Mulqā* pl. *malāqī*: "crossroad, meeting place, junction". *Malqan al-farj* pl. *malāqī l-farj*: "the narrow part of the vulva"; Wehr; Lane, s.v. *l-q-y*. See also Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 281.

<sup>1077</sup> According to some, it was directed against his father as well as his mother and uncles from paternal and maternal sides; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 276 nr. 62; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 130; al-Baghdādi, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 2:410; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 8:97 vv.1-2; Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), *al-Shī'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:312.

[AHo6 wāfir]

1. لَحَاكَ اللَّهُ ثُمَّ لَحَاكَ حَقًّا - أَبَا وَلَحَاكَ مِنْ عَمِّ وَخَالَ
2. فَبِعَمِّ الشَّيْخِ أَنْتَ عَلَى الْمَخَازِي - وَيُبْسِ الشَّيْخُ أَنْتَ لَدَى الْمَعَالِي
3. جَمَعْتَ اللُّؤْمَ لَا حَيَّاكَ رَبِّي - وَأَبْوَابَ السَّفَاهَةِ وَالضَّلَالِ

1. May God curse you, may God truly curse a father, may he curse you from the side of paternal and maternal uncle
2. You are the best leader in terms of disgraceful things and the worst in terms of praiseworthy things
3. You – May my Lord not prolong your life! – accumulated blame and all kinds of foolishness and error.

The different sources in which this poem is found do not specify which one of the two possible fathers of al-Ḥuṭayʿa was the target of this *hijāʿ*, Aws b. Mālik al-ʿAbsī or al-Afqam al-Dhuhli, nor do they tell us more about the specific occasion on which he composed it. The identity of the insulted individual (m. sg.) may be uncertain, the insults and curses are not. In tribal Arabia, the male members of a group elected their leader based on lineage and inherited honour, but also based on proven experience and the ability to lead in times of war and deprivation.<sup>1078</sup> Al-Ḥuṭayʿa is clear: the man he is addressing leads others towards that which is bad for them (v.2) and he is cursed because of his shame and dishonour (v.3).

The use of *rabb* (“Lord, lord, master”, v.3) could indicate that al-Ḥuṭayʿa composed these lines after the emergence of Islam, but neither the rest of the vocabulary nor the topics necessarily substantiate that. He was a travelling poet—the use of *rabb* may derive from his contacts with monotheistic groups or individuals.<sup>1079</sup>

As a composition against his father, this poem shows how the discursive strands of allegiance and authority are entangled. However, while a close relationship between the poet and the individual or group addressed usually entailed a recognition and proclamation of the power and authority of the individual or group in question, also reflecting on the poet himself, al-Ḥuṭayʿa goes against this convention and insults none other than his own father and characterises him as a man unfit to hold any position of authority and to lead others.

<sup>1078</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>1079</sup> On the use of *rabb*, see poems Z09, Z15; Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 16–17, 18–19.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a composed the following invective against his wife, blaming her for turning the scarce time he spends at his home into an unpleasant stay:<sup>1080</sup>

[AH07 wāfir]

أَطُوفُ مَا أَطُوفُ ثُمَّ آوِي - إِلَى بَيْتِ قَعِيدَتُهُ لِكَاعِ .1

1. I go round and round until I come to a house whose mistress is ignoble.<sup>1081</sup>

The verse may have been part of a longer composition; probably because of its topic and its vocabulary this verse has survived in many classical dictionaries (*Tāj al-Arūs*, *Lisān al-Arab*, *Jamharat al-Lughā*, etc.) as an example of the rare uses of the noun *qa'ida* (f.sg., "mistress of a house") and the adjective *lakā'* (f.sg., synonym of *la'ima*: "base, ignoble").

Al-Ḥuṭay'a probably had several wives<sup>1082</sup> and we do not know to which one this verse applies. Al-Madā'inī mentions one of the wives of al-Ḥuṭay'a in his *Kitāb al-Nisā' al-Fawārik* (*The book of women who hate their husbands*), but if that inclusion is based solely on this verse it may be a case of circular reasoning.<sup>1083</sup> According to Goldziher, al-Ḥuṭay'a's relation with his wives and daughter was that of a caring husband and father.<sup>1084</sup> This single line is not entirely in accordance with that description, however. The poet complains of the evilness and ignobility of his wife, which make it impossible for him to rest when he comes back to his family.

Against this positive picture by Goldziher also speaks the following composition, dated around the end of al-Ḥuṭay'a's life. In it, the poet addresses his sons and reviles them for treating him badly, accusing them of trying to accelerate his death:<sup>1085</sup>

<sup>1080</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 280 nr. 67; al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Awā'il*, 160; al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:208; al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 2:144. Goldziher does not include this verse in his *dīwān* but mentions it in the introduction to it: Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 40. The verse by al-Ḥuṭay'a seems to be a variant on a verse by the pre-Islamic poet Qays b. Zuhayr b. Jadhīma in praise of his protector: *uṭawwifū mā uṭawwifū thumm(a) āwī / ilā jarīn ka-jārī Abī Duwād*: "I went round and round until I took refuge with a protector like the protector of Abū Duwād" (Abū Duwād: a man whose loyalty became proverbial). 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 2001, 18:366; al-Baṣrī, *al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*, 1999, 1:48.

<sup>1081</sup> Variant: *Ujawwīlu mā ujawwīlu*, "I go round and about"; *uṭarrīdu mā uṭarrīdu*, "I go forth and forth".

<sup>1082</sup> Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 39.

<sup>1083</sup> al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 2:405; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 40.

<sup>1084</sup> Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 38–40.

<sup>1085</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 279–80 nr. 66; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 33; I. Goldziher, 'Der Dīwān des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. IV', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 47, no. 1 (1893): 44–45 nr. 35.

[AHO8 *basīṭ*]

1. قَدْ وَزَوَّانِي مُشْتَدًّا رِقَابُهُمَا – دَبًّا رُوَيْدًا لِأَدْنَى مَا تَكِيدَانِ .1
2. قَدْ عَجَّلَ الدَّهْرُ وَالْأَقْدَارُ بُؤْسَكُمْمَا – فَاسْتَعْنِيَا بُؤْسَ إِنِّي عَنْكُمْمَا غَانِ .2
3. وَدَلِّيَانِي فِي غَبْرَاءِ مُظْلِمَةٍ – كَمَا تُدَلِّي دَلَاةً بَيْنَ أَشْطَانِ .3

1. They shake me, their necks stretched – Take it slowly! I am already near to the evil you (dual.) do [to me]<sup>1086</sup>
2. Fate and the passing of time<sup>1087</sup> have accelerated your misery – So I don't need misery (?), I don't need you two
3. So, lower me in the dark earth as you lower with ropes a bucket [in a well].

Al-Ḥuṭay'a reproves his two sons for not taking good care of him in his old age. He takes their ill-treatment as aimed at hastening his passing away, so he reassures them that he is indeed about to die (v.1), unable to escape Fate (v.2), implicitly presenting himself as a man now deprived of his power and strength. Although he is angry at his sons for the evil they commit against him in his weak state, he does not seem scared of death, of which he speaks in relatively light terms: he is about to be lowered into the dark grave as a bucket is lowered into a well (v.3).

### 5.1.2 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and his kin

A weak lineage like that of al-Ḥuṭay'a was cause for shame and dishonour, a serious stain on one's reputation,<sup>1088</sup> but al-Ḥuṭay'a does not seem to have made an attempt at hiding this "fault in his lineage". Rather, he almost turned it into his trademark and exploited it, alternatively claiming to belong to the Banū 'Abs and the Banū Dhuhl as it best suited him, and insulting one group or the other if he so wished. In the words of the compiler of the Aghānī, "al-Ḥuṭay'a, when he was angry with the Banū 'Abs, said: 'I am from the Banū Dhuhl', and when he was angry with the Banū Dhuhl he said: 'I am from the Banū 'Abs'"<sup>1089</sup>.

The poems that follow show these shifting alliances of al-Ḥuṭay'a, his praising and insulting poems directed at the 'Abs and the Dhuhl depending on how he was treated.

<sup>1086</sup> Variant: *ruwayda innī la-adnā*, "take it slowly, for I am near"; *mā yakidāni*, "what they (dual.) do".

<sup>1087</sup> Variant: *al-mawtu wa-l-aḥdāthu*, "death and the events of fate".

<sup>1088</sup> Ibn Bakkār, *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh*, 247–48; 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-'Arab*, 2001, 10:230–31.

<sup>1089</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:101,102.

*Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the Dhuhl*

In the following short poem al-Ḥuṭay'a presents himself as the son of al-Afqam b. Riyāḥ b. 'Amr b. 'Awf, from the Dhuhl b. Tha'labā,<sup>1090</sup> and consequently praises this group along the lines of pre-Islamic *murawwa* values:<sup>1091</sup>

[AH09 *majzū' al-kāmil*]

1. قَوْمِي بَنُو عَمْرٍو بْنِ عَوْ - فِإِنْ أَرَادَ الْعِلْمَ عَالِمٌ .1
2. قَوْمٌ إِذَا ذَهَبَتْ خَصَا - رِمٌ مِنْهُمْ خَلَفَتْ خَصَارِمٌ .2
3. لَا يَفْشَلُونَ وَلَا تَبِي - تٌ عَلَى أَنْوْفِهِمُ الْخَوَاطِمُ .3

1. My people are the Banū 'Amr b. 'Awf, if someone wants to know,<sup>1092</sup>
2. A people in which, if bountiful men disappeared, [other] bountiful men replace them
3. They are not vile nor cowards, nor are their noses tied with halters.

The Dhuhlī group of the 'Amr b. 'Awf are his “tribe” or “people” (*qawmī*), al-Ḥuṭay'a states (v.1). They distinguish themselves through their generosity (v.2), goodness, and heroism (v.3). The discursive strands of allegiance and authority are explicitly entangled in this poem: al-Ḥuṭay'a proudly characterises the group to which he claims to belong as men whose noses are not “tied with halters” (v.3), that is, who are not bridled, for they do not submit to anyone nor do they follow the orders of an outsider.<sup>1093</sup>

It would seem that, with the poem AH09, al-Ḥuṭay'a disproved the popular wisdom expressed in the saying “One does not hope for filial piety from the offspring of adultery”.<sup>1094</sup> However, his identification with the Banū Dhuhl was one-sided and short-lived, seemingly induced by his desire for material profit: al-Ḥuṭay'a had received some date-palms from al-Afqam's inheritance but he claimed a full share. Perhaps AH09 was an attempt at softening the hearts of al-Afqam's relatives, but in vain. When they refused to give him what he wanted, thus also refusing to

<sup>1090</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 144, 152.

<sup>1091</sup> Ṭāhā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 80 nr. 28; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 72 nr. 63; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102.

<sup>1092</sup> Or: 'Awf b. 'Amr; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 72 nr. 63.

<sup>1093</sup> On the nose as an image of pride and honour, see footnote 1139.

<sup>1094</sup> Lā yurjā min walad al-sirr birra, Lane, s.v. s-r-r.

acknowledge al-Ḥuṭay'a as one of their own, he composed the following lines reviling the same group he had praised in AH09:<sup>1095</sup>

[AH10 *ṭawīl*]

1. تَمَنَيْتُ بَكْرًا أَنْ يَكُونُوا عِمَارَتِي - وَقَوْمِي وَبَكْرٌ شَرُّ تِلْكَ الْقَبَائِلِ .1  
 2. إِذَا قُلْتُ بَكْرِي نَبُوْتُمْ بِحَاجَتِي - فَيَا لَيْتَنِي مِنْ غَيْرِ بَكْرٍ بَيْنَ وَائِلٍ .2

1. I desired the [Banū] Bakr to be my tribe, my people, but Bakr are the vilest of those tribes  
 2. When I said to be a Bakrī you neglected my need. Oh, that I were of a different [tribe] than the Bakr b. Wā'il!

While in AH09 the poet had addressed the group of the 'Amr b. 'Awf, now he speaks of the Banū Bakr b. Wā'il, the confederation to which the Dhuhl b. Tha'laba and their subgroup 'Amr b. 'Awf belonged. In both poems al-Ḥuṭay'a speaks of the respective groups as "my people" (*qawmī*): in AH09 as a factual statement, in AH10 as a former wish he now regrets. The praise of the 'Amr b. 'Awf in AH09 is now superseded and withdrawn by the blame directed at the large group to which they belong.

The Bakr b. Wā'il are the vilest of tribes (v.1): he made himself known as a Bakrī but his kinsmen refused to help him in times of need (v.2). In spite of himself, it seems, and against what he states in other poems (see AH29), in this poem al-Ḥuṭay'a still identifies as a Bakrī (v.2).

The poems AH09 and AH10 cannot be dated exactly. In the *Aghānī* the invective of AH10 is followed by a statement that afterwards the poet returned to the 'Abs and claimed allegiance to them through Aws b. Mālik, to later return again to the Dhuhl to claim a share in al-Afqam's inheritance, composing the next poem to seek their favour (see also AH12 and AH31). Otherwise al-Ḥuṭay'a could have composed the next poem before AH10, reinforcing his praise of the Dhuhl in AH09 before they refused his first claim:<sup>1096</sup>

[AH11 *kāmil*]

1. إِنَّ الْيَمَامَةَ خَيْرٌ سَاكِنِيهَا - أَهْلُ الْقُرَيْبَةِ مِنْ بَنِي ذُهْلِ .1  
 2. الضَّامِنِينَ لِمَالِ جَارِهِمْ - حَتَّى تَتَمَّ نَوَاهِضُ الْبَقْلِ .2

<sup>1095</sup> These verses are not found in the *Dīwān* as edited by Ṭāhā. Al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:104; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. I', 3.

<sup>1096</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 81–82 nr. 29; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 72–73 nr. 64; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 126; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102, 103, 104.



فَوْمٌ إِذَا نُسِبُوا فَفَرَعُهُمْ – فَرَعِي وَأَثْبَتَ أَصْلُهُمْ أَصْلِي .3

1. The best inhabitants of al-Yamāma are the people of the village, from the Banū Dhuhl<sup>1097</sup>
2. They protect the property of their neighbour until the pastures have grown
3. A people, when their branches are traced: their branch is mine; their origin affirms my origin.

The region of al-Yamāma, in the central Arabian area of Najd, was the original tribal region of the Bakr b. Wā'il, although different Bakrī tribes spread to Eastern and Northern Arabia.<sup>1098</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a singles out the tribe Dhuhl b. Tha'laba as the most praiseworthy of this whole confederation (v.1): they protect their guests and provide them with what they need as long as they need it (v.2). It is to this admirable people (*qawm*) that al-Ḥuṭay'a belongs: "it is my branch" (v.3). Noble branches (*far' pl. furū'*) sprout forth from a noble root (*aṣl*), as can be determined when the lineage of an individual or group is mentioned or traced (*nasaba*, v.3). The discursive strand on allegiance is made explicit in v.3: as a member of this group, the roots of the Dhuhl affirm and strengthen al-Ḥuṭay'a's roots.

Apparently, this poem once again (see AH09 and AH10) did not have the desired outcome for al-Ḥuṭay'a: the Dhuhl of Yamāma did not recognise the poet as one of their own and al-Ḥuṭay'a altered his poem, turning it into the following invective:<sup>1099</sup>

[AH11 *kāmil*]

إِنَّ الْيَمَامَةَ شَرُّ سَاكِنِيهَا – أَهْلُ الْقُرْيَةِ مِنْ بَنِي دُهْلٍ .1

1. The worst inhabitants of al-Yamāma are the people of the village, from the Banū Dhuhl.

Because of the oral character of the poems, they were much more flexible than, for example, written dispositives: changing circumstances or a revised vision of the poet could lead to changes in the composition. In this case, and in reaction to the negative attitude of the Dhuhl towards him, al-Ḥuṭay'a turned his praise into a harsh insult substituting a single word in v.1, and he left out the verses of AH11 in which he attested his lineage as a Dhuhli.

<sup>1097</sup> Variant: *la-amdaḥanna bi-midḥatin madhkūratin / ahla l-qurayyati min banī Dhuhli*, "I will certainly praise, with a praise worthy of mention, the people of the village, from the Banū Dhuhl". *Al-Qurayya* could also be a proper name for a place; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995, 4:340.

<sup>1098</sup> W. Caskel, 'Bakr b. Wā'il', *EL2*, 1:962-64.

<sup>1099</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 81–82 nr. 29; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 72–73 nr. 64; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 126–27; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102, 103, 104.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's series of poems related to the Dhuhl does not end here: at some point after the emergence of Islam he attempted to be accepted as a kinsman by the Banū Dhuhl that had settled in Kūfa. According to al-Aṣma'ī, quoted in the *Aghānī*, al-Ḥuṭay'a came to Kūfa and stayed with the Banū 'Awf b. 'Āmir b. Dhuhl. He asserted his lineage to them in the following lines:<sup>1100</sup>

[AH12 *basīf*]

1. سِيرِي أُمَامَ فَإِنَّ الْمَالَ يَجْمَعُهُ - سَيَّبَ إِلَهِهِ وَإِقْبَالِي وَإِدْبَارِي .1
2. إِلَى مَعَانِسَرٍ مِنْهُمْ يَا أُمَامَ أَبِي - مِنْ آلِ عَوْفٍ بُدُوٌّ غَيْرِ أَشْرَارٍ .2
3. نَمْشِي إِلَى ضَوْءٍ أَحْسَابٍ أَضَانُ لَنَا - مَا ضَاءَتِ اللَّيْلَةُ الْقَمَرَاءُ لِلْسَّارِي .3

1. Go, Umāma, the gift of God brings [me] possessions, as well as my coming and going
2. He belongs to groups from them, O Umāma – My father is from the Banū 'Awf, from among leaders, not wicked ones<sup>1101</sup>
3. We walk to the shining of noble deeds that lighten for us as long as the moon-filled night lightens for the traveller.

Umāma (vv.1,2) could be the name of one of al-Ḥuṭay'a's wives as her name appears in some other compositions too (AH20).<sup>1102</sup> According to the poet, his wealth derives in the first place from the benevolence of God (*al-ilāh*, “the god”; v.1). Although the poem is dated after the emergence of Islam, this reference to God does not necessarily speak of a great piety from the side of the poet: similar references can be found throughout pre-Islamic and *mukhadram* compositions.<sup>1103</sup>

For al-Ḥuṭay'a an important source of income are the Banū 'Awf (v.1), who treat him with generosity and benevolence. According to the poet, this is because of their common ancestry: since he is, or claims to be, a son of al-Afqam al-Dhuhli, he belongs to the Dhuhli group of the Banū 'Awf (v.2).<sup>1104</sup> This group, he states, is led by outstanding chiefs (v.2) and is distinguished by their nobility (v.3). Openly, and ignoring his “fault in the lineage”, al-Ḥuṭay'a claims his share in the nobility of the 'Awf. In this case it does not imply a claim to any inheritance: the group in Kūfa were not direct relatives of al-Afqam but belonged to a different branch from the Dhuhl. It seems that they allowed

<sup>1100</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 78 nr. 27; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 71–72 nr. 62; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 72; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102, 103.

<sup>1101</sup> Reading *ilā* as short for *intamā ilā*, “he belongs/belonged to”.

<sup>1102</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 39–40.

<sup>1103</sup> See the comments to AH06.

<sup>1104</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 141, 152.

al-Ḥuṭay'a to stay with them, although we do not know whether they recognised him as a kinsman or merely as a protégé or ally.<sup>1105</sup>

*Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the 'Abs*

A longer poem by al-Ḥuṭay'a has been transmitted that the compiler of the *Aghānī* describes as “a *qaṣīda* in which he defamed [from among] his people”.<sup>1106</sup> It is a poem of 22 verses: the first eight lines, directed against his kin, are followed by a long description and praise of his camel, which I will not include in full:<sup>1107</sup>

[*AH13 ṭawīl*]

1. أَلَا مَنْ لِقَلْبِ عَارِمِ النَّظْرَاتِ - يُقَطِّعُ طُولَ اللَّيْلِ بِالزَّفَرَاتِ
2. إِذَا مَا الثُّرَيَّا آخِرَ اللَّيْلِ أَعْنَقَتْ - كَوَاكِبُهَا كَالْجِرْعِ مُنْحَدِرَاتِ
3. هُنَالِكَ لَا أَخْشَى مَقَالَهَ قَائِلٍ - إِذَا انْتَبَذَ الْعُرَابُ فِي الْحَجَرَاتِ
4. لَهُمْ نَفْرٌ مِثْلُ الثُّبُوسِ وَنِسْوَةٌ - مَمَاجِيرُ مِثْلُ الْأَتَنِ النَّعْرَاتِ
5. لَعَمْرِي لَقَدْ جَرَّبْتُكُمْ فَوَجَدْتُكُمْ - قَبَاحَ الْوُجُوهِ سَيِّئِ الْعَذْرَاتِ
6. وَجَدْتُكُمْ لَمْ تَجْبُرُوا عَظْمَ مُعْرَمٍ - وَلَا تَنْحَرُونَ النَّيْبَ فِي الْحَجَرَاتِ
7. فَإِنْ يَصْطَبِعْنِي اللَّهُ لَا أَصْطَبِعْكُمْ - وَلَا أُوتِيكُمْ مَالِي عَلَى الْعَثَرَاتِ
8. عَطَاءَ إِلَهِي إِذْ بَخَلْتُمْ بِمَالِكُمْ - مَهَارِيسُ تَرَعَى عَازِبَ الْقَفَرَاتِ
- ...
13. وَإِنْ طَارَ فِيهَا الْحَالِبَانِ اتَّقْتُهُمَا - بِجَوْفٍ عَلَى أُيْدِيهِمَا هَمِيرَاتِ
14. وَإِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ إِلَّا الصَّحَاصِيحُ رُوِّحَتْ - مُحَلَّقَةٌ ضَرَّاتُهَا شَكْرَاتِ
15. وَتَرَعَى بَرَاحًا حَيْثُ لَا يَسْتَطِيعُهَا - مِنَ النَّاسِ أَهْلُ الشَّاءِ وَالْحُمُرَاتِ
16. إِذَا أَنْفَدَ الْمَيَّارُ مَا فِي وَعَائِهِ - وَفَى كَيْلٍ لَا نَيْبٍ وَلَا بَكْرَاتِ

<sup>1105</sup> al-İşfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:102.

<sup>1106</sup> *Qaṣīda nāla fihā min qawmihi*; al-İşfahānī, 2:107.

<sup>1107</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 332–41 nr. 89; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. III', 503–8 nr. 22; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 28–30; al-İşfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:107–8. Goldziher's version presents some minor variant readings and a slightly differing verse order.

...

1. Alas, who is there for a heart that [desiringly] looks around and spends the night sighing
2. When the stars of the Pleiades, at the end of the night, advance to the place of their setting, its stars like gems descending
3. There I don't fear the words of the accuser when the young men retire in their tents<sup>1108</sup>
4. They have a band like male goats, and emaciated pregnant women like asses harassed by flies<sup>1109</sup>
5. By my life, I put you to test and I found you despicable of faces, dirty and inhospitable<sup>1110</sup>
6. I found you as not setting right the bone of the one thrown into destruction;<sup>1111</sup> you don't slaughter the camel during severe years
7. If God did something good for me, I would not do something good for you, and I would not give you my property for [your] faults,<sup>1112</sup>
8. As a gift of my God, whereas you were niggardly with your property – [like] big, trampling camels pasturing scarce herbage
- ...
13. When the two milkmen approach, she [the camel] comes to them with udders dripping on their hands
14. Even if there was nothing but areas destitute of herbage, they return satisfied, their udders full
15. They go far off in remote, destitute high-land [without water], where herders of goats and asses can't [pasture]
16. When the food-provider [of the tribe] exhausted what was in his provision-bag, in their [milk-] measure they were not [like] old or young camels [i.e. their milk was still abundant]
- ...

Said to be an invective “against his people”, neither the poem nor the editors specify whether it is against the Banū ‘Abs or against the Banū Dhuhl. Al-Ḥuṭay’a was generally identified by outsiders as a man from the ‘Abs; had it been a poem against the Dhuhl it would probably have been specified.

Van Gelder presents this poem as an example of what he calls the *hijāʿ-qaṣīda*, that is, a polythematic ode in which *hijāʿ* is the main theme.<sup>1113</sup> The poem opens with two verses with topical images, common in the amatory opening of a *qaṣīda*: a night spent fully awake because of sorrows and worries (vv.1-2). What follows is a description of the tribe through the eyes of the poet, but not after he has distanced himself from those who accuse him falsely and behind his back (v.3). The

<sup>1108</sup> Variant: *maqālatan kāshihīn*, “the words of a (secret) enemy”. *Uzzāb*: pl. form of *ʿazīb* or *ʿazīb*, which means, among other things: “a man without a spouse”.

<sup>1109</sup> *Atān* pl. *ātun*: “she-ass”; also applied as an epithet to foolish, weak women. Or: “bringing forth twins”. Variant: *mamājīn*, “having lost their minds”.

<sup>1110</sup> Lit. “evil of tents” or “open places”.

<sup>1111</sup> Or: “burdened by debt; who has to pay blood wit”.

<sup>1112</sup> Or: “If God prepared me food, I would not prepare food for you in the cause of God”.

<sup>1113</sup> See: The poems of Al-Ḥuṭay’a.

men of which he speaks in v.3 are characterised as young and without wives.<sup>114</sup> In light of v.4 it is possible to understand it as a negative picture of all the male members of the group as young and senseless individuals without a family to sustain or unable to provide for it (v.4). They resemble male goats, proverbial for their stupidity.<sup>115</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭay'a speaks of a "test" that his tribe has failed (v.5), as apparently their hospitality did not meet his standards. In his eyes, this proves that the tribe consists of mean and despicable individuals who disregard the values and virtues of their society. These ugly people do not receive well their guests, no matter if they are expected or unexpected. In addition, they do not amend injustices nor do they feed the hungry in times of famine (v.6). Paralleling one's moral qualities with one's appearance is common in *madiḥ*, *rithā'*, and especially *hijā'* poetry: the good are beautiful and clean, the bad are ugly and filthy, as we see here.<sup>116</sup> One will be disappointed if he were to expect a morally superior attitude of al-Ḥuṭay'a towards his people: the poet is not willing to repay evil with good (v.7).

In the second hemistich of v.8 al-Ḥuṭay'a compares his wicked and niggard tribe to big camels that trample and destroy the herbage at their passing. This image serves as a transition to the section in praise of al-Ḥuṭay'a's camels (vv.9-22), described as strong, well-fed, and giving abundant milk, among other things. Such camel sections were common in a polythematic ode of classical Arabic poetry, but al-Ḥuṭay'a does not follow the usual order of sections, as the short amatory opening (vv.1-2) is followed by the invective (vv.3-8) and only after that he includes the lengthy camel section (vv.9-22), instead of the other way around.<sup>117</sup>

The fact that the invective is directed against al-Ḥuṭay'a's own tribe is even more unconventional. Reportedly, the caliph 'Umar (r. 13-23/634-644), when he heard the poem, addressed al-Ḥuṭay'a surprised and perhaps shocked: "You mock your tribe but you praise your

---

<sup>114</sup> See footnote 1108.

<sup>115</sup> See under Lane, s.v. *t-y-s*; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 334-35.

<sup>116</sup> In words of Ibn al-Zibā'rā: "And good heroes of beautiful faces - they are not found [inclined] to a bad thing"; Z06 v.1. See also: Van Gelder, *The Bad and the Ugly*, 57-59; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. III', 502-3. And AH01, AH14 vv.1, 4.

<sup>117</sup> Jacobi, 'Qaṣīda', 629-32; Jacobi, 'Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik', 17-19; Jacobi, 'Die Altarabische Dichtung', 23-26.

camel!''<sup>118</sup> In theory, an invective should not be directed against one's kin, and *madīḥ* generally was not addressed to one's mounting animal—al-Ḥuṭay'a does both things in one and the same poem.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's mother al-Ḍarrā', after she had been set free by the widow of her late master Aws b. Mālik al-'Absī, married a man from the Banū Jaḥsh, from the Banū Bijād. According to the genealogists, the Bijād b. 'Abd b. Mālik and the Makhzūm b. Mālik, the clan of al-Ḥuṭay'a's alleged father Aws b. Mālik, were cousins, two sections descending from Mālik b. Ghālib b. Quṭay'a b. 'Abs.<sup>119</sup> In the poem that follows al-Ḥuṭay'a attacks his mother, her new husband, al-Kalb b. Kunays, and al-Kalb's group of the Jaḥsh:<sup>120</sup>

[AH14 kāmīl]

1. وَلَقَدْ رَأَيْتُكَ فِي النِّسَاءِ فَسُوِّتَنِي - وَأَبَا بَيْنِكَ فَسَاءَ بَنِي فِي الْمَجْلِسِ
2. إِنَّ الدَّلِيلَ لَمَنْ تَرَوُرُ رِكَابُهُ - رَهْطُ ابْنِ جَحْشٍ فِي مَضْبِقِ الْمَحْسِ
3. لَا يَصْبِرُونَ وَلَا تَرَالُ نِسَاؤُهُمْ - تَشْكُو الْهَوَانَ إِلَى الْبَيْسِ الْأَبَّاسِ
4. رَهْطُ ابْنِ جَحْشٍ فِي الْخُطُوبِ أَدَلَّةٌ - دُسْمُ الثِّيَابِ فَنَاتُهُمْ لَمْ تُضْرَسِ
5. بِالْهَمْزِ مِنْ طُولِ الثَّقَافِ وَجَارُهُمْ - يُعْطَى الظُّلَامَةَ فِي الْخُطُوبِ الْحَوْسِ
6. قَبَحَ الْإِلَهِ قَبِيلَةَ لَمْ يَمْنَعُوا - يَوْمَ الْمُجِيمِ جَارَهُمْ مِنْ فَقَعَسِ
7. تَرَكَو النِّسَاءَ مَعَ الْجِيَادِ لِمَعَشَرٍ - شُمْسِ الْعِدَاوَةِ فِي الْحُرُوبِ الشُّوسِ
8. أَبْلَغَ بَنِي عَبْسٍ بَانَ نَجَارَهُمْ - لُؤْمٌ وَأَنَّ أَبَاهُمْ كَالْهَجْرَسِ
9. يُعْطِي الْخَسِيسَةَ رَاعِمًا مِنْ رَامَهَا - بِالضَّيْمِ بَعْدَ تَكْلُحٍ وَتَعْبَسِ

1. I saw you among the women and you were ugly to me – the father of your sons was ugly to me in the assembly

<sup>118</sup> *Anta tamdaḥu iblaka wa-taḥjū qawmaka*; al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh Abū Hilāl al-'Askarī (d. 1005), *Dīwān al-Ma'ānī*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Jil, n.d.), 41.

<sup>119</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 132, 133.

<sup>120</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 273–75 nr. 61; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. III', 501–3 nr. 21; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 86–87; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:104–5; al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-Awā'il*, 159; al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmīl*, 1997, 2:143.

2. The contemptible is the one whose camels go to the band of Ibn Jaḥsh [for help] in hard circumstances<sup>1121</sup>
3. They are not steadfast, their women do not cease to complain [of their] lowliness to the basest of the base
4. In distressing affairs the band of Ibn Jaḥsh is submissive, their clothes dirty, their spears not tested<sup>1122</sup>
5. For faults in the process of straitening – Their neighbour is exposed to injustice in bad circumstances<sup>1123</sup>
6. May [the] God remove from prosperity a tribe that on the Day of Mujaymir does not keep away their neighbour from the Faq'as<sup>1124</sup>
7. They left behind the women together with the nobles to a group of wicked people in enmity in harsh battles
8. Inform the Banū 'Abs: their natural disposition is baseness, their father is like a fox's cub<sup>1125</sup>
9. He disapprovingly gives lowness to one who strives for it with wrongdoing after frowning and grimacing.<sup>1126</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭay'a opens with an insult directed at his mother and stepfather (v.1). Reportedly a rather unattractive man himself, al-Ḥuṭay'a does not shy away from mocking others based on their appearances.<sup>1127</sup> The rest of the poem is a more general insult against the group to which his stepfather belongs, the Jaḥsh, from the 'Absī group of the Banū Bijād. The close ties between the clan of his alleged father Aws and the new husband of his mother did not stop al-Ḥuṭay'a from insulting the Jaḥsh, whom he describes as failing in all aspects of *muruwwa* values and virtues: steadfastness (v.3), proud independence (v.4), readiness to fight and experience in war (vv.4-5), protection of the weak and needy (vv.5-7), and a noble lineage (v.9).

Who happens to go to them seeking help will be disappointed (v.2); even Jaḥshī's wives constantly find reason to complain (v.3). To add insult to injury, the women complain to people

<sup>1121</sup> *Maḍīq al-maḥbis*: "the narrowness of the manger or stable", probably referring to scarce means of subsistence, i.e. "in hard circumstances, in misfortunes". Variant: *fi l-khuṭūbi l-ḥuwwasi* (see v.5 and the comments in Goldziher's edition to that verse): "in hard times".

*Jaḥsh*: the Jaḥsh belonged to the Bijād b. 'Abd b. Mālik, from the Banū 'Abs; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 133.

<sup>1122</sup> Dirty clothes: a sign of a bad character. Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. III', 502–3.

<sup>1123</sup> *Hanz*: glossed as *ghanz* ("tested for faults") in the different editions. *Thiqāf*: "skill, intelligence, sagacity". Also: an instrument with which spears or bows are straitened after they have been greased and exposed to fire to strengthen them. Their spears have not undergone the common process and will therefore prove to be faulty. Lit.: "their guest is given to injustice".

Enjambment, as in vv.4-5, is rather uncommon in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* Arabic poetry.

<sup>1124</sup> Mujaymir: a mountain in the tribal area of the Banū Asad; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Mu'jam al-Buldān*, 1995,

5:59–60. Faq'as: Faq'as b. Ṭarīf, a large group of the Banū Asad; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 50.

<sup>1125</sup> *Hijris*: The young of the *tha'lab*, used to describe a despicable and deceitful man; *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. *h-j-r-s*.

<sup>1126</sup> Variant: *man rāmahu*, "who seeks him/it".

<sup>1127</sup> On physical ugliness as a visible sign of an evil and immoral character, see AH13.

characterised as “the basest of the base” and yet, in the eyes of the Jaḥshī women, these strangers are better off than they (v.3). The fight or skirmish to which al-Ḥuṭay'a alludes in v.6, the day of Mujaymir, cannot be further identified, but we know that the tribes of Asad and 'Abs, with their respective subgroups, faced each other on the battlefield on more than one occasion in the century or so preceding Islam, both in major battles as well as in minor clashes.<sup>1128</sup> The point that the poet wants to make is clear: the Jaḥsh do not protect their guests or neighbours in times of need (v.5), they expose their women to hardship and danger, and their supposed nobles are unable to defend them (v.7).

Al-Ḥuṭay'a states that the vileness of the Jaḥsh is not limited to the current generation but can be traced back to their forefathers who, instead of nobility and great deeds, left shame and dishonour as an inheritance (v.8). The editors do not shed more light on the rather enigmatic last verse, but the idea seems to be the following: who goes after baseness will spread it around (v.9).

In addition to this insult against his mother, stepfather, and the Banū Jaḥsh (AH14), al-Ḥuṭay'a directed at least three invectives against the Bijād b. 'Abd b. Mālik, the larger 'Absī section to which the Jaḥsh belonged. The occasion and context of these compositions is unknown but it seems that, besides the fact that he resented the marriage of his mother to a Jaḥshī man, there also was bad blood between the two 'Absī sections of the Bijād and the Makhzūm b. Mālik (see below, AH17). The latter, as we know, was the clan of al-Ḥuṭay'a's alleged father Aws b. Mālik. The first of these poems against the Banū Bijād reads:<sup>1129</sup>

[AH15 *ṭawīl*]

1. إِذَا طَعَنْتَ عَنَّا بِجَادٍ فَلَا دَنْتَ - وَلَا رَجَعْتَ حَاشَا مُعِيَّةَ وَالْجَعْدِ .1  
 2. أَكُلُّ بِجَادٍ فَاقْدَ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمْ - كَحَيَّةٍ يَسْتَهْدِي الطَّعَامَ وَلَا يُهْدِي .2

1. If Bijād departs from us, may they not approach us [again] and not return, except Mu'ayya and al-Ja'd
2. Is then the whole of Bijād—that God cause them to perish!—like Ḥayya: asking to be led to food without leading?

<sup>1128</sup> See for example: J.W. Fück, 'Ghaṭafān', *EL2*, 2:1023-24; H. Kindermann, 'Asad', *EL2*, 1:683-84.

<sup>1129</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 299 nr. 75; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 76 nr. 66; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 54-55.



Al-Ḥuṭay'a accuses the Bijād of distancing themselves from his group ("us", v.1), which, we may assume, must be the Makhzūm b. Mālik. Implicitly, and once again, he thus claims to be Aws b. Mālik's son (AH05, AH05I). Two men from the Bijād are excluded from al-Ḥuṭay'a's blame: Mu'ayya and al-Ja'd (v.1). Who they are and why al-Ḥuṭay'a makes an exception for them is unknown. Al-Ḥuṭay'a compares the rest of the Bijād to a certain Ḥayya (v.2), explained by the editors as a reference to a man "from them" (the Bijād, the 'Abs?) who had the bad reputation of asking for food while not feeding others. Once again we see that al-Ḥuṭay'a is not afraid of using that what he was accused of against others: he is remembered as a man who would demand hospitality but refused it to others. The wrongdoing of the Bijād is not explained, but the comparison in v.2 may indicate that they refused to offer assistance to their relatives of the Makhzūm b. Mālik as a group or to al-Ḥuṭay'a personally (see also the following poem, AH16).

A second poem by al-Ḥuṭay'a against the Bijād b. 'Abs reads:<sup>130</sup>

[AH16 *kāmil*]

1. قَبَحَ الْإِلَٰهَةُ بَنِي بَجَادٍ إِيَّاهُمْ - لَا يُصْلِحُونَ وَمَا اسْتَطَاعُوا أَفْسَدُوا
2. بُلْدَ الْحَفِيظَةِ وَاحِدٌ مَوْلَاهُمْ - جُمْدٌ عَلَى مَنْ لَيْسَ عَنْهُ مُجْمَدٌ
3. أَغْمَارُ شُمَطٍ لَا تَثُوبُ حُلُومُهُمْ - عِنْدَ الصَّبَاحِ إِذَا تَعَوَّدُ الْعَوْدُ
4. فَإِذَا تَقَطَّعَتِ الْوَسَائِلُ بَيْنَنَا - فِيمَا جَنَّتْ أَيْدِيَهُمْ فَلْيَبْعِدُوا
5. مَنْ كَانَ يَحْمَدُ فِي الْقَرَى ضَيْفَانُهُ - فَبَنُو بَجَادٍ فِي الْقَرَى لَمْ يُحْمَدُوا

1. May God render despicable the Banū Bijād – They don't do what is good, and what they are capable of, they do [it] wrongly
2. Weak in protection, their relative alone, niggardly towards the one they should not be niggardly towards
3. The inexperienced of the grey men, their wits do not return at the morning of the fight, when the experienced [men] return
4. When the ties between us become ragged, let them perish by what their bands have committed
5. Whomever the guests praise for hospitality, the Banū Bijād are not praised for hospitality.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a insults the Bijād as foolish men (v.3) who do not defend that what they are bound to protect (v.2). Unable to rely on the protection and generosity of the Bijād, their relatives are left to

<sup>130</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 299–300 nr. 76; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 54–55 nr. 44; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 43–44; al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 13:207 v.1.

their own devices (v.2).<sup>131</sup> As in AH15, al-Ḥuṭay'a identifies himself as part of a larger group related in some way to the Bijād (v.4), although the ties between them now are ragged and worn out (v.4). He possibly is speaking out of experience and as a disgruntled guest when he states that the Bijād will not be among those who are praised and thanked for their hospitality and generosity (v.5; see AH15).

