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## INTRODUCTION



*The excellence of historiography.—An appreciation of the various approaches to history.—A glimpse at the different kinds of errors to which historians are liable. Something about why these errors occur.*<sup>31</sup>

IT SHOULD BE KNOWN that history is a discipline that has a great number of (different) approaches. Its useful aspects are very many. Its goal is distinguished.

(History) makes us acquainted with the conditions of past nations as they are reflected in their (national) character. It makes us acquainted with the biographies of the prophets and with the dynasties and policies of rulers. Whoever so desires may thus achieve the useful result of being able to imitate historical examples in religious and worldly matters.

The (writing<sup>32</sup> of history) requires numerous sources and greatly varied knowledge. It also requires a good speculative mind and thoroughness. (Possession of these two qualities) leads the historian to the truth and keeps him from slips and errors. If he trusts historical information in its plain transmitted form and has no clear knowledge of the principles resulting from custom, the fundamental facts of politics, the nature of civilization, or the conditions governing human social organization, and if, furthermore, he does not evaluate remote or ancient material through comparison

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<sup>31</sup> The following four pages were translated by R. A. Nicholson, *Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose* (Cambridge, 1922), pp. 176–79. The Arabic text, down to p. 56, l. 30, of this translation, was edited with notes and a glossary by D. B. Macdonald, *A Selection from the Prolegomena of Ibn Khaldûn* (Semitic Study Series, No. 4) (Leiden, 1905; repr. 1948).

<sup>32</sup> Nicholson supplies “student” instead of “writing.”

### Introduction

with near or contemporary material, he often cannot avoid stumbling and slipping and deviating from the highroad of truth. Historians, Qur'ân commentators and leading transmitters have committed frequent errors in the stories and events they reported. They accepted them in the plain transmitted form, without regard for its value. They did not check them with the principles underlying such historical situations, nor did they compare them with similar material. Also, they did not probe (more deeply) with the yardstick of philosophy, with the help of knowledge of the nature of things, or with the help of speculation and historical insight. Therefore, they strayed from the truth and found themselves lost in the desert of baseless assumptions and errors.

This is especially the case with figures, either of sums of money or of soldiers, whenever they occur in stories. They offer a good opportunity for false information and constitute a vehicle for nonsensical statements. They must be controlled and checked with the help of known fundamental facts.

For example, al-Mas'ûdî and many other historians report that Moses counted the army of the Israelites in the desert.<sup>33</sup> He had all those able to carry arms, especially those twenty years and older, pass muster. There turned out to be 600,000 or more. In this connection, (al-Mas'ûdî) forgets to take into consideration whether Egypt and Syria could possibly have held such a number of soldiers. Every realm may have as large a militia as it can hold and support, but no more. This fact is attested by well-known customs and familiar conditions. Moreover, an army of this size cannot march or fight as a unit. The whole available territory would be too small for it. If it were in battle formation, it would extend two, three, or more times beyond the field of vision.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj adh-dhahab* (Paris, 1861–77), I, 93 f.; IV, 20. Al-Mas'ûdî refers briefly to the number of Israelites. According to al-Bakrî, *Kitâb al-masâlik wa-l-mamâlik* (MS. Nuru Osmaniye, 3034, fol. 47a), Moses left Egypt with 620,000 men able to carry arms, not counting those under ten and over sixty years of age. The exact number 603,550 found in Num. 1:46, was also known to the Arabs; cf., for instance, Ibn Kathîr, *Bidâyah*, I, 321, where the printed text gives 603,555.

*Erroneous Figures: Israelites*

How, then, could two such parties fight with each other, or one battle formation gain the upper hand when one flank does not know what the other flank is doing! The situation at the present day testifies to the correctness of this statement. The past resembles the future more than one (drop of) water another. I, 10

Furthermore, the realm of the Persians was much greater than that of the Israelites. This fact is attested by Nebuchadnezzar's victory over them. He swallowed up their country and gained complete control over it. He also destroyed Jerusalem, their religious and political capital. And he was merely one of the officials of the province of Fârs.<sup>34</sup> It is said that he was the governor of the western border region. The Persian provinces of the two 'Irâq, <sup>35</sup> Khurâsân, Transoxania, and the region of Derbend on the Caspian Sea <sup>36</sup> were much larger than the realm of the Israelites. Yet, the Persian army did not attain such a number or even approach it. The greatest concentration of Persian troops, at al-Qâdisîyah, amounted to 120,000 men, all of whom had their retainers. This is according to Sayf<sup>37</sup> who said that with their retainers they amounted to over 200,000 persons. According to 'Â'ishah and az-Zuhrî,<sup>38</sup> the troop concentration with which Rustum advanced against Sa'd at al-Qâdisîyah amounted to only 60,000 men, all of whom had their retainers.

Then, if the Israelites had really amounted to such a number, the extent of the area under their rule would have been larger, for the size of administrative units and provinces under a particular dynasty is in direct proportion to the size

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<sup>34</sup> Al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj adh-dhahab*, I, 117, describes him as governor of the 'Irâq and the Arabs for the Persian King (King of Fârs). Cf. also aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Annales*, I, 646.

<sup>35</sup> That is, Mesopotamia and northwestern Persia adjacent to it.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. W. Barthold in *EI*, s.v. "Derbend." For the "Gates" and Derbend, see also p. 155, below.

<sup>37</sup> See p. 7, above. For the numbers of the participants in this battle, see also p. 321, below.

<sup>38</sup> Muḥammad b. Muslim, who died between 123 and 125 [740 and 742/43]. Cf. *GAL*, I, 65; *Suppl.*, I, 102.

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of its militia and the groups that support the (dynasty), as will be explained in the section on provinces in the first book.<sup>39</sup> Now, it is well known that the territory of the (Israelites) did not comprise an area larger than the Jordan province and Palestine in Syria and the region of Medina and Khaybar in the Ḥijâz.<sup>40</sup> Also, there were only three generations<sup>41</sup> between Moses and Israel, according to the best-informed scholars. Moses was the son of Amram, the son of Kohath (*Qâhat* or *Qâhit*), the son of Levi (*Lêwî* or *Lâwî*),<sup>42</sup> the son of Jacob who is Israel-Allâh. This is Moses' genealogy in the Torah.<sup>43</sup> The length of time between Israel and Moses was indicated by al-Mas'ûdî when he said: "Israel entered Egypt with his children, the tribes, and their children, when they came to Joseph numbering seventy souls. The length of their stay in Egypt until they left with Moses for the desert was two hundred and twenty years. During those years, the kings of the Copts, the Pharaohs, passed them on (as their subjects) one to the other."<sup>44</sup> It is improbable that the descendants of one man could branch out into such a number within four generations.<sup>45</sup>

It has been assumed that this number of soldiers applied to the time of Solomon and his successors. Again, this is improbable. Between Solomon and Israel, there were only eleven generations, that is: Solomon, the son of David, the son of Jesse, the son of Obed (*'Ûbidh*, or *'Ûfidh*), the son of Boaz (*Bâ'az*, or *Bû'iz*), the son of Salmon, the son of Nahshon, the son of Amminadab (*'Ammînâdhâb*, or *Ḥammînâdhâb*), the son of Ram, the son of Hezron (*Ḥaḍ/ṣrûn*,

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<sup>39</sup> See pp. 327 ff., below.

<sup>40</sup> See also p. 474, below.

<sup>41</sup> The early text, as represented by Bulaq, had the statement (later corrected by Ibn Khaldûn) that there were four generations between Moses and Jacob. Amram is made the son of Izhar, the son of Kohath. Cf. also, for instance, ath-Tha'labî, *Qışaş al-anbiyâ'*, at the beginning of the chapter on Moses.

<sup>42</sup> The MSS state that the *L* of Levi should have either *i* or *a*, as indicated above. \* For Israel-Allâh, cf. aṭ-Ṭabarî, I, 442.

<sup>43</sup> Exod. 6:16 ff.

<sup>44</sup> The quotation is not, apparently, to be found in al-Mas'ûdî.

<sup>45</sup> On population increase, see also *'Ibar*, V, 506.

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or *Ḥasrûn*), the son of Perez (*Bâras*, or *Bayras*), the son of Judah, the son of Jacob. The descendants of one man in eleven generations would not branch out into such a number, as has been assumed. They might, indeed, reach hundreds or thousands. This often happens. But an increase beyond that to higher figures<sup>46</sup> is improbable. Comparison with observable present-day and well-known nearby facts proves the assumption and report to be untrue. According to the definite statement of the Israelite Stories,<sup>47</sup> Solomon's army amounted to 12,000 men, and his horses<sup>48</sup> numbered 1,400 horses, which were stabled at his palace. This is the correct information. No attention should be paid to nonsensical statements by the common run of informants. In the days of Solomon, the Israelite state saw its greatest flourishing and their realm its widest extension.