Al-Ḥuṭay'a composed yet a third and longer poem against the Bijād b. 'Abs. Vv.3-6, omitted here, are part of the amatory opening, with a description of a beautiful young girl. The rest of the poem speaks of the enmity between al-Ḥuṭay'a's group and their relatives from the Bijād:<sup>132</sup>

[AH17 *tawīl*]

1. أَفِيْمَا خَلَا مِنْ سَالِفِ الْعَيْشِ تَدَكَّرْ - أَحَادِيثَ لَا يُنْسِيكَهَا الشَّيْبُ وَالْعُمُرُ
2. طَرِبْتِ إِلَى مَنْ لَا يُؤَاتِيكَ دَارُهُ - وَمَنْ هُوَ نَائٍ وَالصَّبَابَةُ قَدْ تَضُرُّ
- ...
7. بَنِي عَمَّنَا إِنَّ الرِّكَابَ بِأَهْلِهَا - إِذَا سَاءَهَا الْمَوْلَى تَرَوْحُ وَتَبْتَكِرُ
8. بَنِي عَمَّنَا مَا أَسْرَعَ اللَّوْمَ مِنْكُمْ - إِلَيْنَا وَلَا نَبْغِي عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا نَجُرُّ
9. وَتَشْرَبُ رَنْقَ الْمَاءِ مِنْ دُونَ سُحْطِكُمْ - وَلَا يَسْتَوِي الصَّافِي مِنَ الْمَاءِ وَالْكَدِرُ
10. غَضِبْتُمْ عَلَيْنَا أَنْ قَتَلْنَا بِخَالِدٍ - بَنِي مَالِكٍ هَا إِنَّ دَا غَضِبَ مُطَرٌّ
11. وَكُنَّا إِذَا دَارَتْ عَلَيْكُمْ عَظِيمَةً - نَهَضْنَا فَلَمْ يَنْهَضْ ضِعَافٌ وَلَا ضَجْرُ
12. وَنَحْنُ إِذَا مَا الْخَيْلُ جَاءَتْ كَأَنَّهَا - جَرَادٌ زَفَتْ أَعْجَازَهُ الرِّيحُ مُنْتَشِرُ
13. إِذَا الْخَفِيرَاتُ الْبَيْضُ أَبَدَتْ خِدَامَهَا - وَقَامَتْ فَرَاثَ عَنْ مَعَاذِهَا الْأُزْرُ
14. نُحَامِي وَرَاءَ السَّبِيِّ مِنْكُمْ كَمَا حَمَتْ - أُسُودٌ ضَوَارٍ حَوْلَ أَشْبَالِهَا هُضْرُ
15. عَلَى كُلِّ مَحْبُوكِ الْمَرَائِلِ سَابِحٍ - إِذَا أُشْرِعَتْ لِلْمَوْتِ حَظِيَّةٌ سُمُرُ
16. مَطَاعِينَ فِي الْهَيْجَاءِ بِيضٌ وَجُوهُهُمْ - إِذَا ضَجَّ أَهْلُ الرُّوعِ سَارُوا وَهُمْ وَهُرُّ

<sup>131</sup> On *mawlā* pl. *mawālī*, relatives through blood or through oaths, see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>132</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 300–310 nr. 77; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. III', 492–97 nr. 19; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 80–83; Hibat Allāh ibn 'Alī Ibn al-Shajari (d. 1148), *Mukhtārāt Shu'arā' al-'Arab*, ed. Maḥmūd Ḥasan Zanāti, vol. 3 (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-I'timād, 1925), 26–28.

17. فَأَمَّا بَجَادٌ رَهْطٌ جَحَشٍ فَإِنَّهُمْ – عَلَى النَّائِبَاتِ لَا كِرَامٍ وَلَا صُبْرٍ
18. إِذَا نَهَضْتَ يَوْمًا بَجَادًا إِلَى الْعَلَا – أَبِي النَّاشِئِ الْمَوْهُونُ وَالْأَشْمَطُ الْعُمُرُ
19. تَدْرُونَ إِنْ شُدَّ الْعِصَابُ عَلَيْكُمْ – وَنَأْبَى إِذَا شُدَّ الْعِصَابُ فَمَا نَدُرُ
20. نَعَامٌ إِذَا مَا صَبِحَ فِي حَجْرَاتِكُمْ – وَأَنْتُمْ إِذَا لَمْ تَسْمَعُوا صَارِحًا دُثْرُ
21. تَرَى اللَّؤْمَ مِنْهُمْ فِي رِقَابٍ كَأَنَّهَا – رِقَابُ ضِبَاعٍ فَوْقَ آذَانِهَا الْعُفْرُ
22. إِذَا طَلَعَتْ أُولَى الْمُغِيرَةِ قَوْمُوا – كَمَا قَوْمَتْ نَيْبٌ مُخْرَمَةٌ زَجْرُ
23. أَرَى قَوْمَنَا لَا يَعْفِرُونَ دُنُونَنَا – وَنَحْنُ إِذَا مَا أَدْنَبُوا لَهُمْ عُفْرُ
24. وَنَحْنُ إِذَا جَبَبْتُمْ عَن نِسَائِكُمْ – كَمَا جَبَبْتُ مِنْ عِنْدِ أَوْلَادِهَا الْحُمُرُ
25. عَطَفْنَا الْعِتَاقَ الْجُرْدَ خَلْفَ نِسَائِكُمْ – إِذَا الْخَيْلُ مَسْفَاهَا زُبَالَةٌ أَوْ يُسْرُ
26. يَجْلُنَ بِفَيْتِيَانِ الْوَعَى بِأَكْفِهِمْ – رَدَيْنِيَّةٌ سُمُرٌ أَسِنَّتْهَا حُمُرُ
27. إِذَا أَجْحَفَتْ بِالنَّاسِ شَهْبَاءُ صَعْبَةٌ – لَهَا حَرَجَفَتْ مِمَّا يَقِلُّ بِهَا الْقُتْرُ
28. نَصَبْنَا وَكَانَ الْمَجْدُ مِنَّا سَجِيَّةً – قُدُورًا وَقَدْ تَشَقَى بِأَسْيَافِنَا الْجُرُرُ
29. وَمِنَّا الْمُحَامِي مِنْ وَرَاءِ ذِمَارِكُمْ – وَنَمْنَعُ أَخْرَاكُمُ إِذَا ضَيَّعَ الدُّبُرُ

1. Is there, in what has gone by of earlier life, a memory of stories that old age and age did not make you forget?
2. You were filled with grief by the one who did not offer his house and by the one far off – sympathy may hurt<sup>133</sup>
- ...
7. Cousins, when a relative does evil to them, the riders with their people are quick and are the first
8. Cousins, how quick is your blame against us – We don't seek [to wrong] you and commit a crime against you
9. We drink muddy water in spite of your discontentment [towards us] – Clear water isn't like muddy water
10. You were angry at us for us killing Khalid – Banū Mālik, is this not a misplaced anger?<sup>134</sup>
11. When calamity rose against you we rose for war – the ones who rose were not weaklings and disquieted<sup>135</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Variant: *lā yu'atika dhikruhu*, "the one who did not offer his memory". Variant: *wa-man huwa nā'in 'an ṭilābukum 'asir*, "and who is far off – your desire is hard to endure".

<sup>134</sup> Variant: *qatalnā bi-Māliki*, "we killed Mālik".

<sup>135</sup> Variant: *fa-lam nanhaḍ di'āfan wa-lā dujur*, "we didn't rise weakly and disquieted".

12. And we, when the horses advanced like locusts, the wind blowing the last parts of them, scattered
13. [As] when the white maidens show their anklets, stand up and the knots come loose of their waistwrapper
14. We protect the back of the captive from among you as violent lions guard their cubs<sup>1136</sup>
15. Against every horse of strong flanks, stretching forth its fore-legs when running – When the brownish Khaṭṭī spears are unsheathed to bring death<sup>1137</sup>
16. The ones who smite with the spears in war, the fair-complexioned, when the people of war cry out for help they spring [to help] and they are calm
17. But Bijād, [and] a group of Jaḥsh, in front of evil accidents they are neither noble nor steadfast
18. If one day Bijād raises up to the honour the weak youngster and the foolish one with grey hair will dislike [them]<sup>1138</sup>
19. You [only] give milk when the bond is tightened, while we, when the bond is tightened, withhold and don't give abundant milk
20. [You are like] ostriches when the voice is raised in your tents, while you are lazy when you don't hear a cry for help
21. You see their baseness in the neck like the neck of a hyena, over their ears thin, yellow hair
22. When the first of the swift horses advance, they stand up [with difficulty] like the old she-camels with sore backs, their noses pierced<sup>1139</sup>
23. I see our people, they don't pardon our wrongdoings, and we, when they do wrong, are forgiving
24. [We,] while you forsook your wives like the asses forsake their children,<sup>1140</sup>
25. We made the swift, short-haired [horses] incline behind your wives, that is, the horses whose drinking places are Zubāla or Yusur<sup>1141</sup>
26. They run around [them] with war heroes, in their hands brown Rudayna spears, their spearheads red<sup>1142</sup>
27. When an evil year and difficulty attack the people with a cold wind to which there is little smell of roasted meat
28. We set up cooking pots – glory is our natural disposition – while the camels for slaughtering maybe are sad because of our swords
29. From among us is the defender of the back of your possessions – we defend your other things when the rear parts are scattered.

<sup>1136</sup> *Huṣur*: epithet of the lion. Variant: *'uqur*, “voracious”.

<sup>1137</sup> On the *Khaṭṭī* spear, see DK12 v.7.

<sup>1138</sup> Variant: *abā l-ashmaṭu l-mazhūqu wa-l-nāshī'u l-ghumur*, “the gray-haired, lightwitted man and the young, foolish one will deter [them]”.

<sup>1139</sup> In pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry, the nose is a recurrent image of pride and honour. A pierced or lowered nose is the image of submission and baseness. See AH09 v.3; AH22 v.1.

<sup>1140</sup> The line is translated by Lane as “And we, when you flee from your women like as the wild asses have fled from the presence of their young ones”; Lane, s.v. *j-b-b*. Perhaps we can read, also in light of the following verse, the verb *jabbaba* as “to satisfy with water”: the men addressed would allow their women to drink first at a watering place, while the men from the poet's group would not only allow the women from the other group, but also the mounting animals to satisfy their thirst before they would drink themselves.

<sup>1141</sup> Variant: *ḥawla buyūtikum*, “around your houses”. Zubāla and Yusur: explained by the editors as places of watering in the area.

<sup>1142</sup> On the *Rudayna* spear, see Z14 v.6.

After an amatory opening (vv.1-6) al-Ḥuṭayʿa brings to the front the enmity between his group and the Banū Bijād, but not after he has set the tone for the poem: if a group is wronged by outsiders its members will hasten to its defence even if the attacker is somehow related to them (v.7). Whether related through birth or through an oath or alliance, a *mawlā* who attacked the group to which he was related was to be blamed.<sup>143</sup> Here, the statement by al-Ḥuṭayʿa is not just a general truth but also a threat against the Bijād: in the verses that follow he accuses them of having attacked his group, who are their “cousins” (vv.7,8). This poem is an angry reaction to the wrongdoing the Bijād b. ‘Abs have committed against al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s group (“us”, “we”, v.8). The name of his group is not specified but that should not surprise us: in the oral tradition of Arabic poetry the audience was supposed to understand the references, and otherwise the reciter or transmitter could offer some explanation. In addition, because of the identity of the opponent (Bijād b. ‘Abs) and the nature of the conflict (said to be between “cousins”, vv.7-8) we can assume that al-Ḥuṭayʿa identifies himself with the Makhzūm b. Mālik, the same group whose members he attacked in AH05 and AH05L.

The precise cause behind the conflict between the two sections of the ‘Abs is unclear, as are its development and resolution. In v.10 al-Ḥuṭayʿa refers to the killing of a certain man at the hands of his people, which would have sparked the anger of the Bijād. In the same verse he appeals to the larger group to which the Bijād and the Makhzūm both belong, the “Banū Mālik”, to defend his group against the misplaced anger of the Bijād. It is not clear whether al-Ḥuṭayʿa considers his people innocent because they did not commit the crime they were accused of or because he does not consider it a crime but a rightful killing. In any case, the innocence and unstained honour of al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s people is a recurrent theme throughout the poem, as is their self-control and moderation in responding to the unfair attack of the Bijād (vv.8,10).

Like his people (v.8), the poet had restrained himself in the poem, but now he hardens his tone. In the verses that follow he draws a sharp distinction between the honour of his group and the baseness of the Bijād. While the latter had insulted al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s group, these rose to the defence of their relatives (vv.11,14-15), a weak and powerless group repudiated by the young, inexperienced men as well as by the old and weak (vv.17-18). In v.17 we may assume that al-Ḥuṭayʿa uses the term *Jaḥsh* conscious of its ambiguity: besides the name of a clan of the Bijād, it also indicated a young she-ass. Its combination with *raḥṭ* (“pack, band”) instead of, for example, *qawm* (“people”),

---

<sup>143</sup> On *mawlā* pl. *mawālī*, relatives through blood or through oaths, see AH16 and chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

strengthens this ambiguity.<sup>144</sup> While al-Ḥuṭay'ā's group proudly refuses to follow any orders, the Bijād submit to a supreme authority (v.19). When a cry for help reaches them, the Bijād are slow to come to the rescue and deaf to the cries for help (v.20). In addition, their thick necks show that they are not used to fight (v.21). Indeed, when faced with an attack they only react with difficulty, like old camels that have been submitted (v.22; see vs.19).

After this negative picture of the Bijād, al-Ḥuṭay'ā retakes the topic of the contrast between them and his people (*qawminā*; v.23): while his group pardons the wrongdoings of the Bijād against them, the latter are unforgiving (v.23). However, the Bijād fail to defend their group, while al-Ḥuṭay'ā's people defend those in need from among the Bijād and provide for them (vv.24-26). The poem ends with a description of al-Ḥuṭay'ā's group as generous and hospitable in times of need and hunger (vv.27-28), defending that what the Bijād fail to protect (v.29).

All in all the tone of the poem is that of disappointment and anger at the Bijād. Al-Ḥuṭay'ā's group and the Bijād are related, and yet these ties have not prevented the Bijād from attacking them. In other poems al-Ḥuṭay'ā attacked and insulted even his closest relatives, but in this poem the discursive strand on allegiance is in line with the ideal of pre-Islamic society: his group endures an unfair attack but does not lower itself to the level of the Bijād. Instead, they uphold the values and virtues of their time, and defend and protect their hostile relatives. This does not mean, however, that al-Ḥuṭay'ā refrains from insulting his relatives of the Bijād: entangled with the discursive strand on allegiance is the strand on authority: in spite of the shared lineage the Bijād are characterised as inferior to al-Ḥuṭay'ā's group. Not only are the Bijād base and ignoble, they also have proven unfit to lead and to defend what is theirs. While the Bijād submit to strangers, al-Ḥuṭay'ā's group is strong and independent.

### Al-Ḥuṭay'ā and the 'Abs in an intratribal conflict

Al-Ḥuṭay'ā is remembered as a man not bound by sentiments of duty and loyalty to his kin, and as a wandering poet it seems that he could stay clear or even move away when tribal conflicts and blood feuds arose, seeking a more favourable environment among another group. In AH17 we have already seen that there is another side to his character and that the rebellious attitude against the

<sup>144</sup> The substantive *raḥṭ* carries a negative connotation. It is not common in al-Ḥuṭay'ā's poems; in at least one other occasion he uses it in combination with the Jaḥsh (AH14 vv.2-3).

institutions and values of his time does not offer the full picture: in that poem he proves loyal to his group and reviles the opponent for their disloyalty towards their kin. In spite of his sharp invectives against the ‘Abs and in spite of his shifting alliances, at least once we are told that al-Ḥuṭay’a fought alongside his ‘Absī kinsmen against a different tribe that attacked—and defeated—them.<sup>145</sup> In addition, in the following poems al-Ḥuṭay’a puts his poetical talent to use in a conflict between two ‘Absī clans.

At some point the Mālik b. Ghālib b. Quṭay’a b. ‘Abs b. Baghīḍ, the ‘Absī section to which al-Ḥuṭay’a’s alleged father Aws b. Mālik belonged, together with their cousins the Sahn b. ‘Awdh b. Ghālib b. Quṭay’a b. ‘Abs b. Baghīḍ, raided the Hawāzin. A conflict erupted when men from the two clans contended over their part of the spoils. In the conflict, al-Ḥuṭay’a sided with the Mālik b. Ghālib, and he composed the following poem against the Sahn b. ‘Awdh:<sup>146</sup>

[AH18 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَشَافَتَكَ لَيْلَى فِي اللَّمَامِ وَمَا جَزَتْ - بِمَا أَزْهَفَتْ يَوْمَ النَّقْمِ وَأَصْرَتْ  
...
7. أَلَا هَلْ لِسَهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ فَإِنِّي - أَرَى الْحَرْبَ عَنْ رُوقِ كَوَالِحِ فُزَّتِ
8. وَلَنْ يَفْعَلُوا حَتَّى تَشُولَ عَلَيْهِمْ - بِفُرْسَانِهَا شَوْلَ الْمَخَاضِ اقْمَطَرَتْ
9. عَوَائِسَ بِالشُّعْثِ الْكَمَاةِ إِذَا ابْتَعَوْا - عَلَّالَتِهَا بِالْمُحْصَدَاتِ أَصْرَتْ
10. تُنَازِعُ أَبْكَارُ النِّسَاءِ ثِيَابَهَا - إِذَا أُخْرِجَتْ مِنْ حَلْقَةِ الدَّارِ كَرَّتِ
11. بِكُلِّ فَنَاءَةٍ صَدَقَةٍ رُدِّيَةٍ - إِذَا أُكْرِهَتْ لَمْ تَنَاطِرْ وَأَتَمَّارَتْ
12. وَإِنَّ الْحِدَادَ الزُّرْقَ مِنْ أَسْلَاتِنَا - إِذَا وَاجَهْتُهُنَّ النُّحُورَ اقْشَعَرَّتِ
13. وَلَوْ وَجَدَتْ سَهُمْ عَلَى الْعَيِّ نَاصِرًا - لَقَدْ حَلَبَتْ فِيهَا نِسَاءً وَصْرَتْ
14. وَلَكِنَّ سَهُمَا أَفْسَدَتْ دَارَ غَالِبٍ - كَمَا أَعَدَّتِ الْجَرَبَى الصَّحَاخَ فَعُرَّتِ
15. وَجُرْثُومَةٍ لَا يَبْلُغُ السَّيْلُ أَصْلَهَا - رَسَا وَسَطَ عَيْسٍ عِزُّهَا وَاسْتَقَرَّتِ

<sup>145</sup> He composed a poem on this war against the Banū Riyāḥ b. Yarbū‘, from the Banū Tamīm, not included in this analysis; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 323–24 nr. 86; Goldziher, ‘Dīwān al-Hutej’a. IV’, 81–82 nr. 70.

<sup>146</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 341–46 nr. 90; Goldziher, ‘Dīwān al-Hutej’a. III’, 509–12 nr. 23; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 30–32; Ibn al-Shajari, *Mukhtārāt Ibn al-Shajari*, 3:29–31; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 4:157 vv. 13–14. The verse order differs in the different editions. Goldziher omits vv.4,17. Ṭāhā omits vv.3-4,17

16. وَإِنَّ الْمَخَاضَ الْأُدْمَ قَدْ حَالَ دُونَهَا – مَيَّانُ مِنَ الْغِرْصَانِ لَأَنْتِ وَتَرَّتِ  
 17. فَلَنْ تَعْلَفُونَا الضَّيْمَ مَا دَامَ جِذْمُنَا – وَلَمَّا تَرَوْا شَمْسَ النَّهَارِ اسْتَسْرَّتْ

1. Did Layla make you yearn for her during the visits, and not reward [you] by what she lied on the day we met and hurt you<sup>147</sup>
- ...
7. Ah! Is Sahn at peace? For I see War [and] horses, their bare long front teeth being examined
8. They won't act until it rises against them with horsemen, like pregnant animals raise their tails
9. Horses forced by the horsemen – their hair unkempt – when they want them to attack with strongly twisted whips
10. The young women pull their robes when they are forced to leave the house and flee<sup>148</sup>
11. With every strong Rudayna spear, when pierced with it it does not bend but is strong<sup>149</sup>
12. And the shining blades of our weapons, when they face them they quiver
13. If Sahn would ever be victorious over an error, the women would milk and bind the camel's udder
14. But Sahn corrupted the house of Ghālib like scabies infects the healthy body and it is disgraced
15. How many a tree, its roots not reached by the water-course, – its might amid the 'Abs was stable and steady
16. The dappled, pregnant camels, behind them are sharp spears, supple and straight
17. You won't feed us injustice as long as our roots exist and [as long as] you see the sun declining.

The poem opens with the topical image of a night spent awake because of worries and sorrows.

What follows is an invective against the Banū Sahn b. 'Awdh (vv.7-17), beginning with an exclamation of wonder or sarcasm. The Sahn b. 'Awdh think themselves safe, but this peace will soon be disrupted (v.7). The fierce war that will break out will turn their horses into quivering, hesitating animals and will make their female relatives fear for their lives (vv.8-10). Al-Ḥuṭay'a's group, on the other hand, is ready and well-equipped, and their sight alone will inspire fear in the enemy (vv.11-12). Again, al-Ḥuṭay'a turns the attention to the Sahn. The meaning of the second part of v.13 escapes me, and also the following verses are quite difficult, but what is clear is that they contain a series of reproaches against the Sahn b. 'Awdh. They have defamed the "house of Ghālib" (v.14), that is, Ghālib b. Quṭay'a b. 'Abs b. Baghīḍ, the ancestor of the two clans who now face each other after their successful raid together. The image of the firmly rooted trees in v.15 may be a reference to its heroes: steadfast and rooted among their people (vv.15-16). While the opponent

<sup>147</sup> This verse is found in *Lisān al-'Arab* as an example of the occurrence of the verb *azhafa*, closely associated with "lying, overstating, exaggerating". *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. *z-h-f*.

<sup>148</sup> Explained as "to get out of a bad situation to fall into an even worse one", Ibn al-Shajārī, *Mukhtārāt Ibn al-Shajārī*, 3:30.

<sup>149</sup> On the *Rudayna* spear, see Z14 v.6.



leaves the best of his camels (the “pregnant” ones) on the battlefield as he is forced to flee (v.16), the group of the poet (“us”) will never subdue themselves (v.17).

Less explicitly than in the previous poem (“cousins”, AH17 v.7) does al-Ḥuṭay’a here acknowledge the shared lineage between his group and the opponent. One has to know that his group also belongs to “the house of Ghālib”, now tarnished because of the baseness of the Sahn b. ‘Awdh. Contrary to AH17, al-Ḥuṭay’a does not promise his relatives of the Sahn b. ‘Awdh the assistance of his group, but instead seems to threaten them with war. In AH17 he expressed his hurt and anger at the disloyalty that the Bijād showed their relatives, but here the enmity between the two related groups apparently is justified. The discursive strand on authority is more or less absent in this poem, although, and not surprisingly, the poet puts his own group above the opponent both in terms of nobility and in terms of heroism and steadfastness in battle.

We are told that al-Ḥuṭay’a composed this previous poem (AH18) before his clan the Mālik b. Ghālib actually set out to attack the Sahn b. ‘Awdh following the clash over the spoils of war they had seized in their raid against the Hawāzin. In spite of his scornful description of the enemy in that poem, the Sahn b. ‘Awdh defeated his group. Subsequently, al-Ḥuṭay’a repented of what he had said against them (*nadima al-Ḥuṭay’a mimma qāla*) and composed the following lines:<sup>150</sup>

[AH19 wāfir]

- |  |     |
|--|-----|
| يَا نَدَمِي عَلَى سَهْمِ بْنِ عَوْذٍ - نَدَامَةٌ مَا سَفِهْتُ وَضَلَّ حِلْمِي  | . 1 |
| نَدِمْتُ نَدَامَةَ الْكُسَعِيِّ لَمَّا - شَرَيْتُ رِضًا بَنِي سَهْمٍ بِرِغْمِي | . 2 |
| نَدِمْتُ عَلَى لِسَانِ فَاتٍ مِنِّي - فَلَيْتَ بَأَنَّهُ فِي جَوْفِ عِصْمِي    | . 3 |
| هُنَالِكُمْ تَهَدَّمَتِ الرَّكَايَا - وَضُمَّنْتَ الرَّجَا فَهَوَتْ بِدَمِّ    | . 4 |

1. Oh, regret over Sahn b. ‘Awdh because I was unwise and lost my mind
2. I regretted like al-Kusa’i when I scoffed at the contentment of Sahn in spite of myself<sup>151</sup>

<sup>150</sup> Tāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 347–49 nr. 91; Goldziher, ‘Dīwān al-Hutej’a. III’, 513 nr. 24; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 4:153–54.

<sup>151</sup> The idiomatic phrase “the regret of al-Kusa’i” is explained as: a man from the Banū Kusa’, a clan or tribe from the Yemen, shot at a gazelle at night but thought he had missed it. He therefore became angry and broke his bow. When he discovered in the morning light that he had in fact killed the gazelle, he was angry at himself for having broken the weapon. Al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:103; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Ma’ārif*, 612. In an even more extensive explanation it is added that al-Kusa’i had made this bow himself, from a tree he had chosen for this purpose a long time ago, having waited until it was big enough to make a bow out of it. Zayd b. ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas’ūd b. Rifā’a Abū al-Khayr al-Ḥāshimī, *al-Amthāl* (Damascus: Dār Sa’d al-Dīn, 2002), 256.

3. I regretted a word that went away from me, I wished that it stayed inside of a bundle
4. There for [the sake of] you the wells have been demolished, their interior wall had been secured but fell down because of [my] blaming.

It is unclear when al-Ḥuṭayʿa composed this poem. According to the editors of his *dīwān*, it followed the poetical insult of AH18, in which case it would be an attempt by the poet to secure his position towards the past opponents, hoping to regain their favour or at least escape their anger and retribution for his previous insult.<sup>1152</sup> Interestingly, al-Ḥuṭayʿa does not specifically mention the ties of blood that bind him and his group to the Sahn b. ʿAwdh, nor does he try and restore the honour of the Sahn by now praising them as a most noble group within the ʿAbsī tribe.<sup>1153</sup> Without amending his past insult and without explicitly retracting it, he does emphatically express his regret over what he had said in the past (vv.1-3).<sup>1154</sup>

In v.3 the poet goes into more detail. What he regrets is the “word” or saying that accidentally “went out” from him: he presents his past invective against the Sahn b. ʿAwdh (AH18) almost as something he did not regulate, having lost control over his mind and tongue (vv.2-3).<sup>1155</sup> This underscores the position of power and authority of the poets in his time, because al-Ḥuṭayʿa does not ask forgiveness for the military opposition and perhaps the killing of men from the Sahn b. ʿAwdh by the hands of his group, their relatives; instead, he asks forgiveness for the poem he composed. We might be inclined to think that a clash on the battlefield was more serious than a poetical attack, but in al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s time poetry was a powerful discourse, and a composition in which a poet insulted a hostile clan was comparable to fighting.<sup>1156</sup> In addition, al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s wish that the words had remained locked up (v.3) speaks of the power of the poetical discourse: in al-

<sup>1152</sup> For a similar attempt, see the poems Ibn al-Zibaʿrā composed praising Muḥammad and repenting over his past invectives against him and his followers prior to his conversion; poems Z22, Z23, Z24.

<sup>1153</sup> After he had insulted the Qurashī group of the Quṣayy and had to face the consequences, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā did compose a poem in which he turned the insult into praise; Z02, Z03.

<sup>1154</sup> In these four lines he employs no less than five times the root *n-d-m*, “to repent, to regret, dislike or grieve over sth. one has done”.

<sup>1155</sup> A similar idea of composing poetry in spite of oneself and later regretting it is found in the poem Z24 by Ibn al-Zibaʿrā. It reminds us of the pre-Islamic notion of poetry as a sort of calling, with the poems as put in the mouth of the poet by a supernatural being (see paragraph 2.3.1 Authority in pre-Islamic Arabia in chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*). More than once al-Ḥuṭayʿa praises someone he had insulted in the past or the other way around (the poem AH11, for example, is the opposite of the poem AH1), but on such occasions he does not excuse the previous attitude as caused by some external power, presenting himself merely as a “mouthpiece” for a supernatural being.

<sup>1156</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

Ḥuṭay'a's representation the "message" or "words" spoken by him almost exist outside and independently of the poet.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a composed at least three other poems against the Sahn b. 'Awdh or specific members of the group. Seemingly his words of regret as expressed in AH19 did not yield the desired result and did not help him regain the favour of the opponents after his insult in AH18, for he composed the following poem, explained by the editors as a later invective against the Sahn b. 'Awdh (note the use of the same metre and rhyme as in AH19):<sup>157</sup>

[AH20 *wāfir*]

1. أَلَا هَبَّتْ أُمَامَةٌ بَعْدَ هَدْيٍ - تُعَاتِبُنِي وَتَجْبُهْنِي بِظُلْمٍ
2. تُعَاتِبُ أَنْ رَأَيْتَنِي سَافَ مَالِي - وَطَاوَعْتُ الصَّبَاءَ وَرَثَ جِسْمِي
3. وَقَنَعَنِي الْقَتِيرُ خِمَارَ شَيْبٍ - وَوَدَّعَنِي الشَّبَابُ وَرَقَّ عَظْمِي
4. فَقُلْتُ لَهَا أُمَامَةٌ لَيْسَ هَذَا - عِتَابًا بَعْدَمَا أَنْحَلْتُ جِسْمِي
5. فَإِنْ تَكُنَّ الْحَوَادِثُ أَقْصَدْتَنِي - وَأَخْطَأَهُنَّ سَهْمِي حِينَ أُرْمِي
6. فَقَدْ أَخْطَأْتُ حِينَ تَبِعْتُ سَهْمًا - سَفَاهًا مَا سَفِهْتُ وَزَلَّ جِلْمِي
7. تَبِعْتُهُمْ وَصَبَّعْتُ الْمَوَالِي - فَأَلْقُوا لِلضَّبَاعِ دَمِي وَلَحْمِي
8. وَصَبَّعْتُ الْكِرَامَةَ فَارْمَادَتْ - وَقَبَّضْتُ السَّقَاءَ فِي جَوْفِ سَلْمٍ
9. وَصَبَّعْتُ النَّعِيمَ فَبَانَ مِنِّي - وَعَانَقْتُ الْهَوَانَ وَقَلَّ طَعْمِي
10. وَوَبَّدْتُ النَّعِيمَ بِدَارِ دُلٍّ - كَذَلِكَ حِرْفَتِي وَكَذَاكَ عِلْمِي
11. فَلَا لَقِيَتْ شِمَالِي يَوْمَ خَيْرٍ - وَلَا لَقِيَتْ يَمِينِي يَوْمَ غُنْمٍ

1. Ah! Umāma woke up after resting and reproved me, and accused me of wrongdoing
2. She held against me that she had seen that my cattle died and I indulged [my] youth although my body grew old
3. Old age veiled me with a veil of white hair – youth bade farewell to me, my bones grew weak

<sup>157</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 349–52 nr. 92; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 31; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. III', 515 nr. 27; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 139–40; Ibn al-Shajarī, *Mukhtārāt Ibn al-Shajarī*, 319. The different editions present several minor variant readings, especially in the last word of some verses, but these variants do not change the meaning profoundly. See: al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 4:508; Ibn al-Athir, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 2:600–601. The vv.5-6 of this poem are combined with AH19 v.1 and a fourth verse not included in either poem into a new composition, but this is not attributed to al-Ḥuṭay'a and is put in a different context.

4. I said to her: O Umāma, this is nothing to blame me for, after you have emaciated my body<sup>1158</sup>
5. If the events [of Fate] come for me, and my arrow missed them when I shot
6. I missed when I stupidly went after [a] Sahn and my wisdom made a slip
7. I went after them and lost the relatives – they threw my blood and my flesh for the hyenas to find
8. I neglected nobility and it acted vigorously – I held for myself distress inside the bucket<sup>1159</sup>
9. I neglected goodness and it disappeared away from me – I embraced despicability and what I gave to eat became little
10. I turned goodness into a place of baseness like that was my craft and my knowledge
11. My left hand did not meet a day of goodness, my right did not meet a day of repayment.

In the first lines of the poem al-Ḥuṭay'a portrays his wife, Umāma,<sup>1160</sup> looking at him in disgust because of the poet's dire situation, impoverished and old (vv.1-5). He reproves her, for she has had a hand in it all (v.4). The theme of old age and the weakness that comes with it are common topics in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry. Although seen as a burden, it is also a sign of experience and endurance.<sup>1161</sup>

In the verses that follow al-Ḥuṭay'a describes in disheartened terms his defeat at the hand of the Sahn b. 'Awdh (vv.5-7), explained by the editors as the conflict between them and their relatives of the Mālik b. Ghālib in the aftermath of the raid they conducted together against the Hawāzin (see AH18). He went after his "relatives" (*mawālī*),<sup>1162</sup> but failed (vv.6-7) as his own foolishness prevented him from overpowering them. The poet does not speak explicitly of his group nor does he attribute the defeat to others than himself. It seems almost as if he alone had faced the Sahn b. 'Awdh and had lost. However, the "blood and flesh" that were thrown to the wild animals (v.7) cannot have been al-Ḥuṭay'a's but must be the bodies of his relatives who were killed by the Sahn b. 'Awdh. In vv.8-10 the poet describes himself as foolishly neglecting goodness and nobility, amassing distress and despicability.

<sup>1158</sup> Variant: *ba'da mā ajlamti jismi* "after you have taken away all my flesh".

<sup>1159</sup> Or: "I held for myself the drinking sack in a safe hole".

<sup>1160</sup> See also AH12. Her name appears frequently in al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems.

<sup>1161</sup> See for example the following line by an unnamed poet: *fa-qultu lahā lā tahza'ī bīfa-qallamā / yasūdū l-fatā ḥattā yashiba wa-yaṣla'ā*, "Thereupon I said to her, 'Do not scoff at me, for rarely / doth the youth become a chief till he grows old and bald'; Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, Ar. 155, Trans. 134 v.3. On the other hand, reaching old age may also be a sign of shame and disgrace, for the fact that one had not died on the battlefield in the prime of his life might imply a lack of heroism, as the poet 'Abid b. al-Abrāṣ said: *wa-l-shaybu shaynun li-man yashibu*, "and grey hair is a [mark of] shame for those who [survived and now] have grey hair"; Jones, *Early Arabic Poetry*, 315–16 v.6.

<sup>1162</sup> See footnote 1131.

If this poem was indeed composed after the remorse poem (AH19) it is, rather than a renewed insult against the opponent (as in AH18), a cynical and mocking poem on himself at his proven inability to defeat a despicable group like the Sahn b. ‘Awdh: their victory is explained by al-Ḥuṭay’a’s own errors, not by their nobility and heroism. Not in line with the proud poetical expressions of his contemporaries, who would boast of the heroism of their group even after a defeat, such a poem is not that surprising in al-Ḥuṭay’a’s corpus, a poet who did not shrink back from insulting himself, his closest relatives, and his clan.

Al-Ḥuṭay’a composed at least two other poems in which he reviled specifically the leader of the Sahn b. ‘Awdh, Qudāma b. ‘Alqama. The first of these invectives reads:<sup>163</sup>

[AH21 *tawīl*]

- لَقَدْ ذَهَبَتْ خَيْرَاتُ قَوْمٍ يَسُودُهُمْ – قُدَامَةُ خُصِيَا فَنَبَلِيٍّ مُهْمَلٍ . 1  
 مَنَعَتْ قَلُوصًا بِالْمَطَالِي وَلَمْ يَكُنْ – بِنَائِيكَ مِنْهَا غَيْرُ تُرْبٍ وَجَنْدَلٍ . 2  
 وَعَزَّتْ عَلَيْكَ الْفَحْلَ سَوْدَاءُ جَوْنَةٌ – وَقَدْ تَنْجُلُ الْأَرْحَامُ مِنْ كُلِّ مَنْجَلٍ . 3

1. The good things went away from a tribe led by Qudāma, a castrated ram: [the tribe] was an abandoned ram<sup>164</sup>
2. You prevented a young she-camel from the soft places [where it is fed], your two old she-camels have nothing but dust and rocky places
3. A very black woman overcame the noble man when it came to you<sup>165</sup> – perhaps the [your] ties of kinship trace back to all different places.

Contrary to AH18 and AH20, directed at the Sahn b. ‘Awdh as a whole, in these verses al-Ḥuṭay’a centres the attention on the Sahnī Qudāma, whom he portrays as an inexperienced, foolish leader.<sup>166</sup> Qudāma neglected important tasks of a tribal chief, for he offered no guidance to his people and did not provide forage for the animals (v.2). Clearly, he could not boast of the great deeds (*ḥasab*) that the free and noble man had to uphold, especially a man in a position of authority. But al-Ḥuṭay’a goes a step further and proceeds to question Qudāma’s lineage (*nasab*): in

<sup>163</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 311–12 nr. 79; Goldziher, ‘Dīwān al-Hutej’a. IV’, 53 nr. 42.

<sup>164</sup> Variant of the first hemistich: *tajhahama lī bi-l-sharri yawma laqītuhu ...*, “He grinned at me with evil the day I met him”.

<sup>165</sup> The first hemistich is explained in the editions by pointing to what was said of a child who resembled more his mother than his father (in appearance and character): *ghalabat ‘alayka ummuka abāka fa-ashbahathā dīnahu*, “your mother has overcome your father over you and you resemble her and not him”. It could also be read as: “The woman preferred the male camel over you”.

<sup>166</sup> On leadership in tribal society, see AH06 and chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

appearance and character the slave blood is evident and his lineage can barely be traced (v.3). In a way, this insult could negatively affect al-Ḥuṭay'a too. Claiming to be Aws b. Mālik's son, he was identifying himself as a member of the Banū 'Abs. Any insult against the forefathers of the 'Absī Qudāma was also an insult against his own group. In addition, he was a son of a slave woman and had a questionable lineage. However, al-Ḥuṭay'a does not seem to have been the type of man who cared about such details, since he more than once employed insults against others that could equally be applied to him.