Whenever<sup>49</sup> contemporaries speak about the dynastic armies of their own or recent times, and whenever they engage in discussions about Muslim or Christian soldiers, or when they get to figuring the tax revenues and the money spent by the government, the outlays of extravagant spenders, and the goods that rich and prosperous men have in stock, they are quite generally found to exaggerate, to go beyond the bounds of the ordinary, and to succumb to the temptation of sensationalism. When the officials in charge are questioned about their armies, when the goods and assets

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<sup>46</sup> Literally, "to higher powers of ten" (*'uqûd*). Cf. also J. Ruska, *Der Islam*, X (1920), 87 ff. Somewhat different, Bombaci, p. 441.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. I Kings 10:26. As a rule, Muslim scholars gave an unpleasant connotation to the term "Israelite Stories," as mere fiction presented as history. Cf. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 417.

<sup>48</sup> *Muqrabât* is an adjective used in connection with horses and camels. Ibn Khaldûn uses the word commonly for good riding (or race) horses; see 2:358, below, and *'Ibar*, V, 473, 479 f., 501; VI, 289, 394; VII, 36. The vocalization *muqrabât*, as against *muqarrabât*, is confirmed by a verse of Ibn Khaldûn's in the *Autobiography*, p. 73, l. 4. Regardless of what the original derivation of the term may have been (cf. *Lisân al-'Arab*, II, 158; Ibn Hudhayl, *La Parure des cavaliers*, ed. L. Mercier [Paris, 1922], p. 29; tr. by the same [Paris, 1924], p. 110), Ibn Khaldûn seems to have connected it with the form *qarraba*, in the meaning of "to present" (noble horses as a gift). This is shown by *'Ibar*, V, 499, last line.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Issawi, p. 29.

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of wealthy people are assessed, and when the outlays of extravagant spenders are looked at in ordinary light, the figures will be found to amount to a tenth of what those people have said. The reason is simple. It is the common desire for sensationalism, the ease with which one may just mention a higher figure, and the disregard of reviewers and critics. This leads to failure to exercise self-criticism about one's errors and intentions, to demand from oneself moderation and fairness in reporting, to reapply oneself to study and research. Such historians let themselves go and made a feast of untrue statements. "They procure for themselves entertaining stories in order to lead (others) astray from the path of God."<sup>50</sup> This is a bad enough business.

It<sup>51</sup> may be said that the increase of descendants to such a number would be prevented under ordinary conditions which, however, do not apply to the Israelites. (The increase in their case) would be a miracle in accordance with the tradition which said that one of the things revealed to their forefathers, the prophets Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, was that God would cause their descendants to increase until they were more numerous than the stars of heaven and the pebbles of the earth. God fulfilled this promise to them as an act of divine grace bestowed upon them and as an extraordinary miracle in their favor. Thus, ordinary conditions could not hinder (such an event), and nobody should speak against it.

1, 13 Someone might come out against this tradition (with the argument) that it occurs only in the Torah which, as is well known, was altered by the Jews. (The reply to this argument would be that) the statement concerning the alteration (of the Torah by the Jews) is unacceptable to thorough scholars and cannot be understood in its plain meaning, since custom prevents people who have a (revealed) religion from dealing with their divine scriptures in such a manner. This was men-

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<sup>50</sup> Qur'ân 31.6 (5).

<sup>51</sup> The following three paragraphs are found in the margin of C (and in MS. Nuru Osmaniye, 3424), but appear neither in the earlier texts nor in D.

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tioned by al-Bukhârî in the *Ṣaḥîḥ*.<sup>52</sup> Thus, the great increase in numbers in the case of the Israelites would be an extraordinary miracle. Custom, in the proper meaning of the word, would prevent anything of the sort from happening to other peoples.

It is true that a (co-ordinated battle) movement in (such a large group) would hardly be possible, but none took place, and there was no need for one. It is also true that each realm has its particular number of militia (and no more). But the Israelites at first were no militiamen and had no dynasty. Their numbers increased that much, so that they could gain power over the land of Canaan which God had promised them and the territory of which He had purified for them. All these things are miracles. God guides to the truth.

The<sup>53</sup> history of the Tubba's, the kings of the Yemen and of the Arabian Peninsula, as it is generally transmitted, is another example of silly statements by historians. It is said that from their home in the Yemen, (the Tubba's) used to raid Ifrîqiyah and the Berbers of the Maghrib. Afrîqus b. Qays b. Ṣayfî, one of their great early kings who lived in the time of Moses or somewhat earlier,<sup>54</sup> is said to have raided Ifrîqiyah. He caused a great slaughter among the Berbers. He gave them the name of Berbers when he heard

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<sup>52</sup> For Muḥammad b. Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî, 194–256 [810–870], and his famous canonical collection of prophetic traditions, see *GAL*, I, 157 ff.; *Suppl.*, I, 260 ff. I do not know which passage of the *Ṣaḥîḥ* Ibn Khaldûn may have had in mind here. Al-Bukhârî certainly believed in the alteration of the Torah by the Jews. Perhaps Ibn Khaldûn was recalling the often-quoted tradition that the Muslims should neither believe nor disbelieve statements concerning the Torah made by Jews and Christians; cf. J. Horowitz in *EI*, s.v. "Tawrât."

<sup>53</sup> The whole discussion of South Arabian history appears in C on an inserted sheet.

<sup>54</sup> The historical reports on ancient South Arabian history were no less confusing for Ibn Khaldûn than they are for us. He tried to deal with them critically in *Ibar*, II, 50 ff. Cf. below, pp. 296 and 360. For the legendary eponym of Africa, one may also compare al-Balâdhurî, *Futûḥ al-buldân*, ed. M. J. de Goeje (Leiden, 1866), p. 229; (Pseudo-)Ibn Hishâm, *Tijân* (Hyderabad, 1347/1928–29), pp. 407 ff. Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamharat ansâb al-'Arab* (Cairo, 1948), p. 461, calls Ḥimyar-Berber connections lies existing only in the imagination of Yemenite historians.

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their jargon and asked what that “*barbarah*” was.<sup>55</sup> This gave them the name which has remained with them since that time. When he left the Maghrib, he is said to have concentrated some Ḥimyar tribes there. They remained there and mixed with the native population. Their (descendants) are the Ṣinhâjah and the Kutâmah. This led aṭ-Ṭabarî, al-Jurjânî,<sup>56</sup>  
I, 14 al-Mas’ûdî, Ibn al-Kalbî,<sup>57</sup> and al-Bayhaqî<sup>58</sup> to make the statement that the Ṣinhâjah and the Kutâmah belong to the Ḥimyar. The Berber genealogists do not admit this, and they are right. Al-Mas’ûdî also mentioned that one of the Ḥimyar kings after Afrîqus, Dhû l-Adh’âr, who lived in the time of Solomon, raided the Maghrib and forced it into submission. Something similar is mentioned by al-Mas’ûdî concerning his son and successor, Yâsir.<sup>59</sup> He is said to have reached the Sand River<sup>60</sup> in the Maghrib and to have been unable to find passage through it because of the great mass of sand. Therefore, he returned.

Likewise, it is said that the last Tubba’,<sup>61</sup> As’ad Abû Karib, who lived in the time of the Persian Kayyanid king

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<sup>55</sup> Cf. also aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Annales*, I, 516; ‘*Ibar*, II, 51; VI, 89, 93 f.; de Slane (tr.), I, 168, 176.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Alî b. ‘Abd-al-‘Azîz, d. 392 [1002]. Cf. *GAL*, *Suppl.*, I, 199. Cf. also ‘*Ibar*, VI, 93; de Slane (tr.), I, 175.

<sup>57</sup> See p. 7, above, and ‘*Ibar*, VI, 90; de Slane (tr.), I, 170.

<sup>58</sup> Al-Bayhaqî’s *Kitâb al-Kamâ’im* is one of the principal sources for Ibn Sa’îd’s (see 3:445, below) account of pre-Islamic history. Cf. F. Trummer, *Ibn Sa’îd’s Geschichte der vorislamischen Araber*, p. 62; *GAL*, *Suppl.*, I, 558. Ibn Sa’îd, in turn, was one of Ibn Khaldûn’s sources. However, the identity of the author of the *Kamâ’im* is not certain. It has been suggested that he was the historian and littérateur ‘Alî b. Zayd, 499–565 [1106–1169] (*GAL*, I, 324; *Suppl.*, I, 557 f.), but we are well informed about his literary output, and no *Kitâb al-Kamâ’im* appears in the list of his works.

<sup>59</sup> Al-Mas’ûdî mentions Afrîqus and his brother Dhû l-Adh’âr, and in another context speaks of the Sand River; cf. *Murûj adh-dhahab*, II, 224, 151; I, 369. But the story of Yâsir (whose name is occasionally spelled Nâshir, incorrectly) and the Sand River appears in aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Annales*, I, 684 ff.

<sup>60</sup> On the legendary Wâdî as-Sabt (the “Sabbath River” of the Jewish Sambation legends) in the West, where sand flows like water, see G. Ferrand, “Le *Tuhfat al-albâb* de Abû Hâmid al-Andalusî al-Ġarnâṭî,” in *Journal asiatique*, CCVII (1925), 48, 252. Cf. also Ibn al-Athîr, *Kâmil*, I, 118 f.

<sup>61</sup> Or rather, “the second”? Ḥamzah al-Iṣfahânî, *Annales*, ed. Gottwaldt (St. Petersburg & Leipzig, 1844–48), I, 125, calls him *al-awsaṭ*, “the middle Tubba’,” but *al-âkhir* is, of course, found elsewhere. Cf. Ibn Hishâm, *Sîrah*, ed. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1858–60), I, 12.

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Yastâsb,<sup>62</sup> ruled over Mosul and Azerbaijan. He is said to have met and routed the Turks and to have caused a great slaughter among them. Then he raided them again a second and a third time. After that, he is said to have sent three of his sons on raids, (one) against the country of Fârs, (one) against the country of the Soghdians, one of the Turkish nations of Transoxania, and (one) against the country of the Rûm (Byzantines).<sup>63</sup> The first brother took possession of the country up to Samarkand and crossed the desert into China. There, he found his second brother who had raided the Soghdians and had arrived in China before him. The two together caused a great slaughter in China and returned together with their booty. They left some Ĥimyar tribes in Tibet. They have been there down to this time. The third brother is said to have reached Constantinople. He laid siege to it and forced the country of the Rûm (Byzantines) into submission. Then, he returned.

All this information is remote from the truth. It is rooted in baseless and erroneous assumptions. It is more like the fiction of storytellers. The realm of the Tubba's was restricted to the Arabian peninsula. Their home and seat was Şan'â' in the Yemen. The Arabian peninsula is surrounded by the ocean on three sides: the Indian Ocean on the south, the Persian Gulf jutting out of the Indian Ocean to al-Başrah on the east, and the Red Sea jutting out of the Indian Ocean to Suez in Egypt on the west. This can be seen on the map. There is no way from the Yemen to the Maghrib except via Suez. The distance between the Red Sea and the Mediterranean is two days' journey or less. It is unlikely that the distance could be traversed by a great ruler with a large army unless he controlled that region. This, as a rule, is impossible. In that region there were the Amalekites and Canaan in Syria, and, in Egypt, the Copts. Later on, the Amalekites

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<sup>62</sup> This is how Ibn Khaldûn read the name, as indicated by the vocalization in C. B and D similarly have Yastâsab, and in the passage below, p. 25, D has *f* as the last letter. It should be Bishtâsp = Vishtâspa. The Kayyanids correspond to the historical Achaemenids.

<sup>63</sup> For the eastern expedition of the Tubba's, see Ibn al-Athîr, *Kâmil*, I, 119, and (Pseudo-)Ibn Hishâm, *Tijân*, pp. 429 ff.

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took possession of Egypt, and the Israelites (took possession) of Syria. There is, however, no report that the Tubba's ever fought against one of these nations or that they had possession of any part of this region. Furthermore, the distance from the Yemen to the Maghrib is great, and an army requires much food and fodder. Soldiers traveling in regions other than their own have to requisition grain and livestock and to plunder the countries they pass through. As a rule, such a procedure does not yield enough food and fodder. On the other hand, if they attempted to take along enough provisions from their own region, they would not have enough animals for transportation. So, their whole line of march necessarily takes them through regions they must take possession of and force into submission in order to obtain provisions from them. Again, it would be a most unlikely and impossible assumption that such an army could pass through all those nations without disturbing them, obtaining its provisions by peaceful negotiation. This shows that all such information (about Tubba' expeditions to the Maghrib) is silly or fictitious.

Mention of the (allegedly) impassable Sand River has never been heard in the Maghrib, although the Maghrib has often been crossed and its roads have been explored by travelers and raiders at all times and in every direction.<sup>64</sup> Because of the unusual character of the story, there is much eagerness to pass it on.

With regard to the (alleged) raid of the Tubba's against the countries of the East and the land of the Turks, it must be admitted that the line of march in this case is wider than the (narrow) passage at Suez. The distance, however, is greater, and the Persian and Byzantine nations are interposed on the way to the Turks. There is no report that the Tubba's ever took possession of the countries of the Persians and Byzantines. They merely fought the Persians on the borders of the 'Irâq and of the Arab countries between al-Baḥrayn and al-Ḥîrah, which were border regions common to both

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<sup>64</sup> The same argument is used again below, pp. 27 and 75.

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nations.<sup>65</sup> These wars took place between the Tubba' Dhû l-Adh'âr and the Kayyanid king Kayqâwûs, and again between the Tubba' *al-Aşghar*<sup>66</sup> Abû Karib and the Kayyanid Yastâsb (Bishtâsp). There were other wars later on with rulers of the dynasties that succeeded the Kayyanids, and, in turn, with their successors, the Sassanians. It would, however, ordinarily have been impossible for the Tubba's to traverse the land of the Persians on their way to raid the countries of the Turks and Tibet, because of the nations that are interposed on the way to the Turks, because of the need for food and fodder, as well as the great distance, mentioned before. All information to this effect is silly and fictitious. Even if the way this information is transmitted were sound, the points mentioned would cast suspicion upon it. All the more then must the information be suspect since the manner in which it has been transmitted is not sound. In connection with Yathrib (Medina) and the Aws and Khazraj, Ibn Ishâq<sup>67</sup> says that the last Tubba' traveled eastward to the 'Irâq and Persia, but a raid by the Tubba's against the countries of the Turks and Tibet is in no way confirmed by the established facts. Assertions to this effect should not be trusted; all such information should be investigated and checked with sound norms.<sup>68</sup> The result will be that it will most beautifully be demolished.

God is the guide to that which is correct.

Even<sup>69</sup> more unlikely and more deeply rooted in baseless assumptions is the common interpretation of the following

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<sup>65</sup> Al-Ĥīrah on the Euphrates was the capital of the Lakhmid buffer state under Persian control. Al-Baḥrayn included the country on the northwestern shore of the Persian Gulf, and not only the islands today known under that name.

<sup>66</sup> "The Younger" Abû Karib is apparently identical with the above-mentioned "last" Tubba', As'ad Abû Karib.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Ibar*, II, 53. Cf. also Ibn Hishâm, *Sīrah*, I, 12 f., where, however, only events dealing with the Tubba's return from his eastern expedition are dealt with.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. Bombaci, p. 442.

<sup>69</sup> The following story, too, is found in the margin of C, though it appears incorporated in the text of B and D. It is found in Bulaq, but not in A.

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verse of the *Sûrat al-Fajr*: “Did you not see what your Lord  
I, 17 did with ‘Âd—Iram, that of the pillars?”<sup>70</sup>

The commentators consider the word Iram the name of a city which is described as having pillars, that is, columns. They report that ‘Âd b. ‘Ûṣ b. Iram had two sons, Shadîd and Shaddâd, who ruled after him. Shadîd perished. Shaddâd became the sole ruler of the realm, and the kings there submitted to his authority. When Shaddâd heard a description of Paradise, he said: “I shall build something like it.” And he built the city of Iram in the desert of Aden over a period of three hundred years. He himself lived nine hundred years. It is said to have been a large city, with castles of gold and silver and columns of emerald and hyacinth, containing all kinds of trees and freely flowing rivers. When the construction of (the city) was completed, Shaddâd went there with the people of his realm. But when he was the distance of only one day and night away from it, God sent a clamor from heaven, and all of them perished. This is reported by aṭ-Ṭabarî, ath-Tha‘âlibî,<sup>71</sup> az-Zamakhsharî,<sup>72</sup> and other Qur’ân commentators. They transmit the following story on the authority of one of the men around Muḥammad, ‘Abdallâh b. Qilâbah.<sup>73</sup> When he went out in search of some of his camels, he hit upon (the city) and took away from it as much as he could carry. His story reached Mu‘âwiyah, who had him brought to him, and he told the story. Mu‘âwiyah sent for Ka‘b al-aḥbâr<sup>74</sup> and asked him about it. Ka‘b said, “It is Iram, that of the pillars. Iram will be entered in your time by a Muslim who is of a reddish, ruddy

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<sup>70</sup> Qur’ân 89.6–7 (5–6). Cf. J. Horovitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen* (Berlin & Leipzig, 1926), p. 89, and, for the following story, A. J. Sinick in *EI*, s.v. “Iram Dhât al-‘Imâd.”