In this poem, the discursive strands on allegiance and authority are well-entangled. The people or tribe (*qawm*) led by Qudāma are like a group without a chief. Implicitly, the group as a whole is portrayed as base and ignoble, for they are submissive and passive and refrain from deposing their unfit and ignoble leader and electing a new one.

In a second and longer invective against Qudāma b. 'Alqama, the leader of the Sahm b. 'Awdh, al-Ḥuṭay'a says:<sup>1167</sup>

[AH22 *ṭawīl*]

1. قُدَامَةُ أَمْسَى يَعْزُكُ الْجَهْلُ أَنْفُهُ - بِجَدَاءٍ لَمْ يُعْرِكَ بِهَا أَنْفُ فَآخِرِ
2. فَخَرْتُمْ وَلَمْ نَعْلَمْ بِحَادِثِ مَجْدِكُمْ - فَهَاتِ هَلُمَّ بَعْدَهَا لِلتَّنَافُرِ
3. وَمَنْ أَنْتُمْ إِنْآ نَسِينَا مَنْ أَنْتُمْ - وَرِيحُكُمْ مِنْ أَيِّ رِيحِ الْأَعَاصِرِ
4. فَهَذِي الَّتِي تَأْتِي عَلَى كُلِّ مَنْهَجٍ - تَبُوعُ أَمِّ الْقَعْوَاءِ خَلْفَ الدَّوَابِرِ
5. مَتَى جِئْتُمْ إِنْآ رَأَيْنَا شُخُوصَكُمْ - ضِيَالًا فَمَا إِنْ بَيْنَنَا مِنْ تَنَافُرِ
6. وَأَنْتُمْ أَلَى جِئْتُمْ مَعَ الْبَقْلِ وَالذَّبَا - فَطَارَ وَهَذَا شَخْصُكُمْ غَيْرَ طَائِرِ
7. أَرِيحُوا الْبِلَادَ مِنْكُمْ وَدَيْبِيكُمْ - بِأَعْرَاضِنَا فَعَلُ الْإِمَاءِ الْعَوَاهِرِ

1. Qudāma has come to the point that foolishness crushed his nose in the dust in which the nose of the boastful is not rubbed in it
2. You (pl.) boasted, we never heard the story of your [supposed] glory. Come on, do as if you distance yourself from it
3. Who are you? We forgot who you are – And to what violent storm does your wind belong?
4. Is this [wind] the one that passes over every place, blowing anywhere, or the that squats [like a dog] hiding at the rear of the calamities?
5. When did you arrive? We saw you forms as meagre. We certainly did not recognise you

<sup>1167</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 310 nr. 78; Goldziher, *Dīwān al-Hutej'a*, V, 181–82 nr. 86.

6. You are those that came with the spring grass and the small locusts – those can fly [in the end], but with your looks you are not even able to do that
7. So, relieve now the lands from you – your crawling [slandering] our honour is like the way of whoring slave-girls.

Like AH21, this whole poem is an attack on Qudāma's leadership, glory, lineage, experience, and wisdom. He is like a fool whose folly has caused him to stumble and to crush his "nose" in the dust (v.1).<sup>168</sup> Qudāma and his people boasted, but it was unfounded and vain (v.2)—understandably, al-Ḥuṭay'a and his people ("we", vv.2-3) did not care for what they were saying (v.2). Disregarding as weak the lineage and the deeds of this group (v.3), they dismiss their supposed predominance and power as bluff (v.3). Not only is their origin unknown, the appearance of the Sahn b. 'Awdh is compared by the poet to a disaster and calamities (v.4). Like locusts Qudāma and the Sahn b. 'Awdh appeared out of nowhere (v.5)—perhaps an image of their lack of an ancient and noble lineage (v.6). Contrary to the locusts, however, they do not vanish that easily (v.6), much to al-Ḥuṭay'a's despair and dismay (v.7).

Once again, in this invective al-Ḥuṭay'a employs an insult that could be used against himself: his mother al-Ḍarrā' was a handmaid and he the son of an unknown father. In this poem, Qudāma and his group are characterised as base and ignoble people. The fact that the Sahn b. 'Awdh have Qudāma as their leader is a clear sign of their lack of reason and their sudden appearance, a sign of their lack of a noble and longstanding lineage. The fact that al-Ḥuṭay'a's group is related to the Sahn b. 'Awdh is left unmentioned.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a could have chosen not to become involved in the clash between the Banū Mālik b. Ghālib and the Banū Sahn b. 'Awdh, two 'Absī groups. A neutral or indifferent attitude towards a conflict in which his alleged kin were involved would agree with al-Ḥuṭay'a's representation, as we find it in later sources, as a man who did not care about and even mocked the central tenet of tribal society, namely, fidelity and loyalty towards one's kin. And yet, he did become involved and sided with his alleged kin—sharing even in their defeat.

### Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the war of Dāḥis

The conflict with the Banū Sahn b. 'Awdh was not the only occasion on which al-Ḥuṭay'a became involved in a tribal conflict. Although he certainly did not fit the prototypical mould of the pre-

---

<sup>168</sup> See footnote 1139.

Islamic Bedouin, fiercely loyal to his relatives, guests, and confederates, we may have to reconsider al-Ḥuṭay'a's image as a man indifferent to all bonds and promises, driven only by greed and envy.

Siding with the kin of his alleged father Aws b. Mālik, al-Ḥuṭay'a became involved in the conflict of the War of Dāḥis, a war between the Banū 'Abs and the Banū Dhubyān—more precisely, the Fazāra, a subgroup of the Dhubyān, aided by the rest of the Dhubyān and a great part of the Ghaṭafān, the large tribal framework to which the 'Abs belonged too. The tribal area of the Ghaṭafān was north of Yathrib and thus the pasture grounds of the Dhubyān and the 'Abs were adjacent. The long War of Dāḥis took place in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, knew different phases and turns, and ended in a peace settlement towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1169</sup>

The following poem is put in the context of this war. In it, al-Ḥuṭay'a praises the 'Abs:<sup>1170</sup>

[AH23 *wāfir*]

1. أَخُو ذُبْيَانَ عَبَسُ ثُمَّ مَالَتْ - بَنُو عَبَسٍ إِلَى حَسَبٍ وَمَالٍ .1
2. فَمَا إِنْ فَضُلُ ذُبْيَانَ عَلَيْنَا - بِشَيْءٍ غَيْرِ أَقْوَالِ الضَّلَالِ .2
3. سَوَى أَنْ قُدُمُوا وَحَظُّوا عَلَيْنَا - كَمَا تَحْظَى الِيَمِينُ عَلَى الشَّمَالِ .3
4. تَنُوطُنَا بِذُبْيَانَ عَزِيزٌ - عَلَيْنَا مِثْلُ أَثْقَالِ الْجِبَالِ .4

1. The brother of Dhubyān is 'Abs – then the Banū 'Abs inclined to nobility and possessions
2. There is no excellence in Dhubyān over us except in talking nonsense
3. But they were put in preferred places and were favoured over us, as the right [hand] is favoured over the left<sup>1171</sup>
4. Our dependence from Dhubyān is extremely heavy to us, as the weight of mountains.

In the genealogies, 'Abs and Dhubyān, the ancestors of their respective tribes, are said to be brothers, sons of Baghīḍ b. Rayth b. Ghaṭafān b. Sa'd b. Qays 'Aylān.<sup>1172</sup> In the century preceding the arrival of Islam, the 'Abs dominated the other tribes of the Ghaṭafān framework. This supremacy and the bad blood it caused are adduced as part of the reasons that led to the War of Dāḥis.<sup>1173</sup> In this poem, al-Ḥuṭay'a acknowledges the close relationship between the 'Abs and the Dhubyān,

<sup>1169</sup> After peace was restored between them, the 'Abs and Dhubyān joined in a fight against the Banū 'Āmir, former allies of 'Abs. Fück, 'Ghaṭafān'; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:509ff.

<sup>1170</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 312–13 nr. 80; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. V', 187–88 nr. 90; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 127–28.

<sup>1171</sup> The right is associated with the good, the left with evil and bad omens.

<sup>1172</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ḡamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 92.

<sup>1173</sup> James A. Bellamy, 'Dāḥis', *EL2*, 12:177–79.



calling them “brothers” (v.1). Nonetheless, the ‘Abs surpass the Dhubyān in glory (v.1). If in any way superior to the ‘Abs, the Dhubyān surpass them in talking rubbish (v.2).

Facing the Dhubyān and a great part of the Ghatafān, the ‘Abs had been forced to leave their tribal area and moved around trying to find protection and aid from different tribes against the enemy. Perhaps al-Ḥuṭay’a has this in mind when he complains about the unfair “favour” and preference shown to the Dhubyān (v.3). The bond between the Dhubyān and the ‘Abs is explained by the poet as a burden to the latter (v.4). The primary meaning of the root *n-w-ṭ* is “to suspend sth., to hang sth.”, and it can be used in the metaphorical—and mocking—sense of “to hang on to (another tribe)”, to seek assimilation with a group to which one does not belong.<sup>174</sup> Here, it is the ‘Abs who are “burdened” with the ties that bind them to the Dhubyān. Implicitly, al-Ḥuṭay’a is declaring the bond of brotherhood (v.1) as fake or unequal. Although it is not entirely clear which of the two groups he considers as former strangers now assimilated, what is clear is that he accuses the Dhubyān of claiming a lineage and nobility to which they are not entitled.

In this poem, there is no trace of the changing allegiances or doubtful ascendancies for which al-Ḥuṭay’a is famous. Instead, he presents himself as a full member of the ‘Abs, of which he speaks as “we” and “us” (vv.2,4), and he sides with them against the Dhubyān (“they”, vv.2-3). As is rather common in such circumstantial poems, al-Ḥuṭay’a does not explain the reasons behind the conflict nor the course of the battles. He must have composed it around the end of the War of Dāḥis, towards the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, for at an earlier stage of the war he would have been too young. The War of Dāḥis is known for the large amount of poetry and *ayyām*-literature composed on it. Even after the end of the conflict—and up until Umayyad times, according to Bellamy—events and anecdotes from this war were used in poetry to boast or to insult.<sup>175</sup> It is possible, therefore, that al-Ḥuṭay’a composed this poem when the war was already over, looking back on it and boasting of the nobility of the ‘Abs, past and present.

Besides AH23, al-Ḥuṭay’a composed several other poems against groups and individuals from the Dhubyān. Their precise dating is unknown but, again, it is plausible that he composed them towards the end or in the aftermath of the War of Dāḥis. In the following poem al-Ḥuṭay’a reviles ‘Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn and his brother Khārīja b. Ḥiṣn, leaders of the Fazāra, the Dhubyānī faction that

---

<sup>174</sup> Lane s.v. *n-w-ṭ*. See also Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:126–27; Goldziher, ‘*Diwān al-Hutej’a*. V’, 188.

<sup>175</sup> Bellamy, ‘Dāḥis’.

was the main opponent of the ‘Abs in the war. The two men are not mentioned by name but are identified in the comments to the poem:<sup>1176</sup>

[AH24 *tawīl*]

1. حَمَدْتُ إِلَهِي أَنِّي لَمْ أَجِدْكُمْ - مِنَ الْجُوعِ مَأْوَى أَوْ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ مَهْرَبًا .1
2. ضُبَيْبَانِ جَحْلِيَّانِ فِي آمِنِ الْكُدَى - إِذَا مَا أَحَسَّ حَارِشَ اللَّيْلِ ذَنْبًا .2
3. تَبَاعَدْتُ حَتَّى عَيْرَانِي بَعْدَمَا - تَقَرَّبْتُ حَتَّى عَيْرَانِي التَّقْرُبًا .3

1. Thank God! I have not found in you two a refuge from hunger nor a shelter when in fear
2. [You] huge, fat lizards on the security of large rocks – as soon as they sense the lizard-hunter at night they waggle their tail<sup>1177</sup>
3. I withdrew to the point that they reproved me, after I had approached until they reproved me for my approaching.<sup>1178</sup>

In the short invective al-Ḥuṭayʿa expresses his great relief for the fact that he was not forced to seek the help of the two Fazārī chiefs, ʿUyayna and Khārīja, sons of Ḥiṣn (v.1). He compares them to a lizard (v.2), an animal described in rather negative terms in the various dictionaries and lexicons, and used in similarly negative sayings, comparisons, and metaphors.<sup>1179</sup> Al-Ḥuṭayʿa also plays with the phonetic similarity between the name of the opponents’ tribe, Dhubyān, and the animal’s name, *ḍubaybān* (male dual). The poet compares the two Fazārī men to confused and inexperienced (“young”) or slow (“fat, large”) animals,<sup>1180</sup> defenceless against the skilful hunter. In v.3 he reproves the two men for their attitude towards him. Based on v.3, rather enigmatic, as well

<sup>1176</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭayʿa*, 313–14 nr. 81; Goldziher, ‘Diwān al-Hutej’a. IV’, 52–53 nr. 41; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭayʿa*, 22–23.

<sup>1177</sup> *Ḥajliyān*: in the edition of Ṭammās and Goldziher: *jaḥliyān*. In both cases its meaning is not entirely clear. Ṭammās glosses *jaḥl* as “the young of a lizard”, Goldziher as “of advanced age”. The variant *ḥajl* is glossed in the edition of Ṭāhā as “large, heavy”. One of the meanings of the verb *ḥajala* is “to leap, to walk with shackled legs (or: as if the legs were shackled), to hop”; *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. ḥ-j-l. The *ḍabb* is a species of lizard, edible and known for striking with its tail. To catch the animal, the hunter would move his hand or a stick at the opening of the hole and the lizard, thinking that it was a snake, would stick out its tail to strike the attacker, enabling the hunter to grab it.

<sup>1178</sup> Variant: *tabāʿadtu ḥattā ʿayyarā bī tabāʿudi*, “I withdrew and you reproved me for my withdrawing”.

<sup>1179</sup> This lizard was considered guileful and deceitful, sometimes smelling the hunter and circumventing it. Some sayings are related to this animal: “more unable to find his right course than a *ḍabb*” (*aḥīru min al-ḍabb*), for the animal cannot find its hole after leaving it; “more deceitful than a *ḍabb*” (*akhdaʿ u min al-ḍabb*); and “more undutiful to his kindred than a *ḍabb*” (*aʿaqqu min al-ḍabb*), for the animal would eat its young ones.

<sup>1180</sup> Depending on the variant adjective and its explanation, see footnote 1177.

as on his relief expressed in v.1, it seems that al-Ḥuṭay'a composed this short invective as a reaction to a specific encounter, but the details are unknown to us.

Not caring for the fact that the Dhubyān and their subgroup of the Fazāra were related to the 'Abs, with whom he identifies here, al-Ḥuṭay'a insults two of the prominent leaders of the Dhubyān. In AH23 he had recognised the Dhubyān as a "brother" of the 'Abs, but accused the former of having abandoned the honour and nobility of their common ancestor. In the present poem he does not speak of shared blood. Obviously, the fact that the Fazāra allow these two men to lead them speaks of the baseness of the group as a whole.

In later poems, composed probably after a peace settlement put an end to the conflict between the 'Abs and Dhubyān, al-Ḥuṭay'a would praise these same two men, 'Uyayna and Khārīja,<sup>1181</sup> but contrary to AH19, in which he expressed his remorse over the insults he had directed against a fellow 'Absī group in an earlier composition (AH18), there seems to be no poem in which he regrets the present invective.

### 5.1.3 Al-Ḥuṭay'a and individuals and groups from other tribes

Remembered as a man who did not fit the mould of the pre-Islamic noble man, al-Ḥuṭay'a would indeed shift allegiance depending on the circumstances, sometimes claiming to belong to the Banū Dhuhl, sometimes to the Banū 'Abs. This is generally explained as a sign of his greediness: he would choose one group over the other if that benefitted him. Nevertheless, this is not the whole picture: we have seen that he chose to stay loyal to the 'Abs during the War of Dāḥis even though this group was subjugated by their opponents.

To clarify al-Ḥuṭay'a's understanding of the virtues and values of his time, especially those related to the discourse on allegiance and authority, in this section I will analyse three poems which tell us more about how al-Ḥuṭay'a positioned himself in his poems towards those groups and individuals who received him (or not) as a guest, and towards those who asked for his hospitality.<sup>1182</sup>

---

<sup>1181</sup> At least one of these poems was composed after the emergence of Islam, since it deals with the events of the *Ridda*; see AH30 and the comments.

<sup>1182</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

In the following lines al-Ḥuṭay'a attacks the Banū Sha'l b. 'Āmila, a South-Arabian group of which little is known.<sup>1183</sup> Apparently, they did not treat him well when he came to them, for he blames them for neglecting his hunger and thirst:<sup>1184</sup>

[AH25 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَتَيْتُ ابْنَ شَعْلٍ بِالْحُشَّاشَةِ صَادِيًّا – وَقَدْ رَكَدَتْ يَوْمًا أُصُولُ السَّمَائِمِ  
 2. فَقُلْتُ لَهُ يَا انْقَعِ صَدَائِي بِشَرَبِيَّةٍ – مِنَ الْمَاءِ تُقْصِي عَنْكَ لَوْمَةَ لَائِمٍ  
 3. فَقَالَ أَنْتَسِبُ أَعْلَمَ مَوَاقِعَ نِعْمَتِي – وَكَانَ الْقِرَى فِيكُمْ كَحَزِّ الْحَلَاقِمِ  
 4. فَقُلْتُ لَهُ أَمْسِكْ فَحَسْبُكَ إِنَّمَا – سَأَلْتُكَ صِرْفًا مِنْ جِيَادِ الْحَزَاقِمِ

1. I came to Ibn Sha'l with my last breath, thirsty, on a day the hot winds died down
2. I said to him: Quench my thirst with a drink of the water that will remove far the blame of the blamer
3. He said: State your blood line that I may know the [high] positions of my favour – The hospitality for the guest would be among you (pl.) like a cut of the throat
4. I said to him: Leave it like that – I only asked you for pure blood from the best of your veins.

In a rather dramatic tone al-Ḥuṭay'a paints the picture of his arrival at the Banū Sha'l: it was a scorching hot day and the poet was about to die of thirst (v.1). What he adds to his request for water may be a generally accepted truth regarding hospitality, an implicit threat, or both (v.2): offering water to the stranger and traveller was more than just something praiseworthy, it was almost a sacred duty. Coming from al-Ḥuṭay'a, these words must have sound like a warning, for his contemporaries knew him as a man who would insult those who did not treat him well. Indeed, al-Ḥuṭay'a implicitly accuses the Sha'l b. 'Āmila of being unwilling to help not only him but any guest (v.3). Instead of offering him some water this group—or one of their members (v.1)—demanded that al-Ḥuṭay'a recognise their power and authority (v.3). Perhaps they considered that he had approached them disrespectfully, perhaps they demanded some words of praise as a pre-condition for their hospitality. In any case it did not go as planned: the poem al-Ḥuṭay'a composed against them was remembered and transmitted, surviving until our days.

Mockingly, al-Ḥuṭay'a depicts the man's reaction at his perfectly reasonable request for some water in the summer heat: the man behaved as if the poet had demanded the blood of the

<sup>1183</sup> Ibn Durayd, *al-Ishtiqaq*, 373.

<sup>1184</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 354–55 nr. 96; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 69–70 nr. 60; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 141.

most noble of his kin (v.4). Al-Ḥuṭay'a would not hold back from insulting his own closest relatives, but he was well-aware of the prevalent discourse on allegiance of his time: not one's material possessions but one's relatives were his most valuable property. In addition, the immaterial nobility inherited from one's forefathers had to go hand in hand with displays of honour in the present. By neglecting the stranger in need, the Sha'1 b. 'Āmila in fact show that they lack the prized *ḥasab wa-nasab*, the great deeds and nobility of a free and highborn group.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's bad reputation was based not only on how he reacted to those who received him, but also on how he treated those who sought his hospitality. A whole section in the chapter on al-Ḥuṭay'a in the *Aghānī* is devoted to his ill-treatment of people who dared appeal to his hospitality.<sup>1185</sup> To an unnamed guest al-Ḥuṭay'a snarled:<sup>1186</sup>

[AH26 *wāfir*]

1. وَسَلَّمَ مَرَّتَيْنِ وَقُلْتُ مَهْلًا – كَفَّتَكَ الْمَرَّةُ الْأُولَى السَّلَامًا .1
2. وَنَفَقَ بَطْنُهُ وَدَعَا رُؤُوسًا – لِمَا قَدْ نَالَ مِنْ شَبَعٍ وَنَامًا .2

1. He greeted me twice, but I told him: Take it easy, the first hello was quite enough
2. Indeed, his belly was rumbling, then he called out to the Ru'ās for what he meanwhile had received to be satisfied and he fell asleep.

This unknown man apparently came to the poet expecting the customary hospitality. Instead of offering him water, some food, and perhaps a place to spend the night, al-Ḥuṭay'a ridiculed him. The poet did not appreciate the man greeting him twice (v.1), but it is unclear whether we must understand it in the sense that this was the second time the man had come to him or whether al-Ḥuṭay'a considered that he insisted too much, perhaps being overly friendly to try and win him over. The second verse speaks in favour of the first interpretation, for it seems to apply to an encounter in the past, when the poet did neither feed him. Instead, the man was forced to call out for help (*da'ā*) to a third party, the group of the Ru'ās.<sup>1187</sup>

<sup>1185</sup> al-İşfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:111–13.

<sup>1186</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 353–54 nr. 95; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. V', 178–79 nr. 82; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 132; al-İşfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:112.

<sup>1187</sup> There are several groups by the name of Ru'ās: the Ru'ās b. Kilāb b. Rabī'a b. 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a; the Ru'ās b. Dālān b. Sābiqa, a group from the Ḥāshid, a sub-tribe of the Yamānī tribe Hamdān; and the Ru'ās b. Dālān b. Ṣa'b b. al-Ḥārith, from the Bakil, also a sub-tribe of the Hamdān; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables

In spite of these accounts and poems, the negative picture of al-Ḥuṭay'a as "a vile soul with many vices and very few virtues"<sup>1188</sup> must be tempered: there are reports that portray him in a different light. In the accounts that follow, for example, al-Ḥuṭay'a appears as a man loyal to individuals or groups because they had shown him hospitality in the past, even if it would have been more profitable for him to distance himself from them in the present.

We are told that once al-Ḥuṭay'a was asked to compose invectives against Zayd al-Khayl from the Banū Ṭayyi', a tribe that lived on the plateau of Shammar, to the east of Yathrib. For his fierceness in battle Zayd was also known as Mulā'ib al-Asinna (Player with lances).<sup>1189</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a refused to Zayd, for Zayd had treated him well in the past. Not even the offer of many camels as a reward for his invective made him change his mind.<sup>1190</sup>

A similar account is transmitted of al-Ḥuṭay'a and another man from the Banū Ṭayyi'. According to this report, a certain Aws b. al-Ḥāritha al-Ṭā'ī had been distinguished with special favours by the Lakhmid king al-Nu'mān b. Mundhir at his court in al-Ḥira. Other members of the *wufūd al-'arab* (delegations of the Arabs) felt jealous and asked "the poets of the Arabs" to revile Aws. One of these was al-Ḥuṭay'a, whom they offered 300 camels. Reportedly, al-Ḥuṭay'a replied: "How would I revile a man if, when looking in my house, I do not see any abundance (*athāth*) or possessions (*māl*) except what came from him?"<sup>1191</sup>

To yet a third unpopular figure al-Ḥuṭay'a showed an undiplomatic and unrewarding loyalty because of how he had treated him in the past: we are told that in Muslim times, during the caliphate of 'Uthmān (r. 23-35/644-655), al-Ḥuṭay'a stayed loyal to the unpopular and isolated al-Walid b. 'Uqba. Al-Walid, 'Uthmān's half-brother, had been appointed governor of Kūfa by the caliph but fell in disgrace and was removed from office after complaints from the inhabitants of Kūfa. Already unhappy with al-Walid, the straw that broke the camel's back, so to speak, was the fact that al-Walid—allegedly—once came to prayer in the mosque while drunk. To revile al-Walid, or at least to ignore his fate, would have been more tactical for al-Ḥuṭay'a, but al-Walid had been

93, 229, 231. According to Ṭāhā, the Ru'ās in the poem are the former, from the Banū Kilāb; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 354.

<sup>1188</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2105.

<sup>1189</sup> His real name was Zayd b. Muhalhil b. Yazid b. Munhib; Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe*, 1964, 2:268.

<sup>1190</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a composed two poems in praise of Zayd, omitted in the present analysis: Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 82–85 nr. 30, 31.

<sup>1191</sup> Ṭāhā, 85–86 nr. 32; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 62 nr. 53; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 17:192.

good to him in the past. In his *dīwān* we find two poems in which al-Ḥuṭay'a defends al-Walid. In them, he does not deny the accusations presented against al-Walid, but characterises him as a noble man, possibly in contrast to those who accused him.<sup>1192</sup>

In al-Ḥuṭay'a's corpus we find a poem in praise of the Banū Kulayb and the Banū Riyāh.<sup>1193</sup> Both belonged to the Yarbū' b. Ḥaṅzala, an important group of the Banū Tamīm.<sup>1194</sup> The two groups in question do not seem to have played an important role in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times. According to Ibn Rashīq, "Abū 'Ubayda reported that no-one praised the Banū Kulayb except for al-Ḥuṭay'a",<sup>1195</sup> who said:<sup>1196</sup>

[AH27 *wāfir*]

1. لِنِعْمَ الْحَيِّ حَيِّ بَنِي كَلَيْبٍ - إِذَا مَا أَوْقَدُوا فَوْقَ الْيَفَاعِ
2. وَنِعْمَ الْحَيِّ حَيِّ بَنِي كَلَيْبٍ - إِذَا اخْتَلَطَ الدَّوَاعِي بِاللِّدَّوَاعِي
3. أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ جَارَ بَنِي زُهَيْرٍ - قَصِيرُ الْبَاعِ لَيْسَ بِذِي امْتِنَاعِ
4. وَلَيْسَ الْجَارُ جَارُ بَنِي كَلَيْبٍ - بِمُقْصَى فِي الْمَحَلِّ وَلَا مُضَاعِ
5. هُمْ صَنَعُوا لِحَارِهِمْ وَلَيْسَتْ - يَدُ الْخَرْفَاءِ وَمِثْلُ يَدِ الصَّنَاعِ
6. وَيَحْرُمُ سِرُّ جَارَتِهِمْ عَلَيْهِمْ - وَيَأْكُلُ جَارُهُمْ أَنْفَ الْقِصَاعِ
7. وَجَارُهُمْ إِذَا مَا حَلَّ فِيهِمْ - عَلَى أَكْنَافِ رَابِيَةِ يَفَاعِ
8. لَعَمْرُكَ مَا قَرَادُ بَنِي رِيَاكِ - إِذَا نُزِعَ الْقَرَادُ بِمُسْتَطَاعِ

1. Certainly, excellent above all tribes is the tribe of Banū Kulayb, as they light a fire on a hill<sup>1197</sup>

<sup>1192</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 232–35, 236–37 nr. 51, 53; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 64–67 nr. 57; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 71; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:83–85. And: Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 236 nr. 52; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 67; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 72; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 5:84. Both poems present serious difficulties in their variants and contents. Since they do not shed new light on al-Ḥuṭay'a's understanding of allegiance and authority, they will be omitted in the analysis.

<sup>1193</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a is said to have fought with his kinsmen from the 'Abs against the Riyāh b. Yarbū'. A poem on this war is found in his *dīwān*; see footnote 1145 (if they were indeed the ones he mentioned, and not the Kulayb or Kilāb, as some variants suggest). I cannot determine whether that poem against the Banū Riyāh was composed before or after the present one.

<sup>1194</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 68.

<sup>1195</sup> Ibn Rashīq, *al-'Umda*, 1981, 2:184. See also Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 68.

<sup>1196</sup> Ṭahā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 62–66 nr. 18; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 78–81 nr. 69; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 92–93.

<sup>1197</sup> I.e. for the travellers to see and to approach them.

2. And certainly, excellent is the tribe of Banū Kulayb when the callers for help mix with the callers for help
3. Did you not see that the neighbour of the Banū Zuhayr is powerless and is left unprotected?<sup>1198</sup>
4. The neighbour, the neighbour of the Banū Kulayb is not far away in a place and not neglected
5. They do everything possible<sup>1199</sup> for their neighbour, and certainly, the hand of a clumsy woman can't be compared with a hand of a skilful one
6. The wife of their neighbour is sacred to them<sup>1200</sup> and their neighbour eats from an untouched, full bowl
7. And their neighbour, when he alights with them, he is put out of reach of vilification on a hill
8. By your life, not even the ticks of the Banū Riyāḥ, when the ticks are plucked, consent (?).<sup>1201</sup>

Al-Ḥuṭayʿa praises the Banū Kulayb for their generosity, heroism, and protection of those in need. The images he uses are common in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* praise poems. The Kulayb light a fire on a hill to orient and invite strangers travelling through the desert (v.1).<sup>1202</sup> In war they protect the needy and weak (v.5), unlike others, who leave neighbours or guests unprotected during an attack or a battle (v.3). They treat their guests with due respect and generosity: the wives of the guests are to them like their own female relatives, that is, inviolable and to be protected against others (v.6).<sup>1203</sup> The image of the experienced and the clumsy women in v.5 must serve to emphasise the diligence and experience of the Kulayb in all good deeds, especially in their hospitality and protection of the stranger.

In the final verse al-Ḥuṭayʿa praises the Banū Riyāḥ b. Yarbūʿ.<sup>1204</sup> The editors offer different interpretations, but the image used seems to speak of submission and deception: plucking the ticks of a camel rendered it submissive—it was a trick to make a potential buyer believe that it was a

<sup>1198</sup> Banū Zuhayr: their identity is unknown. Perhaps a group that al-Ḥuṭayʿa encountered on his travels and did not receive him as he wished.

<sup>1199</sup> Lit. “they are resourceful, skilful”.

<sup>1200</sup> Ṭāhā: *sirr*: *nikāḥ*, i.e. “married woman”. Goldziher interprets *sirr* as “secret” and states that in poetry the act of keeping someone’s secret was one of the central aspects of fidelity.

<sup>1201</sup> The process of transmission of this text is not clear, many variants are known. Variant: *Kilāb*; *Kulayb*. A variant of this verse is found in a poem by the Umayyad poet al-Akḥṭal, who probably adopted it from al-Ḥuṭayʿa; al-Azharī, *Tahdhīb al-Lughā*, 9:44.

<sup>1202</sup> See the line of *fakhr* by Jubayhāʿ of Ashjaʿ: *fa-abšara nārī wa-hiya shaqraʿu ʿiwqīdat / bi-laylin fa-lāḥat li-l-ʿuyūni l-nawāziri*, “He then caught sight of my fire, of a reddish colour, which was kindled at night and shone forth to the eyes looking for it”; trans. Ḥusain, *Early Arabic Odes*, Ar. 223, Trans. 185 nr 74 v. 5.

<sup>1203</sup> On his travels, al-Ḥuṭayʿa was frequently accompanied by his wife(s) and at least one daughter, Mulayka. Such praise from his side is significant.

<sup>1204</sup> There are variants that read *Kilāb* and *Kulayb* (see the editions).



tranquil animal.<sup>1205</sup> While other groups may be abased and submitted, the Riyāḥ remain proudly independent (v.8).

As said, the Kulayb and the Riyāḥ were minor subgroups of the Yarbū' b. Ḥanzala. These words of al-Ḥuṭay'a on their fierceness and great deeds in battle must be taken as a hyperbole. In addition, there is an account of the Banū Kulayb refusing to aid a group, the Rubay' b. al-Ḥārith, who cried out for their help in a conflict dated around the middle of the 6<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1206</sup> Not answering a call for help of a distressed group was a serious violation of the unwritten code of *muruwwa* values and virtues, and is a frequent insult in invective poems. We may assume that al-Ḥuṭay'a knew of the Banū Kulayb's refusal to assist their guests. Although this might have been an isolated reaction of the Kulayb, pre-Islamic society did not easily forgive and certainly did not forget such faults. The misdeeds of generations back could still be used to mock their descendants, especially through poems, sayings, and nicknames. Al-Ḥuṭay'a, though, does not seem to care about the stigma of the Kulayb: they had received him well, so he praised them (vv.1-2).

In a similar vein al-Ḥuṭay'a would defend and praise the ridiculed Banū Anf al-Nāqa (see below). The name of this tribe (Sons of the Nose of the She-camel) was a mocking nickname that they inherited from an ancestor.<sup>1207</sup> It was given to him, it is said, because of a stupid action: he forgot to give the best meat of a slaughtered camel to his mother; after dividing the meat among the people, only the head and the neck of the animal were left for her. Turning the insult into praise, al-Ḥuṭay'a said about this group, in a longer poem: "Yes, a people is the nose, the tail is another people—who would call the camel's tail equal to its nose?"<sup>1208</sup>

<sup>1205</sup> Applied to people, the root *q-r-d* generally has the connotation of submission and baseness. The verbal form IV *aqrada*, for example, is explained as: to become submissive; (for a man) to cleave to the ground because of submissiveness; Lane, s.v. *q-r-d*.

<sup>1206</sup> Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:545–46; 'Alī, *al-Mufaṣṣal*, 2001, 10:38. See also: Ibn al-Kalbi, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 76; Ma'mar Abū 'Ubayda Ibn al-Muthannā (d. ca. 825), *Sharḥ Naqā'id Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*, ed. Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ḥūwar and Walid Maḥmūd Khālīš, vol. 2 (Abu Dhabi: al-Majma' al-Thaqāfi, 1998), 498.: The Kulayb are said to have been the *jirān* (hosts) of the group in distress, the Banū Rubay' b. al-Ḥārith.

<sup>1207</sup> Precisely an example of how the actions of distant ancestors could still stain a group, as indicated above. The ancestor's name was Ja'far b. Quray' b. 'Awf b. Ka'b b. Sa'd b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm, great-grandfather of Baghid b. 'Amir; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 12:369; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 93.

<sup>1208</sup> *Qawmun humu l-unfu wa-l-adhnābu ghayruhumu / wa-man yusawwi bi-unfi l-nāqati l-dhanabā*; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 93; I. Goldziher, 'Der Diwān des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. II', *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, no. 2 (1892): 175–81 nr.1 v.22; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 15–22; al-Baghdādi, *Khizānat al-Adab*, 1998, 2:117. Trans. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:52–53.

### 5.1.4 *Al-Ḥuṭay'a and the umma*

In advance, one would suspect that the institution of the *umma*, a community of people united by faith rather than lineage, and distinguished by piety rather than by nobility, would be an attractive principle for someone like al-Ḥuṭay'a. No matter how skilful and beautiful his poetry in the eyes of his contemporaries—and later critics—, as a man with a stain on his lineage he would never be put on the same level as true tribal poet-warriors of his time, heroes like Durayd b. al-Ṣimmā and 'Āmir b. al-Ṭufayl. In that sense, the ideal of the *umma* could open doors for al-Ḥuṭay'a, allowing him to distance himself from the doubts about his progenitor and perhaps to rise in the estimation of his contemporaries by piety.

Contrary to Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Ibn al-Ziba'rā, in al-Ḥuṭay'a's corpus of poetry I have not found poems prior to his conversion in which he reacts to Muḥammad and his followers, be it negatively, positively, or neutrally. This is not strange: while Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā, as members of the Quraysh, were faced with Muḥammad's preaching at an early stage, al-Ḥuṭay'a may not have come into contact with Muḥammad until relatively late. During the earliest phase of Muḥammad's preaching, many in Mecca saw in him a man who disrupted life as they knew it and threatened the stability of their town. At a later stage, and with the growth of Muḥammad's social and political power and influence, leaders of many nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes like the Hudhayl and the 'Āmir b. Ṣa'ṣa'a saw in him a man who threatened the independence of their clans and tribes. Neither the 'Abs nor the Dhuhl lived in the immediate vicinity of Mecca and in addition, as a wandering poet, al-Ḥuṭay'a moved from tribe to tribe across the peninsula. Therefore, the influence and impact of Muḥammad's message and leadership may have passed by unnoticed for al-Ḥuṭay'a for a while.

According to Ibn Qutayba, al-Ḥuṭay'a did not convert until after the death of Muḥammad, a conclusion he reaches based on the fact that the poet is not mentioned as participating in one of the various tribal delegations that came to Muḥammad in Medina.<sup>1209</sup> However, his participation in such a delegation would have been surprising, for al-Ḥuṭay'a was not a prominent member or leader of any group, the men commonly chosen for such a task.<sup>1210</sup> Although Ibn Qutayba's argument is not fully convincing, it might be true that al-Ḥuṭay'a did not convert until a relatively

<sup>1209</sup> Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:310.

<sup>1210</sup> M. Lecker and C.E. Bosworth, 'Wufūd', *EL2*, 11:219-20.

late stage of his life.<sup>1211</sup> One thing is evident: al-Ḥuṭayʿa was a prolific poet whose corpus touches upon many themes and concepts and upon major and minor events of the past and present, and yet the themes and concepts of nascent Islam as well as the events and individuals remembered as crucial in later Muslim historiography are almost completely absent in his *dīwān*.

### *Al-Ḥuṭayʿa and the Ridda*

A series of poems by al-Ḥuṭayʿa directly related to events of the nascent Muslim community are to be dated after Muḥammad's death (11/632). These poems deal with the so-called *Ridda* or War of Apostasy, the revolt against Abū Bakr's leadership as successor of Muḥammad. We do not know whether al-Ḥuṭayʿa actually fought in some of the battles of the *Ridda*, but he used his poetical talent in support of those who revolted against Abū Bakr's caliphate (r. 11-13/632-634).

In Muslim historiography, those who took part in the *Ridda* wars against Abū Bakr are usually portrayed as apostates.<sup>1212</sup> In spite of the religious connotations of the term "apostasy", at the time the motivation for the revolts seems to have been more socio-political than religious. Muḥammad's leadership and authority had long been questioned and challenged, but eventually many clans and tribes entered into covenants and treaties with him. In their opinion, however, and in line with the temporal and personal character of agreements in pre-Islamic Arabia, these covenants were not necessarily nor automatically inherited by Muḥammad's successor.<sup>1213</sup>

In a first poem on the *Ridda* al-Ḥuṭayʿa praises those who take up the arms against the caliph Abū Bakr. The poem may be specifically on the *Yawm al-Ghamr*, a battle between, on one side, the army of the caliph led by Khālīd b. al-Walīd and, on the other, troops from the Banū Asad, Ghaṭafān, and others. One of their leaders was Khārīja b. al-Ḥiṣn al-Fazārī.<sup>1214</sup> In this poem al-Ḥuṭayʿa addresses the enemy groups of the 'Abs and the Ṭayyi'. The 'Abs would eventually join the tribes who had taken up the arms against the caliph and would play an important role in the

---

<sup>1211</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 12.

<sup>1212</sup> The basic meaning of the root *r-d-d* is "to revert, to turn back"; one of the meanings of the substantive *ridda* is "apostasy", and especially: "apostasy from Islam". Lane, s.v. *r-d-d*.