<sup>71</sup> See 2:444, below.

<sup>72</sup> See 2:446 f. and 3:338 f., below.

<sup>73</sup> Actually, Ibn Qilâbah is known only for this story; cf. Ibn Hajar, *Lisân al-Mîzân*, III, 327, who calls attention to the biography of the man in Ibn ‘Asâkir, *Ta’rikh Dimashq*.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. M. Schmitz in *EI*, s.v., and, most recently, M. Perlmann in *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume* (Jewish Social Studies, Publication No. 5) (New York, 1953), pp. 85–99, and *idem*, *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XLV (1954), 48–58.

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color, and short, with a mole at his eyebrow and one on his neck, who goes out in search of some of his camels." He then turned around and, seeing Ibn Qilābah, he said: "Indeed, he is that man."

No information about this city has since become available anywhere on earth. The desert of Aden where the city is supposed to have been built lies in the middle of the Yemen. It has been inhabited continuously, and travelers and guides have explored its roads in every direction. Yet, no information about the city has been reported. No antiquarian, no nation has mentioned it. If (the commentators) said that it had disappeared like other antiquities, the story would be more likely, but they expressly say that it still exists. Some identify it with Damascus, because Damascus was in the possession of the people of 'Ād. Others go so far in their crazy talk as to maintain that the city lies hidden from sensual perception and can be discovered only by trained (magicians) and sorcerers. All these are assumptions that would better be termed nonsense.

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All these suggestions proffered by Qur'ân commentators were the result of grammatical considerations, for Arabic grammar requires the expression, "that of the pillars," to be an attribute of Iram. The word "pillars" was understood to mean columns. Thus, Iram was narrowed down in its meaning to some sort of building. (The Qur'ân commentators) were influenced in their interpretation by the reading of Ibn az-Zubayr<sup>75</sup> who read (not 'Ādin with *nûnation* but) a genitive construction: 'Ād of Iram. They then adopted these stories, which are better called fictitious fables and which are quite similar to the (Qur'ân) interpretations of Sayfawayh which are related as comic anecdotes.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> That is, 'Abdallâh b. az-Zubayr, who is also quoted elsewhere as an authority for Qur'ân readings. Cf. A. Jeffery, *Materials for the History of the Text of the Qur'ân* (Leiden, 1937), pp. 226 ff.

<sup>76</sup> Sayfawayh (or Sîfawayh) is mentioned as early as the tenth century, in the list of famous comedians in Ibn an-Nadîm, *Fihrist*, ed. Flügel (Leipzig, 1871-72), p. 313; (Cairo, 1348/1929-30), p. 435. Cf., further, Ibn al-Jawzî, *Akhbâr al-hamqâ wa-l-mughaffalîn* (Cairo, 1347/1928), pp. 81 f., and Ibn

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(In fact,) however, the “pillars” are tent poles. If “columns” were intended by the word, it would not be farfetched, as the power of (the people of ‘Ād) was well known, and they could be described as people with buildings and columns in the general way. But it would be farfetched to say that a special building in one or another specific city (was intended). If it is a genitive construction, as would be the case according to the reading of Ibn az-Zubayr, it would be a genitive construction used to express tribal relationships, such as, for instance, the Quraysh of Kinānah, or the Ilyās of Muḍar, or the Rabī‘ah of Nizār. There is no need for such an implausible interpretation which uses for its starting point silly stories of the sort mentioned, which cannot be imputed to the Qur’ān because they are so implausible.

1, 19 Another fictitious story of the historians, which they all report, concerns the reason for ar-Rashīd’s destruction of the Barmecides. It is the story of al-‘Abbāsah, ar-Rashīd’s sister, and Ja‘far b. Yaḥyā b. Khālid, his client. Ar-Rashīd is said to have worried about where to place them when he was drinking wine with them. He wanted to receive them together in his company. Therefore, he permitted them to conclude a marriage that was not consummated. Al-‘Abbāsah then tricked (Ja‘far) in her desire to be alone with him,<sup>77</sup> for she had fallen in love with him. Ja‘far finally had intercourse with

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Ḥajar, *Lisān al-Mizān*, III, 132 f. This Sayfawayh (or Sīfawayh) should not be confused with the later Egyptian Sībawayh to whom Ibn Zūlāq devoted the *Kitāb Akhbār Sībawayh al-Miṣrī* (Cairo, 1352/1933). Cf. now F. Rosenthal, *Humor in Early Islam* (Leiden, 1956), p. 11.

MSS. B, C, and D clearly indicate a reading Sayqawayh (Sīqawayh) with *q*, but Sayfawayh probably is the correct form.

It may seem strange that a comedian like Sayfawayh should have had anything to do with “Qur’ān interpretations.” If Ibn Khaldūn expressed himself correctly, they may have been facetious applications of Qur’ān verses (and traditions), jokes such as we find in the literature on Muslim comedians. Cf. also the story of ar-Rashīd and Ibn Abī Maryam, p. 33, below.

<sup>77</sup> The long story as to how the persistent ‘Abbāsah finally succeeded, with the connivance of Ja‘far’s mother, in being united with Ja‘far (who did not know that it was she), is told by al-Mas‘ūdī, *Murūj adh-dhahab*, VI, 387 ff.

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her—it is assumed, when he was drunk—and she became pregnant. The story was reported to ar-Rashîd who flew into a rage.

This story <sup>78</sup> is irreconcilable with al-'Abbâsah's position, her religiousness, her parentage, and her exalted rank. She was a descendant of 'Abdallâh b. 'Abbâs and separated from him by only four generations, and they were the most distinguished and greatest men in Islam after him. Al-'Abbâsah was the daughter of Muḥammad al-Mahdî, the son of Abû Ja'far 'Abdallâh al-Manṣûr, the son of Muḥammad as-Sajjâd, the son of the Father of the Caliphs 'Alî. 'Alî was the son of 'Abdallâh, the Interpreter of the Qur'ân, the son of the Prophet's uncle, al-'Abbâs. Al-'Abbâsah was the daughter of a caliph and the sister of a caliph. She was born to royal power, into the prophetic succession (the caliphate), and descended from the men around Muḥammad and his uncles. She was connected by birth with the leadership of Islam, the light of the revelation, and the place where the angels descended to bring the revelation. She was close in time to the desert attitude of true Arabism, to that simple state of Islam still far from the habits of luxury and lush pastures of sin. Where should one look for chastity and modesty, if she did not possess them? Where could cleanliness and purity be found, if they no longer existed in her house? How could she link her pedigree with (that of) Ja'far b. Yaḥyâ and stain her Arab nobility with a Persian client? His Persian ancestor had been acquired as a slave, or taken as a client, by one of her ancestors, an uncle of the Prophet and noble Qurashite, and all (Ja'far) did was that he together with his father was dragged along (by the growing fame of) the 'Abbâsid dynasty and thus prepared for and elevated to a position of nobility. And how could it be that ar-Rashîd, with his high-mindedness and great pride, would permit himself to become related by marriage to Persian clients! If a critical person looks at this story in all fairness and compares al-'Abbâsah

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. also *Ibar*, V, 436 f.; VI, 7. See pp. 269 and 272, below.

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with the daughter of a great ruler of his own time, he must find it disgusting and unbelievable that she could have done such a thing with one of the clients of her dynasty and while her family was in power. He would insist that the story be considered untrue. And who could compare with al-'Abbâsah and ar-Rashîd in dignity!

The reason for the destruction of the Barmecides was their attempt to gain control over the dynasty and their retention of the tax revenues. This went so far that when ar-Rashîd wanted even a little money, he could not get it. They took his affairs out of his hands and shared with him in his authority. He had no say with them in the affairs of his realm. Their influence grew, and their fame spread. They filled the positions and ranks of the government with their own children and creatures who became high officials, and thus barred all others from the positions of wazir, secretary, army commander, doorkeeper (*ḥâjib*), and from the military and civilian administration. It is said that in the palace of ar-Rashîd, there were twenty-five high officials, both military and civilian, all children of Yaḥyâ b. Khâlîd. There, they crowded the people of the dynasty and pushed them out by force. They could do that because of the position of their father, Yaḥyâ, mentor to Hârûn both as crown prince and as caliph. (Hârûn) practically grew up in his lap and got all his education from him. (Hârûn) let him handle his affairs and used to call him "father." As a result, the (Barmecides), and not the government, wielded all the influence.<sup>78a</sup> Their presumption grew. Their position became more and more influential. They became the center of attention. All obeyed them. All hopes were addressed to them. From the farthest borders, presents and gifts of rulers and amirs were sent to them. The tax money found its way into their treasury, to serve as an introduction to them and to procure their favor. They gave gifts to and

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<sup>78a</sup> Lit., "the preferred position (ordinarily enjoyed by government and ruler) went from the government to them," or, if *ithâr* should rather be translated "bounty," instead of "preferential position" (cf. 2:274, l. 34, below), "the bounty (ordinarily dispensed by government and ruler). . . ."

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bestowed favors upon the men of the ('Alid) Shî'ah<sup>79</sup> and upon important relatives (of the Prophet). They gave the poor from the noble families (related to the Prophet) something to earn. They freed the captives. Thus, they were given praise as was not given to their caliph. They showered privileges and gifts upon those who came to ask favors from them. They gained control over villages and estates in the open country and (near) the main cities in every province.

Eventually, the Barmecides irritated the inner circle. They caused resentment among the elite and aroused the displeasure of high officials. Jealousy and envy of all sorts began to show themselves, and the scorpions of intrigue crept into their soft beds in the government. The Qaḥṭabah family, Ja'far's maternal uncles, led the intrigues against them. Feelings for blood ties and relationship could not move or sway them (the Qaḥṭabah family) from the envy which was so heavy on their hearts. This joined with their master's incipient jealousy, with his dislike of restrictions and (of being treated with) highhandedness, and with his latent resentment aroused by small acts of presumptuousness on the part of the Barmecides. When they continued to flourish as they did, they were led to gross insubordination, as is shown, for instance, by their action in the case of Yaḥyâ b. 'Abdallâh b. Ḥasan b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib, the brother of "the Pure Soul" (an-Nafs az-Zakîyah), Muḥammad al-Mahdî, who had revolted against al-Manṣûr.<sup>80</sup>

This Yaḥyâ had been brought back by al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyâ from the country of the Daylam under a safe-conduct of ar-Rashîd written in his own hand. According to aṭ-Ṭabarî,<sup>81</sup> (al-Faḍl) had paid out a million dirhams in this matter. Ar-Rashîd handed Yaḥyâ over to Ja'far to keep him imprisoned in his house and under his eyes. He held him for a while but, prompted by presumption, Ja'far freed Yaḥyâ by his own

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<sup>79</sup> In the first case, the 'Alids, rather than the 'Abbâsîd Shî'ah, are meant. The latter are meant by "important relatives of the Prophet," though this, too, may be another term for the 'Alids.

<sup>80</sup> See pp. 410 f., below.

<sup>81</sup> *Annales*, III, 614, *anno* 176.

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decision, out of respect for the blood of the Prophet's family as he thought, and in order to show his presumption against the government. When the matter was reported to ar-Rashîd, he asked Ja'far about (Yaḥyâ). Ja'far understood and said that he had let him go. Ar-Rashîd outwardly indicated approval and kept his grudge to himself. Thus, Ja'far himself paved the way for his own and his family's undoing, which ended with the collapse of their exalted position, with the heavens falling in upon them and the earth's sinking with them and their house. Their days of glory became a thing of the past, an example to later generations.

Close examination of their story, scrutinizing the ways of government and their own conduct, discloses that all this was natural and is easily explained. Looking at Ibn 'Abdrabbiḥ's report<sup>82</sup> on ar-Rashîd's conversation with his great-granduncle Dâwûd b. 'Alî concerning the destruction of the Barmecides as well as al-Aṣma'î's evening causeries with ar-Rashîd and al-Faḍl b. Yaḥyâ, as mentioned in the chapter on poets in the '*Iqd*',<sup>83</sup> one understands that it was only jealousy and struggle for control on the part of the caliph and his subordinates that killed them. Another factor was the verses that enemies of the Barmecides among the inner circle surreptitiously gave the singers to recite, in the intention that the caliph should hear them and his stored-up animosity against them be aroused. These are the verses:

Would that Hind could fulfill her promise to us  
And deliver us from our predicament,  
And for once act on her own.  
The impotent person is he who never acts on his own.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Aḥmad b. Muḥammad, 246–328 [860–940]. Cf. *GAL*, I, 154 f.; *Suppl.*, I, 250 f.; '*Iqd*' (Cairo, 1305/1887), III, 24. The edition of the '*Iqd*' has Ishâq b. 'Alî, instead of Dâwûd b. 'Alî.

<sup>83</sup> '*Iqd*', III, 108–11. See also below, 3:411.

<sup>84</sup> The verses are by 'Umar b. Abî Rabî'ah who lived ca. A.D. 700. Cf. *GAL*, I, 45 ff.; *Suppl.*, I, 76 f. Cf. P. Schwarz, *Der Diwan des 'Umar Ibn Abi Rebi'a* (Leipzig, 1901), I, 115 (No. 155, ll. 1 f.). Cf. also Ibn al-Athîr, *Kâmil*, VII, 4, anno 229.

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When ar-Rashîd heard these verses, he exclaimed: "Indeed, I am just such an impotent person." By this and similar methods, the enemies of the Barmecides eventually succeeded in arousing ar-Rashîd's latent jealousy and in bringing his terrible vengeance upon them. God is our refuge from men's desire for power and from misfortune. I, 23

The stupid story of ar-Rashîd's winebibbing and his getting drunk in the company of boon companions is really abominable. It does not in the least agree with ar-Rashîd's attitude toward the fulfillment of the requirements of religion and justice incumbent upon caliphs. He consorted with religious scholars and saints. He had discussions with al-Fuḍayl b. 'Iyâd,<sup>85</sup> Ibn as-Sammâk,<sup>86</sup> and al-'Umarî,<sup>87</sup> and he corresponded with Sufyân.<sup>88</sup> He wept when he heard their sermons. Then, there is his prayer in Mecca when he circumambulated the Ka'bah.<sup>89</sup> He was pious, observed the times of prayer, and attended the morning prayer at its earliest hour. According to aṭ-Ṭabarî and others, he used every day to pray one hundred supererogatory *rak'ahs*.<sup>90</sup> Alternately, he was used to go on raids (against unbelievers) one year and to make the pilgrimage to Mecca the other. He rebuked his jester, Ibn Abî Maryam, who made an unseemly remark to him during prayer. When Ibn Abî Maryam heard ar-Rashîd recite: "How is it that I should not worship Him who created me?"<sup>91</sup> he said: "Indeed, I do not know why."

<sup>85</sup> Died 187 [803]. Cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 430.

<sup>86</sup> Muḥammad b. Şabîḥ, d. 183 [799/800]. Cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Ta'rîkh Baghdâd*, V, 364-73.

<sup>87</sup> Apparently 'Abdallâh b. 'Abd-al-'Azîz b. 'Abdallâh b. 'Abdallâh b. 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭâb, d. 184 [800/801]. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, V, 302 f. A nephew of this man, 'Ubaydallâh b. 'Umar, was brought by ar-Rashîd to Baghdad (cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Ta'rîkh Baghdâd*, X, 310), but he would not seem to be the one meant here.

<sup>88</sup> Of the two famous Sufyâns, Sufyân ath-Thawrî and Sufyân b. 'Uyaynah, the latter is meant here. He lived from 107 to 198 [725/26 to 814]. Cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Ta'rîkh Baghdâd*, IX, 174-84.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Ibn al-Athîr, *Kâmil*, VI, 87 f., anno 193. Cf. also G. Audisio, *Harun al-Rashid* (New York, 1931), p. 173.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Annales*, III, 740, anno 193. A *rak'ah* is a prescribed sequence of motions in prayer.

<sup>91</sup> Qur'ân 36.22 (21).