<sup>1213</sup> Dostal, 'Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit', 40–41; Imhof, *Religiöser Wandel*, 142. The motivation for the "conversion" of tribes to Islam in times of Muḥammad may have been more socio-political than religious too, see the cases of the Banū Ṭayyi', who signed an agreement with Muḥammad but asked to be exempted from the obligation to pray—an exemption that they were not granted; Imhof, 284.

<sup>1214</sup> al-Balādhuri, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, 10, 102.

fight.<sup>1215</sup> According to Goldziher, we may assume that at the beginning of the revolt the ‘Abs were indecisive about which side to join, and that the following poem was composed when they still sided with Abū Bakr or at least had not taken a stand against him.<sup>1216</sup> The poem reads:<sup>1217</sup>

[AH28 *ṭawīl*]

1. أَلَا كُلُّ أَرْمَاحٍ قِصَارٍ أَدْلِيَّةٍ – فِدَاءٌ لِأَرْمَاحِ رُكُزِنَ عَلَى الْعَمْرِ
2. فَإِنَّ الذِّي أَعْطَيْتُمْ أَوْ مَنَعْتُمْ – لَكَالْتَمْرِ أَوْ أَحْلَى لِخِلْفِ بَنِي فِيهِرٍ
3. فَبَاسَتْ بَنِي عَبْسٍ وَأَفْنَاءَ طَبِيِّءٍ – وَبَاسَتْ بَنِي دُودَانَ حَاشَى بَنِي نَصْرِ
4. فِدَى لَبَنِي دُؤْيَانَ أُمِّي وَخَالَتِي – عَشِيَّةً يُحْدَى بِالرَّمَّاحِ أَبُو بَكْرٍ
5. أَبُو غَيْرٍ صَرَبٍ يَحْطُمُ الْهَامَ وَسَطُهُ – وَطَعْنٍ كَأَفْوَاهِ الْمُزَقَّقَةِ الْحُمْرِ
6. فَاقْضُوا وَلَا تَعْطُوا اللَّتَامَ مَقَادَةً – وَاقْضُوا وَإِنْ كَانَ الْقِيَامُ عَلَى الْجَمْرِ
7. أَطَعْنَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ إِذْ كَانَ صَادِقًا – فَيَا عَجَبًا مَا بَالُ دِينَ أَبِي بَكْرٍ
8. أَيُّورُنَا بَكْرًا إِذَا مَاتَ بَعْدَهُ – فَيْلِكَ وَبَيْتِ اللَّهِ قَاصِمَةَ الظَّهْرِ

1. Ah, all the short, bad spears stand ransom for the spears that were set upright in the ground next to al-Ghamr!<sup>1218</sup>
2. For what you gave or held back is like a date or sweeter to what remains of the Banū Fihr!<sup>1219</sup>

<sup>1215</sup> In other poems by contemporaries, and even in a poem by al-Ḥuṭayʿa himself, the Dhubyān together with the ‘Abs are counted amongst the opponents of Abū Bakr in the *Ridda*. See below, AH29.

<sup>1216</sup> The ‘Abs and Dhubyān would be among the first tribes to be attacked by Abū Bakr—the caliph’s army defeated them at the battle at al-Abraq, to the east of Medina. Goldziher, ‘*Diwān al-Hutejʿa*. I, 12–13; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 2:203. See also footnote 1232.

<sup>1217</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭayʿa*, 329 nr. 88; Goldziher, ‘*Diwān al-Hutejʿa*. IV’, 43–44 nr. 34; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭayʿa*, 69; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:101 vv. 7–8; al-Mubarrad, *al-Kāmil*, 1997, 1:307–8. Al-Ṭabarī attributes a variant version of the poem to al-Khuṭayl b. Aws, [half-]brother of al-Ḥuṭayʿa (al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:245, 246.) Donner’s translation of this version in al-Ṭabarī: “We obeyed the Apostle of God as long as he was among us, So, o worshipers of God, what [is so great about] Abū Bakr? // Will he bequeath [leadership of] us to a young camel (*bakr*) if he should die? That would be, in God’s name, a disaster. // Why won’t you return our delegation in time? Have you no fear of the blast of braying young camels? // Indeed, the thing requested of you, and that you denied, is like dates, or sweeter to me than dates”; Donner explains the latter verse as: “it would have been better had you complied with the delegation’s requests”; Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *The History of al-Ṭabarī. An Annotated Translation. Vol. X. The Conquest of Arabia*, ed. Iḥsān ʿAbbās and Iḥsān Yārshāṭīr, trans. Fred McGraw Donner, SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993), 47–48.

<sup>1218</sup> Al-Ghamr: water close to Medina. Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 4:211–12. Variant: *nuṣibna*, “we set upright”; Variant: *li-armāḥi l-fawārisi bi-l-Ghamri*, “for the spears of the horsemen at al-Ghamr”. On the promise to ransom someone as an expression of loyalty and close ties, see v. 4 and DK16 v.10.

3. By the arse of the Banū ‘Abs and the bands of Ṭayyi’, by the arse of the Banū Dūdān – except for the Banū Naṣr
4. [But] my mother and my aunt, let them stand ransom for the Banū Dhubyān on the evening on which Abū Bakr is driven back by spears<sup>1220</sup>
5. They didn’t hold back from their strikes, breaking the skulls in two, and from cutting wounds like open, red mouths<sup>1221</sup>
6. So then, rise up! May the ignoble not be given to you as a leader. Stand up! Even if this is like standing on live coal
7. We obeyed the messenger of God – he was truthful. But what is this! What do we have [to do] with this “religion” of Abū Bakr?<sup>1222</sup>
8. Will he bequeath us a young camel after him when he dies – by the house of God, that would be a great disaster.<sup>1223</sup>

In the turmoil at Muḥammad’s death, al-Ḥuṭay’a looks back on one of the battles and sides with those who opposed Abū Bakr. The details of the clash at al-Ghamr are unknown, but it seems to have been a minor encounter between the two armies during which Abū Bakr’s army was put to flight.<sup>1224</sup> The action of planting a spear upright in the ground (v.1) is symbolic for the victory and the appropriation of something; the fight was over, the opponents who had not been killed had fled, and the victors stood firm and controlled the battlefield.

The editors explain “what you gave or held back” (v.2) as an allusion to the *zakāt*, the obligatory alms tax instituted in Islam.<sup>1225</sup> It is unclear what al-Ḥuṭay’a means to say with the reference to the remnants of Fihr in the same verse.<sup>1226</sup> The verse is obscure, but following the praise of al-Ḥuṭay’a’s group in v.1 it is plausible to read it as a continuation of it: by not paying the

<sup>1219</sup> *Khilf* usually taken as: “the women and children” of a group; here it may refer to the remains of the Banū Fihr, that is, the Quraysh, in general.

Variant: *wa-inna llatī sa’lūkumu fa-mana’tumu – la-ka-l-tamri aw ahlā ilayya mina l-tamri*, “For what you asked and held back is like a date or sweeter than a date to me”.

<sup>1220</sup> Variant: *fidan li-Banī Naṣrin ṭarifi wa-tālidī*, “let all my property, newly acquired and inherited, stand ransom for the Banū Naṣr”. Variant: *raḥli wa-nāqatī*, “my saddle and my she-camel”.

<sup>1221</sup> Ṭāhā reads *yuhṭamu* (pass.) but that seems a mistake. Goldziher reads *yajthimu*, which in this context, said of the skulls of the enemy, I would expect in the passive voice, “to make lie down, to make fall down”.

<sup>1222</sup> Variant: *idh kāna baymanā; idh kāna ḥāḍiran; idh kāna waṣtana*; all meaning: “when he was among us”. Variant: *la-ḥaftā*, “what a stupidity!”. The second hemistich has the variant reading: *fa-yā-la ‘ibādī Allāhi mā li-Abī Bakri*, “O you servants of God [i.e. people], come to my/our rescue, and not to Abū Bakr’s”, and: *fa-yā qawmi mā sha’nū wa-sha’nu Abī Bakri*, “O you people, come! What is my affair and Abū Bakr’s?”.

<sup>1223</sup> Variant: *li-yūriṭhahā bakran idhā māta ba’dahu*, “To make us inherit a young camel after him, now that he’s dead” Variant: *la-‘amru llāhi*, “By the eternal God!”.

<sup>1224</sup> See al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-Buldān*, 10, 102.

<sup>1225</sup> A. Zysow, ‘Zakāt’, *EJ2*, 11:406-22.

<sup>1226</sup> Probably meaning the Quraysh, see footnote 1219.

obligatory *zakāt* to Abū Bakr, the group of the poet (“you”) has done well.<sup>1227</sup> Precisely the payment of the *zakāt* is adduced as one of the reasons behind the *Ridda* wars, as the tribes that entered into an agreement with Muḥammad refused to continue paying their obligatory portion after his death, since they did not consider that Abū Bakr had inherited the right to it.<sup>1228</sup>

The enemy tribes of the Banū ‘Abs and the Banū Ṭayyi’ are insulted (v.3). The phrase *afnā’ min al-nās* (“groups of people”) bears the negative connotation of “groups of people who do not know their lineage, strangers (among another tribe)”:<sup>1229</sup> this questionable lineage emphasises the disgrace of the Ṭayyi’, and as often al-Ḥuṭay’a uses an insult against others that could equally be applied to himself. The Dūdān mentioned in the same verse were a subgroup of the Banū Asad, while the Banū Naṣr, in turn, were a subgroup of the Dūdān.<sup>1230</sup> In pre-Islamic times an alliance had been established between the Ghaṭafān (with their subtribes of the ‘Abs and the Dhubyān), the Ṭayyi’, and the Asad (to which the Dūdān belonged).<sup>1231</sup> Rivalries and clashes had broken up the bond a few decades after its establishment, leading up to an even longer enmity between the groups until they settled for peace in Muslim times.<sup>1232</sup> Thus, the groups mentioned in v.3 are all former members of this alliance, turned into enemies only to be allied again under Muḥammad and Abū Bakr. The enumeration can be read as a conscious recalling of this past alliance and enmity, in which case al-Ḥuṭay’a blames the groups for making peace and submitting to Abū Bakr instead of resisting.

<sup>1227</sup> See Donner’s translation and explanation of the verse in footnote 1217: Donner follows al-Ṭabarī’s version of the poem, which puts this verse in a different order.

<sup>1228</sup> See for example: al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:241.

<sup>1229</sup> Lane, s.v. *afn-w*.

<sup>1230</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 50, 51.

<sup>1231</sup> Kindermann, ‘Asad’.

<sup>1232</sup> Indeed, an alliance possibly based on this shared past re-emerged during the *Ridda*. It is said that before the death of Muḥammad, Ṭulayḥa b. Khuwaylid b. Nawfal, a leader of the Banū Asad, had proclaimed himself a prophet, and during the *Ridda* wars he succeeded in re-establishing the alliance with the Ghaṭafān and the Ṭayyi’, joined by sections of the ‘Abs and the Dhubyān. Their resistance was eventually broken after they were defeated by the Muslim general Khālid b. al-Walid in the battle of al-Buzākha, where Ṭulayḥa was abandoned by the Fazārī leader ‘Uyayna b. Ḥiṣn and his group of the Fazāra, from the Dhubyān. Al-Ḥuṭay’a praises here the Dhubyān (v.4), which would indicate that the poem was composed before the battle of Buzākha. Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Umar al-Wāqidi (d. 822), *Kitāb al-Ridda ma‘a Nubdha min Futūḥ al-‘Irāq wa-Dhikr al-Muthannā b. Ḥāritha al-Shaybānī* (also attributed to: Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. A‘tham al-Kūfi (d. 926-927), ed. Yaḥyā Wahīb al-Jubūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990), 86–92; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:253ff.; Kindermann, ‘Asad’.

From among the Asadī group of the Banū Dūdān only the subgroup of the Banū Naṣr are exempted from the blame (v.3). In Edition Goldziher and Edition Ṭāhā we are told that these are the Naṣr b. Qu‘ayn b. al-Ḥārith b. Tha‘alaba b. Dūdān; Edition Ṭāhā adds that the Naṣr were the only Asadi group to revolt (*irtadda*) against Abū Bakr.<sup>1233</sup> Although that would explain why al-Ḥuṭay‘a excludes them from the insult, we know that at least the Banū Faq‘as b. Ṭarīf b. ‘Amr b. Qu‘ayn, also a subgroup of the Dūdān, revolted as well and fought against the army of the caliph.<sup>1234</sup> Besides the Naṣr (v.3), also the Dhubyān are exempted from al-Ḥuṭay‘a’s poetical insult (vv.4-5).<sup>1235</sup>

This poem shows how the discourse on allegiance and authority could be conducted around the beginning of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and especially around the events of the nascent Muslim community. al-Ḥuṭay‘a does not just question the legitimacy of Abū Bakr’s position as a chief but plainly denies it. The fact that Abū Bakr and his troops are driven back by al-Ḥuṭay‘a’s group (v.4) demonstrates that the caliph is neither a noble and heroic man nor a true leader: he is unable to lead his army to victory and is unwilling to stand his ground even when others flee. Even more explicit is the accusation in v.6: al-Ḥuṭay‘a portrays Abū Bakr as an ignoble, base man and exhorts anyone with some self-respect not to recognise him as a leader. Indeed, who is Abū Bakr to claim such a position of authority similar to that of Muḥammad (v.7)? The agreements that the different clans and tribes had entered into had been established with Muḥammad, “the messenger of God” (v.7)<sup>1236</sup>—why would they now be inherited by somebody else at Muḥammad’s death (v.8)?

In the poem, al-Ḥuṭay‘a substantiates his opposition to Abū Bakr through the common elements of the discourse on leadership in tribal times: Abū Bakr clearly fails to meet the expectations that society had of a tribal leader.<sup>1237</sup> In passing al-Ḥuṭay‘a uses terms with a Muslim connotation (vv.7-8), but in general he seems to look at the group of Muḥammad and his followers through the lens of tribal society. The “obedience” of which he speaks (v.7), for example, derives from the legitimate rule of Muḥammad: it was the conscious and rational decision to follow the orders of a man who had proven himself up to the task. In the same verse, al-Ḥuṭay‘a refers to *dīn Abī Bakr* (v.7). While *dīn* would come to mean “religion”, in pre-Islamic times it was used in the

---

<sup>1233</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay‘a*, 330.

<sup>1234</sup> The Banū Faq‘as were led by Ṭulayḥa b. Khuwaylid b. Nawfal, see footnote 1232.

<sup>1235</sup> See also AH29.

<sup>1236</sup> On *rasūl* (*Allāh*) as a title for Muḥammad already in early Islam, see Z22.

<sup>1237</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

sense of “habits, customs” inherited from the ancestors.<sup>1238</sup> Here, al-Ḥuṭayʿa seems to use it in the sense of “something Abū Bakr imposed on us as if it were habits of old that we were supposed to keep”.<sup>1239</sup> Being Abū Bakr an unfit and illegitimate chief, al-Ḥuṭayʿa certainly is not willing to give in to this demand of obedience (v.8). Dismissing him as a leader, in passing al-Ḥuṭayʿa uses Abū Bakr’s name to ridicule him as the successor at Muḥammad’s death: a *bakr* is a young camel.

It is more difficult to see how al-Ḥuṭayʿa understands his own group. Since he addresses the enemy by tribal names (v.3), it seems that he sees them as an alliance of clans and tribes under the leadership of Abū Bakr. Unfortunately, from the text of this poem we cannot infer with which group al-Ḥuṭayʿa identifies himself, but it is clear that to the enemy group belong the ‘Abs, the tribe of his alleged father Aws b. Mālik, with whom in the past he had associated himself—not always successfully. The text of the poem suggests that al-Ḥuṭayʿa was among those who “obeyed” Muḥammad during his life (v.7). Neither the rest of al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s poems nor other sources point in this direction. It is possible that al-Ḥuṭayʿa is including himself in the larger group of followers of Muḥammad just as he had included himself in one tribe or the other, without truly belonging to them.

At the same time, this attack by al-Ḥuṭayʿa on the ‘Abs differs from earlier poetical insults against the tribe of the ‘Abs or its members (AH05, AH05I, AH13). Those past invectives can be explained through the poet’s personal grudges sparked by the ‘Absī refusal to recognise him as one of their own. The present poem, on the other hand, is more than an angry reaction to such personal offences and shows instead al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s involvement in events that did not directly and solely affect him. Once again we see that al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s picture as we find it in the classical sources, that of a cynical and egoistic man always and only in pursuit of his own benefit and fame, may be in need of some correction.

In a few sources we find a short composition (three verses) that seems to be a poetical reply to AH28.<sup>1240</sup> It is attributed to the Muslim poet and warrior Ziyād b. Ḥaṇẓala, from the Banū Tamīm. Although it has the same metre and rhyme as AH28 and uses similar expressions and vocabulary, it must have been composed somewhat later, because in al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s poem the ‘Abs are still portrayed as not participating in the fight against Abū Bakr (v.3); in the lines attributed to

<sup>1238</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>1239</sup> See Z24 v.12.

<sup>1240</sup> al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 11:347; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya*, 1986, 6:314; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Tārīkh Dimashq*, 1995, 25:161.



Ziyād the poet speaks of a victory of Abū Bakr and his troops over, specifically, the ‘Abs and Dhubyān.<sup>1241</sup>

In a second poem on the *Ridda*, al-Ḥuṭay’a praises the ‘Abs and the Dhubyān for their role in the fight against Abū Bakr and his supporters. In AH28 al-Ḥuṭay’a had praised the Dhubyān for standing up against Abū Bakr but blamed the ‘Abs for siding with him, but now he praises both groups, an indication that the ‘Abs must have joined the fight against the caliph and his troops.

The poem reads:<sup>1242</sup>

[AH29 *wāfir*]

1. أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ ذُبْيَانًا وَعَبَسًا – لَبَاغِي الْحَرْبِ قَدْ نَزَلَا بَرَاخَا  
 2. يُقَالُ الْأَجْرَبَانِ وَنَحْنُ حَيِّي – بُنُو عَمِّ تَجَمَّعْنَا صَلَاخَا  
 3. مَنَعْنَا مَدْفَعَ الثَّلْبُوتِ حَتَّى – تَرَكْنَا رَاكِرِينَ بِه الرِّمَاحَا  
 4. نُقَاتِلُ عَنْ قُرَى غَطَفَانَ لَمَّا – خَشِينَا أَنْ تَدِلَّ وَأَنْ تُبَاخَا

1. Don't you see that Dhubyān and ‘Abs are indeed wanting to fight? They have already come down in the open
2. They are called the *Ajrabān* – We are one tribe, cousins from fathers side, we've gathered virtue and honour<sup>1243</sup>
3. We defended the *wādī* of al-Thalabūt<sup>1244</sup> until we left the spears planted upright in the ground

<sup>1241</sup> *Aqamnā lahum ‘urda l-shimāli fa-kabkabū / ka-kabkabati l-ghuzzā anākhū ‘alā l-wafri // fa-mā šabarū li-l-ḥarbi ‘inda qiyāmiḥā / šabiḥata yasmū bi-l-rijāli Abū Bakri // ṭaraqnā banī ‘Absin bi-adnā Nibājihā / wa-Dhubyāna nahnahnā bi-qāšimati l-ḡahri*; “We set up for them on the left side, then they gathered together in a jumble / like the troop of warriors who make their camels kneel on well-watered pastures // They had no endurance for war, when it arose / on the morning when Abū Bakr rose up with [his] men // We approached the Banū ‘Abs by night, at their nearer Nibāj, / and Dhubyān we scared away with back-breaking losses”; al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 1960, 3:247. Trans. Donner: al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), *The History of al-Ṭabarī Vol. X*, 49.

<sup>1242</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 60 nr. 16; Goldziher, ‘Diwān al-Hutej’a. IV’, 83–84 nr. 72; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 34.

<sup>1243</sup> Variant: *fa-qāla*, “they say”. *Al-Ajrabān*: “the two with scabies”, a name given to the alliance of the Abs and Dhubyān for the fierceness with which they would attack whoever would oppose them. The name *Ajrabān* was not only given to the alliance of the Dhubyān and the ‘Abs, but also to the alliance of the Banū Ma‘īš b. ‘Amir and the Banū Muḥārib b. Fihri: “And they were called *Ajrabān* due to the force with which they abased and disgraced whoever vied with them, as scabies disgraces”. Al-ʿIṣṣāhānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 5:48, 68. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:68; Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, *Dīwān*, 9, 94. Al-ʿIṣṣāhānī speaks of the Baghiḍ b. ‘Amir b. Lu‘ayy as the allies of the Muḥārib b. Fihri, but this must be a misspelling of Ma‘īš; see al-ʿIṣṣāhānī, *Simṭ al-Nujūm*, 1998, 1:206.

4. We will fight for the dwellings of Ghaṭafān when we fear that they'll be abased and plundered.

The poem opens with the image of the 'Abs and Dhubyān jointly prepared for battle (v.1). As al-Ḥuṭay'a expresses in the second part of v.2, the two groups were closely related, descendants of Baghiḍ b. Rayth b. Ghaṭafān.<sup>1245</sup> To express their fierceness, in v.2 it suffices to mention the name by which they are known: "the two with scabies". Just as someone affected with scabies infects anyone who comes into contact with him, the *Ajrabān* would aggressively harm whoever would dare attack them.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a had composed invectives against the 'Abs on several occasions, but all this is now forgotten: "we are one tribe" (v.2). The common eponym of a tribe instilled a notion of shared descent on its members. In times of conflict such shared ancestry could be consciously forgotten, but in times of peace or in a conflict against a common opponent the ties could be revived. In al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems we see examples of both: he composed lines reviling the Dhubyān in the context of the War of Dāḥis, presenting them as "brothers" who had deviated (AH23) or plainly as enemies (AH24), and positioning the 'Abs as the enemy of the Dhubyān (AH28), but now he reaffirms the ties of blood that unite them as "cousins".

Al-Ḥuṭay'a refers to a battle or skirmish at the *wādī* of al-Thalabūt, an event otherwise obscure. According to him, the Dhubyān and the 'Abs fought heroically and obtained the victory (v.3).<sup>1246</sup> In the final verse the poet promises, on behalf of the 'Abs and Dhubyān, that they will come to the rescue of their relatives of the Ghaṭafān to prevent their submission by strangers and to save them from abasement and plunder. The reference to the spoils of war puts the resistance against the enemy in a tribal perspective. In Muslim tradition the *Ridda* wars are characterised as a religious war, but most likely the opponents of Abū Bakr and his followers understood them in the light of tribal relations and conflicts: a strange group, led by Abū Bakr, sought to subdue and plunder them and to impose on them a leadership that they did not wish nor did agree upon (see also AH28). The only logical reaction for a group with any self-respect was to resist such attempts and to come to the rescue of their relatives and allies.

<sup>1244</sup> *Wādī* between the tribal areas of the Ṭayyi' and the Dhubyān, and is said to have been of the Banū Naṣr of the Dūdān b. Asad, the group praised in AH28 v.3; Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muḥjam al-Buldān*, 1995, 2:82.

<sup>1245</sup> See AH23.

<sup>1246</sup> On the image of spears planted in the ground, see AH28 v.1.

While in AH28 it is difficult to assess with which group al-Ḥuṭay'a identifies himself (except for the broad category of the opponents of Abū Bakr), here he seems to position himself once again as a member of the 'Abs. In AH28 he had distanced himself from this tribe, reviling them for not fighting against the unfit ruler Abū Bakr. Now that the 'Abs have joined the fight against Muḥammad's successor al-Ḥuṭay'a again presents himself as one of them in association with the Dhubyān, even to the point of explicitly invoking the ties of kinship between the 'Abs and the Dhubyān to explain their alliance and their shared nobility and honour in what is, in his eyes, a war between tribes (see AH30 v.2: it is a fight against the "Quraysh").

As in AH28, in this poem the discursive strand on allegiance and authority reveals a tribal understanding of society, in spite of the nascent community of believers, the *umma*, which transcended tribal boundaries. Al-Ḥuṭay'a's group, demarcated by ties of blood, is distinguished not just by their great deeds (*ḥasab*) but also by their noble lineage (*nasab*). With their proven ability to fight and their steadfastness they implicitly can be understood as occupying a position of authority and leadership, defending their relatives from the Ghaṭafān against the enemy (v.4).

In yet a third poem on the *Ridda* wars al-Ḥuṭay'a praises a specific individual, al-Khārija b. al-Ḥiṣn, from the Fazāra, a group of the Dhubyān. In al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān* we find several poems on the Fazāra and the Fazārī leaders 'Uyayna and Khārija, sons of Ḥiṣn. He reviled them in the context of the War of Dāḥis, a conflict between the 'Abs and Dhubyān (AH24), and he praised 'Uyayna, Khārija, or both in six other poems.<sup>1247</sup> The context of those six poems is not always clear, but we may assume that they were composed when the longstanding conflict of the War of Dāḥis had come to an end.<sup>1248</sup> In the *Ridda* wars, the Fazāra, led by 'Uyayna and Khārija, were among the groups that rebelled against the caliph Abū Bakr. The poem reads:<sup>1249</sup>

[AH30 *tawīl*]

1. فِدَى لِبْنِ حِصْنٍ يَوْمَ أَقْدَمَ حَيْلَهُ - وَقَدْ خَامَ أَقْوَامٌ طَرِيفِي وَتَالِدِي
2. أَيْ حَقَّ مَا مَنَّتْ قُرَيْشٌ نَفُوسَهَا - فَوَارِسُ أَبْطَالِ طَوْلِ السَّوَاعِدِ

<sup>1247</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 28–48 nr. 5–10.

<sup>1248</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 9–10.

<sup>1249</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 47–48 nr. 10; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 53–54 nr. 43; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 54.

3. وَقَدْ عَلِمَتْ خَيْلُ ابْنِ خُشَعَةَ أَنَّهَا - مَتَى تَلْقَى يَوْمًا غَمْرَةً لَا تُعَايِدِ
4. وَقَدْ عَلِمَتْ خَيْلُ ابْنِ خُشَعَةَ أَنَّهَا - مَتَى تَلْقَى يَوْمًا ذَا جِلَادٍ تُجَالِدِ

1. Let all my property, newly acquired and inherited, stand ransom for Ibn Ḥiṣn on the day he drove his riders forward, while the tribes were held back<sup>1250</sup>
2. They denied the rightfulness of what the Quraysh bestowed on themselves, the heroic horsemen with long arms
3. And certainly, the riders of Ibn Khush'a<sup>1251</sup> knew that, whenever they meet a day of ferocious fighting, they would not deviate<sup>1252</sup>
4. And certainly, the riders of Ibn Khush'a knew that, whenever they would encounter a day of fighting, they would fight.

At the opening, al-Ḥuṭay'a contrasts Khārija b. Ḥiṣn's attitude and character of to that of the "tribes" (v.1): while Ibn Ḥiṣn advances against the enemy, the "(hostile) tribes" shrink back in fear and cowardice. The reason for the conflict is given in v.2: Ibn Ḥiṣn refuses to recognise the authority of the Quraysh. In the commentaries to the poem it is explained as Khārija's rejection to pay the obligatory alms<sup>1253</sup> or his refusal to submit to the Quraysh. In light of the context, namely, the *Ridda* wars of the tribes against Abū Bakr's leadership at Muḥammad's death, the "Quraysh" here must refer to the group around the caliph. In AH28 al-Ḥuṭay'a had mentioned the enemy groups of the 'Abs, the Ṭayyi', and the Dūdān—except the Naṣr, and alluded to the "Fihri" or Quraysh; now he only mentions the Quraysh as the opponents of Khārija. Being Abū Bakr a Qurashī, al-Ḥuṭay'a praises Khārija for not submitting to Abū Bakr's authority and the impositions of his group, further characterised as greedy and given to stealing.

Like in AH28, al-Ḥuṭay'a praises a man and his riders for standing up against an enemy who illegitimately tries to impose something on others. The only appropriate reaction is indeed the one shown by Khārija: to stand up and fight (vv.3-4). Others may fear and retract, but truly bold

<sup>1250</sup> Variant: *li-bni Badrin yawma qaddama khaylahu*, "for Ibn Badr the day he brought forward his horse". Badr was the great-grandfather of Khārija b. Ḥiṣn.

<sup>1251</sup> Variant: *Ibni Khish'ati*. Khush'a or Khish'a; the mother of Khārija b. Ḥiṣn.

<sup>1252</sup> Some lexicographers take vv.3-4 to illustrate the terms *khish'a* and *khārija*, and thus the name of Ibn Ḥiṣn. A *khish'a* was a she-camel that died while pregnant, and whose belly was cut open to rescue the foal. The foal, in turn was known as *khārija*, for it had been taken out (*akhrajahu*) of the belly. *Tāj al-'Arūs*, s.v. *kh-sh-*; *Lisān al-'Arab*, s.v. *kh-sh-*. See also *Kitāb al-'ayn*; *Jamharat al-lughā*. Edition Ṭāhā mentions a characterisation of Khārija as *baqīr Ghaṭāfān*; perhaps he was born through a Caesarean section while his mother had passed away and was thus given this name; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 48; Goldziher, 'Dīwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 54.

<sup>1253</sup> The *zakāt*, see the comments to AH28.

and heroic men would not be stopped by that. The fact that al-Ḥuṭay'a speaks of the enemy as the Quraysh once again shows how the discursive strands on allegiance and authority, closely entangled, are still similar to those of pre-Islamic tribal Arabia: the boundaries between groups are marked by ties of blood, and legitimate authority is determined by one's lineage and recognition by the tribe.

### *Al-Ḥuṭay'a and prominent Muslims of his time*

As Abū Bakr (r. 11-13/632-634) gradually regained control over the tribes, groups and individuals are said to have returned to Islam and to have pledged allegiance to the caliph.<sup>1254</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a's must have done so as well, for in his compositions that can be dated after the *Ridda* he can be seen moving freely from town to town and from court to court, sometimes clashing with prominent members and rulers of the Muslim community, sometimes praising them, but never disqualified nor persecuted as an unbeliever or apostate. In the accounts and poems that follow, however, we will see that his conversion did not necessarily mean that he saw himself as part of a supratribal community with its own rules and expectations, or that he automatically recognised the authority of fellow Muslims from a different tribe.

Some of these encounters between al-Ḥuṭay'a and prominent contemporaries were friendlier and more casual than others.<sup>1255</sup> A hostile encounter between al-Ḥuṭay'a and a prominent and rich man of his time took place when, on one of his travels, he arrived at Kūfā. According to Edition Ṭahā, al-Ḥuṭay'a approached a house around which he saw many people—a sign of the wealth and generosity of its residents. He was told that the master of the house was 'Uṭayba b. al-Nahhās al-'Ijlī, descendant of a man known as Sayyār al-Qibāb, from the group of the 'Ijl b. Lujaym from the Bakr b. Wā'il tribe—thus a distant relative of al-Ḥuṭay'a through the poet's alleged father al-Afqam, whose group of the Dhuhl belonged to the same tribe.<sup>1256</sup> The nickname of 'Uṭayba's ancestor spoke of his generosity: in pre-Islamic times, having a round structure known as *qubba*

---

<sup>1254</sup> M. Lecker, 'al-Ridda', *EI2*, 12:692-95.

<sup>1255</sup> On such a friendly encounter, see: al-Ḥafḥānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:108.

<sup>1256</sup> Ibn al-Kalbi, *Ḥamharat An-Nasab*, 1: tables 141, 157.

(pl. *qibāb*) at the door or entrance of one's house was a sign of hospitality, of one's readiness to receive unexpected guests and travellers.<sup>1257</sup>

'Uṭayba, however, was considered stingy (*kāna yubakkkhalu*),<sup>1258</sup> and he turned al-Ḥuṭay'a away emptyhanded. Someone warned him: "you have exposed us and yourself to evil" (*la-qad 'arraḍtanā wa-naḥsaka li-l-sharr*), for the poet now certainly would compose "the worst invective" (*akhbath hijā'*) against them.<sup>1259</sup> Thus warned, 'Uṭayba reportedly sent for al-Ḥuṭay'a and tried to justify his inhospitality by blaming it on al-Ḥuṭay'a's behaviour: he had not inquired whether the inhabitants of the house wished him to enter and he had not come with "the greeting of the people of Islam" (*taslīm ahl al-Islām*).<sup>1260</sup>

Trying to regain al-Ḥuṭay'a's favour, 'Uṭayba told him that he was his guest (*ḡar*) and the greatest poet of the Arabs (*ash'ar al-'arab*). Al-Ḥuṭay'a was not impressed, and while on other occasions he presented himself as the greatest poet of the Arabs,<sup>1261</sup> now he refused the title. According to him, it was reserved for Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā, the poet for whom he acted as transmitter,<sup>1262</sup> and he proceeded to quote Zuhayr's line: "Whoever does good to save his honour

<sup>1257</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 326–27. The ancestor 'Ijl b. Luḡaym was proverbially noted for his stupidity, and this bad name affected his descendants; Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, 1:52 n. 3. According to Watt, the 'Ijl "as a whole had a reputation for niggardliness"; W. Montgomery Watt, "'Idjl", *EL2*, 3:1022–23.

<sup>1258</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 327; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 44.

<sup>1259</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:108.

<sup>1260</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 73. Implicitly, 'Uṭayba reproved al-Ḥuṭay'a for not keeping the Qur'anic rules given to the believers for when they enter a house other than their own (Q 24: 27). If he indeed reproved al-Ḥuṭay'a in this way, he most likely did so to try and mask his own greediness. Nevertheless, the allusion to the Qur'an shows that the prescriptions and prohibitions of the nascent *umma* were gaining force. The unwritten code of behaviour of pre-Islamic times was not forgotten, but coexisted now with a new codex, which would gradually crystallise in the written and oral tradition of Islam. Interesting in this respect is that in Edition Ṭāhā a third reproof by 'Uṭayba is added: "you did not greet [us] with the greeting of the cousin (*ibn al-'amm*)" (Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 327.) Through his alleged father al-Aḥqam al-Duhli al-Ḥuṭay'a was indeed related in the distance to the 'Ijl: both groups belonged to the Banū Bakr b. Wā'il. Not found in the Qur'an, this last recrimination speaks of the coexistence of and tensions between the values of pre-Islamic tribal Arabia and the nascent *umma*, a community that ideally should overcome the ties of blood in favour of the ties of faith. In an addition to the account, in Edition Ṭāhā we read that 'Uṭayba invited al-Ḥuṭay'a to sit down and explain his *nasab*, that is, his kindred or lineage by which he was related to them (Ṭāhā, 327. According to Edition Goldziher, al-Ḥuṭay'a was to explain not the *nasab* but the reason (*al-sabab*) for his arrival; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. IV', 73; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 44–45.) Unfortunately, we cannot determine whether these reproofs attributed to 'Uṭayba were indeed voiced by him or included in the narration at a later point.

<sup>1261</sup> See section: Themes in Al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems.

<sup>1262</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:107; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r wa-l-Shu'arā'*, 1:310.

protects it – Whoever does not avoid reviling is reviled”.<sup>1263</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay’a most certainly considered Zuhayr a great poet,<sup>1264</sup> but his rejection of the tribute ‘Utayba paid him and his recitation of Zuhayr’s verse were more than feigned modesty: it was a masked and sarcastic reproof. ‘Utayba had not done “good to save his honour”, as Zuhayr had described the noble man, and was thus exposed to insults. ‘Utayba must have understood the implicit threat of the impending invective, and to buy al-Ḥuṭay’a’s favour he sent a boy to accompany him to the market and instructed him to buy everything that the poet would desire. Obstinate, the poet declined the most expensive clothes and gifts and chose coarse, cotton garments instead, declaring that he did not want his people (*qawmuḥu*) to be indebted to ‘Utayba. In addition, he composed the following verses:<sup>1265</sup>

[AH31 *ṭawīl*]

1. سئلت فلم تبخل ولم تعط طائلاً – فسَيان لا ذم عليك ولا حمد  
 2. وأنت امرؤ لا الجود منك سجية – فتعطي وقد يعدي على النَّائلِ الوجد

1. You were asked and were not niggardly, but you didn’t give generously – so this is neither praise nor blame
2. You are a man whose natural disposition is not generosity, so that you would give, whereas richness might help the bestower.<sup>1266</sup>

It is an invective typical for al-Ḥuṭay’a: not obscene nor coarse, but sarcastic and deeply insulting nonetheless. In just two verses he characterises ‘Utayba as a greedy and ignoble man who only after being asked for it provided a guest with what he needed, and even then only reluctantly (v.1). His reaction to the request was half-hearted, and half-hearted is now this poem by al-Ḥuṭay’a: it is neither praise nor blame (v.1). To the audience, the blame implicit in these lukewarm words would be obvious, and v.2 does away with any possible doubt: in his reaction to al-Ḥuṭay’a ‘Utayba had shown that his natural disposition was that of greediness, and his attempt to give expensive gifts to

<sup>1263</sup> *wa-man yaj’ali l-ma’rūfa min dūna ‘irdīhi / yafirhu wa-man lā yattaqī l-shatmi yushtami*; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 327; Goldziher, ‘*Diwān al-Hutej’a*. IV’, 73; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 45; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:108.

<sup>1264</sup> Ibn Qutayba transmits that on other occasions, when inquired about the greatest poet of the Arabs, al-Ḥuṭay’a would point to the pre-Islamic poet Abū Du’ād al-Iyādī; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi’r wa-l-Shu’arā*, 1:314.

<sup>1265</sup> According to the compiler of the *Aghānī*, al-Ḥuṭay’a recited these verses when he returned from the market and ‘Utayba invited him to sit next to him at an honoured place. According to Edition Ṭāhā, al-Ḥuṭay’a recited them when he returned to his people and they blamed him for not having taken more from the “richest man of the Arabs”. Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay’a*, 326–29 nr. 87; Goldziher, ‘*Diwān al-Hutej’a*. IV’, 73–76 nr. 65; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:108–9.

<sup>1266</sup> Variant: *wa-lā yu’di ‘alā al-nā’il al-wajdu*, “whereas richness might not help the bestower”.

al-Ḥuṭayʿa was not an expression of the deeply ingrained *muruwwa* values but an effort to avoid further invectives. “Affluence helps one to be generous” (v.2), the poet mockingly and unimpressed added, that is: “you offered me just some crumbs of all what you have”. In the lore of pre-Islamic Arabia the names and stories survived of individuals who were so generous to their guests that they ruined themselves—something they were praised for.<sup>1267</sup>

In this poem al-Ḥuṭayʿa does not employ the alleged blood ties that bind him to the ʿIjl to justify his request for customary hospitality and to further blame ʿUṭayba. Neither does he pay attention to the Muslim precepts. He could have accused his unwilling host for being a bad Muslim,<sup>1268</sup> but instead his insults are based on the codex of *muruwwa*: in his greediness and inhospitality ʿUṭayba had shown to be an ignoble, base man.