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Ar-Rashîd could not suppress a laugh, but then he turned to him angrily and said: "O Ibn Abî Maryam, (jokes) even during the prayer? Beware, beware of the Qur'ân and Islam. Apart from that, you may do whatever you wish."<sup>92</sup>

Furthermore, ar-Rashîd possessed a good deal of learning and simplicity, because his epoch was close to that of his forebears who had those (qualities). The time between him and his grandfather, Abû Ja'far (al-Manşûr), was not a long one. He was a young lad when Abû Ja'far died. Abû Ja'far possessed a good deal of learning and religion before he became caliph and (kept them) afterwards. It was he who advised Mâlik to write the *Muwatta'*, saying: "O Abû 'Abdallâh, no one remains on earth more learned than I and you. Now, I am too much occupied with the caliphate. Therefore, you should write a book for the people which will be useful for them. In it you should avoid the laxity of Ibn 'Abbâs and the severity of Ibn 'Umar,<sup>93</sup> and present (*waṭṭi*) it clearly to the people." Mâlik commented: "On that occasion, al-Manşûr indeed taught me to be an author."<sup>94</sup>

Al-Manşûr's son, al-Mahdî, ar-Rashîd's father, experienced the (austerity of al-Manşûr) who would not make use of the public treasury to provide new clothes for his family. One day, al-Mahdî came to him when he was in his office discussing with the tailors the patching of his family's worn garments. Al-Mahdî did not like that and said: "O Commander of the Faithful, this year I shall pay for the clothes of the members of the family from my own income." Al-Manşûr's reply was: "Do that." He did not prevent him from paying himself but would not permit any (public) Muslim money to be spent for it. Ar-Rashîd was very close in

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Annales*, III, 743 f.

<sup>93</sup> Ibn 'Abbâs is the 'Abdallâh b. 'Abbâs mentioned above, p. 29, the Prophet's cousin. Ibn 'Umar is 'Abdallâh, a son of the caliph 'Umar, who died in 73 or 74 [692/93 or 693/94]. Cf. K. V. Zetterstéen in *EI*, s.v. "'Abd Allâh b. 'Umar."

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Khaldûn also refers to this story in his *Şurghatmishîyah* lecture. Cf. *Autobiography*, p. 301. Cf. also Ibn Farḥûn (Cairo, 1351/1932), *Dibâj*, p. 25.

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time to that caliph and to his forebears.<sup>95</sup> He was reared under the influence of such and similar conduct in his own family, so that it became his own nature. How could such a man have been a winebibber and have drunk wine openly? It is well known that noble pre-Islamic Arabs avoided wine. The vine was not one of the plants (cultivated) by them. Most of them considered it reprehensible to drink wine. Ar-Rashîd and his forebears were very successful in avoiding anything reprehensible in their religious or worldly affairs and in making all praiseworthy actions and qualities of perfection, as well as the aspirations of the Arabs, their own nature.

One may further compare the story of the physician Jibrîl b. Bukhtîshû' reported by aṭ-Ṭabarî and al-Mas'ûdî.<sup>96</sup> A fish had been served at ar-Rashîd's table, and Jibrîl had not permitted him to eat it. (Jibrîl) had then ordered the table steward to bring the fish to (Jibrîl's) house. Ar-Rashîd noticed it and got suspicious. He had his servant spy on Jibrîl, and the servant observed him partaking of it. In order to justify himself, Ibn Bukhtîshû' had three pieces of fish placed in three separate dishes. He mixed the first piece with meat that had been prepared with different kinds of spices, vegetables, hot sauces, and sweets. He poured iced water over the second piece, and pure wine over the third. The first and second dishes, he said, were for the caliph to eat, no matter whether something was added by him (Ibn Bukhtîshû') to the fish or not. The third dish, he said, was for himself to eat. He gave the three dishes to the table steward. When ar-Rashîd woke up and had Ibn Bukhtîshû' called in to reprimand him, the latter had the three dishes brought. The one with wine had become a soup with small pieces of fish,

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<sup>95</sup> A, C, and D read *ubûwatihî*, but in B we find *abawayhi* "his parents," or "his two forebears" (?). Translating *wa-ubûwatihî* "and counted him among his forebears" would be possible here, but is hardly correct.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. *Murûj adh-dhahab*, VI, 305 ff., but aṭ-Ṭabarî does not seem to have the story. Cf. also Ibn Abî Uşaybi'ah, *'Uyûn al-anbâ'*, ed. Müller (Königsberg & Cairo, 1882-84), I, 129.

Jibrîl was an early member of the famous dynasty of physicians. He died in 213 [828/29]. Cf. C. Brockelmann in *EI*, s.v. "Bakhtîshû'."

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but the two other dishes had spoiled, and smelled differently. This was (sufficient) justification of Ibn Bukhtîshû's action (in eating a dish of fish that he had prevented the caliph from eating). It is clear from this story that ar-Rashîd's avoidance of wine was a fact well known to his inner circle and to those who dined with him.

I, 26 It is a well-established fact that ar-Rashîd had consented to keep Abû Nuwâs imprisoned until he repented and gave up his ways, because he had heard of the latter's excessive wine-bibbing.<sup>97</sup> Ar-Rashîd used to drink a date liquor (*nabîdh*), according to the 'Irâqî legal school whose *responsa* (concerning the permissibility of that drink) are well known.<sup>98</sup> But he cannot be suspected of having drunk pure wine. Silly reports to this effect cannot be credited. He was not the man to do something that is forbidden and considered by the Muslims as one of the greatest of the capital sins. Not one of these people (the early 'Abbâsids) had anything to do with effeminate prodigality or luxury in matters of clothing, jewelry, or the kind of food they took. They still retained the tough desert attitude and the simple state of Islam. Could it be assumed they would do something that would lead from the lawful to the unlawful and from the licit to the illicit? Historians such as aṭ-Ṭabarî, al-Mas'ûdî, and others are agreed that all the early Umayyad and 'Abbâsid caliphs used to ride out with only light silver ornamentation on their belts, swords, bridles, and saddles, and that the first caliph to originate riding out in golden apparel was al-Mu'tazz b. al-Mutawakkil, the eighth caliph after ar-Rashîd.<sup>99</sup> The same applied to their clothing. Could one, then, assume any differently with regard to what they drank? This will become still clearer when the nature of dynastic beginnings in desert life and modest circumstances is understood, as we shall

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<sup>97</sup> For Abû Nuwâs, see *GAL*, I, 75 ff.; *Suppl.*, I, 114 ff.

<sup>98</sup> For the lenient Ḥanafite attitude toward *nabîdh*, see A. J. Wensinck in *EI*, s.v. "Nabîdh." Cf. also p. 445, below.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. al-Mas'ûdî, *Murûj adh-dhahab*, VII, 401.

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explain it among the problems discussed in the first book, if God wills.<sup>100</sup>

A parallel or similar story is that reported by all (the historians) about Yaḥyâ b. Aktham, the judge and friend of al-Ma'mûn.<sup>101</sup> He is said to have drunk wine together with al-Ma'mûn and to have gotten drunk one night. He lay buried among the sweet basil until he woke up. The following verses are recited in his name:

O my lord, commander of all the people!  
He who gave me to drink was unjust in his judgment.  
I neglected the cupbearer, and he caused me to be,  
As you see me, deprived of intelligence and religion.

The same applies to Ibn Aktham and al-Ma'mûn that applies to ar-Rashîd. What they drank was a date liquor (*nabîdh*) which in their opinion was not forbidden. There can be no question of drunkenness in connection with them. Yaḥyâ's familiarity with al-Ma'mûn was friendship in Islam. It is an established fact that Yaḥyâ slept in al-Ma'mûn's room. It has been reported, as an indication of al-Ma'mûn's excellence and affability, that one night he awoke,<sup>102</sup> got up,

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<sup>100</sup> See, for instance, pp. 313 ff., below.

<sup>101</sup> The story is told fully in Ibn 'Abdrabbih, *'Iqd*, III, 313.

Yaḥyâ b. Aktham died in 242 or 243 [847]. Cf. al-Khaṭîb al-Baghdâdî, *Ta'rîkh Baghdâd*, XIV, 191 ff.

<sup>102</sup> Bulaq adds "thirsty." In this case the "vessel" (*inâ'*) mentioned would not be a chamber pot, but a water pitcher. A very similar story of how al-Ma'mûn himself went out for a drink of water and did not disturb Yaḥyâ b. Aktham occurs in al-Itlîdî, *I'lâm an-nâs bi-mâ waqa'a li-l-Barâmîkah min Banî l-'Abbâs* (Cairo, 1303/1886), p. 110. Al-Itlîdî adds another story, according to which al-Ma'mûn had gone to urinate and hesitated to call his servants to help him to get ready for the morning prayer, as long as Yaḥyâ did not stir. Thus, it seems hardly possible to decide whether Ibn Khaldûn thought of a water pitcher or a chamber pot. *Inâ'* "urine glass" is found in aṭ-Ṭabarî, *Firdaws al-ḥikmah* (Berlin, 1928), pp. 354 f. An author closer to the time of Ibn Khaldûn, as-Suyûṭî, uses a synonym for *inâ'*, *wi'â'*; cf. as-Suyûṭî, *Tanbî'at al-ghabî bi-tabrî'at Ibn al-'Arabî*, Istanbul MS, Laleli, 3645, fol. 162a. For another version of the story, cf. as-Sulamî, *Âdâb aṣ-ṣuḥbah*, ed. M. J. Kister (Oriental Notes and Studies, No. 6) (Jerusalem, 1954), p. 57.

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and felt around for the chamber pot. He was afraid to wake Yaḥyâ b. Aktham. It also is an established fact that the two used to pray together at the morning prayer. How does that accord with drinking wine together! Furthermore, Yaḥyâ b. Aktham was a transmitter of traditions. He was praised by Ibn Ḥanbal<sup>103</sup> and Judge Ismâ'îl.<sup>104</sup> At-Tirmidhî<sup>105</sup> published traditions on his authority. The *ḥadīth* expert al-Mizzî mentioned that al-Bukhârî transmitted traditions on Yaḥyâ's authority in works other than the *Jâmi'* (*aṣ-Ṣaḥîḥ*).<sup>106</sup> To vilify Yaḥyâ is to vilify all of these scholars.

Furthermore, licentious persons accuse Yaḥyâ b. Aktham of having had an inclination for young men. This is an affront to God and a malicious lie directed against religious scholars. (These persons) base themselves on storytellers' silly reports, which perhaps were an invention of Yaḥyâ's enemies, for he was much envied because of his perfection and his friendship with the ruler. His position in scholarship and religion makes such a thing impossible. When Ibn Ḥanbal was told about these rumors concerning Yaḥyâ, he exclaimed: "For God's sake, for God's sake, who would say such a thing!" He disapproved of it very strongly. When the talk about Yaḥyâ was mentioned to Ismâ'îl, he exclaimed: "Heaven forbid that the probity (*'adâlah*)<sup>107</sup> of such a man should cease to exist because of the lying accusations of envious talebearers."<sup>108</sup> He said: "Yaḥyâ b. Aktham is inno-

<sup>103</sup> Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Ḥanbal, the founder of the Ḥanbalite school of jurisprudence, 164–241 [780–855]. Cf. *GAL*, I, 181 ff.; *Suppl.*, I, 309 f.

<sup>104</sup> Ismâ'îl b. Ishâq, the Mâlikite judge. Cf. 3:13, below.

<sup>105</sup> Muḥammad b. 'Îsâ, d. 279 [892], author of one of the authoritative collections of traditions. Cf. *GAL*, I, 161 f.; *Suppl.*, I, 267 f.

<sup>106</sup> The *Tahdhîb al-Kamâl* of Yûsuf b. 'Abd-ar-Raḥmân al-Mizzî, 654–742 [1256–1341] (cf. *GAL*, II, 64; *Suppl.*, II, 66 f.), was not available, but see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, XI, 180. In al-Bukhârî's *Ta'riḥ* (Hyderabad, 1360—/1941—), IV<sup>2</sup>, 263, we find only Yaḥyâ's name, without any further information.

<sup>107</sup> *'Adâlah* is a common term of Muslim jurisprudence and political science for which in this translation the word "probity" was chosen. It means possession of the moral qualifications that make a person acceptable for high office and for serving as a witness, that is, for exercise of his duties as a citizen. See also p. 395 and n. 388 to Ch. III, below.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdâdî, *Ta'riḥ Baghdâd*, XIV, 200, l. 13.

*Al-Ma'mûn and Ibn Aktham — al-Ma'mûn and Bûrân*

cent in the eyes of God of any such relationship with young men (as that) of which he is accused. I got to know his most intimate thoughts and found him to be much in fear of God. However, he possessed a certain playfulness and friendliness that might have provoked such accusations." Ibn Ḥibbân mentioned him in the *Thiqât*.<sup>109</sup> He said that no attention should be paid to these tales about him because most of them were not correct. 1, 28

A similar story is the one about the basket reported by Ibn 'Abdrabbih, author of the *Iqd*, in explanation of how al-Ma'mûn came to be al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's son-in-law by marrying his daughter Bûrân.<sup>110</sup> One night, on his rambles through the streets of Baghdad, al-Ma'mûn is said to have come upon a basket that was being let down from one of the roofs by means of pulleys and twisted cords of silk thread. He seated himself in the basket and grabbed the pulley, which started moving. He was taken up into a chamber of such-and-such a condition—Ibn 'Abdrabbih described the eye- and soul-filling splendor of its carpets, the magnificence of its furnishings, and the beauty of its appearance. Then, a woman of extraordinary, seductive beauty is said to have come forth from behind curtains in that chamber. She greeted al-Ma'mûn and invited him to keep her company. He drank wine with her the whole night long. In the morning he returned to his companions at the place where they had been awaiting him. He had fallen so much in love with the woman that he asked her father for her hand. How does all this accord with al-Ma'mûn's well-known religion and learning, with his imitation of the way of life of his forefathers, the right-guided ('Abbâsid) caliphs, with his adoption of the way of life of those pillars of Islam, the (first) four caliphs, with his respect for the religious scholars, or his observance in his prayers and

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<sup>109</sup> I consulted the MS. Ahmet III, 2995 (of the Topkapusaray in Istanbul) of the work on reliable transmitters (*Thiqât*) by Ibn Ḥibbân, 274–354 [887/88–965] (cf. *GAL*, I, 164; *Suppl.*, I, 273 f.), but it does not go as far as Yahyâ. For the remarks of Ibn Ḥibbân and the statement of Ismâ'il, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhîb*, XI, 181.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. *Iqd*, III, 356–63. Cf. also below, pp. 348 f.

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1, 29 legal practice of the norms established by God! How could it be correct that he would act like (one of those) wicked scoundrels who amuse themselves by rambling about at night, entering strange houses in the dark, and engaging in nocturnal trysts in the manner of Bedouin lovers! And how does that story fit with the position and noble character of al-Ḥasan b. Sahl's daughter, and with the firm morality and chastity that reigned in her father's house!

There are many such stories. They are always cropping up in the works of the historians. The incentive for inventing and reporting them is a (general) inclination to forbidden pleasures and for smearing the reputation of others. People justify their own subservience to pleasure by citing men and women of the past (who allegedly did the same things they are doing). Therefore, they often appear very eager for such information and are alert to find it when they go through the pages of (published) works. If they would follow the example of the people (of the past) in other respects and in the qualities of perfection that were theirs and for which they are well known, "it would be better for them,"<sup>111</sup> "if they would know."<sup>112</sup>

I once criticized a royal prince for being so eager to learn to sing and play the strings. I told him it was not a matter that should concern him and that it did not befit his position. He referred me to Ibrâhîm b. al-Mahdî<sup>113</sup> who was the leading musician and best singer in his time. I replied: "For heaven's sake, why do you not rather follow the example of his father or his brother? Do you not see how that activity prevented Ibrâhîm from attaining their position?" The prince, however, was deaf to my criticism and turned away.

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<sup>111</sup> Qur'ân 3.110 (106); 4.46 (49), 66 (69); 47.21 (23); 49.5 (5).

<sup>112</sup> Qur'ân 2.102 (96), 103 (97); 16.41 (43); 29.41 (40), 64 (64); 68.33 (33).

<sup>113</sup> The son of the caliph al-Mahdî, who was for a short time considered by some groups as caliph. 162–224 [779–839]; cf. *GAL, Suppl.*, I, 223, and below, pp. 325 f. and 433 f., and 3:341.

*The Genealogy of the Fâtîmids*

Further silly information which is accepted by many historians concerns the 'Ubaydid(-Fâtîmids), the Shî'ah caliphs in al-Qayrawân and Cairo.<sup>114</sup> (These historians) deny their 'Alid origin and attack (the genuineness of) their descent from the imam Ismâ'îl, the son of Ja'far aṣ-Ṣâdiq. They base themselves in this respect on stories that were made up in favor of the weak 'Abbâsid caliphs by people who wanted to ingratiate themselves with them through accusations against their active opponents and who (therefore) liked to say all kinds of bad things about their enemies. We shall mention some such stories in our treatment of the history of (the 'Ubaydid-Fâtîmids). (These historians) do not care to consider the factual proofs and circumstantial evidence that require (us to recognize) that the contrary is true and that their claim is a lie and must be rejected. I, 30

They all tell the same story about the beginning of the Shî'ah dynasty. Abû 'Abdallâh *al-Muhtasib*<sup>115</sup> went among the Kutâmah urging acceptance of the family of Muḥammad (the 'Alids). His activity became known. It was learned how much he cared for 'Ubaydallâh al-Mahdî and his son, Abû l-Qâsim. Therefore, these two feared for their lives and fled the East, the seat of the caliphate. They passed through Egypt and left Alexandria disguised as merchants. 'Îsâ an-Nawsharî, the governor of Egypt and Alexandria, was informed of them. He sent cavalry troops in pursuit of them, but when their pursuers reached them, they did not recognize them because of their attire and disguise. They escaped into

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<sup>114</sup> The question of the 'Alid origin of the Fâtîmids and their early history was loaded with political "dynamite" for many centuries after the Fâtîmid dynasty had ceased to exist. In some respects, it is still of importance today. Cf. the works of W. Ivanow: *Ismaili Tradition Concerning the Rise of the Fatimids* (Islamic Research Association Series, No. 10) (Oxford, 1942), and *The Alleged Founder of Ismailism* (The Ismaili Society Series, No. 1) (Bombay, 1946). Cf. also F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 335.