Al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s silence on the—alleged—ties of blood is surprising, for in earlier poems we have seen how he would use that argument as it suited him. The fact that, according to at least one source, ʿUṭayba reproved al-Ḥuṭayʿa for not revealing that he was related to him and his people—implying that he would have treated him well had he known—would not have served as an excuse in the discourse of al-Ḥuṭayʿa’s time: one had to be hospitable and generous to strangers, not only to relatives. The poet’s silence on the precepts of Islam and his focus instead on the virtues and values of pre-Islamic society is also remarkable: in his eyes, apparently, the precepts of the *umma* did not carry the same weight as the unwritten rules of *muruwwa*.

### *Al-Ḥuṭayʿa and al-Zibriqān b. Badr*

In Muslim times, al-Ḥuṭayʿa became involved in a conflict between two individuals disputing over the leadership of the Banū Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm, al-Zibriqān b. Badr,<sup>1269</sup> and Baghiḍ b. ʿĀmir b. Shammās,<sup>1270</sup> from the Tamīmī group of the Banū Anf al-Nāqa. Baghiḍ’s group was also known as

<sup>1267</sup> Like the example of Ḥātim al-Ṭāʿī, see P.G. Emery, ‘Bedouin’, *EAL*, 145.

<sup>1268</sup> The Muslims were instructed to treat the travellers, fellow Muslims or not, well, and greediness is condemned in the Qurʾān (Q 4: 36-37; 9: 6); see chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*. These precepts could have been more or less well-known at the time: to excuse himself ʿUṭayba had implicitly pointed to rules for the guest laid down in the Qurʾān, see footnote 1260, although this excuse may have been added or altered in later times.

<sup>1269</sup> His full name: al-Zibriqān b. Badr b. Imruʿ al-Qays b. Khalaf b. Bahdala b. ʿAwf b. Kaʿb b. Saʿd b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-Ashraf*, 1996, 12:353–54.

<sup>1270</sup> His full name: Baghiḍ b. ʿĀmir b. Shammās b. Laʿy b. Jaʿfar b. Qurayʿ b. ʿAwf b. Kaʿb b. Saʿd b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm; al-Balādhurī, 12:369.



the Āl Shammās or the Banū Anf al-Nāqa. The contest between al-Zibriqān and Baghīḍ was battled out, among other things, in poetical contests between supporters of either man; most of the poems that have come down to us relating the conflict between al-Zibriqān and Baghīḍ are in favour of the latter and against al-Zibriqān.<sup>1271</sup>

The story of how al-Ḥuṭayʿa became involved in the conflict between Baghīḍ and al-Zibriqān contending over the leadership of their group of the Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm, is full of plots and intrigues. Reportedly al-Ḥuṭayʿa met al-Zibriqān on one of his travels, on his way to Iraq with his family. In exchange for poetry in praise of him, al-Zibriqān invited the poet to go to his house, where his wife (or mother) would receive him; al-Zibriqān himself was headed in another direction.<sup>1272</sup> When Baghīḍ heard that the poet lodged in his rival's house, he saw in it an opportunity to harm al-Zibriqān. According to one account, Baghīḍ and his people promised al-Ḥuṭayʿa more than he received now from al-Zibriqān. According to another version, al-Zibriqān's wife (or his mother)<sup>1273</sup> received al-Ḥuṭayʿa with disgust because of his ugliness. In either case, the poet refused the offer of Baghīḍ and his people to leave al-Zibriqān's house for, he argued, the fault of al-Zibriqān's wife was not to be held against the husband. Persistent, the Banū Anf al-Nāqa sent a whole delegation to try to convince al-Ḥuṭayʿa,<sup>1274</sup> and this time al-Ḥuṭayʿa let slip that, if he were treated badly, he would leave al-Zibriqān for the Anf al-Nāqa. These “made him covet and promised him great goods”<sup>1275</sup> and, too impatient to wait for what might come, they stirred up distrust in al-Zibriqān's household: they managed to convince al-Zibriqān's wife that al-Zibriqān wanted to take al-Ḥuṭayʿa's beautiful daughter Mulayka as his wife. Wishing to cast out the poet and his family before al-Zibriqān returned, his wife told al-Ḥuṭayʿa to take his family and set out to travel, promising that al-Zibriqān's household would join them at a later stage. Waiting in vain and

<sup>1271</sup> Goldziher, ‘Diwān al-Hutej’a. I’, 24–25. When speaking of men (poets) who were defeated in *hijā*’ and were thus deemed *mughallabūn*, that is, surpassed by others, al-Suyūṭī states: “Among the *mughallabūn* was al-Zibriqān: ‘Amr b. al-Ahtam defeated him, al-Mukhabbal al-Sa’dī defeated him, and al-Ḥuṭayʿa defeated him (*ghalabahu*)”; Jalāl al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), *al-Muzhir fī l-Lughā wa-Anwā’ihā*, ed. Fuʿād ‘Alī Maṣṣūr, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1998), 414.

<sup>1272</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:116–17. I follow here in broad outlines the accounts as found in the latter. The introductions to the different poems in the editions of al-Ḥuṭayʿa's *diwān* agree with these accounts and occasionally offer some additional details; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭayʿa*, 90–115 nr. 34; Goldziher, ‘Diwān al-Hutej’a. II’, 210–17 nr. 8; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭayʿa*, 9–15.

<sup>1273</sup> The accounts differ here and in the following passages on the identity of the woman.

<sup>1274</sup> Ibn al-Kalbī, *Ġamharat An-Nasab*, 1: table 77. Al-Kalbī does not mention Hawdha b. Shammās and his descendants, but see: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 2:531; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Iṣāba*, 1994, 5:106.

<sup>1275</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:117.

feeling abandoned, al-Ḥuṭay'a was approached once again by the Banū Anf al-Nāqa, and this time he accepted their invitation.<sup>1276</sup>

Al-Zibriqān did not stand still and after calling his group, the Bahdala b. 'Awf, for help, he set out against Baghīḍ and his close relatives of the Āl Shammās. They did not give in to his request to return to him his guest (*jār*), adducing his neglect for al-Ḥuṭay'a, but faced with an imminent war his people told Baghīḍ to send al-Ḥuṭay'a back to al-Zibriqān. Baghīḍ refused: "I will not send him away after I took him as a guest". Being al-Ḥuṭay'a "a free man, master of his own affairs", Baghīḍ gave him the choice of staying or leaving.<sup>1277</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a chose to stay with Baghīḍ and his clan (*raḥṭahu*). After al-Ḥuṭay'a had reassured al-Zibriqān that he had not left him because of discontentment and faults (*sukḥṭ wa-dhamm*), al-Zibriqān left.<sup>1278</sup>

Against the hopes of the Āl Shammās, al-Ḥuṭay'a praised them but refrained from reviling al-Zibriqān with the argument that the fault of al-Zibriqān's wife was not to be held against al-Zibriqān himself.<sup>1279</sup> It was not until al-Zibriqān had another poet compose an invective against Baghīḍ that al-Ḥuṭay'a composed a poem in which he praised his present and insulted his former host.<sup>1280</sup> Once he started, however, he did not hold back, and composed against al-Zibriqān lines that have been deemed "the worst invective" by literary critics.<sup>1281</sup> In al-Ḥuṭay'a's corpus, the poems in praise of Baghīḍ and his people and against al-Zibriqān make up a significant part (14 poems, of considerable length).<sup>1282</sup> Not surprisingly, the poems revolve around the contrast between the two groups: the nobility, generosity, loyalty, and heroism of the Āl Shammās versus the ignoble, base, greedy al-Zibriqān and his relatives.

I will include one of al-Ḥuṭay'a's poems on the conflict, namely, al-Ḥuṭay'a's reply to the insult by another poet against Baghīḍ's people, the insult which, reportedly, sparked al-Ḥuṭay'a's anger enough to overcome his reluctance to insult al-Zibriqān. As it has been transmitted, the poem by al-Zibriqān's supporter consists of eight verses; al-Ḥuṭay'a's reply is 42 verses long (48 in

<sup>1276</sup> al-*Iṣfahānī*, 2:117–18.

<sup>1277</sup> According to another version, al-Zibriqān appealed to 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb for assistance against Baghīḍ, and 'Umar ruled that al-Ḥuṭay'a was free to choose. Al-*Iṣfahānī*, 2:118.

<sup>1278</sup> al-*Iṣfahānī*, 2:118.

<sup>1279</sup> al-*Iṣfahānī*, 2:118–19.

<sup>1280</sup> al-*Iṣfahānī*, 2:119.

<sup>1281</sup> Ḥassān b. Thābit, who had been asked to act as a judge, stated that al-Ḥuṭay'a's invective was very harsh: "He has shat on him [al-Zibriqān]!"; see footnote 1054.

<sup>1282</sup> Ṭahā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 98–206, 283–96 nr. 34-44, 71-73.

Edition Goldziher). The selection of a few verses from such a composition might seem a trick to tailor the contents to the argument, but it is too long to include and analyse in full here. The selected verses speak most clearly about al-Ḥuṭay'a's understanding of allegiance and authority.<sup>1283</sup>

[AH32 wāfir]

1. أَلَا أُبْلِغُ بَنِي عَوْفِ بْنِ كَعْبٍ - فَهَلْ قَوْمٌ عَلَى خُلُقٍ سَوَاءٍ  
...
4. أَلَمْ أَكُ جَارِكُمْ فَتَرَكَتُمُونِي - لِكَلْبِي فِي دِيَارِكُمْ عَوَاءٌ  
5. وَأَتَيْتُ الْعِشَاءَ إِلَى سُهَيْلٍ - أَوْ الشَّعْرَى فَطَالَ بِي الْأَنَاءُ  
...
8. وَمَلَّمَا أَنْ مَدَحْتُ الْقَوْمَ قُلْتُمْ - هَجَوْتُمْ وَلَا يَحِلُّ لَكَ الْهَجَاءُ  
9. أَلَمْ أَكُ مُسْلِمًا فَيَكُونُ بَيْنِي - وَبَيْنَكُمْ الْمَوَدَّةُ وَالْإِحَاءُ  
10. فَلَمْ أَشْتُمْ لَكُمْ حَسَبًا وَلَكِنْ - حَدَوْتُ بِحَيْثُ يُسْتَمَعُ الْحَدَاءُ  
...
16. وَإِنِّي قَدْ عَلِقْتُ بِحَبْلِ قَوْمٍ - أَعَانَهُمْ عَلَى الْحَسَبِ التَّرَاءُ  
...
22. فَأَبْقُوا لَا أَبَا لَكُمْ عَلَيْهِمْ - فَإِنَّ مَلَامَةَ الْمَوْلَى شَفَاءُ  
23. وَإِنَّ أَبَاكُمْ الْأَدْنَى أَبُوهُمْ - وَإِنَّ صُدُورَهُمْ لَكُمْ بُرَاءُ  
24. وَإِنَّ سَعَاتِهِمْ لَكُمْ سَعَاءٌ - وَإِنَّ نَمَاءَهُمْ لَكُمْ نَمَاءُ  
25. وَإِنَّ سَنَاءَهُمْ لَكُمْ سَنَاءٌ - وَإِنَّ وِفَاءَهُمْ لَكُمْ وِفَاءُ  
...

1. Woe, inform the Banū 'Awf b. Ka'b – Is there a people equal in nature?

...

4. Was I not your (pl.) guest? – You left me, my dog is howling over [the traces of] your deserted camps

<sup>1283</sup> Ṭahā, 90–115 nr. 34; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. II', 210–17 nr. 8; Ṭammās, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 9–15; Ibn al-Shajārī, *Mukhtārāt Ibn al-Shajārī*, 3:10–12. For two more verses, see footnote 1295.

5. I postponed dinner watching the rising of Suhayl and Shi'rā – the time was long to me<sup>1284</sup>  
 ...  
 8. When I praised the people, you said: You satirised, while *hijā'* is not licit for you  
 9. Was I not a Muslim so that there is affection and brotherhood between you (pl.) and me?<sup>1285</sup>  
 10. I did not revile you (pl.) for your parentage – I sang in such a way that my singing was heard  
 ...  
 16. I clung to the bond of a people whose wealth supports their nobility  
 ...  
 22. So leave them – You have no father!<sup>1286</sup> – The blame of a cousin is misery<sup>1287</sup>  
 23. Their father is your nearest father – Their souls have become free [of malice] towards you<sup>1288</sup>  
 24. Their striving [for glory] is your striving, their growth is your growth  
 25. Their high rank is your high rank, their faithfulness to promises is faithfulness to you.  
 ...

The convention of one or two unnamed messengers who are to transmit a message is very common in Arabic poetry (v.1). Cleverly, al-Ḥuṭay'a uses the conventions of the amatory opening (*nasīb*) of a classical ode, the sorrow at the sight of a now abandoned campsite where once the beloved lived, to denounce the ill-treatment he endured at the hands of his former hosts (vv.4-5).

In the verses that follow al-Ḥuṭay'a expresses his grudges towards al-Zibriqān, justifying his choice for Baghīḍ as his host and protector and praising him and his kin (vv.6-7). Contrary to other—later?—poems, al-Ḥuṭay'a refrains from openly insulting al-Zibriqān. Noteworthy is v.9. A response to the reproof put in the mouth of al-Zibriqān in v.8 (note the use of the first person sg. for the poet and second person pl. for al-Zibriqān's group, vv.7-11), v.9 speaks of a relationship between the two men that made it unlawful for them to attack each other, a bond that al-Ḥuṭay'a had respected (v.10). In one variant this unlawfulness derives from the fact that they were "Muslim" to each other, that is, that they both belonged to the *umma*. The other variant (*muḥrim*, "unlawful") does not specify the precise reason for the unlawfulness, which could also be the relationship between host and guest. In light of the poem as a whole and of al-Ḥuṭay'a's discourse on allegiance, the second variant is the most plausible: not because both were Muslims, but because he was al-Zibriqān's guest al-Ḥuṭay'a was entitled to generosity and protection.

In vv.11-15 the poet refutes the blame against Baghīḍ and his people and put matters right by praising them. This praise continues in vv.16-21, verses in which al-Ḥuṭay'a does not refer

<sup>1284</sup> Or: "I postponed the evening meal until...". Variant *ṭāla biya l-'ashā'u*, "the night was long to me". Suhayl and Shi'rā: Canopus and Sirius, the two bright stars that appear towards the end of the night.

<sup>1285</sup> Variant: *a-lam aku muḥriman*, "Am I not to you unlawful to fight?".

<sup>1286</sup> "You have no father": a serious and common insult that questions one's ascendancy.

<sup>1287</sup> *Mawlā*: client or cousin, relative. See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>1288</sup> See the notes in Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. II', 216.

anymore to the opponent but focuses solely on extolling Baghīḍ's group, the Quray' b. 'Awf: they are distinguished by nobility, loyalty, faithfulness to promises and oaths, and readiness to help those in need. From all this derives the exhortation which the poet directs at al-Zibriqān's group, the Bahdala b. 'Awf ("you"): they must stop reviling their cousins (v.22). Instead, they should seek to attach themselves more closely to the Banū Quray', who do not hate them (v.23), because perhaps this way the Bahdala b. 'Awf could share in the nobility of their relatives (vv.24-25). After a short interlude (vv.30-31), the final section no longer is centred on the conflict between al-Zibriqān and Baghīḍ, but on the issue of old age, Fate, and death (vv.32-42).

Looking back at v.1, we see how al-Ḥuṭay'a uses the discursive strand on allegiance to reprove al-Zibriqān for his hostility towards Baghīḍ, reminding him of their shared blood ties: both men belong to the same subgroup of the Zaydmanāt b. Tamīm, the Banū 'Awf b. Ka'b. The poem reads as a long accusation against al-Zibriqān and his people for their infringement, not so much of Muslim precepts and values, but of the codex of *murūwwa* values of pre-Islamic times. Their disloyalty towards their relatives and their guest is a clear show of their baseness and lowliness.

### *Al-Ḥuṭay'a on his deathbed*

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's irreverence for all that was held dear by his contemporaries did not diminish when he felt his end approaching, well after the emergence of Islam. We have seen already the poem he composed against his sons when he was about to die (AH08). On his deathbed the poet reportedly was asked to say some last words and to make his testament. The details differ across the accounts, but in all of them al-Ḥuṭay'a focuses not on what may lie beyond the grave but on the present world. Urged by the bystanders, his relatives (*qawmuḥu*), to commend his soul to God, al-Ḥuṭay'a replied: "Woe for the poetry that is badly transmitted" (*waylun li-l-shi'r min riwāyat al-saw*). They insisted: "Commend [your soul], that God may have mercy on you, O Ḥuṭay'a!", but instead he started talking about the greatest poets of his time and of the past, quoting some verses. On himself, he said:<sup>1289</sup>

---

<sup>1289</sup> Ṭahā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 355–59 nr. 97; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 33–34; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. V', 183–85 nr. 88; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:127–28.

[AH33 *rajaz*]

1. قَدْ كُنْتُ أَحْيَاناً شَدِيدَ الْمُعْتَمَدِ .1
2. قَدْ كُنْتُ ذَا غَرْبٍ عَلَى الْخَصْمِ الْأَلْدِّ .2
3. قَدْ وَرَدْتُ نَفْسِي وَمَا كَادَتْ تَرْدُ .3

1. I was at times strong in intention
2. I was the owner of a sharp tongue against the violent adversary<sup>1290</sup>
3. My soul went to the water to drink and hardly quenched its thirst.

As in the invective he composed against himself (AH01), in these verses al-Ḥuṭay'a portrays himself as a proud, independent man, feared by others for his poetical talent even by those who threatened him with physical violence (v.2). As we have come to see, the tongue was a weapon of war which, just like the sword, served to attack and to defend. At times al-Ḥuṭay'a used his poems in defence of his tribe in conflicts, but in this poem we may presume that he is speaking of its use for himself against those he considered his opponents for various reasons. The last verse, in which he speaks of his soul's unquenchable thirst, he may be referring to an unwearying anger, not quenched by his harsh invectives and insults.

Again, his relatives urged him: "Commend [your soul] to what benefits you!", but he did not heed their words. When they tried to have him at least repeat after them the confession "There is no god but God", he recited instead two *rajaz* verses by an anonymous poet: "She said, glancing disapprovingly and frightened: // I take refuge in my Lord from you, and inviolable [I am to you]."<sup>1291</sup> Al-Ḥuṭay'a's intention behind these verses is difficult to interpret. Did he recite them in an ironical tone? In his replies to the pious questions of those around him, al-Ḥuṭay'a appears as a careless, even frivolous man in the face of death and afterlife. We may assume, also in light of what follows, that he recited his own poem and the lines by another as a haughty rejection of resorting to God in his last moments, an illustration of his irreverent behaviour up until his death.

<sup>1290</sup> Variant: *qad kuntu ahyānan 'alā l-khaṣmi al-aladd*, "I was at times against the violent adversary".

<sup>1291</sup> *Qālat wa-fihā ḥaydatun wa-dhu'ru // 'awdhun bi-rabbī minkumu wa-ḥujru; Ṭāhā, Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 357; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:128. These two anonymous verses are quoted in many classical lexicographical works, commentaries on the Qur'ān, etc. as an example of the usage of the *maṣdar* form *'awdhun bi-* in the sense of *'ādha bi-* or *ista'ādha bi-*, that is, "to seek refuge by" (usually: by God), as well as an example of the term *ḥujr* or *ḥijr*.

This interpretation of the quotation as an arrogant rejection of resorting to God in his final moments is strengthened by the following. About to die, al-Ḥuṭay'a reportedly ignored the Muslim institution of inheritance. According to one account, he declared that only his sons were to inherit, thus following the pre-Islamic customary law.<sup>1292</sup> According to a second report, his daughter(s) were to receive twice as much as his sons. Those around him tried to correct him and told him that God did not order it that way, to which al-Ḥuṭay'a replied: "But this is how I command it" (*lakinnī hakadhā qaḍaytu*).<sup>1293</sup>

Finally, he requested to be put on a she-ass and to ride upon it until he would pass away, for: "The noble (*al-karīm*) does not die on his bed".<sup>1294</sup> It is hard to read this request in any other sense than as an ironical statement. In pre-Islamic poetry, old age is associated with experience and wisdom, but also with weakness and humiliation at the sight of new generations that do not need the elderly anymore.<sup>1295</sup> The ideal for the noble leader was to die not of old age in his house but heroically on the battlefield.<sup>1296</sup> Barely any verses in his corpus can be qualified as self-praise: when he speaks of himself, he does so in a mocking tone. In that light, this sudden self-characterisation as a noble man and his request to be ridden around until his death seem more than anything a final mockery of himself and the bystanders. In some final *rajaz* verses attributed to al-Ḥuṭay'a on himself the irony of this last wish is illustrated:<sup>1297</sup>

[AH34 *rajaz*]

- |                                       |     |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| لَا أَحَدٌ أَلَامٌ مِنْ حُطَيْيَةٍ    | . 1 |
| هَجَا بَنِيهِ وَهَجَا الْمُرِيَّةِ    | . 2 |
| مِنْ لُؤْمِهِ مَاتَ عَلَيَّ فُرِيَّةِ | . 3 |

<sup>1292</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 32–33; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. V', 183.

<sup>1293</sup> al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:128.

<sup>1294</sup> al-Isfahānī, 2:128.

<sup>1295</sup> In the words of al-Ḥuṭay'a, *wa-ya'khudhuhu l-hudāju idhā hadāhu / walidu l-ḥayyi fi yadihi l-ridā'u // wa-yanzuru ḥawlahu fa-yarā banihi / ḥiwa'an min warā'ihimi ḥiwā'u*, "He takes to quick staggering when the youngster of the clan drives him forth, the sword in his hand // He looks around him and sees his sons – tents with tents behind them [i.e. they have families of their own]" (Trans. MC). These are vv.38–39 from the poem AH32 against al-Zibriqān; Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 90–115 nr. 34; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. II', 210–17 nr. 8; Ṭammās, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 9–15; Ibn al-Shajarī, *Mukhtārāt Ibn al-Shajarī*, 3:10–12.

<sup>1296</sup> See footnote 1161.

<sup>1297</sup> Ṭāhā, *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 355–59 nr. 97; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 33–34; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. V', 183–85 nr. 88; al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:127–28.

1. Nobody is meaner than al-Ḥuṭay'a
2. He satirised his sons, he satirised the missus
3. Because of his meanness he died on a wild ass.

Goldziher considers these verses not as a composition by al-Ḥuṭay'a but as a poetical judgement of his character and life by others, but other editions attribute it to al-Ḥuṭay'a without further comment.<sup>1298</sup> The verses do fit al-Ḥuṭay'a's discourse on life, on himself, and on the people around him, like the poem in which he insulted himself at the lack of another victim (AH01), and like his response to the caliph 'Umar's reproach at his insults against his clan: "But caliph, I have made *hijā*' against my father and mother, my wife, and myself".<sup>1299</sup>

A final poem attributed to al-Ḥuṭay'a must be included here. It is found in the *Aghānī*, and in it the poet declares the gathering of property (*māl*) to be vain, and piety (*taqwā Allāh*) as desirable:<sup>1300</sup>

[AH35 *wāfir*]

1. وَلَسْتُ أَرَى السَّعَادَةَ جَمْعَ مَالٍ - وَلَكِنَّ التَّقِيَّ هُوَ السَّعِيدُ
2. وَتَقْوَى اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ ذُخْرًا - وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ لِلْآتِقَى مَزِيدٌ
3. وَمَا لَا بُدَّ أَنْ يَأْتِيَ قَرِيبٌ - وَلَكِنَّ الَّذِي يَمْضِي بَعِيدٌ

1. I don't see the gathering of properties as happiness, but the pious man is the one who is happy
2. The fear of God is the best of treasures, and with God there is more of it for the most pious
3. What without any doubt will come is close by but what is past is far away.

This poem is not included in Edition Goldziher since Goldziher doubts its authenticity.<sup>1301</sup> Indeed, its contents do not seem to agree with the picture painted of al-Ḥuṭay'a's character, with his greediness and constant pursuit of money and goods. However, in the accounts of his life we have encountered examples that amend that generally dark picture of the poet: more than once he is said to have stayed loyal to individuals who fell out of grace in spite of the material rewards or benefits he thus missed out on. It is true, however, that the poem does not fit al-Ḥuṭay'a's attitude towards Islam. Even though he is said to have returned to Islam after the *Ridda* wars, the spirit of

<sup>1298</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 34.

<sup>1299</sup> See above, the introduction to AH03.

<sup>1300</sup> Ṭahā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 393 nr. 108; Ṭammās, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 47; al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 2:113; al-Baṣrī, *al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*, 1999, 2:929 nr. 794.

<sup>1301</sup> Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 36–37.



his poems did not change much. Occasionally, he would refer to himself as Muslim and he used some Qur'anic vocabulary in his later poems, but he did not express a profound religiousness.<sup>1302</sup> Up until the end of his life he is said to have rejected an imposed authority on how to live his life.<sup>1303</sup> Goldziher's judgment that this poem is not to be attributed to al-Ḥuṭay'a thus seems sound.

## 5.2 Recapitulation

Al-Ḥuṭay'a does not fit the mould of the pre-Islamic ideal, that of a man who lived in accordance to the exemplary codex of *muruwwa*: heroic, always ready to defend his kin and allies with words and the sword, generous to the guest, and perseverant in hardship. This is not because he is oblivious to the importance of the virtues and values of this codex in his time, because they take up a prominent place in his poems. In his invectives he mocks individuals and groups for their inability to uphold these values, while in turn in his praise poems he extols others precisely as possessors and defenders of these values. Somehow he feels free of upholding these values and yet he blames others when in his eyes they do the same.

In pre-Islamic Arabia, the free men were the ones who inherited the values and traditions of old and who had to live up to them. Al-Ḥuṭay'a had been set free after the death of his master—and possible progenitor—Aws b. Mālik. Was he expected to uphold the values and virtues as comprised in the codex of *muruwwa*? The answer seems to be affirmative. In any case the faults and vices of his character are not ignored or excused by his contemporaries or later critics—he lived and moved around as a free man, and as such he was judged. If he claimed the rights of a free man, as he did once and again, the duties that derived from these rights also applied to him.

### 5.2.1 Allegiance in the poems of al-Ḥuṭay'a

Contrary to the corpuses of Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā, in that of al-Ḥuṭay'a we find quite some allusions to the circumstances of his life and that of his closest relatives, for example to his travelling and the difficulties to gain a living as a poet. In his large and diverse poetical corpus, al-

---

<sup>1302</sup> Farrukh, *Das Bild Des Frühislam*, 65–66; Goldziher, 'Diwān al-Hutej'a. I', 31–33.

<sup>1303</sup> In addition, in his poetical defences of al-Walid b. 'Uqba, the governor of Kūfa who was deposed when he was accused of leading the prayer while drunk, al-Ḥuṭay'a did not manifest any pious feelings or understanding for the complaints of the people of Kūfa; Ṭāhā, *Diwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*, 232–46 nr. 51–54.

Ḥuṭay'a's attitude towards his kin stands out against the background of Arabia on the eve of Islam. Instead of loyalty to his people, a central ideal for the interactions between groups and individuals, al-Ḥuṭay'a did not shrink back from directing invectives against his closest relatives, among them his mother (AH06, AH14, AH03, AH04), his brothers (AH05, AH05I), his children (AH08), and his wife(s) (AH07). His contemporaries and later critics, while they appreciated him as a poet, judged al-Ḥuṭay'a for his vile character and his transgressions of what was considered as honourable, but he does not seem to have cared about what others thought of him, and repeatedly and consciously transgressed the code of *muruwwa*.

Al-Ḥuṭay'a's relation with his clan or tribe was likewise unconventional. The poet exploited his faulty lineage to his benefit. He used the ambiguity of his lineage to shift loyalties and allegiance as it suited him: he attempted to be accepted as a full member by the 'Abs as a son of Aws b. Mālik (AH05, AH05I), and by the Dhuhl as a son of al-Afqam (AH09, AH11, AH12). At the same time, he composed poems reviling these two tribes or their clans (against the 'Abs: AH13?; against the 'Absī groups of the Jaḥsh and the Bijād: AH14, AH15, AH16, AH17; against the Dhuhl: AH10, AH11).

The commentaries on the poems in which al-Ḥuṭay'a claims allegiance to or reviles the 'Abs or the Dhuhl explain al-Ḥuṭay'a's behaviour as driven by material interests. As such, the poet can be seen as the antithesis of the pre-Islamic tribal poet and hero. At the same time, al-Ḥuṭay'a's detachment from his people was not as complete as sometimes pictured. His claims to belong to the 'Abs or the Dhuhl were substantiated through the real possibility of descending from either group—never did al-Ḥuṭay'a claim to belong to a third tribe. He sided with the 'Abs in a tribal war in which the 'Abs were the weaker group (AH18, AH20), not exactly what one would expect of a man portrayed as vile, greedy, and disloyal, only seeking his own interests. In addition, on more than one occasion the poet proved loyal to weak or unimportant groups that had treated him well, and even to individuals who had fallen out of grace (AH27; see the introduction to AH32).

In the case of a man like al-Ḥuṭay'a, with a stained lineage and no right to claim a position of nobility and leadership in pre-Islamic society, one would think that the emergence of Islam, with its ideal of the equality of all believers in the eyes of God and distinguished not by lineage but by nobility, would be appealing. However, nowhere in his poems do we find evidence of this. In

Muslim times, when he asks for hospitality he does not use the argument of a bond of common faith.<sup>1304</sup> Neither does he present himself as a pious man, an attitude with which he perhaps could have claimed a nobility in the eyes of God and have wiped out the stain on his lineage (“Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most godfearing of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware”, Q 49: 13).

At the death of Muḥammad al-Ḥuṭay’a is said to have sided with those who opposed the caliphate of Abū Bakr. In the poems he composed on the *Ridda* wars (AH28, AH29, AH30) the poet presents the conflict not as a religious or ideological war, but instead as a war between tribes.

After his opposition to the caliph Abū Bakr al-Ḥuṭay’a turned again to Islam. The reasons for this reconversion are unclear but the poems and accounts of his life afterwards indicate that it is less a spiritual conversion than an acceptance of the new status quo. His attitude towards the religion and its community did not change much. The understanding of the group as we perceive it in his poems is still that of the clan and tribe, and his loyalty and respect are not for the most pious individuals but for those who show him hospitality and generosity.

### 5.2.2 Authority in the poems of al-Ḥuṭay’a

When it comes to the discourse on authority, it is more difficult to determine how al-Ḥuṭay’a saw the notion of leadership and authority than how he did *not* see it. In his invectives against his mother he accuses her of having brought nothing but evil to her sons, who depended on her (AH03); the disobedience of the sons, among them al-Ḥuṭay’a himself, is therefore not only justified but also mandatory. Similarly, in an invective against one of his alleged fathers (AH06) the close ties that bind them do not entail a recognition and proclamation of the power and authority of the father. Rather, the poet characterises his father as unfit to hold any leadership position.

A general attitude of irreverence for the most powerful men and groups of his time, both before and after the emergence of Islam, permeates the whole of al-Ḥuṭay’a’s corpus. His poetry is his source of income, and yet he is not a flatterer or a yes-man in the presence of those more powerful than he. Without fear or favour he would praise a small and rather insignificant tribe if they received him well, while a powerful and rich individual was as much exposed to his harsh invective as anyone else.

---

<sup>1304</sup> Except possibly on one occasion, if we follow the variant reading of AH32 v.9, see above.

Throughout his poems, we see that al-Ḥuṭay'a regards submission as something shameful. More than once this idea appears in reviling poems (AH05, AH06, AH17) or, in the positive sense of proud insubmission, in poems in praise of others (AH09).

Al-Ḥuṭay'a only alludes to Muḥammad and his leadership in one poem. More than a recognition of Muḥammad's position it is a rejection of Abū Bakr's authority who, in his eyes, does not conform to the ideal of the pre-Islamic tribal leader (AH28).

After the *Ridda*, the poems and accounts of al-Ḥuṭay'a's life do not speak of a man who now recognised the values and precepts of a supratribal community to which he now belonged, or who recognised the authority of fellow Muslims from a different tribe. Al-Ḥuṭay'a rejected the authority of powerful men in his time, and likewise rejected the imposition of rules to be followed blindly. Thus, in the accounts of his relationship with the deposed governor of Kūfa, al-Ḥuṭay'a was not impressed by the accusation levelled against al-Walid that he had transgressed a religious stipulation. Similarly, on his deathbed he was not willing to listen to the bystanders who tried to correct his un-Islamic decisions and statements, favouring, we are told, his own wishes over God's precepts.



# **Conclusions**

---

# CONCLUSIONS

With the spotlights of religious tradition and historiography focused on Muḥammad and on the reactions he provoked, the events which are not directly related to him tend to fall in the shadows. In addition, the reactions to Muḥammad are categorised as belief or unbelief, submission or stubbornness, conversion or rejection. The message brought by Muḥammad obviously left a lasting mark on his immediate society and beyond, and yet we must be cautious not to assume—consciously or unconsciously—that his influence was clear and all-affecting from the very beginning and that his contemporaries were aware of the historical times they were living in.

The research question of this thesis was twofold. From a descriptive point of view the question was how Muḥammad's contemporaries received, perceived, and reacted to his message, and how their reactions were to be understood in light of what we know of society in pre-Islamic Arabia.

The second question, deriving from the first, was how the discourse of Muḥammad's contemporaries served to legitimise the institutions and the ways of thinking of their time. Faced with Muḥammad's claim to authority and the emergence of a community around him, did the poets legitimise the ways of thinking and the societal organisation of old, or did the discourse strengthen and validate Muḥammad's position and claims?

The discourse-historical approach brings to light “self-evident knowledge”, that is, accepted, implicit truths, and illustrates how discourse changes in relation to social and political changes. The discursive analysis of the poems brings to light whether and how poets of Muḥammad's time, as authoritative figures, strengthened or deligitimised Muḥammad's position and the legitimacy of the community around him.

## The poetical discourse

In order to answer the research questions I have studied the poetical discourse of Muḥammad's time. To assess the value and the role of the poems as a dispositive for discursive analysis, it is important to understand the characteristics of the poems and the role of the poets at the time.

The focus of the analysis lies on the areas of Northern and Central Arabia, a predominantly tribal society in pre-Islamic times. I understand the tribe as a unit determined by—possibly

fictional—shared ancestry and shared liability. On the Arabian peninsula poetry was an important discourse, giving voice to and shaping the values and ideals of pre-Islamic society.

As defenders of the tribal identity, the poets kept the memory of the genealogies alive and boasted of the honour and the achievements of their own group, thus drawing the lines between their kin and the outsiders. As spokespeople and “knowers” of matters related to the tribe, in their compositions the poets preserved and transmitted the inherited knowledge of genealogies and great deeds of their group, at the same time expanding this oral tradition by composing their own poems. In praising and eulogising individuals or groups from their kin they upheld and increased the immaterial honour of their group; by attacking and insulting the enemy they contributed to feuds and battles. Not surprisingly, the poets did not remain silent in face of Muḥammad’s military and prophetic activity: some joined his ranks, others opposed him—temporarily or until their death—, but in both cases they used their compositions to defend their group and attack the enemy.

The authority of a—good—*mukhaḍram* poet was somehow institutionalised and recognised and therefore not a challenge to the structure of society. What is more, the poet was entitled and even expected to defy figures and institutions of authority of his time. Muḥammad himself also employed poets to defend his cause and attack the enemy. In times of conflicts and wars the poets would insult the the opponent’s lineage and inherited honour, but they would also speak up when they considered that their own group was erring. Thus, the challenges the poets posed to the institutions and the divisions of power of their time derived from those same institutions and from the rules of conduct of their environment. Not always were the poet’s challenges headed by his kin, and they could take action against him, but in general the position of the poet as troublemaker was recognised and respected.

The main sources for the present research are not the longer, polythematic odes (*qaṣīda* pl. *qaṣāʿid*) of *mukhaḍram* poets but the shorter, monothematic compositions, circumstantial poems in which they react to what they witnessed, experienced, or were informed about.

The genres or modes of panegyric (*madīḥ*), satire or invective (*hijāʿ*), and self-praise (*fakhr*) were in many cases reactions to real developments and events and reflected the opinion of the author, who also sought to convince others. By force of the genre, in these compositions we may expect exaggerations and overstatements in which the virtues and faults of individuals and groups



are amplified and inflated. At the same time, and in order to have an impact, the subject of the poems must have been recognizable for the audience and have related in one way or the other to their worldview and experiences.

*Hijā'*, *madīh*, or *fakhr* were not necessarily true descriptions of groups and individuals. The poems reflected the worldview of their time, but also shaped it by legitimising and de-legitimising institutions and individuals. In that sense, their composition and repetition “made” them true, so to speak. A famous verse comes to mind with which the Lakhmid king al-Nu‘mān b. Mundhir reacted to an invective composed by Labīd b. Rabī‘a against a former confidant of his, al-Rabī‘ b. Ziyād al-‘Absī. Acknowledging that the reviling poem did not necessarily contain the truth, al-Nu‘mān nevertheless did not want to see al-Rabī‘ ever again, for: “This [*hijā'*] has been said, whether true or false, and no excuse can help you once it’s been said”.<sup>1395</sup>

This double role of the poetical discourse can be studied through the discourse-historical approach, for it enables us to understand the ideologies and worldview of the times around nascent Islam, as well the self-evident truths and beliefs of its time, and the transformations in the discourse in relation with social changes in a time in which Islam emerged.

### The three poets before Islam – the individual and the group

The ranges of themes and topics within pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry is large, as is the corpus of poetry that has come down to us. The discourse analysis in this research focuses on the compositions of three contemporaries of Muḥammad: Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā, and al-Ḥuṭay‘a. This is a narrow selection of the extensive corpus of *mukhaḍram* poetry at our disposal, and yet the poems by the three men display the breadth of the poetical discourse of the time, the variety of concerns, topics, and common images, and, most importantly, the function of poetry and the position of the poets in society.

We see both similarities and differences in the lives of the three poets and those of their relatives in their corpuses. On first sight the lives of Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba‘rā were similar, especially compared with al-Ḥuṭay‘a. However, Ibn al-Ziba‘rā belonged to a prominent clan, part of an important alliance and living in the centre of the town while Ḍirār belonged to a rather weak clan on the outskirts of Mecca. Perhaps this explains why Ibn al-Ziba‘rā would dare stand up against

---

<sup>1395</sup> al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aghānī*, 2008, 15:248–49.; trans. Stetkevych, *The Mute Immortals Speak*, 49–50.

power divisions within the tribe, attempting to change the politics, while ʿDirār would stand aside, instead leading his clan and others on raids against outsiders.

Compared with ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, al-Ḥuṭayʿa's life is closer to the ideal of the nomadic man. The former two lived in a sedentary context and occupied themselves with trade and the institutions of a fixed sanctuary, while al-Ḥuṭayʿa travelled through the peninsula, a free and proud man—in spite of his doubtful lineage. However, his detachment was relative: al-Ḥuṭayʿa had a wife(s) and children to take care of, and travelled purposefully from court to court and from group to group—be it nomadic or sedentary—, living of the protection and generosity of others.

### *The clan and tribe before Islam – allegiance and authority*

The compositions of the three poets, ʿDirār, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, and al-Ḥuṭayʿa, follow the general themes and topics of the poetry of pre-Islamic tribal Arabia: individuals or groups are praised as possessing the values and virtues of *muruwwa*—courage, perseverance, loyalty, nobility, and generosity, among others—, while the opponents are blamed for lacking them or not upholding them. At the same time, the poems of all three and the accounts in which they are embedded go beyond a stylised list of values and virtues and the ideal of tribal society and speak, explicitly or implicitly, of the reality of life through the eyes of the poets.

ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā lived in the sedentary context of Mecca, a town in which the inhabitants formed a patchwork of Qurashī and non-Qurashī individuals. In ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā's lifetime their tribe of the Quraysh was divided along the lines of different alliances. Although these groupings were still drawn upon clan divisions, they were based less on lineage and more on power division and influence. The lives of and poems by ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā speak of the tensions between, on the one hand, the ideal of tribal unity and loyalty and, on the other, a reality of competition over the control of political and cultic institutions within Mecca. Their lives also speak of the policies of appeasement that the Quraysh would set in motion when faced with challenges to the tribal unity in order to confine the frictions and limit their effects.

In the case of ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and his relationship with his clan, the picture that emerges from his poetry is that of a man proud of the Muḥārib b. Fihri, yet dissatisfied with their relegation to a

secondary plane in Mecca, both in the literal sense of the geographical sphere as well as in the figurative sense of the political sphere.

Ḍirār's pride in and loyalty to his clan were not incompatible with his loyalty to the larger tribe of the Quraysh. Under Ḍirār's leadership, at least once bands of the Muḥārib b. Fihri and their allies of the *Quraysh al-Ẓawāhir* raided allies of the Quraysh, and he pressed for a more prominent role of his clan among his tribe. Nonetheless, in several of the poems on conflicts between the Quraysh and other tribes in pre-Islamic times we see how the intratribal divisions of the Quraysh are moved to the background. At times Ḍirār directed harsh words against his tribe or its individual members, but these attacks can be explained as an attempt by the poet, as leader and spokesperson, to change the course of events, calling his people to stand up for themselves and rejecting their preference for peace settlements over warfare. Especially in these poems we see how the poetical discourse on allegiance and authority clashed with the pragmatic approach in social reality: for Ḍirār it was of utmost importance that his kin lived up to their inherited *nasab* by setting right offences committed against them. Only then could the Quraysh truly claim to possess *ḥasab* and make clear to the outsiders that they were not to "crush the perfume of the one to whom [they] should be a crushing stone" (DKo8 v.4), that is, that the Quraysh were not to be humiliated but instead would humiliate and submit who dared attack or insult them. Besides his more personal poems, in his pre-Islamic compositions Ḍirār exercises the public role of poet and spokesperson of his kin.

Even though they were contemporaries and members of the same tribe, Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra differed in how in their pre-Islamic poems they characterised their relation to their clan and tribe and in how they reacted to the leadership of their tribe. Ḍirār's clan, the Muḥārib b. Fihri, was a relatively isolated clan, lacking power and influence among the Quraysh, not a member of either the *Aḥlāf* or the *Muṭayyabūn* faction. Absent from the poems by Ḍirār are crucial aspects of the social and political life of his town, like the commercial activities of his tribe and the struggles over the political and cultic institutions of Mecca. Nevertheless, the events in which some of his compositions are embedded do offer glimpses into a society in which ties of blood are losing their sacred and all-binding force in determining the life of the group and of the individual.

Ibn al-Ziba'ra's clan of the Banū Sahl, on the other hand, was more prominent. The Sahl lived in the centre of the town and belonged to the faction of the *Aḥlāf*. More than Ḍirār did Ibn al-

Ziba'ra devote attention to the power division within the Quraysh and emphasise the value and weight of Mecca's sacredness and influence. While Dirar's pre-Islamic poems follow more closely the conventions and themes of pre-Islamic Bedouin poets, Ibn al-Ziba'ra's compositions offer insight into the sedentary society of Mecca and the ensuing changes in worldview and everyday life in pre-Islamic times. In addition, Ibn al-Ziba'ra attempted to change the status quo of power divisions within Mecca more openly than Dirar, perhaps because he knew that he was backed by a powerful clan within a strong alliance.

Compared with Dirar's corpus, the poems by Ibn al-Ziba'ra that are related to pre-Islamic events speak less often of the inter-tribal relations of the Quraysh. Only one poem speaks of a war of the Quraysh as a whole against a common enemy. Interestingly, in this poem the focus is on a series of Qurashī individuals closely related to the poet; he does not speak of the tribe as a whole but singles out his relatives. Nonetheless, in the aftermath of his poetical insult against a Qurashī group Ibn al-Ziba'ra would submit to the authority of his tribe. His poem against the Quṣayy may have been an attempt at claiming power for his clan and its allies, but when his attempt failed and the tribe took measures to neutralise the threat, Ibn al-Ziba'ra had to recognise the legitimacy of the steps taken against him and submitted to the will of the larger group. In this respect Ibn al-Ziba'ra's attitude differs starkly from that of al-Ḥuṭay'a who, less bound to tribal allegiance and authority, would insult individuals and groups freely.

Even more than in Dirar and Ibn al-Ziba'ra's case, in al-Ḥuṭay'a's life we see how the tribal bonds of the past were losing force. While the other two poets were full members of their tribe, with a certain position of leadership as military chiefs and spokespeople, al-Ḥuṭay'a lived more or less detached from his kin. His insults against his close relatives and his kin were clear transgressions of the codex of *murūwwa*, as were his shifting loyalties and claims of lineage. It is unclear why al-Ḥuṭay'a would wash his dirty linen in public, so to speak, composing poems in which the fault in his lineage came to light implicitly and explicitly. Throughout the accounts of his life we see that he was aware of the performative power of poetry: with his praise or insults he could build up or destroy the reputations of individuals and groups. Why would he not keep silent about the suspicions on his mother's moral status, for example? By composing a poem reviling her, he not only drew attention to his faulty lineage but also preserved it for posterity.

In earlier times a poet like al-Ḥuṭay'a might have become a *ṣu'ūk*, an outcast without the support of his kin. As a living illustration of the changing social situation on the Arabian peninsula on the eve of Islam, al-Ḥuṭay'a did not have to resort to armed robbery as these outcasts often did—although in his blackmail and insults he was far from a peaceful man. He moved from clan to clan and from court to court, living of the hospitality and gifts of his hosts, who feared his sharp tongue but made use of it to scorn their enemies. Reportedly, at times al-Ḥuṭay'a did not even have to compose a poem to make a living: at his presence alone individuals and groups would pay him off in order to avoid any scorning verses against them. His was not the life of a man deprived of everything and everyone, struggling with the elements, battling with enemies, and with wild animals as the only company, as we find it described in the poems of famous *ṣa'ālik* of pre-Islamic times. Instead, al-Ḥuṭay'a was able to support a family—his children and perhaps more than one wife—and to reject substantial gifts if he so wished.

As in Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra's life, in that of al-Ḥuṭay'a we see that, in spite of the loosening of tribal bonds, these were still prevalent in the discourse on allegiance. Al-Ḥuṭay'a used the general discourse on lineage and nobility to praise or to insult others, and even to portray himself as belonging to one group or the other. In addition, al-Ḥuṭay'a on several occasions sought to be accepted as a member by the tribe of the 'Abs or the Dhuhl, and in times of war he effectively sided with the 'Abs as a full member of the group. More importantly, he never sought to be accepted as a member of a different tribe than the 'Abs or the Dhuhl, the two tribes to which he could claim to belong through his two possible fathers.

More than Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra al-Ḥuṭay'a rejected any authority held over him. Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra occasionally acted against the dominant group within their tribe but in the end remained full members of it and would defend their kin with their poems and the sword. Al-Ḥuṭay'a, on the other hand, rejected not only the authority of powerful groups of his time, but even that of his mother and father. At the same time, he did not seem to be driven in the first place by a desire to reform the structures of his society. He challenged and sometimes ridiculed the values and virtues of his time, but never proposed a reform program or an alternative.

## The poets and the *umma*

It would be erroneous to classify as a single category all reactions of Muḥammad's opponents. As in the poems of *mukhaḍram* times, the compositions in reaction to Muḥammad show a diversity of approaches and points of view regarding the reality the poets were facing and shaping.

As kinsmen of Muḥammad, and contrary to al-Ḥuṭay'a, Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Ibn al-Ziba'rā were confronted from the start with Muḥammad's claim and message. Before the Emigration of Muḥammad and his followers to Medina (1/622), the tensions and struggles he provoked impacted first and foremost his tribe, the Quraysh. The earliest reactions of the Quraysh to Muḥammad's prophetic activity as we find them in *sīra* books and other sources indicate that his kinsmen initially saw Muḥammad's activities as going against the customs and ties of old, but also as a threat that could be neutralised, similar perhaps to threats like those that Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā had posed to the Qurashī tribal unity in the past. Indeed, initially there was no reason to assume that the Quraysh would not be able to contain the danger Muḥammad posed to their unity, to their political power, and to their commercial success. However, the policies of appeasement failed, for the boycotts through which the Quraysh tried to isolate Muḥammad and his clan failed, not in the least because Muḥammad's group of followers soon exceeded the boundaries of a clan or group of clans.

Among the poems by Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā we find no compositions that deal with Muḥammad and his message prior to the Emigration to Medina. Although we must be careful not to read all sorts of conclusions into this silence, it is certainly noteworthy that also in other sources we notice that the challenge that Muḥammad posed to the traditional ideas on allegiance and authority intensified after the Emigration, especially for the Quraysh. Until then, Muḥammad's prophetic mission may have been seen by his kinsmen as one of the many threats to the unity of the Quraysh—not innocuous but also not a definitive split. With the Emigration and the alliance with the tribes from Medina it turned into a significant challenge: a group of the Quraysh abandoned their kin and town and entered into an alliance with strange tribes.

In face of this threat from the outside, the Quraysh who remained in Mecca closed their ranks: following the Emigration the poems by Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā speak less of conflicts and competition within Mecca and more of conflicts of the Quraysh with the outside world. In their poems related to the battles of the tribe against Muḥammad and his followers, which make out a

relatively large part of their corpuses, they react to these tensions and conflicts. At the same time the poetical discourse also shapes the perception the rest of their kin had of the battles and the tensions. If the Qurashī followers of Muḥammad had all come from one and the same clan, the rest of the Quraysh could perhaps have framed their departure in terms other than treason and disloyalty, for such a division along clan boundaries would have resembled the dynamics of pre-Islamic tribes. In spite of the discourse on eternal loyalty and an almost sacred lineage, the vagueness of genealogical links allowed for new associations and dissociations of groups within the tribal framework. The Emigrants that left Mecca for Medina, however, came from different Qurashī clans, and it is obvious that not only ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā but the tribe as a whole struggled to define the new situation.

Both ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā used the strategy of depicting the battles against Muḥammad as hostile encounters in which their tribe faced a strange tribe or agglomeration of tribes, overlooking the fact that among the enemy were men from the Quraysh. In addition, both show a lack of concern for the reasons behind the battles and the spiritual or ethical content of Muḥammad's message. In fact, both barely pay attention to Muḥammad himself in these compositions.

In the *sīra* books, the poems by ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā on the battles against Muḥammad are frequently found in a pair with a poem by a follower of Muḥammad. The poems by ʿDirār are most often paired with poems by Kaʿb b. Mālīk, and those by Ibn al-Zibaʿrā with poems by Ḥassān b. Thābit. It is difficult to determine whether the responses of Ḥassān to Ibn al-Zibaʿrā and of Kaʿb to ʿDirār reflect more than just personal preferences. However, the fact that from Muḥammad's side they went to the trouble of replying to the poetical attacks from the Quraysh speaks once again of the power of the poetical discourse and the subsequent need to address poetical insults.

Interestingly, compared with their poems prior to the emergence of Islam, in the poems by ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā that deal with the battles of the Quraysh against Muḥammad and his followers after the Emigration the two poets follow more closely the conventions of the classical *qaṣīda* in their structure and images. Against the innovations preached by Muḥammad and the transformations of society they faced, it seems that they resorted to the poetical tradition of old and fell back on the recognised position of the tribal poet to defend the inherited structure and institutions, as well as the virtues and values of their time. The circumstances of life of ʿDirār,

Ibn al-Ziba'ra, and al-Ḥuṭay'a were rather different from the ideal of the nomadic Bedouin. Nonetheless, especially Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra would employ the range of values and virtues of nomadic life as synthesised in the unwritten code of *muruwwa* in their compositions against Muḥammad, against his call, and against those who heeded his call, while al-Ḥuṭay'a would use the arguments of *muruwwa* to discredit especially the leadership of the caliph Abū Bakr in the *Ridda* wars.

In Ḍirār's case, the portrayal of his own group and that of the enemy in his poetry from after the Emigration could very well be contextualised in pre-Islamic society and be understood as a war between different tribes. Frequently he identified the enemy as the Yathribi tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj or their subgroups, and only rarely did he allude to a group of Qurashī men among them. When he did so, he almost always limited it to some individuals, thus avoiding the thorny issue of the deep split caused by Muḥammad among his kin.

In addition, on Ḍirār we have the noteworthy anecdote of his oath not to kill a kinsman from among the enemy ranks. This oath, if indeed sworn by him, was not because Ḍirār saw the battles in question as unjust and shameful for his group, since he participated in them, praised those who fought on his side and reviled the opponent—including his fellow tribesmen. We may understand this apparent contradiction in Ḍirār's attitude as an indication that, in spite of the power of poetry and its use in tribal warfare, there was a difference between armed and poetical attacks: Ḍirār did not see a problem in insulting him but did not wish to kill a tribesman. However, if we study Ḍirār's position more closely we see that it goes further than just a difference between a military and poetical attack, for he refused to kill a tribesman himself, but did not stop others from killing his and their kin.

We may understand this tension through what we know of the individual focus of the poems on battles and skirmishes by *mukhaḍram* poets. Upholding one's *ḥasab wa-nasab* was in the first place up to the individual. It was considered praiseworthy to hold the ground when all had fled, as was taking up the arms even knowing that one's group would face a certain defeat. Ḍirār barely speaks of the greater good for the tribe, of the goal they want to achieve, and of the motives behind the battles. Instead, he speaks of individual endeavours and successes, of singular displays of heroism and endurance. In Ḍirār's poems we do not find a call for peace based on the ties of



kinship that tied the Quraysh of Mecca to Muḥammad and the Emigrants. He apparently saw the need to fight them, and knew that his people run the risk of killing their kinsmen on the battlefield. For the sake of the honour and glory of the Quraysh Ḍirār understood that the tribe had to fight collectively against Muḥammad and his followers from among the Quraysh and other tribes, but Ḍirār himself, for the sake of his individual honour and glory, pledged to refrain from killing any Qurashī enemy. At the battle of Badr the Qurashī leader ‘Utba b. Rabī‘a, similar to Ḍirār, reportedly expressed reluctance to kill kinsmen. However, while Ḍirār imposed the restriction only upon himself, ‘Utba b. Rabī‘a reportedly called his kinsmen to retreat at Badr in order to avoid killing their fellow Qurashis in the confrontation. However, again similar to Ḍirār, ‘Utba did not aim to restore peace: his group should retreat, but that did not mean that they should let their enemy walk free, since he added that his people should let other tribes fight Muḥammad and his followers.<sup>1306</sup>

In Ibn al-Ziba‘rā’s case it is noteworthy that his poems on the battles against Muḥammad and his followers are more tribal in tone than his earlier compositions. The divisions within the Quraysh of Mecca become less prominent. Those from among the tribe who have followed Muḥammad out of Mecca, regardless of the clan to which they belong, are to be considered enemies who have cut the ties of blood, neglect the inherited traditions and honour, and reject legitimate leadership only to accept an unskilled man as their leader.

At the same time, and although Ibn al-Ziba‘rā uses the images and language of a tribal war, the fight he describes in his poems is less a fight between nomadic groups as they were fought in the past and more a fight for the sacredness and the institutions of Mecca against outsiders, especially the tribes of Medina and disloyal members of the Quraysh. More than Ḍirār, in early poems on the battles against Muḥammad and his group Ibn al-Ziba‘rā spoke of the ties of blood that once bound him to those who are now his enemies and whom he reproves for turning their back on their kin and foolishly following the wrong leader. In later poems such past ties are

---

<sup>1306</sup> Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, 1955, 1:623. See also the account mentioned by Landau-Tasseron: in Umayyad times clashes took place between a group of rebels and the army of the Umayyads. Men from the tribe of the Tamim fought on both sides. On the side of the rebels, a Tamimī changed the position of a ballista so that it no longer aimed at his tribesmen on the other side; Landau-Tasseron, ‘Alliances among the Arabs’, 143.

omitted: apparently he considers the ties between him and those men from the Quraysh who had joined the tribes of the Aws and the Khazraj as something of the past.

In his poems, Ibn al-Ziba'ra's seems to oppose Muḥammad because of the threat he posed to society as the poet knew it. Although before the start of Muḥammad's career Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poems reveal a reality of clashes and conflicts within the Quraysh, apparently the role Muḥammad claimed for himself went too far for him. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what made the difference to the poet, but perhaps we may point to the question of authority. Contrary to Ibn al-Ziba'ra in the aftermath of his invective against the Quṣayy, Muḥammad refused to submit to the will of the leaders of his kin and to recognise their authority, thus jeopardising the tribal solidarity and stability of Mecca. At the same time, we must be careful not to focus too much attention on a supposed attitude adopted by Ibn al-Ziba'ra towards Muḥammad, understanding his position in the conflict with Muḥammad and his early followers almost as a personal conflict between the poet and the prophet, for the direct or explicit allusions to Muḥammad in Ibn al-Ziba'ra's poems is rare. It is unclear whether he remained relatively silent on Muḥammad in an attempt at downplaying his importance or because Muḥammad's role was not as evident to his contemporaries as it would be in later times, although the latter interpretation seems more plausible.

While ʿDirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra, as members of the Quraysh, sided with their tribe in the battles against Muḥammad and his followers and put their tongues and their swords at use for the benefit of their group, al-Ḥuṭay'a, as a wandering poet and not attached to the Quraysh, may have been confronted with Muḥammad and his followers only at a later stage. He may have known of the battles of Badr (2/624) and Uḥud (3/625), among others, but would have understood them as tribal wars, having no reason to fear the propagation of Muḥammad's dominance and the growth of the community of followers around him. In al-Ḥuṭay'a's *dīwān*, a prolific poet, we do not find compositions directed at Muḥammad or dealing with him and the nascent movement of followers until the *Ridda* at the death of Muḥammad, when al-Ḥuṭay'a composed a series of poems in opposition of the caliph Abū Bakr. More than a religious apostate, in these poems al-Ḥuṭay'a appears as the rebel we came to know in his earlier poems: unwilling to accept any figure of authority and fearlessly mocking whomever, in his eyes, was weak and submissive. The scarce

influences and traces that Islam left in al-Ḥuṭayʿa's *dīwān* are not that odd if we consider that for Muḥammad's contemporaries, the importance and impact of Muḥammad was not as obvious as it would be for later generations, Muslims and non-Muslims.

### *The poets and their conversion*

In their poems from after their conversion the three poets show the same diverse range of motives and reflections as they had shown in their poetry from before and during the early stages of Islam. As far as their poems shed light on the process of conversion, at the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad and his followers Ḍirār seems to have accepted, with the majority of the Quraysh, the new status quo. This conversion of Ḍirār might seem surprising: had he not been a leader of the Qurashī opposition to Muḥammad? If we look at his conversion in a less individualistic and spiritual way we may understand it better. With the majority of the Quraysh Ḍirār had opposed Muḥammad as a man who transgressed the inherited customs and values and who threatened tribal allegiance and loyalty. Now that the majority of the tribe, including the prominent leaders, accepted Muḥammad and recognised his authority, Ḍirār could accept it too. In this sense Ḍirār's conversion was like that of many in his time: tribes as a whole converted when their leaders established an alliance with Muḥammad and the Muslims.

At the conquest, Ḍirār recognised Muḥammad's leadership and authority, who had proven his worth precisely with the conquest. In addition, Muḥammad was the one who could now protect his tribe from the vengeance of those of the Aws and the Khazraj who followed him. Nonetheless, in the single poem directed at Muḥammad at the conquest of the town Ḍirār appeals to him more as a tribal leader than as a man with religious authority—it would seem that he still understood the past tensions and the present conquest in tribal terms. In the poems by Ḍirār related to the Muslim conquests, in which he actively participated as a leader of the Muslim army, the language still resembles that of wars between tribes, his group being distinguished not so much by piety and submission to God, but by nobility and heroism. It would seem that Ḍirār, the man who in pre-Islamic times longed for heroism and battles and despised peace treaties and settlements, saw his wishes fulfilled precisely through Islam, the movement he had once seen as a threat to his people.

While ʿDirār yielded to the decision of the majority and accepted Muḥammad's new position among the Quraysh, at the conquest of Mecca Ibn al-Ziba'ra apparently was unwilling to recognise his authority. Had he, like many of his kinsmen, gone to Muḥammad and asserted his belief in him and his message, he might have been allowed to stay, but instead he fled the town. It was not until after a period of exile in Najrān that Ibn al-Ziba'ra returned to Mecca and that he, with a series of coaxing poems, tried to gain Muḥammad's favour. While in ʿDirār's case it had sufficed to follow the majority, by fleeing the town Ibn al-Ziba'ra had set himself apart from the tribe and, once back in the town, he was forced to individually plead for his safety. Ibn al-Ziba'ra consciously decided to go back to Mecca and face the consequences; there seems to have been no pressing need to return to Mecca or pressing danger to leave Najrān, for his companion in exile stayed there up until his death without ever submitting to the authority of Muḥammad. The fact alone that in the three poems at his return to Mecca the poet asked forgiveness for himself, therefore, may be taken as an illustration of the shifts in worldview of society: a tribal society characterised by collective duties and responsibilities, and by the submission of the individual to the collective<sup>1307</sup> was turning into a society of individual responsibility and accountability, in which one's position was no longer determined by one's *ḥasab wa-nasab*, but by obedience and piety towards God and his messenger Muḥammad.<sup>1308</sup> However, the poems may also illustrate Ibn al-Ziba'ra's isolated position after his exile. In the past, Ibn al-Ziba'ra had not asked forgiveness to the Banū Quṣayy for his invective (Z02): the (indirect) backing of his clan and some words of praise (Z03) were sufficient to restore the balance. Now, alone because the rest of his tribe had submitted already to Muḥammad at the conquest, the effort to regain his position among the group and towards Muḥammad was bigger.

Like in the aftermath of his poetical insult against a group from his tribe, Ibn al-Ziba'ra now submitted to the authority he could no longer deny and to the will of the larger group, for the majority of the Quraysh had already recognised Muḥammad's leadership. In the three poems Ibn al-Ziba'ra composed at his return he expressed his deep remorse over his past opposition and his new-found recognition of Muḥammad. However, he seemed to switch between taking the blame

<sup>1307</sup> Grunebaum, 'Arab Unity', 11. Cf. Chelhod, *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine*, 265–67.

<sup>1308</sup> See section: Genealogies and the *umma*. Guy G. Stroumsa, *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 1ff.; Angelika Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text*, Qur'anic Studies Series (Oxford University Press, 2015), xxi–xxiv.

himself and claiming responsibility for leading his kinsmen into error and, on the other hand, blaming the group for what he had done. In these poems, and more than ʔirār in the single poem at the conquest of Mecca, Ibn al-Zibaʔrā alluded in these compositions to the religious authority of Muḥammad, using Qurʔanic themes and vocabulary. Nonetheless, this authority of Muḥammad still applies to the tribe of the Quraysh and not so much to a supratribal community of followers and a universal message.

Al-Ḥuṭayʔa's corpus does not reveal much about the process or moment of his conversion. Precisely for a man like him it would seem that the nascent *umma* would have been appealing, for the ideal of the community was that men were not distinguished by their noble lineage but by piety. Had al-Ḥuṭayʔa become a pious Muslim, perhaps he could have ascended on the social ladder now obstructed by his stained lineage. However, his poems that can be dated after the emergence of Islam show no pious tendency. In addition, he does not seem to employ the nascent community of the *umma* to his advantage: he does not appear to use the argument of brotherhood in faith to appeal to fellow Muslims for hospitality and generosity—the one time such an argument can be read in a verse, it is in a verse to which a variant reading exists—, he does not spare fellow Muslims the insults, nor does he recognise the precepts and obligations of Islam as authoritative. Like ʔirār, al-Ḥuṭayʔa settles into the new status quo, but contrary to ʔirār he continues to rebel up until his death against the institutions and values of the time—just like he had done against the institutions and values of pre-Islamic society.

### **A transformed society – a changed discourse?**

Besides these answers to the descriptive question of how Muḥammad's contemporaries perceived and received his message, the present research also aims at answering the question from a discursive perspective. In the analysis of the poems I have focused on the discursive strands on allegiance and authority, two crucial aspects in the organisation of society and two recurrent themes in the poems of Muḥammad's time. The three selected poets, ʔirār, Ibn al-Zibaʔrā, and al-Ḥuṭayʔa, were contemporaries of Muḥammad who were not mere witnesses but instead actively participated in the events of their time. Similarly, their poems not only are records on what they witnessed and how they interpreted it, but, as discourse, they also shaped reality and served to institutionalise and legitimise knowledge and ways of thinking, constructing the understanding of

the events they relate to and shaping their interpretations. The historical-critical discourse analysis thus enables us to answer the second research question, namely, whether the poems of ʿDirār, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, and al-Ḥuṭayʿa legitimised the group that formed around Muḥammad and whether they served to strengthen Muḥammad’s own authority.

Not only on the battlefield but also in the poetical arena the opponents of Muḥammad stood up to defend their kin against a strange group and to prevent their submission to Muḥammad and those around him. In that light the fact that ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā present the battles of the Quraysh against Muḥammad and his followers as justified is understandable, as is their relative silence on the causes behind the conflict. Those members of the Quraysh who did choose to follow Muḥammad out of Mecca and on to the battlefield were the ones who could be accused of cutting the ties of kinship and transgressing the unwritten rules of loyalty and fidelity, not the Quraysh who rejected Muḥammad’s leadership and authority and stuck to the inherited norms and values. Perhaps this explains also the classical undertones in the poems by ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā on the battles against Muḥammad, following the structure and *topoi* of the *qaṣīda*: the poets, as spokespersons of their group, perhaps attempted to stand up for the inherited values and virtues against the innovations they witnessed and condemned. In Ibn al-Zibaʿrā’s case, we also may ask ourselves whether it is a coincidence that his poems on the battles against Muḥammad and his men are considerably longer than the poems by him on pre-Islamic events. He was famous for his concise compositions; the average number of verses in his pre-Islamic poems (not counting Z<sub>01</sub>, Z<sub>12</sub>, Z<sub>12I</sub> because of doubts about their dating and authenticity) is of 3.9 verses, while in his poems after the emergence of Islam it is of 9.2—or 8.5, if we include the poems after his conversion.

In their opposition to Muḥammad, ʿDirār, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, and others could argue that they were defending the tribe and upholding the inherited values and its customs of old. We may venture to think that, with the hostilities breaking out between the Quraysh and Muḥammad and his followers, among the Quraysh who stayed in Mecca tribal loyalty and shared liability increased in weight. In times of relative peace the clans and factions could compete with each other for predominance and power, but in the face of a common enemy they not only fell back more starkly on the pre-Islamic discourse of loyalty and fidelity, but also relegated to a secondary plane the internal struggles, as we see in the poems by ʿDirār and Ibn al-Zibaʿrā on the battles.

As an outsider among his kin and his contemporaries, al-Ḥuṭay'a accepted and even exploited this position by taking the liberty to insult his kin when that suited him and by seeking the allegiance of other groups when he desired. At the same time, the discourse on nobility and honour in his compositions was, broadly speaking, the discourse of his contemporaries. He did not seek to profoundly change the attitude of individuals towards their group and their lineage, he simply took the liberty not to—always—conform to it himself. Apparently, he did not aspire to a position of authority and power except that of a poet, and in that aspiration he also conformed to the conventions of his time: the authority of a—good—poet was recognised by all and was therefore not a challenge to the structure of society. What is more, the poet somehow had the right to defy the figures and institutions of authority of his time. This he would do vehemently both before and after the emergence of Islam.

Muḥammad's call to a new sort of allegiance was undermined by the poets' continued defence of groups based on blood ties. At the same time, the fact that in the poems the group around Muḥammad is frequently characterised—implicitly or explicitly—as a tribal enemy would provide a basis for the *umma* within the institutions known to his contemporaries, therefore legitimising it even when they refused to belong to it. The fact that poems by supporters of Muḥammad would similarly present the *umma* in tribal terms, as we see especially in poems by the Helper poet Ḥassān b. Thābit, bring to light this “self-evident knowledge” of the time, namely, that groups are to be based on kinship and that new alliances could be forged through the fiction of ancestry.

Muḥammad's claim to authority was destabilised by the poems of contemporaries such as Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra, who did not recognise the legitimacy of his leadership and therefore refused to obey him, an attitude that al-Ḥuṭay'a would later show towards the caliph Abū Bakr in times of the *Ridda*. At the same time, the fact that prominent poets took the trouble to compose verses against the group that was forming around Muḥammad may have worked partially against them: apparently the movement was powerful enough not to be ignored. Nonetheless, the analysis of the poems of Ḍirār, Ibn al-Ziba'ra, and al-Ḥuṭay'a has shown that all three pay relatively little attention to Muḥammad himself. Contrary to what we might expect based on our own perspective, Muḥammad's contemporaries did not see him from the start as a central figure of a nascent movement. In Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'ra's cases, it is not until their conversion that they direct

poems at Muḥammad, addressing him, and therefore recognising him, as a prophet and leader. Al-Ḥuṭay'a, on the other hand, would remain silent on Muḥammad altogether, as far as I have seen.

Further research on the poetical discourse during Muḥammad's lifetime and after his death, especially including the corpuses of poets who would follow him, can shed light on the development and crystallisation of the concept of the *umma* as a supratribal community in the eyes of its members and its opponents, as well as on Muḥammad's role and position in it. This research could also help to interpret the position of the poets within the *umma*, and the persistence or devaluation of the codex of *muruwwa*.

The research questions are based on the premise that pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry can be taken as a source for historiographical research on early Islam. A popular argument among non-specialists and the general public is that we lack sources to corroborate, among other things, the historicity of the figure of Muḥammad, the early dating of the Qur'ān, and the emergence of the early *umma*. Against this argument I argue that the poems by contemporaries of Muḥammad can be used as sources on the events and circumstances of nascent Islam—that this should be done only after a careful analysis and contextualisation is a matter of course. In the first place they serve as sources for the discourse analysis. In the second place, specific poems or series of poems can also serve to support or elucidate certain developments or events also found in other sources, and support or disprove certain accounts.

In respect of this second use of poetry, I will point here to two specific examples in the section on Ibn al-Ziba'ra, the poem Z13 and the poem Z21. The first of these two supports an account of the expedition against Mecca of the king Abraha from Yemen, an account which many researchers considered a later Muslim invention to accompany and explain the chapter Q 105.<sup>1309</sup> A recent epigraphical discovery as well as the poem by Ibn al-Ziba'ra (Z13) indicate that the general frame of the account as we find it in Muslim tradition may be more historically accurate than has been for long accepted. The second composition, on the other hand, relates to the conquest of Mecca by Muḥammad and his followers. On the details of this conquest the accounts differ, and the poem Z21, in combination with data from non-poetical sources, supports one reading of the

---

<sup>1309</sup> Q 105: "Hast thou not seen how thy Lord did with the Men of the Elephant? Did He not make their guile to go astray? And He loosed upon them birds in flights, hurling against them stones of baked clay and He made them like green blades devoured."



## Conclusions

---

events against other variants. These and other poems exemplify how the poems by contemporaries of Muḥammad can serve as sources for research on early Islam. Further analysis of a broad selection of *mukhaḍram* poems as sources of historical information may allow for a firmer foundation of the history of early Islam in contemporary sources.





# **Excursus**

---

THE 'AJAM AND THE 'ARAB

## EXCURSUS – THE ‘AJAM AND THE ‘ARAB

In chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma* I summarised the principal scholarly approaches to the development of the notion of “Arabness”. In chapter 3. Ḍirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihrī I discuss a poem attributed to Dirar (DKo6) that may contribute to the debate on the development of the notion of Arabness. Although this question lies beyond the scope of this research, the short poem DKO6 may contribute to the debate.

Peter Webb argues that the notion of shared identity of the Arabs did not originate until Muslim times. One of Webb’s arguments is the lack of pre-Islamic sources that show a contrast between Arabs and non-Arabs and that speak of the Arabs as a “definite, ethnically distinct and cohesive community”.<sup>1310</sup> Equally late, according to Webb, is the generalised idea that the “Arabs”, now conceived as one group, descent from Abraham through Ishmael.<sup>1311</sup> The connection between the Ka’ba and Abraham and his son, on the other hand, does seem to have pre-Islamic roots,<sup>1312</sup> although it is debated whether in pre-Islamic times it was already a common belief that Ishmael was buried there.<sup>1313</sup>

Because of the contrast between the ‘*ajam* and *fushḥ* in v.1 of DKO6, apparently a contrast between the non-Arabian barbarian and the Arab, we may ask whether the poem substantiates the theory of a pre-Islamic development of an Arab identity as defended by al-Azmeh and Shahid and rejected by Hoyland, Webb, and others. Or is it to be considered a later poem put in the mouth of a *mukhaḍram* individual? Or is there perhaps a third solution?<sup>1314</sup>

---

<sup>1310</sup> Webb, 29. See also: Kister, ‘Mecca and Tamīm’, 128 n. 4; Rubin, ‘Ḥanifiyya and Ka’ba’, 103ff., 107; Webb, ‘Identity and Social Formation’. On epigraphical material from pre-Islamic times in which we find autodeclarations of being an “Arab”, and the interpretation of these scarce occurrences, see Hoyland, ‘Epigraphy and the Emergence of Arab Identity’.

<sup>1311</sup> Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 211ff. But according to Rubin, in pre-Islamic times there was an awareness of ascendancy from Abraham through Ishmael, at least of the Quraysh; Rubin, ‘Ḥanifiyya and Ka’ba’, 106–7.

<sup>1312</sup> Rubin, ‘Ḥanifiyya and Ka’ba’, 97, 103ff., 107; Kister, ‘Mecca and Tamīm’, 128 n. 4.

<sup>1313</sup> Rubin, ‘The Ka’ba’, 325–27.

<sup>1314</sup> Perhaps, in light of the poems Z13 and Z21 by his fellow Qurashī Ibn al-Ziba’rā, which can be read against the background of the tensions provoked by Muḥammad’s preaching, this poem by Ḍirār is also an angry reaction to Muḥammad, who challenged the original position and the role of the Ka’ba and the Ḥijr in Mecca. As Webb states, the discourse of the Qur’ān challenged the legitimacy of the rule of the Quraysh in Mecca. This poem by Ḍirār could be, like Z13 and Z21, a reaction to these challenges, and an attempt at undermining Muḥammad’s position, for the poet declares that no man can compare to Ishmael and Zuhayr. See Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 117.

In the poem, Ḍirār establishes in v.1 a contrast between two groups, the 'ajam (coll.) vs. the *fuṣḥ* (sg. *faṣīḥ*). The root 'j-m is related to speaking incorrectly and unclearly, and would come to indicate the “barbarian”, the “foreigner, non-Arab”, and often “Persian”. In later times, the common antonym of 'ajam as “barbarians, non-Arabs” would be the term 'arab (“Arabs”).<sup>1315</sup> Also in later times, the root 'r-b would come to be used as a close synonym of *f-ṣ-ḥ* (related to a clear, pure speech): contrary to the non-Arab barbarian, the Arab was distinguished and recognised by his eloquence, clarity, and correct use of the (Arabic) language.<sup>1316</sup>

According to Peter Webb, the pre-Islamic groups on the Arabian peninsula lacked a “perception of a single ‘other’ – the sense of a recognisable ‘non-Arabian’ ‘them’ against whom populations could imagine one cohesive Arabian community”.<sup>1317</sup> Is the poem DKo6 then a later forgery? There is no intra- or inter-textual evidence for that. On the contrary, the evidence points to an early date. Among other things, Ḍirār does not speak of Ishmael as an ancestor of the Arabs,<sup>1318</sup> and he goes against later Muslim traditions that speak of the Ḥijr as the burial place not only of Ishmael but also of a whole series of other prophets like Noah, Ḥūd, Ṣāliḥ, and others.<sup>1319</sup> Would a later forger dare to include a pre-Islamic non-prophet like Zuhayr, not a member of Muḥammad’s close family, and not remembered as a *ḥanīf*, a monotheistic, pious man—and thus, we may assume, a polytheist—, in such a sacred place? That seems unlikely. Even more so because the poet not only states that Zuhayr has been buried here but also excludes all others, prophets and non-prophets, with the exception of Ishmael.

Is this poem then one of the few instances of an early (pre-Islamic or *mukhadram*) notion of a shared identity of the Arabs vs. the non-Arabs? Not necessarily. In the dichotomy *fuṣḥ*-*'ajam* in v.1, the identity of both groups is not self-evident. Are the *fuṣḥ* (1) the Quraysh, (2) the Quraysh and their allies, or perhaps even (3) the inhabitants of Northern and Central Arabia as a whole? On the answer depends the definition of the 'ajam: are the 'ajam (1.i) the non-Qurashī groups, (2.i) groups

<sup>1315</sup> Retsö, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, 24–28.

<sup>1316</sup> Cf. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 178ff.

<sup>1317</sup> Webb, 130.

<sup>1318</sup> Instead, the poet speaks of Ishmael’s connection to the Ka’ba (v.2). The latter notion seems to predate the former, which is generally understood as having emerged in Muslim times. Rubin, ‘Ḥanīfiyya and Ka’ba’, 103ff.

<sup>1319</sup> Some of these reports speak of 70 prophets buried there. Rubin, ‘The Ka’ba’, 327. See also Webb, ‘The Hajj before Muhammad’.

which have not entered into an alliance with the Quraysh, or even (3.i) the inhabitants of those regions outside the peninsula?

While, as Webb states, the term *‘arab* is not found in the compositions of any important pre-Islamic poet,<sup>1320</sup> a quick search for *‘ajam* in pre-Islamic poems does yield some results.<sup>1321</sup> It may have been used as a general term for “the Other”, that is, for outsiders and strangers in general and not for a specific ethnical group. It is unclear whether Ḍirār uses *fuṣṣḥ* here in a reference to the Quraysh or in a broader sense, perhaps encompassing the allies through the supratribal *ḥums* and the *ilāf* relations.<sup>1322</sup> In any case, the following is important to note. In pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry, as well as in the Qur’ān, we often find a binary opposition to refer to “all” of a kind or species.<sup>1323</sup> All in all, based on the occurrence of *‘ajam* in pre-Islamic and *mukhaḍram* poetry as well as on this figure of speech, the aim of this verse by Ḍirār does not seem to be to underline a distinct “Arab” identity; rather, he uses the binary opposition *fuṣṣḥ-‘ajam* in v.1 to emphasise in v.2 that “no man” has been more distinguished and favoured than Zuhayr b. al-Ḥārith, treated like an equal of Ishmael.