<sup>115</sup> Abû 'Abdallâh ash-Shî'î, through whose efforts the Fâtîmids became rulers of northwestern Africa, is said to have been *muhtasib* (cf. pp. 462 f., below) in al-Baṣrah, if it was not his brother Abû l-'Abbâs who held that office. Cf. *Ibar*, III, 362; IV, 31 f., 204 f. See also below, 2:133.

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the Maghrib. Al-Mu'taḍid <sup>116</sup> ordered the Aghlabid rulers of Ifrîqiyah in al-Qayrawân as well as the Midrârid rulers of Sijilmâsah to search everywhere for them and to keep a sharp lookout for them. Ilyasa', the Midrârid lord of Sijilmâsah, learned about their hiding place in his country and detained them, in order to please the caliph. This was before the Shî'ah victory over the Aghlabids in al-Qayrawân. Thereafter, as is well known, the ('Ubaydid-Fâṭimid) propaganda spread successfully throughout Ifrîqiyah and the Maghrib, and then, in turn, reached the Yemen, Alexandria and (the rest of) Egypt, Syria and the Ḥijâz. The ('Ubaydid-Fâṭimids) shared the realm of Islam equally with the 'Abbâsids. They almost succeeded in penetrating the home country of the 'Abbâsids and in taking their place as rulers. Their propaganda in Baghdad and the 'Irâq met with success through the amir al-Basâsîrî, one of the Daylam clients who had gained control of the 'Abbâsid caliphs. This happened as the result of a quarrel between al-Basâsîrî and the non-Arab amirs.<sup>117</sup> For a whole year, the ('Ubaydid-Fâṭimids) were mentioned in the Friday prayer from the pulpits of Baghdad. The 'Abbâsids were continually bothered by the ('Ubaydid-Fâṭimid) power and preponderance, and the Umayyad rulers beyond the sea (in Spain) expressed their annoyance with them and threatened war against them. How could all this have befallen a fraudulent claimant to the rulership, who was (moreover) considered a liar? <sup>118</sup> One should compare (this account with) the history of the Qarmaṭian.<sup>119</sup> His genealogy was, in fact, fraudulent. How completely did his propaganda

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<sup>116</sup> Rather, his son and successor al-Muktafi. The event related took place in the year 293 [905/6], after the death of al-Mu'taḍid. Cf. Ibn 'Idhârî, *al-Bayân al-Mughrib*, ed. G. S. Colin and E. Lévi-Provençal (Leiden, 1948-51), I, 140. But see also below, p. 46, and 'Ibar, III, 360; IV, 31.

<sup>117</sup> This refers to events at the beginning of the Saljûq rule under Tughrilbek, that took place in the period from December, 1058, to 1060. Cf. also 'Ibar, III, 463 f.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. 'Ibar, III, 360.

<sup>119</sup> The "Qarmaṭian" was the supposed founder of the sect, a certain Ḥamdân, who lived in the second half of the ninth century. Cf. L. Massignon in *EI*, s.v. "Qarmaṭians."

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disintegrate and his followers disperse! Their viciousness and guile soon became apparent. They came to an evil end and tasted a bitter fate. If the 'Ubaydid (-Fâtîmids) had been in the same situation, it would have become known, even had it taken some time.

Whatever qualities of character a man may have,

They will become known, even if he imagines they are concealed from the people.<sup>120</sup>

The ('Ubaydid-Fâtîmid) dynasty lasted uninterruptedly for about two hundred and seventy years. They held possession of the place where Ibrâhîm (Abraham) had stood<sup>121</sup> and where he had prayed, the home of the Prophet and the place where he was buried, the place where the pilgrims stand and where the angels descended (to bring the revelation to Muḥammad). Then, their rule came to an end. During all that time, their partisans showed them the greatest devotion and love and firmly believed in their descent from the imam Ismâ'îl, the son of Ja'far aṣ-Ṣâdiq. Even after the dynasty had gone and its influence had disappeared, people still came forward to press the claims of the sect. They proclaimed the names of young children, descendants of (the 'Ubaydid-Fâtîmids), whom they believed entitled to the caliphate. They went so far as to consider them as having actually been appointed to the succession by preceding imams. Had there been doubts about their pedigree, their followers would not have undergone the dangers involved in supporting them. A sectarian does not manipulate his own affairs, nor sow confusion within his own sect, nor act as a liar where his own beliefs are concerned.

1, 32

It is strange that Judge Abû Bakr al-Bâqillânî,<sup>122</sup> the great

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<sup>120</sup> This verse is quoted from near the end of Zuhayr's *Mu'allaqah*; cf. 3:397 and 410, below. Cf. J. Hausherr, *Die Mu'allaqa des Zuhair* (Berlin, 1905), p. 35.

<sup>121</sup> That is, the *Maqâm Ibrâhîm* in the Sanctuary in Mecca.

<sup>122</sup> Muḥammad b. aṭ-Ṭayyib, d. 403 [1013]. Cf. *GAL*, I, 197; *Suppl.*, I, 349. In Ibn Khaldûn's circle, he was esteemed one of the greatest of ancient eastern Mâlikites, and he is, therefore, often quoted in the *Muqaddimah*.

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speculative theologian, was inclined to credit this unacceptable view (as to the spuriousness of the 'Ubaydid-Fâṭimid genealogy), and upheld this weak opinion. If the reason for his attitude was the heretical and extremist Shî'ism of (the 'Ubaydid-Fâṭimids, it would not be valid, for his denial of their 'Alid descent) does not invalidate<sup>123</sup> (the objectionable character of) their sectarian beliefs, nor would establishment of their ('Alid) descent be of any help to them before God in the question of their unbelief. God said to Noah concerning his sons: "He does not belong to your family. It is an improper action. So do not ask me regarding that of which you have no knowledge."<sup>124</sup> Muḥammad exhorted Fâṭimah in these words: "O Fâṭimah, act (as you wish). I shall be of no help to you before God."<sup>124a</sup>

When a man comes to know a problem or to be certain about a matter, he must openly state (his knowledge or his certainty). "God speaks the truth. He leads (men into) the right way."<sup>125</sup> Those people (the 'Ubaydid-Fâṭimids) were constantly on the move because of the suspicions various governments had concerning them. They were kept under observation by the tyrants, because their partisans were numerous and their propaganda had spread far and wide. Time after time they had to leave the places where they had settled. Their men, therefore, took refuge in hiding, and their (identity) was hardly known, as (the poet) says:

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Recent publications in connection with al-Bâqillânî include the edition of his *Kitâb at-Tamhîd* by al-Khuḍayrî and Abû Rîdah (Cairo, 1366/1947), who contribute much biographical material, and G. E. von Grunebaum, *A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Criticism* (Chicago, 1950). An edition of his *Inṣâf* appeared in Cairo in 1369/1950. Al-Bâqillânî's work against the Fâṭimids was entitled *Kashf al-asrâr wa-hatâk al-astâr*. Cf. Ibn Kathîr, *Bidâyah*, XI, 346; the edition of the *Tamhîd* cited above, p. 259 (n. 3). That al-Ghazzâlî based his *Mustaẓhirî* upon al-Bâqillânî's *Kashf* has been denied by I. Goldziher, and, indeed, Goldziher's study of the *Mustaẓhirî* has no indication that the work dealt with the 'Alid descent of the Fâṭimids. Cf. I. Goldziher, *Streitschrift des Ġazâlî gegen die Bâṭinîja-Sekte* (Leiden, 1916), pp. 15 f.

<sup>123</sup> The phrase used here means "to push back." Cf. 3:49, below.

<sup>124</sup> Qur'ân 11.46 (48). <sup>124a\*</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, V, 15, ll. 64 f.

<sup>125</sup> Qur'ân 33.4 (4).