---

<sup>1320</sup> While, according to him, the (few) early references ascribed to less important poets are suspect, for they could be “Muslim-era fabrications”. Based on the sources, he concludes that in pre-Islamic times the term “Arab” was not used by a group to refer to the “self”, to their communal identity; it was used by others (Assyrians, Romans, Greeks, and South Arabians) to refer to “outliers”, “nomadic outsiders”. Webb, *Imagining the Arabs*, 24–36, 68.

<sup>1321</sup> In the online database ‘al-Mawsū‘a al-Shi‘riyya’, Database, al-Mawsū‘a al-Shi‘riyya 2016 - Hay’at Abū Zāby li-l-Siyāḥa wa-l-Thaqāfa, accessed 28 July 2017. For example in a poem by al-Akhnas b. Shihāb al-Taghlibī; Abū al-‘Abbās al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. ca. 785), *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir and ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 6th ed. (Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1979), 206 v. 16.

<sup>1322</sup> See chapter 2. The tribe and the *umma*.

<sup>1323</sup> “The menstruating and the non-menstruating young women” (see poem AB01 v.12 in 4. Ibn al-Zibā‘rā): “all young women”.







# **Bibliography**

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdesselem, M. 'Mawt'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 6:910–911. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Abū al-Khayr al-Hāshimī, Zayd b. 'Abd Allāh b. Mas'ūd b. Rifā'a. *al-Amthāl*. Damascus: Dār Sa'd al-Dīn, 2002.
- Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī (d. 1058), Schoeler, Gregor, and Geert Jan van Gelder. *The Epistle of Forgiveness: Volume Two: Hypocrites, Heretics, and Other Sinners*. New York: NYU Press; 2013.
- Abū Bakr (d. 634). *Dīwān Abī Bakr al-Šiddīq*. Edited by Muḥammad Shafiq al-Bayṭār. Damascus: Shirā', 1993.
- Abū Ḥayyān (d. 1344), Muhammad b. Yūsuf. *al-Baḥr al-Muḥīṭ fi l-Tafsīr*. Edited by Šidqī Muḥammad Jamil. 5 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1999.
- Abū 'Ubayda Ibn al-Muthannā (d. ca. 825), Ma'mar. *Sharḥ Naqā'id Jarīr wa-l-Farazdaq*. Edited by Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ḥūwar and Walid Maḥmūd Khālīs. 3 vols. Abu Dhabi: al-Majma' al-Thaqāfi, 1998.
- Agha, Saleh Said. 'Of Verse, Poetry, Great Poetry, and History'. In *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, edited by Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi, 1–35. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011.
- Ahrens, K. 'Christliches im Qoran. Eine Nachlese'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* N.F.9, no. 1930 (1930): 15–68, 148–90.
- . *Muhammed als Religionsstifter*, 1935.
- al-Afghānī, Sa'īd. *Aswāq al-'Arab fi l-Jāhiliyya wa-l-Islām*. 3rd ed. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1974.
- al-Akhfash al-Aṣghar (d. 927), 'Alī b. al-Sulaymān b. al-Faḍl. *al-Ikhtiyārāyn al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt wa-l-Aṣma'iyāt*. Edited by Fakhr al-Dīn Qabawa. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr al-Mu'āsir, 1999.
- al-Azhari (d. 980), Abū Maṅšūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad. *Tahdhīb al-Lughā*. Edited by Muḥammad 'Awḍ. 80 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2001.
- al-Azmeh, 'Aziz. *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allāh and His People*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Allen, Roger. *An Introduction to Arabic Literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- 'Abd al-Jābir, Su'ūd Maḥmūd, ed. *Shi'r al-Zibriqān b. Badr wa-'Amr b. al-Ahtam*. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1984.
- 'Alī, Jawād. *al-Mufaṣṣal fi Tārīkh al-'Arab Qabl al-Islām*. 20 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Sāqī, 2001.
- 'Arafat, W.N. 'An Aspect of the Forger's Art in Early Islamic Poetry'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 28, no. 3 (1965): 477–82.
- . 'Early Critics of the Authenticity of the Poetry of the "Sira"'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 21, no. 1 (1958): 453–63.
- Andrae, Tor. *Die Person Muhammeds in Lehre und Glauben Seiner Gemeinde*. Stockholm: Norstedt, 1918.
- Arazi, A. 'Šu'lūk'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 9:863–67. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Arberry, Arthur John, trans. *The Koran Interpreted: A Translation*. Repr. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996.
- . *The Seven Odes: The First Chapter in Arabic Literature*. London etc.: Allen and Unwin, 1957.

- Aristotle. *Aristotle's Poetics*. Edited by George Whalley, John Baxter, and Patrick Atherton. Montreal Que.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997.
- Arkoun, M. 'Inṣāf'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:1237-38. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009.
- Aslim b. Aḥmad, Fārūq, ed. 'Muqaddimat Dīwān Dīrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri'. In *Dīwān Dīrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri*, 5-39. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1996.
- al-'Askarī (d. 1005), al-Ḥasan b. 'Abd Allāh Abū Hilāl. *Dīwān al-Ma'ānī*. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Jil, n.d.
- . *Kitāb al-Awā'il*. Edited by Muḥammad al-Sayyid al-Wakil. Ṭanṭā: Dār al-Bashīr li-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-'Ulūm al-Islāmiyya, 1987.
- Austin, John Langshaw. *How to Do Things with Words*. The William James Lectures 1955. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962.
- Baalbaki, Ramzi, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi. *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011.
- al-Bakrī (d. 1094), Abū 'Ubayd 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. *al-Tanbih 'alā Awhām Abī 'Alī fi Amālihi*. 2nd ed. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 2000.
- . *Simṭ al-La'ālī fi Sharḥ Amāli al-Qālī*. Edited by 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Maymanī. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, n.d.
- al-Baghdādī (d. 1682), 'Abd al-Qādir b. 'Umar. *Khizānat al-Adab wa-Lubb Lubāb Lisān al-'Arab*. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. 4th ed. 13 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1998.
- Baker, Paul, and Sibonile Ellece. *Key Terms in Discourse Analysis*. London etc.: Continuum, 2011.
- Bakhos, Carol, and Michael Cook, eds. *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017.
- al-Balādhurī (d. ca. 892), Abū al-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Yaḥyā. *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*. Edited by Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḍ al-Ziriklī. 13 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1996.
- . *Futūḥ al-Buldān*. Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1988.
- Bamyeh, Mohammed A. 'The Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia'. In *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*, edited by Dawn Chatty, 33-48. Brill, 2006.
- . *The Social Origins of Islam: Mind, Economy, Discourse*. Minneapolis, MN etc.: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- al-Barqūqī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān. *Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī*. Cairo, 1929.
- Bashear, Suliman. *Arabs and Others in Early Islam*. Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1997.
- al-Baṣrī (d. 1261), Ṣadr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī al-Faraj b. al-Ḥasan. *Kitāb al-Ḥamāsa al-Baṣriyya*. Edited by 'Ādil Sulaymān Jamāl. 4 vols. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1999.
- Bauer, Thomas. *Altarabische Dichtkunst: Eine Untersuchung ihrer Struktur und Entwicklung am Beispiel der Onagerepisode. Texte*. 2 vols. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1992.
- . *Die Kultur der Ambiguität: Eine andere Geschichte des Islams*. Berlin: Verlag der Weltreligionen, 2011.
- . 'The Relevance of Early Arabic Poetry for Qur'ānic Studies Including Observations on Kull and on Q22:27, 26:225, and 52:31'. In *The Qur'an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 699-732. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.
- Emery, P.G. 'Bedouin'. Edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. London etc.: Routledge, 1998, 146-48.

- Beeston, A. F. L., and Lawrence I. Conrad. 'On Some Umayyad Poetry in the History of al-Ṭabarī'. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Third Series, 3, no. 2 (1 July 1993): 191–206.
- Bellamy, James A. 'Dāḥīs'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 12:177–79. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Berg, Herbert, ed. *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Blachère, Régis. *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe des Origines à la Fin du XVe Siècle de J.-C.* 3 vols. Paris: Maisonneuve, 1952–1964.
- Boekhoff-van der Voort, N.A. 'Hind Bint 'Utba, de "Levereetster": Verhalen over Een Invloedrijke Vrouw Uit de Tijd van de Profeet Muhammad'. In *Jaarboek Voor Vrouwengeschiedenis*, 43–60. 29, n.d.
- Boisliveau, Anne-Sylvie. 'Polemics in the Koran: The Koran's Negative Argumentation over Its Own Origin 1'. *Arabica* 60, no. 1–2 (1 January 2013): 131–45.
- Bonebakker, S. A. 'Religious Prejudice against Poetry in Early Islam'. *Medievalia et Humanistica* 7 (1976): 77–99.
- Borg, G.J.A., and Ed De Moor, eds. *Representations of the Divine in Arabic Poetry*. Amsterdam: Rodolpi, 2001.
- Borg, G.J.A. 'Ammā Ba'du: The Meaning of "Lā Tab'ad"'. *Zeitschrift Für Arabische Linguistik* 37 (1999): 13–24.
- . *Mit Poesie vertreibe ich den Kummer meines Herzens: Eine Studie zur altarabischen Trauerklage der Frau*. Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul 81. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1997.
- . 'Poetry as a Source for the History of Early Islam: The Case of (al-)ʿAbbās b. Mirdās'. *Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies* 15 (2015): 137–63.
- . 'Ṣaʿālik'. Edited by Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. London etc.: Routledge, 1998, 670–71.
- Bosworth, C.E. 'Sayyid'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 9:115–16. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Bourdieu, Pierre F. *Language and Symbolic Power*. Edited by John Brookshire Thompson. Translated by Gino Raymond and Matthew Adamson. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991.
- Bräunlich, E. 'Beiträge zur Gesellschaftsordnung der arabischen Beduinenstämme'. *Islamica* 6 (1934): 68–111, 182–229.
- Bravmann, M.M. *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam: Studies in Ancient Arab Concepts*, 1972.
- Brinton, Laurel J. 'Historical Discourse Analysis'. In *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by Deborah Schiffrin, Deborah Tannen, and Heidi E. Hamilton, 138–60. Malden and Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2001.
- Brockelmann, Carl. *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur*. 2 vols. E. Felber, 1898.
- . *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur. Supplement*. 3 vols, 1937.
- Brockopp, Jonathan E. 'Servants'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 4:576–80. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Brown, Deborah, Annie Finch, and Maxine Kumin, eds. *Lofty Dogmas: Poets on Poetics*. Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2005.
- Brown, Jonathan A.C. 'The Social Context of Pre-Islamic Poetry: Poetic Imagery and Social Reality in the Muʿallaqat'. *Arab Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2003): 29–50.
- Bulliet, Richard W. *Islam: The View from the Edge*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

- al-Buḥturī (d. 897), Abū 'Ubāda al-Walid b. 'Ubayd. *Kitāb al-Ḥamāsa*. Edited by P.L. Cheikho. Mélanges de La Faculté Orientale. Beirut, 1910.
- Burr, Vivien. *An Introduction to Social Constructionism*. E-Book. London and New York: Routledge, 2006.
- Cachia, Pierre J. *Arabic Literature: An Overview*. Culture and Civilisation in the Middle East. London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002.
- Cameron, A.M., ed. *Late Antiquity on the Eve of Islam*. The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 1. Farnham etc.: Ashgate Variorum, 2013.
- Caskel, W. 'Bakr b. Wā'il'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:962-64. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009.
- . 'The Bedouinization of Arabia'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, 3:34-44. The Formation of the Classical Islamic World. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Chatty, Dawn, ed. *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Entering the 21st Century*. Handbook of Oriental Studies 81. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- Chelhod, J. 'Ḥawṭa'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:293-94. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009.
- . *Le Droit dans la Société Bédouine: Recherches Ethnologiques sur le 'Orfou Droit Coutumier des Bédouins*. Petite Bibliothèque Sociologique Internationale. Série A, Auteurs Contemporains 12. Paris: Librairie Marcel Rivière et Cie, 1971.
- Creswell, Robyn, and Bernard Haykel. 'Why Jihadists Write Poetry'. *The New Yorker*, 1 June 2015. Accessed 10 October 2017. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/08/battle-lines-jihad-creswell-and-haykel>.
- Crone, Patricia. *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*. Oxford: Blackwell; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987.
- . 'Serjeant and Meccan Trade'. *Arabica* 39, no. 2 (1 July 1992): 216-40.
- . *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity*. Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- . 'The Tribe and the State'. In *The State. Critical Concepts*, edited by J.A. Hall, 1:446-78. London and New York: Routledge, 1994.
- . 'What Do We Actually Know about Mohammed?' openDemocracy, 3 September 2014. Accessed 09-01-2015. [https://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe\\_islam/mohammed\\_3866.jsp](https://www.opendemocracy.net/faith-europe_islam/mohammed_3866.jsp).
- Crone, Patricia, and Michael Cook. *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Daniel, Norman. *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. Edinburgh University Publications, Language and Literature 12. Edinburgh: University Press, 1962.
- De Blois, F.C., B. Van Dalen, R.S. Humphreys, M. Marín, A.K.S. Lambton, C. Woodhead, M. Athar Ali, J.O. Hunwick, G.S.P. Freeman-Greenville, and I. Proudfoot. 'Ta'rikh'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 10:258-302. Leiden: Brill, 1960-2009.
- Denny, F.M. 'Community and Society in the Qur'an'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 1:367-86. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- . 'Some Religio-Communal Terms and Concepts in the Qur'an'. *Numen* 24, no. 1 (April 1977): 26-59.
- . 'The Meaning of "Ummah" in the Qur'an'. *History of Religions* 15, no. 1 (1 August 1975): 34-70.

- . 'Ummah in the Constitution of Medina'. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 36, no. 1 (January 1977): 39–47.
- Doe, Brian. *Southern Arabia*. New Aspects of Antiquity. London: Thames and Hudson, 1971.
- Donner, Fred M. 'Modern Approaches to Early Islamic History'. In *The New Cambridge History of Islam. The Formation of the Islamic World: Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, edited by Chase F. Robinson, 1:625–47. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- . *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*. Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010.
- . 'The Bakr B. Wā'il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam'. *Studia Islamica*, no. 51 (1980): 5–38.
- . *The Early Islamic Conquests*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981.
- . 'The Historical Context'. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'ān*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 23–39. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- . 'The Role of Nomads in the Near East in Late Antiquity (400–800 C.E.)'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 21–33. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Dostal, W. 'Die Araber in Vorislamischer Zeit'. *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients*, no. 1 (1997): 1–63.
- . 'Mecca before the Time of the Prophet - Attempt of an Anthropological Interpretation'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 205–43. Ashgate, 1999.
- Dozy, R.P.A. *Geschichte der Mauren in Spanien Bis Zur Eroberung Andalusiens Durch Die Almoraviden (711–110)*. German translation. 2 vols. Leipzig: Fr. Wilh. Grunow, 1874.
- Dresch, Paul. *Tribes, Government, and History in Yemen*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Drory, Rina. 'The Abbasid Construction of the Jahiliyya. Cultural Authority in the Making'. *Studia Islamica*, 1996, 33–49.
- Ḍīrār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri. *Dīwān*. Edited by Fārūq Aslīm b. Aḥmad. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1996.
- Eickelman, Dale F. *The Middle East: An Anthropological Approach*. 2nd ed. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1989.
- El Fadl, Khaled Abou. 'Retaliation'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 4:436–37. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- El-Tayib, Abdulla. 'Pre-Islamic Poetry'. In *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, edited by A. Beeston, T. Johnstone, R. Serjeant, and G. Smith, 27–113. The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Fabietti, U. 'The Role Played by the Organization of the "Ḥums" in the Evolution of Political Ideas in Pre-Islamic Mecca'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 348–56. Ashgate, 1999.
- Fahd, T. 'Divination'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 1:542–45. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- . 'Hubal'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:536–37. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . 'Kāhin'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 4:420–22. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Fahmī, Jābī Zāda 'Alī. *Ḥuṣn al-Ṣaḥāba fi Sharḥ Ash'ar al-Ṣaḥāba*. Vol. 1. Riyāḍ: Dār Sa'āda, 1906.
- Fairclough, Norman. *Discourse and Social Change*. Cambridge etc.: Polity Press, 1992.

- Fairclough, Norman, and Ruth Wodak. 'Critical Discourse Analysis'. In *Discourse as Social Interaction*, edited by Teun A. van Dijk, 2:258–84. Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction. London etc.: Sage, 1997.
- Fākīhī (d. ca. 892), Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ishāq b. al-'Abbās. *Akhbār Makka fi Qadīm al-Dahr wa-Ḥadīthihi*. Edited by 'Abd al-Malik 'Abd Allāh Ibn Duhaysh. 6 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Khiḍr, 1994.
- Farès, Edouard Bichr. *L'Honneur chez les Arabes avant l'Islam*. Protat frères, 1932.
- Farrukh, Omar A. *Das Bild Des Frühislam in der Arabischen Dichtung: Von der Hiğra Bis Zum Tode Umars (1-23 D.H./622-644 n.Ch.)*. Leipzig: Pries, 1937.
- Fisher, Greg. 'Arabia and the Late Antique East: Current Research, New Problems'. 4th Nangeroni Meeting presented at the Early Islam: The Sectarian Milieu of Late Antiquity?, Milan, 15 June 2015.
- . ed. *Arabs and Empires Before Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Frolov, D. *Classical Arabic Verse: History and Theory of 'Arūd*. Studies in Arabic Literature 21. Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- . 'The Place of Rajaz in the History of Arabic Verse'. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28, no. 3 (1997): 242–90.
- Fück, J.W. 'al-Basūs'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:1089. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . 'Fidjār'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 2:883–84. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . 'Ghaṭafān'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 2:1023–24. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . 'Ibn al-Ziba'ra'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:975–76. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Gabrieli, F. 'Aṣabiyya'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:–. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Gaudefroy-Demombynes, M. 'Shayba'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 9:389–91. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Geiger, Abraham. *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* Osnabrück: Biblio Verlag, 1971.
- Gelder, Geert Jan van. *Classical Arabic Literature: A Library of Arabic: Literature Anthology*. Library of Arabic Literature. New York etc.: New York University Press, 2013.
- . 'Genres in Collision: Nasīb and Hijā'. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21, no. 1 (1 January 1990): 14–25.
- . 'Poetry in Historiography: Some Observations'. In *Problems in Arabic Literature*. Edited by M. Maróth, 1–14. Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2004.
- . *Sound and Sense in Classical Arabic Poetry*. Arabische Studien 10. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012.
- . *The Bad and the Ugly: Attitudes Towards Invective Poetry (Hijā) in Classical Arabic Literature*. Brill Archive, 1988.
- Gibb, H.A.R. *Arabic Literature: An Introduction*. The World's Manuals. London etc.: Oxford University Press, 1926.
- Goethe, J.W., and J.H.J. Düntzer. *Goethes Westöstlicher Divan*. Erläuterungen Zu Den Deutschen Klassikern. 1. Abt., Erläuterungen Zu Goethes Werken 33. Leipzig: Wartig, 1878.



- Goldstein, Amanda Jo. *Sweet Science. Romantic Materialism and the New Logics of Life*. Repr. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017.
- Goldziher, I., ed. 'Der Diwân des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, no. 46:1-3; 47:1-2 (1893 1892).
- . 'Der Diwân des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. I'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, no. 1 (1892): 1–53.
- . 'Der Diwân des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. II'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, no. 2 (1892): 173–225.
- . 'Der Diwân des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. III'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 46, no. 3 (1892): 471–527.
- . 'Der Diwân des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. IV'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 47, no. 1 (1893): 43–85.
- . 'Der Diwân des Garwal b. Aus al-Hutej'a. V'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 47, no. 2 (1893): 168–201.
- . *Muslim Studies*. Edited by S.M. Stern and C.R. Barber. 2 vols. London: Allen & Unwin, 1967.
- . *Abhandlungen Zur Arabischen Philologie*. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1896.
- . *Die Richtungen der Islamischen Koranauslegung*. Leiden: Brill, 1920.
- . 'Die Šu'ûbiyya Unter Den Muhammadanern in Spanien'. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, no. 4 (1899): 601–20.
- Goldziher, I., and Ch. Pellat. 'al-Ḥuṭay'a'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:641. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Görke, Andreas, Harald Motzki, and Gregor Schoeler. 'First Century Sources for the Life of Muḥammad? A Debate'. *Der Islam*, 2012, 2–59.
- Grohmann, Adolf. *Arabien*. Kulturgeschichte Des Alten Orients ; 3. Abschnitt, 4. Unterabschnitt; Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft ; Abt. 3, 1. Tl, 3. Bd., 3. Abschnitt, 4. Unterabschnitt. München: Beck, 1963.
- Grunebaum, G.E. von. 'The Nature of Arab Unity before Islam'. *Arabica* 10 (1963): 5–23.
- Guillaume, A., ed. *The Life of Muhammad by Ibn Ishāq*. Karachi etc.: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- Haussig, Hans-Michael. 'A Religion's Self-Conception of "Religion": The Case of Judaism and Islam'. In *Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East*, 19–27, 2004.
- 'Ḥabash, Ḥabasha'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:2-8. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- 'Ḥasab wa-Nasab'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:238-39. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Hawting, G.R. 'Parties and Factions'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 4:24–27. Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006.
- . 'Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Qur'ān'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 4:253–61. Leiden: Brill, 2001-2006.
- . 'Sa'd b. Abī Waḳḳāš'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 8:696-97. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750*. London, 2000.
- . *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

- . 'Were There Prophets in the Jahiliyya?' In *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, edited by Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook, 186–212. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017.
- Haymes, Edward R. *Das Mündliche Epos: Eine Einführung in Die 'Oral Poetry' Forschung*. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977.
- Heath, Peter. 'Some Functions of Poetry in Pre-Modern Historical and Pseudo-Historical Texts: Comparing Ayyām al-'Arab, al-Ṭabarī's History, and Sirat 'Antar'. In *Poetry and History: The Value of Poetry in Reconstructing Arab History*, edited by Ramzi Baalbaki, Saleh Said Agha, and Tarif Khalidi, 39–59. Beirut: American University of Beirut Press, 2011.
- Hell, Joseph, ed. *Die Diwane Hudailiten-Dichter Sa'ida ibn Ġu'ajja, Abu Ĥiraš, al-Mutanahhil und Usama ibn al-Ĥarīṭ*. 2 vols. Neue Hudailiten-Diwane 2. Leipzig, 1933.
- Henninger, J. 'Pre-Islamic Bedouin Religion'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 109–28. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Hinds, M. 'Makhzūm'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 6:137–40. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Hirschfeld, Hartwig. *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Korân*. Leipzig, 1886.
- . *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, 1902.
- Holland, Tom. 'When I Questioned the History of Muhammad'. *Wall Street Journal*, 9 January 2015. Accessed 28-09-2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/when-i-questioned-the-history-of-muhammad-1420821462>.
- Holmberg, Bo. 'Hagarism Revisited'. *Studia Orientalia* 99 (2004): 53–64.
- Homerin, T. Emil. 'Echoes of a Thirsty Owl: Death and Afterlife in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry'. *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 44, no. 3 (1985): 165–84.
- Hoyland, Robert G. 'Arab Kings, Arab Tribes and the Beginnings of Arab Historical Memory in Late Roman Epigraphy'. In *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, edited by H. Cotton, R.G. Hoyland, J. Price, and D. Wasserstein. Cambridge, 2009.
- . *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam*. London: Routledge, 2001.
- . 'Arabian Peninsula'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, Three*, 2:105–18. Leiden: Brill, 2007.
- . 'Epigraphy and the Emergence of Arab Identity'. In *From al-Andalus to Khurasan: Documents from the Medieval Muslim World*, edited by Petra M. Sijpesteijn, Lennart Sundelin, Sofia Torallas Tovar, and Amalia Zomeño, 219–42. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007.
- . *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton, N.J.: Darwin Press, 1997.
- Husayn, Nebil Ahmed. 'Scepticism and Uncontested History: A Review Article'. *Journal of Shi'a Islamic Studies* 7, no. 4 (2014): 385–409.
- al-Ĥuṭay'a - for his diwān see under Goldziher; Ṭāhā; and Ṭammās*
- al-Ĥalabī (d. 1635), Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm b. Aḥmad. *Insān al-'Uyūn fī Sirat al-Amīn al-Ma'mūn: al-Sira al-Ĥalabiyya*. Edited by 'Abd Allāh Ibn Muḥammad al-Khalīlī. 3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2002.
- Ḥusain, S.M. *Early Arabic Odes Chosen from the Selections of al-Mufaḍḍal and al-Aṣmā'ī*. Dacca: University of Dacca, 1938.
- Ḥusayn, Ṭāhā. *Fī l-Adab al-Jāhilī*. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1927.
- . *Fī l-Shi'r al-Jāhilī*. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1925.

- Ibn Abi 'Āṣim (d. 900), Abū Bakr Aḥmad. *al-Awā'il*. Edited by Muḥammad b. Nāṣir al-'Ajamī. Kuwait: Dār al-Khulafā' li-l-Kitāb al-Islāmī, n.d.
- Ibn al-Athīr (d. 1233), 'Izz al-Dīn Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī. *al-Kāmil fī l-Tārīkh*. Edited by 'Amr 'Abd al-Salām Tadramī. 10 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Arabī, 1997.
- . *Usd al-Ghāba fī Ma'rīfat al-Ṣaḥāba*. Edited by 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994.
- Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821), Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad. *Ġamharat An-Nasab: Das Genealogische Werk des Hišam ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī*. Edited by Werner Caskel and Gert Strenziok. 2 vols. Leiden: Brill, 1966.
- . *Jamharat al-Nasab*. Edited by Maḥmūd Fardūs al-'Azīm. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Damascus: Dār al-Yaqzā al-'Arabiyya, 1939.
- . *Kitāb al-Aṣnām*. Edited by Aḥmad Zakī Pasha. 4th ed. Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 2000.
- Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 819 or 821), Abū al-Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad, and Muḥyī al-Dīn Muḥammad b. 'Alī Ibn al-'Arabī. *Les 'Livres Des Chevaux' de Hišam Ibn al-Kalbī et Muḥammad Ibn al-A'rābī*. Edited by Giorgio Levi Della Vida. Uitgaven van de Stichting de Goeje 8. Leiden: Brill, 1928.
- Ibn al-Shajarī (d. 1148), Hibat Allāh ibn 'Alī. *Mukhtārāt Shu'arā' al-'Arab*. Edited by Maḥmūd Ḥasan Zanātī. 3 vols. Cairo: Maṭba'at al-'Iṭimād, 1925.
- Ibn Bakkār (d. 870), al-Zubayr. *Jamharat Nasab Quraysh wa-Akhbārūhā*. Edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr. Cairo: Dār al-'Urūbah, 1962.
- Ibn Durayd (d. 933), Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Azdī. *al-Ishṭiqāq*. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1991.
- . *Jamharat al-Lughā*. Edited by Ramzī Munīr al-Ba'labakkī. 3 vols. Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 1987.
- Ibn Hishām (d. 828 or 833), Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Malik. *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*. Edited by Muṣṭafā b. Muḥammad al-Saqqā, Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī, and 'Abd al-Ḥafīz Shalabī. 2 vols. Cairo: Maktabat wa-Maṭba'at Muṣṭafā al-Bābī al-Ḥalabī, 1955.
- Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 860), Abū Ja'far Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-Muḥabbar*. Edited by I. Lichtenstadter. Beirut: Dār al-Āfāq al-Jadida, n.d.
- . *Kitāb al-Munammaq fī Akhbār Quraysh*. Edited by Khurshīd Aḥmad Fārūq. Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1985.
- Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (d. 1449), Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad b. 'Alī. *al-Iṣāba fī Tamayīz al-Ṣaḥāba*. Edited by 'Ādil Aḥmad 'Abd al-Mawjūd and 'Alī Muḥammad Mu'awwad. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1994.
- Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), Abū Muḥammad 'Alī b. Aḥmad. *Jamharat Ansāb al-'Arab*. Edited by Commission of scholars. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1983.
- Ibn Iṣḥāq, Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-Sīyar wa-l-Maghāzī*. Edited by Suhayl Zakkār. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1978.
- Ibn Kathīr (d. 1373), 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl b. 'Umar. *al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*. 15 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1986.
- . *al-Sīra al-Nabawīyya*. Edited by Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Wāḥid. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 1976.
- . *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Azīm*. Edited by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Shams al-Dīn. 9 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998.

- Ibn Khaldūn (d. 1382), ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad. *Dīwān al-Mubtada’ wa-l-Khabar fi Tārīkh al-‘Arab wa-l-Barbar wa-man ‘Āṣarahum min Dhawī al-Shā’n al-Akbar*. Edited by Khalīl Shaḥāda. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1988.
- . *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History*. Translated by Franz Rosenthal. 3 vols. Bollingen Series 43. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958.
- Ibn Qutayba (d. 889), Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd Allāh b. Muslim. *al-Ma‘ārif*. Edited by Tharwat ‘Ukāsha. Cairo: al-Hay’a al-Miṣriyya al-‘Āma li-l-Kitāb, 1992.
- . *Kitāb al-Shi’r wa-l-Shu‘arā’*. 2 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 2002.
- Ibn Rashīq (d. ca. 1070), Abū ‘Alī Ḥasan. *al-‘Umda fi Maḥāsīn al-Shi’r wa-Ādābihi*. Edited by Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd. 5th ed. 2 vols. Dār al-Jīl, 1981.
- Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 1334), Faṭḥ al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Muḥammad. *‘Uyūn al-Athar fi Funūn al-Maghāzī wa-l-Shamā’il wa-l-Sīyar*. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1993.
- Ibn Sa’d (d. 845), Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad. *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā*. Edited by Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Khālīq ‘Abd al-Qādir Aḥmad ‘Aṭā, Aḥmad Shams al-Dīn, and Yaḥyā Muqallid. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1990.
- al-‘Iṣāmī (d. 1699), ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥusayn b. ‘Abd al-Malik. *Simṭ al-Nujūm al-‘Awālī fi Anbā’ al-Awā’il wa-l-Tawālī*. Edited by ‘Ādil Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Mawjūd and ‘Alī Muḥammad Mu‘awwad. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1998.
- Ḥassān ibn Thābit. *Dīwān*. Edited by W.N. ‘Arafat. 2 vols. London: Luzac & Co., 1971.
- . *Dīwān*. Edited by Sayyid Ḥanafī Ḥasanayn. Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1983.
- Ibn Warraq (pseud.). *Koranic Allusions: The Biblical, Qumranian, and Pre-Islamic Background to the Koran*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2013.
- . *The Quest for the Historical Muhammad*. Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2000.
- Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 1070), Abū ‘Umar Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh. *al-Istī‘āb fi Ma‘rifat al-Aṣḥāb*. Edited by ‘Alī Muḥammad al-Bajāwī. 4 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1992.
- Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih (d. 940), Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. *al-‘Iqd al-Farīd*. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1985.
- Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 1176), Abū al-Qāsim ‘Alī b. al-Ḥasan. *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*. Edited by ‘Umar b. Gharāma al-‘Amrawī. 80 vols. Dār al-Fikr, 1995.
- . *Tahdhīb Tārīkh Dimashq al-Kabīr*. Edited by ‘Abd al-Qādir Badrān. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Masīra, 1979.
- Ibrahim, Mahmood. ‘Social and Economic Conditions in Pre-Islamic Mecca’. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 14 (1982): 343–58.
- Imhof, Agnes. *Religiöser Wandel und die Genese des Islam: Das Menschenbild altarabischer Panegyriker im 7. Jahrhundert*. Christentum und Islam 2. Würzburg: Ergon, 2004.
- . ‘The Qur’ān and the Prophet’s Poet: Two Poems by Ka’b b. Mālik’. In *The Qur’ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur’ānic Milieu*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 389–403. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.
- al-Iṣfahānī (d. 976), Abū al-Faraj. *Kitāb al-Aghānī*. Edited by Iḥsān ‘Abbās, Ibrāhīm al-Sa‘afin, and Bakr ‘Abbās. 3rd ed. 25 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 2008.
- Izutsu, Toshihiko. *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur’ān*. McGill Islamic Studies 1. Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University Press, 1966.
- . *God and Man in the Qur’an: Semantics of the Qur’anic Weltanschauung*. 2 repr. Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust, 2008.

- Jackson, C., M. Romanov, and A. Tavares. 'al-Thurayyā Gazetteer Ver. 0.2'. Perseus Project, Tufts University, 2013. [http://maximromanov.github.io/projects/althurayya\\_02/](http://maximromanov.github.io/projects/althurayya_02/).
- Jacobi, R. 'Abbasidische Dichtung (8.-13. Jahrhundert)'. In *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, edited by H. Gätje, 2:41–63, 1987.
- . 'Dichtung. Allgemeine Charakteristik der Arabischen Dichtung'. In *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, edited by H. Gätje, 2:7–19, 1987.
- . 'Die Altarabische Dichtung (6.-7. Jahrhundert)'. In *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, edited by H. Gätje, 2:20–31, 1987.
- . 'Omaijadische Dichtung (7.-8. Jahrhundert)'. In *Grundriss der Arabischen Philologie. Literaturwissenschaft*, edited by H. Gätje, 2:32–40, 1987.
- . 'Qaṣīda'. Edited by J.S. Meisami and P. Starkey. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. London: Routledge, 1998, 630–33.
- . *Studien Zur Poetik der Altarabischen Qaṣīde*. Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission / Akademie der Wissenschaften und Der Literatur 24. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1971.
- Jäger, Siegfried, and Florentine Maier. 'Theoretical and Methodological Aspects of Foucauldian Critical Discourse Analysis and Dispositive Analysis'. In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 2nd ed., 34–61. Los Angeles etc.: SAGE, 2009.
- al-Jāhīz (d. ca. 868), Abū 'Uthmān 'Amr b. Baḥr. *al-Bayān wa-l-Tabyīn*. 3 vols. Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, 1997.
- . *al-Bukhalā'*. Edited by Ṭāhā al-Hājirī. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 2005.
- . *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*. Edited by 'Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. 2nd ed. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2003.
- Jamil, Nadia. *Ethics and Poetry in Sixth-Century Arabia*. Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2017.
- Jarrar, M. 'Houris'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 2:456–458. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Jayyusi, Salma Khadra. 'Umayyad Poetry'. In *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, edited by A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant, and G. R. Smith, 387–432. The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Jones, Alan. *Early Arabic Poetry: Select Poems*. Reading: Ithaca Press, 2011.
- Jones, William. *The Moallakāt: Or Seven Arabian Poems, Which Were Suspended on the Temple at Mecca; with a Translation, a Preliminary Discourse, and Notes Critical, Philological, Explanatory*. Reproduction of original from the British Library (Electronic ed.). London: Thomson Gale, 2003.
- Jorgensen, Cory Alan. 'Jarīr and al-Farazdaq's Naqa'id Performance as Social Commentary', 2012.
- al-Jubūrī, Yaḥyā Wahīb. *Shi'r al-Mukhaḍramīn wa-Āthār al-Islām fihi*, 1981.
- . *Shi'r 'Abd Allāh Ibn al-Ziba'rā*. 2nd ed. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1981.
- al-Jumaḥī (d. 845 or 846), Muḥammad b. Sallām. *Ṭabaqāt Fuḥūl al-Shu'arā'*. Edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr. 2 vols. Jeddah: Dār al-Madanī, 1952.
- al-Jumaḥī (d. 845 or 846), Muḥammad b. Sallām, and Joseph Hell. *Die Klassen der Dichter*. Leiden: Brill, 1916.
- Juynboll, Theodoor Willem. *Over Het Historische Verband Tusschen de Mohammedaansche Bruidsgave En Het Rechtskarakter van Het Oud-Arabische Huwelijk*. Leiden: Brill, 1894.

- Ka' b. Mālik al-Anṣārī. *Dīwān Ka' b. Mālik al-Anṣārī*. Edited by Sāmi Makkī al-Ānī. Baghdad: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, 1966.
- Keller, Reiner. *Doing Discourse Research: An Introduction for Social Scientists*. London: SAGE Publications, 2012.
- Kendall, Elisabeth. 'Jihadist Propaganda and Its Exploitation of the Arab Poetic Tradition'. In *Reclaiming Islamic Tradition. Modern Interpretations of the Classical Heritage*, edited by Elisabeth Kendall and Ahmad Khan, 223–46. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
- . 'Yemen's al-Qa'ida and Poetry as a Weapon of Jihad'. In *Twenty-First Century Jihad*, edited by Elisabeth Kendall and Ewan Stein, 247–69. London: Tauris, 2014.
- al-Khalil b. Aḥmad (d. ca. 776), Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Farāhīdī. *Kitāb al-'Ayn*. Edited by Maḥdī al-Makhzūmī and Ibrāhīm al-Sāmarrā'ī. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār wa-Maktabat al-Hilāl, n.d.
- Khan, Ruqayya. 'Error'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 2:43–44. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Khazanov, Anatolij M. *Nomads and the Outside World*. 2nd ed. Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1994.
- Khulayf, Yūsuf. *al-Shu'arā al-Ṣa'ālik fi l-'Aṣr al-Jāhili*. 4th ed. Dār al-Ma'ārif, n.d.
- Kimber, Richard. 'Blood Money'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 1:239–240. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Kindermann, H. 'Asad'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:683–84. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Kister, M.J. 'Labbayka, Allāhumma, Labbayka. On a Monotheistic Aspect of a Jāhiliyya Practice'. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 2 (1980): 33–57.
- . 'Mecca and Tamīm (Aspects of Their Relations)'. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 8 (1965).
- . 'Mecca and the Tribes of Arabia: Some Notes on Their Relations'. In *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization in Honour of Professor David Ayalon*, edited by M. Sharon, 33–57. Cana; Leiden: Brill, 1986.
- . 'On Strangers and Allies in Mecca'. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 113–54.
- . *Society and Religion from Jāhiliyya to Islam*. Aldershot: Variorum, 1990.
- . 'Some Reports Concerning Mecca from Jāhiliyya to Islam'. *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 15 (1972): 61–93.
- . 'The Campaign of Ḥulubān. A New Light on the Expedition of Abraha'. *Le Muséon* 78 (1965): 425–36.
- Kronholm, Tryggve. 'Dependence and Prophetic Originality in the Koran'. *Orientalia Suecana* 31–32, no. 83 (1983): 47–70.
- Lammens, H. *L'Arabie Occidentale avant l'Hégire*. Beirut: Imprimerie Catholique, 1928.
- . 'Les "Aḥābīs" et l'Organisation Militaire de la Mecque au Siècle de l'Hégire'. *Journal Asiatique* 11, no. 8 (1916): 425–82.
- Lancaster, William, and Fidelity Lancaster. 'Thoughts on the Bedouinisation of Arabia'. *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 18 (1 January 1988): 51–62.
- . 'Tribal Formations in the Arabian Peninsula'. *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 3, no. 3 (1 October 1992): 145–72.
- Landau-Tasserou, Ella. 'Alliances among the Arabs'. *al-Qanṭara: Revista de Estudios Arabes* 26, no. 1 (2005): 141–73.

- . 'Alliances in Islam'. In *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, edited by Monique Bernards and John Nawas, 1–49. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Larsson, Göran. *Ibn García's Shu'ūbiyya Letter: Ethnic and Theological Tensions in Medieval al-Andalus*. Brill, 2003.
- Lecker, M. 'al-Ridda'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 12:692–95. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . 'Idol Worship in Pre-Islamic Medina (Yathrib)'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 129–44. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- . *People, Tribes, and Society in Arabia around the Time of Muhammad*. Ashgate, 2005.
- . 'Pre-Islamic Arabia'. In *The New Cambridge History of Islam. Vol. 1 - The Formation of the Islamic World: Sixth to Eleventh Centuries*, edited by Chase F. Robinson, 153–70. Cambridge University Press, 2010.
- Lecker, M., and C.E. Bosworth. 'Wufūd'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 11:219–20. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Levy, Reuben. *The Social Structure of Islam*. Second edition of The sociology of Islam. Cambridge: University Press, 1965.
- Lindner, Rudi Paul. 'What Was a Nomadic Tribe?' *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 24, no. 4 (1 October 1982): 689–711.
- Lindstedt, Ilkka. 'Pre-Islamic Arabia and Early Islam'. In *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, edited by Herbert Berg, 159–76. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Lockman, Zachary. *Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism*. The Contemporary Middle East 3. Cambridge etc.: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Lord, Albert Bates. *The Singer of Tales*. Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature 24. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960.
- Lüling, Günter. *Über den Urkoran: Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion der vorislamisch-christlichen Strophenlieder im Koran*. Vol. 2. Erlangen: Verlagsbuchhandlung H. Lüling, 1993.
- Luxenberg (pseud.), Christoph. *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran: ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache*. Schiler, 2015.
- Lyall, Charles. *Translations of Ancient Arabian Poetry: Chiefly Pre-Islamic*. Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press, 1981.
- , ed. *The Dīwāns of 'Abid Ibn al-ʿAbras and 'Āmir Ibn al-Ṭufayl*. E.J.W. Gibb Memorial Series 21. Leyden: E. Brill, 1913.
- Lyons, Malcolm C. *Identification and Identity in Classical Arabic Poetry*. Gibb Literary Studies 2. Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1999.
- Macdonald, M.C.A. 'Ancient Arabia and the Written Word'. In *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies. Supplement: The Development of Arabic as a Written Language: Papers from the Special Session of the Seminar for Arabian Studies Held on 24 July, 2009*, edited by M.C.A. Macdonald, 5–28. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2010.
- . 'Reflections on the Linguistic Map of Pre-Islamic Arabia'. *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy*, no. 11 (2000): 28–79.
- al-Mallah, Majd. 'Classical Arabic Poetry in Contemporary Studies: A Review Essay'. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 44, no. 2 (1 January 2013): 240–47.
- Mann, Michael. *The Sources of Social Power*. 2 vols. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012.

- al-Maqrīzī (d. 1442), Takī al-Dīn Abū l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī b. ‘Abd al-Qādir. *Imtā‘ al-Asmā‘ bi-mā li-l-Nabī min al-Aḥwāl wa-l-Amwāl wa-l-Ḥafada wa-l-Matā’*. 15 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1999.
- Margoliouth, D.S. ‘The Origins of Arabic Poetry’. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, no. 3 (1 July 1925): 417–49.
- Marx, Emanuel. ‘The Tribe as a Unit of Subsistence: Nomadic Pastoralism in the Middle East’. *The American Anthropologist*, no. 2 (1977): 343–63.
- al-Marzubānī, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Imrān. *Mu‘jam al-Shu‘arā’*. Edited by F. Krenkow. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1982.
- al-Marzūqī (d. 1030), Abū ‘Alī Aḥmad b. Muḥammad. *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 2003.
- ‘al-Mawsū‘a al-Shi‘riyya’. Database. al-Mawsū‘a al-Shi‘riyya 2016 - Hay‘at Abū Zāby li-l-Siyāḥa wa-l-Thaqāfa. Accessed 28 July 2017. <https://poetry.tcaabudhabi.ae/search>.
- Meisami, J.S. ‘Qiṭ‘a’. Edited by J.S. Meisami and P. Starkey. *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*. London: Routledge, 1998, 638–39.
- Meredith-Owens, G.M. ‘Ḥamza b. ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:152–54. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Minganti, P. ‘Il Poeta Meccano ‘Abd Allāh Ibn az-Ziba‘rā as-Sahmī’. *Rivista Degli Studi Orientali* 38 (1963): 323–59.
- Mitter, Ulrike. *Das Frühislamische Patronat: Eine Studie Zu Den Anfängen Des Islamischen Rechts*. Würzburg: Ergon, 2006.
- . ‘Origin and Development of the Islamic Patronate’. In *Patronate and Patronage in Early and Classical Islam*, edited by Monique Bernards and John Nawas, 70–133. Leiden: Brill, 2005.
- Monroe, James T. ‘Oral Composition in Pre-Islamic Poetry’. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 3 (1 January 1972): 1–53.
- . ‘The Poetry of the Sīrah Literature’. In *Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, edited by A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant, and G. R. Smith, 368–73. The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.
- Montgomery, James E. ‘Dichotomy in Jāhili Poetry’. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 17 (1986): 1–20.
- Mottahedeh, R.P. ‘The Shu‘ūbiyah Controversy and the Social History of Early Islamic Iran’. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (1976): 161–82.
- al-Mubarrad (d. 900), Abū al-‘Abbās Muḥammad b. Yazīd. *Kitāb al-Kāmil fi l-Lughā wa-l-Adab*. Edited by Muḥammad Abū al-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. 3rd ed. 4 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-‘Arabī, 1997.
- al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. ca. 785), Abū al-‘Abbās. *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*. Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākīr and ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn. 6th ed. Cairo: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1979.
- Mulder, E.H., and Thomas Milo. *De Omstreden Bronnen van de Islam*. Zoetermeer: Meinema, 2010.
- Müller, Gottfried. *Ich bin Labīd und das ist mein Ziel: Zum Problem der Selbstbehauptung in der altarabischen Qaside*. Berliner Islamstudien 1. Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1981.
- Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 875), Abū al-Ḥusayn. *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. 5 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā’ al-Turāth al-‘Arabī, n.d.
- al-Muzarrīd b. Ḍīrār al-Ghatafānī (7th c.). *Dīwān*. Edited by K.I al-‘Aṭīya. Baghdad, 1962.
- Neuwirth, A. ‘Eine “Religiöse Mutation der Spätantike”: Von Tribaler Genealogie Zum Gottesbund Koranische Refigurationen Pagan-Arabischer Ideale Nach Biblischen Modellen’. In



- Genealogie und Migrationsmythen Im Antiken Mittelmeerraum und Auf der Arabischen Halbinsel*, edited by Almut-Barbara Renger and Isabel Toral-Niehoff, 201–30, 2014.
- . ‘Qur’an and History — a Disputed Relationship: Some Reflections on Qur’anic History and History in the Qur’an’. *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 5, no. 1 (1 January 2003): 1–18.
- . *Scripture, Poetry, and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur’an as a Literary Text*. Qur’anic Studies Series. Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Neuwirth, Angelika, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, eds. *The Qur’an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur’anic Milieu*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2011.
- Nevo, Yehuda D., and Judith Koren. *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State*. Negev Archeological Project for Study of Ancient Arab Desert Culture. Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2003.
- Nicholson, R.A. *A Literary History of the Arabs*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1966.
- Nöldeke, Theodor. ‘Anzeigen: W. Robertson Smith, Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia’. *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 40 (1886): 148–87.
- Noth, Albrecht. *Quellenkritische Studien Zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen Frühislamischer Geschichtsüberlieferung*. Bonner Orientalistische Studien 25. Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität, 1973.
- Paraszczuk, Joanna. ‘The Poems of Jihadists’. *The Atlantic*, 18 September 2015. Accessed 06-10-2017. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/09/jihadist-poetry-syria-chechnya-syria/405790/>.
- Paret, R. ‘Ismā’īl’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 4:184–85. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Der Koran als Geschichtsquelle’. *Der Islam* 37 (1961): 24–42.
- Parry, Milman. ‘Studies in the Epic Technique of Oral Verse-Making. I. Homer and Homeric Style’. *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 41 (1 January 1930): 73–147.
- Parry, Milman, and Adam Parry, eds. *The Making of Homeric Verse: Collected Papers*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.
- Pavlovitch, Pavel. ‘The Sira’. In *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, edited by Herbert Berg, 65–78. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- Peters, Francis E. ‘Introduction’. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, xi–xlix. The Formation of the Classical Islamic World 3. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Pipes, Daniel. ‘Black Soldiers in Early Muslim Armies’. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 13, no. 1 (1980): 87–94.
- Powers, David S. ‘Inheritance’. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 2:518–26. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Procksch, O. *Über die Blutrache bei den vorislamischen Arabern und Mohammeds Stellung zu ihr*. Leipzig: B.G. Teubner, 1899.
- al-Qalqashandī (d. 1418), Abū al-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī. *Ṣubḥ al-A‘shā fi Ṣinā‘at al-Inshā’*. 15 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilmiyya, 1988.
- Rambo, Lewis R., and Charles E. Farhadian. ‘Conversion’. Edited by Lindsay Jones. *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005. Gale Virtual Reference Library.
- Reinhart, A. Kevin. ‘Ethics and the Qur’an’. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur’an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 2:55–79. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Reisigl, M., and R. Wodak. *Discourse and Discrimination: Rhetorics of Racism and Antisemitism*. London and New York: Routledge, 2001.

- Reisigl, M., and R. Wodak. 'The Discourse-Historical Approach'. In *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*, edited by Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer, 2nd ed., 87–121. Los Angeles etc.: SAGE, 2010.
- Retsö, Jan. *The Arabs in Antiquity: Their History from the Assyrians to the Umayyads*. London etc.: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003.
- Reynolds, Gabriel S. 'Introduction'. In *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context*, edited by Gabriel S. Reynolds, 1:1–25. Routledge Studies in the Qur'an. London: Routledge, 2008.
- , ed. *The Qur'an in Its Historical Context* 1. 2 vols. Routledge Studies in the Qur'an. London: Routledge, 2008.
- , ed. *New Perspectives on the Qur'an: The Qur'an in Its Historical Context* 2. 2 vols. Routledge Studies in the Qur'an. London: Routledge, 2011.
- . 'Remembering Muhammad'. *Numen* 58, no. 2–3 (2011): 188–206.
- . 'Review: Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State by Yehuda D. Nevo; Judith Koren'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 125, no. 3 (1 July 2005): 453–57.
- Rippin, Andrew. 'Western Scholarship and the Qur'an'. In *The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an*, edited by Jane D. McAuliffe, 235–51. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.
- Robertson Smith, William. *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*. Edited by Ignaz Goldziher and Stanley A. Cook. London: A. and C. Black, 1903.
- Robin, C.J. 'Ḥimyar, Aksūm, and Arabia Deserta in Late Antiquity. The Epigraphic Evidence'. In *Arabs and Empires Before Islam*, edited by Greg Fisher, 127–71. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- . 'L'Arabie Dans Le Coran. Réexamen de Quelques Termes à La Lumière Des Inscriptions Préislamiques'. In *Les Origines Du Coran, Le Coran Des Origines*, edited by F. Déroche, C.J. Robin, and M. Zinc, 27–74. Paris: Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, 2015.
- Roded, Ruth. 'Women and the Qur'an'. In *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, edited by Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 5:523–41. Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006.
- Rodinson, M. 'Kabid'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 4:327–33. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Rosenthal, Franz. *A History of Muslim Historiography*. Brill Archive, 1968.
- Rubin, Uri. 'Ḥanifiyya and Ka'ba: An Inquiry into the Arabian Pre-Islamic Background of Dīn Ibrāhīm'. *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 13 (1990): 85–112.
- . *The Eye of the Beholder: The Life of Muḥammad as Viewed by the Early Muslims*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995.
- . 'The Ka'ba: Aspects of Its Ritual Functions and Position in Pre-Islamic and Early Islamic Times'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 313–47. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Rückert, J.M.F., trans. *Hamāsa, Oder Die Ältesten Arabischen Volkslieder, Gesammelt von Abu Temmām*. 2 vols. Stuttgart: Liesching, 1846.
- Rudolph, Wilhelm. *Die Abhängigkeit des Qorans von Judentum und Christentum*, 1922.
- Sadeghi, Behnam, and Mohsen Goudarzi. 'Ṣan'ā' 1 and the Origins of the Qur'an'. *Der Islam: Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des Islamischen Orients*, no. 87 (2012): 1–129.
- Schacht, J. 'Aḥmad'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:267. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.

- Schoeler, Gregor. 'The Codification of the Qur'ān: A Comment on the Hypotheses of Burton and Wansbrough'. In *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 779–94. Brill, 2010.
- . *The Oral and the Written in Early Islam*. Edited by James E. Montgomery. Translated by Uwe Vagelpohl. Routledge, 2006.
- Schwarzlose, Friedrich Wilhelm. *Die Waffen der Alten Araber Aus Ihren Dichtern Dargestellt: Ein Beitrag Zur Arabischen Alterthumskunde, Synonymik und Lexicographie Nebst Registern*. Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1886.
- Seidensticker, T. *Das Verbum Sawwama: Ein Beitrag Zum Problem der Homonymen-Scheidung Im Arabischen*, 1986.
- . 'Sources for the History of Pre-Islamic Religion'. In *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 293–321. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.
- Serjeant, R. B. 'Haram and Hawtah, the Sacred Enclave in Arabia'. In *The Arabs and Arabia on the Eve of Islam*, edited by Francis E. Peters, 167–84. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999.
- Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte Des Arabischen Schrifttums. Poesie, Bis ca. 430 H.* 15 vols, 1967.
- Shahid, Irfan. 'Another Contribution to Koranic Exegesis the Sūra of the Poets (Xxvi)'. *Journal of Arabic Literature* 14, no. 1 (1 January 1983): 1–21.
- . *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1989.
- . 'Ghassān'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 2:1020–21. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . *Rome and the Arabs: A Prolegomenon to the Study of Byzantium and the Arabs*. Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1984.
- al-Sharif, Aḥmad Ibrāhīm. *Makka wa-l-Madīna fi l-Jāhiliyya wa-'Aṣr al-Rasūl*. Cairo: Dār al-Fikr al-'Arabī, 1965.
- 'Shā'ir'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 12:717–22. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Sinai, Nicolai. 'When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure? Part I'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 2 (2014): 273–92.
- . 'When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure? Part II'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77, no. 3 (2014): 509–21.
- Sinai, Nicolai, and Angelika Neuwirth. 'Introduction'. In *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, edited by Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, 1–24. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010.
- Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind*. New York: MacMillan, 1963.
- Southern, Richard William. *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages*. Cambridge MA, 1978.
- Stetkevych, Suzanne P. *The Mute Immortals Speak: Pre-Islamic Poetry and the Poetics of Ritual*. Myth and Poetics. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993.
- Stewart, Devin. 'Reflections on the State of the Art in Western Qur'anic Studies'. In *Islam and Its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, edited by Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook, 4–68. Oxford Scholarship Online, 2017.
- Stoetzer, W.F.G.J. 'Theory and Practice in Arabic Metrics'. Het Oosters Instituut, 1986.
- Stroumsa, Guy G. *The End of Sacrifice: Religious Transformations in Late Antiquity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

- Stuckrad, Kocku von. 'Discursive Study of Religion: Approaches, Definitions, Implications'. *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion* 25, no. 1 (2013): 5–25.
- . 'Secular Religion: A Discourse–Historical Approach to Religion in Contemporary Western Europe'. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 28, no. 1 (1 January 2013): 1–14.
- al-Suhaylī (d. 1185), 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd Allāh. *al-Rawḍ al-Unuḥfi Sharḥ al-Sira al-Nabawīyya li-Ibn Hishām*. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār Iḥyā' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2000.
- al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), Jalāl al-Dīn 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Bakr. *al-Muzhir fi l-Luḡha wa-Anwā'ihā*. Edited by Fu'ād 'Alī Maṣṣūr. 2 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998.
- Tapper, Richard. 'Anthropologists, Historians, and Tribespeople on Tribe and State Formation in the Middle East'. In *Tribes and State Formation in the Middle East*, edited by Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner, 48–73. University of California Press, 1990.
- Thomson, William. 'Islam and the Early Semitic World'. *The Muslim World* 39, no. 1 (1 January 1949): 36–63.
- al-Tibrizī (d. 1109), Abū Zakariyā' Yaḥyā b. 'Alī. *Sharḥ Dīwān al-Ḥamāsa*. Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, n.d.
- Tolan, John V. *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Torrey, Charles C. *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*. New York, 1933.
- Tritton, A.S. "Arrāf. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:659–60. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr. *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl al-Qur'ān: Tafṣīr al-Ṭabarī*. Edited by Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākīr. 24 vols. Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 2000.
- . *Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk: Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*. 11 vols. Beirut: Dār al-Turāth, 1960.
- . *The History of al-Ṭabarī. An Annotated Translation. Vol. X. The Conquest of Arabia*. Edited by Iḥsān 'Abbās and Iḥsān Yārshāṭīr. Translated by Fred McGraw Donner. SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993.
- . *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Translated and Annotated. Vol. VI. Muḥammad at Mecca*. Translated by W. Montgomery Watt and M.V. McDonald. SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1988.
- . *The History of al-Ṭabarī. Vol. XIII. The Conquest of Iraq, Southwestern Persia, and Egypt: The Middle Years of 'Umar's Caliphate A.D. 636-642/A.H. 15-21*. Translated by G.H.A. Juynboll. SUNY Series in Near Eastern Studies. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Ṭahā, N.A. *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a bi-Sharḥ Ibn Sikkīt wa-l-Sukkarī wa-l-Sijistānī*. Cairo, 1958.
- , ed. *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a bi-Riwayāt wa-Sharḥ Ibn al-Sikkīt*. Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānjī, 1987.
- Ṭammās, Ḥamdu, ed. *Dīwān al-Ḥuṭay'a*. Beirut: Dār al-Ma'rifa, 2005.
- Wagner, Ewald. *Grundzüge der Klassischen Arabischen Dichtung. Die Altarabische Dichtung*. 2 vols. Grundzüge 68. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1987.
- al-Wahīdī (d. 1076), Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Aḥmad. *Kitāb Asbāb al-Nuzūl*. Edited by Kamāl Basyūnī Zaghāl. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1990.
- Walther, W. 'al-Khansā', ed. Julie Scott Meisami and Paul Starkey, *Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature* (London etc.: Routledge, 1998), 435.
- Wansbrough, J. 'Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World by Patricia Crone; Michael Cook. Review'. *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 41, no. 1 (1 January 1978): 155–56.
- . *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*. London Oriental Series 31. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.

- . *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978.
- al-Wāqidi (d. 822), Abū ‘Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. ‘Umar. *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*. Edited by Marsden Jones. 3 vols. Beirut, 1989.
- . *Kitāb al-Ridda ma‘a Nubdhā min Futūḥ al-‘Irāq wa-Dhikr al-Muthannā b. Ḥāritha al-Shaybānī* (also attributed to: Abū Muḥammad Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. A‘tham al-Kūfī (d. 926-927)). Edited by Yaḥyā Wahīb al-Jubūrī. Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islāmī, 1990.
- Watt, W. Montgomery. ‘Abū D̲jahl’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:115. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘al-Anṣār’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:514-15. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘al-Aws’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:771-72. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘al-Khazradj’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 4:1187. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Badr’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 1:867-68. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Fazāra’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 2:873. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Ka‘b b. Mālik’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 4:315-16. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Khandak’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 4:--. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Ḳuraysh’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 5:434-35. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . *Muhammad at Mecca*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1953.
- . *Muhammad at Medina*. Repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- . ‘Sa‘d b. Bakr’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 8:--. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- . ‘Idjī’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 3:1022-23. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Watt, W. Montgomery, A.J. Wensinck, C.E. Bosworth, R.B. Winder, and D.A. King. ‘Makka’. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 6:145-87. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.
- Webb, Peter. ‘al-Jāhiliyya: Uncertain Times of Uncertain Meanings’. *Der Islam* 91, no. 1 (2014): 69–94.
- . ‘Identity and Social Formation in the Early Caliphate’. In *Routledge Handbook on Early Islam*, edited by Herbert Berg, 129–58. New York: Routledge, 2017.
- . *Imagining the Arabs: Arab Identity and the Rise of Islam*. Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2016.
- . ‘Poetry and the Early Islamic Historical Tradition: Poetry and Narratives of the Battle of Šiffin’. In *Warfare and Poetry in the Middle East*, edited by Hugh Kennedy, 119–48. London: I.B.Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013.
- . ‘The Hajj before Muhammad: Journeys to Mecca in Muslim Narratives of Pre-Islamic History’. In *The Hajj: Collected Essays*, edited by Venetia Porter and Liana Saif, 6–14. British Museum, 2013.

- Weber, Max. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited by Charles W. Mills and Hans H. Gerth. New York: Oxford University Press, 1946.
- . 'Politics as a Vocation', 1919.
- Weil, Gustav. *Historisch-Kritische Einleitung in Den Koran*. 2nd ed. Bielefeld, 1878.
- . *Mohammed der Prophet, Sein Leben und Seine Lehre*, 1843.
- Wellhausen, Julius. *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten. Prolegomena Zur Ältesten Geschichte Des Islams*. Vol. 6. Berlin: Reimer, 1899.
- Wensinck, A.J. *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition: Alphabetically Arranged*, 1960.
- . 'Mohammed en de Joden te Medina'. Leiden, 1908.
- Wolf, Eric R. 'The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam'. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1951): 329–56.
- . 'The Social Organization of Mecca and the Origins of Islam'. *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 7, no. 4 (1 December 1951): 329–56.
- Wright, William. *A Grammar of the Arabic Language*. Edited by W. Robertson Smith and M.J. De Goeje. 3rd ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979.
- al-Ya'qūbī (d. 897?), Aḥmad b. Abī Ya'qūb. *al-Buldān*. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2001.
- Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (d. 1244), Shihāb al-Dīn. *Kitāb Mu'jam al-Buldān*. 7 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1995.
- al-Ziriklī, Khayr al-Dīn. *al-A'lām. Qāmūs Tarājim li-Ashar al-Rijāl wa-l-Nisā' min al-'Arab wa-l-Musta'ribīn wa-l-Mustashriqīn*. 15th ed. 8 vols. Beirut: Dār al-'Ilm li-l-Malāyīn, 2002.
- al-Zubayrī (d. 851), Muṣ'ab b. 'Abd Allāh. *Nasab Quraysh*. Edited by E. Lévi-Provençal. Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1999.
- Zwettler, Michael J. 'Classical Arabic Poetry between Folk and Oral Tradition'. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 2 (June 1976): 198–212.
- . 'Ma'add in Late-Arabian Epigraphy and Other Pre-Islamic Sources'. *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes* 90 (2000): 223–309.
- Zysow, A. 'Zakāt'. In *The Encyclopaedia of Islam, New [= Second] Edition*, 11:406–22. Leiden: Brill, 1960–2009.



# **Tables and Figures**

## **Poems**

---



## TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1 – The main clans of the Quraysh in times of Muḥammad.....	59
Table 1 – Division of the Qurashī clans according to their geographical allocation in Mecca .....	60
Table 2 – Division of the Quraysh into the Aḥlāf and Muṭayyabūn.....	62
Table 3 – Ḥilf al-Fuḍūl faction that formed out of the Muṭayyabūn.....	62
Table 4 – Further division of the Quraysh three factions around the time of Muḥammad .....	62
Table 5 - ‘Uthmān and the key at the conquest of Mecca .....	246

## POEMS

3. Dirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri .....	86
[DKo1 ṭawīl].....المقَادِر.....	90
[DKo2 ṭawīl] .....مُحَارِبُ.....	91
[DKo3 rajaz] .....عَيْسَا.....	93
[DKo4 basīṭ] .....أَزَاغُونِي.....	96
[DKo5 basīṭ] .....وَالْأَسَدِ.....	97
[DKo6 basīṭ] .....عَجْمُ.....	98
[DKo7 mutaḳārib].....كَالْخَابِرِ.....	100
[DKo8 ṭawīl].....مَسْأَلِكُ.....	105
[DKo9 mutaḳārib].....خَالِدُ.....	108
[DK10 ṭawīl].....عَوَاطِلُ.....	111
[DK11 ṭawīl].....مُنْزَرَا.....	115
[HbTo1 ṭawīl].....ضُمْرَا.....	118
[DK12 ṭawīl].....الطُّلْمُ.....	120
[DK13 ṭawīl].....بَصَائِرُ.....	124
[KM01 ṭawīl].....قَاهِرُ.....	130
[DK14 basīṭ].....الرُّمْدُ.....	133
[DK15 basīṭ].....عَسَانَا.....	137
[DK16 basīṭ].....تَأْتَلِقُ.....	139
[KM02 mutaḳārib].....تَلْجَجُ.....	142
[DK17 mutaḳārib].....الْأَعْوَجُ.....	145
[DK18 basīṭ].....وَالْقَاعُ.....	148
[DK19 wāfir].....طُحُونَا.....	151
[KM03 wāfir].....صَابِرِينَا.....	155
[DK20 munsariḥ].....الغَلَقُ.....	158

[DK21 khafif].....	لَجَاءُ.....	162
[DK22 ṭawīl].....	نَائِمٌ.....	164
[DK23 ṭawīl].....	فَارَسَ.....	165
[DK24 ṭawīl].....	العَوَامِلُ.....	166
[DK25 ṭawīl].....	تُبْدِي.....	166
4. Ibn al-Ziba‘rā.....		176
[Z01 rajaz].....	تَحْدُدُ.....	176
[Z02 basīṭ].....	السَّفَاسِيرُ.....	180
[Z03 ṭawīl].....	غَالِبٌ.....	183
[Z04 ṭawīl].....	أَلْوَمَهَا.....	186
[Z05 ṭawīl].....	قَلِيلٌ.....	188
[Z06 mutaḡārib].....	أَلَمُ.....	190
[Z07 ṭawīl].....	عَاتِمٌ.....	191
[Z08 hazaj].....	سَهْمٌ.....	191
[Z09 mutaḡārib].....	خَالِدَهُ.....	195
[Z10 kāmīl].....	بِعِيَالٍ.....	196
[Z11 kāmīl].....	الدَّارُ.....	197
[Z12 kāmīl].....	مَنَافٍ.....	199
[Z12I kāmīl].....	عَجَافٌ.....	201
[Z13 kāmīl].....	حَرِيْمَهَا.....	202
[AB01 ṭawīl].....	حَادِثٌ.....	206
[Z14 ṭawīl].....	لَأَبِثُ.....	208
[Z15 kāmīl].....	كِرَامٌ.....	212
[HbT01 ṭawīl].....	بِسِخَامٍ.....	214
[Z16 ṭawīl].....	فُطُوغٌ.....	216
[HbT02 ṭawīl].....	جَمِيعٌ.....	219
[Z17 ramal].....	فُعُلٌ.....	223
[HbT03 ramal].....	عَدْلٌ.....	225
[Z18 ṭawīl].....	فَوَقَلٌ.....	229
[Z19 kāmīl].....	الأَحْقَابُ.....	230
[HbT04 kāmīl].....	بِحَوَابٍ.....	234
[M01 wāfir].....	رُقَادٍ.....	238
[Z20 wāfir].....	يُنَادِي.....	240
[Z21 ṭawīl].....	المُعَقَّلُ.....	242

[HbT05 kāmīl].....	أَلِيمٌ	249
[Z22 khafif].....	بُورٌ	250
[Z23 kāmīl].....	وَالْعَظْمُ	253
[Z24 kāmīl].....	بِهَيْبِ	254
5. Al-Ḥuṭay'a .....		266
[AH01 ṭawīl].....	قَاتِلُهُ	268
[AH02 ṭawīl].....	أَوْئِكَا	272
[AH03 wāfir].....	الْبَيْنِ	273
[AH04 wāfir].....	العَالَمِينَا	274
[AH05 kāmīl].....	الْحَبَّاقِ	275
[AH05I kāmīl].....	حَبَّاقِ	275
[AH06 wāfir].....	وَحَالِ	277
[AH07 wāfir].....	لَكَاعِ	278
[AH08 basit].....	تَكِيدَانَ	279
[AH09 majzū' al-kāmīl].....	عَالِمٌ	280
[AH10 ṭawīl].....	الْقَنَائِلِ	281
[AH11 kāmīl].....	دُهِلِ	281
[AH11I kāmīl].....	دُهِلِ	282
[AH12 basit].....	وَأِذْبَارِي	283
[AH13 ṭawīl].....	بِالزَّرْفَرَاتِ	284
[AH14 kāmīl].....	المَجْلِسِ	287
[AH15 ṭawīl].....	وَالْجَعْدِ	289
[AH16 kāmīl].....	أَفْسُدُوا	290
[AH17 ṭawīl].....	وَالْعُمُرُ	291
[AH18 ṭawīl].....	وَضَرَّتْ	296
[AH19 wāfir].....	جَلْمِي	298
[AH20 wāfir].....	بِظَلْمِ	300
[AH21 ṭawīl].....	مُؤَمَّلِ	302
[AH22 ṭawīl].....	فَأَخِرِ	303
[AH23 wāfir].....	وَمَالِ	305
[AH24 ṭawīl].....	مَهْرَبَا	307
[AH25 ṭawīl].....	السَّمَانِمِ	309
[AH26 wāfir].....	السَّلَامَا	310
[AH27 wāfir].....	الْبِقَاعِ	312

[AH28 ṭawīl].....	العَمْرُ.....	317
[AH29 wāfir].....	بِرَاخَا.....	322
[AH30 ṭawīl].....	وَنَالِدِي.....	324
[AH31 ṭawīl].....	حَمْدُ.....	328
[AH32 wāfir].....	سَوَاءُ.....	332
[AH33 rajaz].....	المُعْتَمَدُ.....	335
[AH34 rajaz].....	حُطَّيَّةُ.....	336
[AH35 wāfir].....	السَّعِيدُ.....	337



# **Nederlandse samenvatting**

---

## NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

### De goede, de slechte en de lelijkere

#### *Trouw en autoriteit in het dichterlijke vertoog uit de tijd van Mohammed*

Dit proefschrift onderzoekt de poëzie van tijdgenoten van Mohammed als bron voor de geschiedschrijving van de vroege Islam. Deze gedichten vinden we in beschrijvingen van veldslagen, verbondssluitingen en overwinningen in de *sīra*-literatuur, maar ook bijvoorbeeld in poëziesamenvattingen van stammen of individuele dichters en in biografisch materiaal. De gedichten kunnen bijdragen aan het onderzoek naar de vroege Islam, en wel op twee manieren, namelijk: specifieke gedichten of een cluster van gedichten kunnen licht werpen op bepaalde gebeurtenissen, en het dichterlijke corpus van tijdgenoten van Mohammed kan als geheel dienen als bron voor discoursanalyse.

Vanuit verschillende disciplines zijn er voldoende argumenten om aan te nemen dat het corpus van Arabische poëzie uit de tijd van Mohammed voldoende dateerbaar en betrouwbaar materiaal bevat om een bijdrage te kunnen leveren aan het onderzoek naar de samenleving op het Arabisch schiereiland in die periode. Uiteraard blijft het van belang om de vraag naar de authenticiteit van afzonderlijke gedichten en dichters steeds in het achterhoofd te houden.

Voor dit proefschrift heb ik drie dichters geselecteerd: ʿDirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb, Ibn al-Zibaʿrā, en al-Ḥuṭayʿa. De eerste twee behoren tot dezelfde stam als Mohammed, de Quraysh; al-Ḥuṭayʿa's exacte afkomst is onbekend maar hijzelf claimt afwisselend te behoren tot de stam van 'Abs of de stam van Dhuhl. Alledrie worden beschouwd als "professionele dichters" en als drie van de beste dichters van die tijd. Bovendien is er van elk van hen in ieder geval een editie van de gedichten. In het proefschrift vertaal, contextualiseer en analyseer ik de gedichten van deze drie dichters. In het geval van ʿDirār en Ibn al-Zibaʿrā heb ik al hun gedichten uit hun *dīwān* (poëziesamenvatting) bestudeerd en, enkele uitzonderingen daargelaten, in het proefschrift gevoegd. De *dīwān* van al-Ḥuṭayʿa is daarvoor te omvangrijk: ik heb een selectie gemaakt gebaseerd op algemene thema's van de gedichten.

De gedichten die ik bestudeer in dit proefschrift zijn zogenaamde gelegenheidsgedichten: in een dergelijke compositie, meestal relatief kort, reageert de dichter op een gebeurtenis die, korter of langer geleden, hem en/of zijn stam heeft getroffen. Dergelijke gedichten hebben soms betrekking op een gebeurtenis die ook we kennen uit de Moslimse traditie. In het geval van

meerdere lezingen van deze gebeurtenis, met bepaalde varianten, tegenstrijdigheden of onduidelijkheden onderling, komt het voor dat een bepaald gedicht of cluster van gedichten een bepaalde lezing ondersteunt of juist een andere tegenspreekt. Ook kan een gedicht of cluster van gedichten soms een omstreden gebeurtenis onderschrijven of juist vraagtekens stellen bij iets wat algemeen wordt geaccepteerd.

Behalve bepaalde gedichten die, alleen of in combinatie met andere gedichten of bronnen, extra of afwijkende informatie bieden bij wat we weten uit de Moslisme traditie, kan een analyse van het corpus als geheel inzichten bieden in de historische en sociale context van Mohammed en zijn vroege volgelingen. De composities zijn niet alleen een weergave van de individuele gevoelens en emoties van de dichter maar ook van diens wereldbeeld. Dat wereldbeeld overstijgt zijn of haar individuele ervaringen en is een uiting van de collectieve stem van de groep waarmee de dichter zich identificeert.

Hiervoor bestudeer ik het vertoog van de dichters om antwoord te geven op de volgende twee onderzoeksvragen. Ten eerste, vanuit een beschrijvende benadering: hoe ontvingen, beschouwden, en reageerden de tijdgenoten van Mohammed op zijn boodschap, en hoe moeten hun reacties gezien worden gezien wat we weten van de samenleving van pre-Islamitisch Arabië? En ten tweede: hoe dient het vertoog van de dichters om de instellingen en denkwijzen te legitimeren, ook in hun confrontatie of acceptatie van de autoriteitsclaim van Mohammed? Het vertoog van de dichters en tijdgenoten van Mohammed kan licht werpen op de aspecten van trouw en autoriteit, twee centrale aspecten in de samenleving van pre-Islamitisch Arabië, en twee aspecten die als ideaal zouden veranderen in de samenleving van vroeg-Islamitisch Arabië.





# **Dankwoord**

---

## DANKWOORD

A versed poet would be able to turn the following words into a *qasīda* with an amatory opening or *nasīb*: the bitter-sweet memories of a past youthful enthusiasm and love-affair with the PhD which has come to an end; with a camel section or *raḥīl* on the arduous journey through the lonesome desert called PhD; and finally with a section of *madīḥ* or panegyric on all of you who contributed to its completion. My lack of poetical talent and my disability when it comes to rhythm make me resort to prose—crippled and clumsy like an old she-camel, but deeply felt nevertheless.

First of all I thank my promotor, Kocku von Stuckrad, for his thoughtful and critical support during the whole project. During the first year of my PhD, Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau was my daily supervisor and her advice helped me turn a wild draft of a research proposal into a workable project, and she encouraged me to apply for a study grant to spend some time in Lebanon. Fred Leemhuis agreed to take over the supervision for a while and provided me with some helpful feedback. Gert Borg, you adopted me as your PhD student the first time I came to Nijmegen for an informal chat. This first meeting would be followed by hours of discussion over the interpretation and translation of the poems, from small details to their broader framework and context. Nicolet Boekhoff-van der Voort, your knowledge of early Muslim sources and historiography has been very beneficial. You would pay attention even to the footnotes of an early draft and yet also find time to care about the practical aspects of the process and to my personal well-being. Gert and Nicolet, the long hours, even whole days, we spent going over my translations and writings during my trips to Nijmegen at times left me exhausted, and yet encouraged and with a clearer understanding and vision of the undertaking.

Coming from a different faculty, I have felt at home at the Oude Boteringestraat 38 from the start. The beautiful building and the great tradition of the coffee break in the morning certainly were an important factor, but even more the friendly and supportive atmosphere on the academic and personal level.

PhD colleagues of the faculty: in spite of the changes in number and names, you have been an enormous support. Our research on burgers, pizza, beer, wine, and whiskey has come the closest to any quantitative research from my side during these five years, and its outcomes are among the easiest to explain their relevance and impact on society. The hours spent on coffee and

lunch breaks, on dinner and drinks certainly have made the tougher times more bearable and the fun times even better.

Manuel Gallardo is the author of the beautiful illustration on the cover of this book. Manuel, muchas gracias por la ilustración, realizada en las pocas horas que os quedaban en los Países Bajos.

Friends close by and further away, thanks for all the times you would ask about the progress of the thesis, and thank you for all the times you would skip this thorny topic. Janita en Ogbonna, Wilma, Tresita, Judith en Ruben, Kiki: huisgenoten in Groningen en Cairo, burens in Utrecht, maar vooral vrienden al deze jaren, dank voor wie jullie zijn in mijn leven. Familie van Willigen, Guido, familie Visser, vrienden uit de Martinikerk, dank voor jullie hartelijkheid, betrokkenheid en gastvrijheid. Alejandra: gracias por estar siempre allí. Cuando nos vemos parece como si los años no hubieran pasado y como si la distancia no nos hubiera separado. Kristina, the months spent in Beirut would have been quite flavourless and fruitless without you—I'm sure you get the word play. HOSTies, you are an amazing group of people. Scattered all over the world, the memories are there to keep.

Pa en ma, germans, nieuwsgierigheid en leergierigheid, doordenken en doorvragen heb ik van en met jullie geleerd. Maar ook betrokkenheid, gastvrijheid, fouten mogen maken en fouten kunnen toegeven, jezelf niet te serieus nemen. Alice, bedankt ook voor je correctiewerk. Als er ergens nog een foutje in staat is dat geheel aan mij. Les cançons que les dues ens sabem de memòria podrien servir com a banda sonora a tot el trajecte del PhD. Jonathan, je kwam in mijn leven toen mijn proefschrift *bijna* af was. Steeds vaker was het *bijna*, *bijna* af. Dank voor je geduld, je zorg, je liefde.

Bovenal dank aan God, wiens geliefd kind ik mij weet.



# **Curriculum Vitae**

---

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Marije Coster (1987) verhuisde in 2006 terug van Spanje naar Nederland en begon met de studie Talen en Culturen van het Midden Oosten aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen. Na haar afstuderen in 2010 werkte ze enige tijd als vertaler Nederlands-Spaans op het gebied van theologie. In 2012 begon ze aan een promotietraject aan de Faculteit Godgeleerdheid en Godsdienstwetenschappen aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen.