

THE ARABIST
BUDAPEST STUDIES IN ARABIC 30

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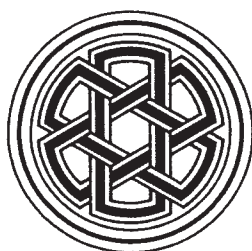
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PREFACE

Exactly ten years ago the charming Hungarian town of Keszthely was witness to a peculiar gathering of about fifty people who met to discuss questions of Paradise and Hell as represented in Islam. The present volume comprises the second section from among the thirty papers read at the Colloquium.

Since Paradise and Hell can be approached from various paths, so it is not surprising that the papers are quite varied themselves. They are, however, headed and ended by studies that explore territories which go beyond the realm of Islam: Jerusalem, on the one hand, and Jewish Paradise, on the other, by Géza Fehérvári and Avi Shvitiel respectively.

Duncan Haldane, who passed away before the publication of his paper, had turned his attention to the miniature paintings in a 16th century manuscript of the *Shah Nameh*, also examining some of the general beliefs that lie behind these illustrations.

Alexander Fodor explores a magical banner from the collection of the Tareq Rajab Museum, Kuwait, which had originally given him the idea to convene the meeting of scholars. The banner, in addition to *Sūrat al-Fath*, exhibits a wide array of magical quadrates which are analyzed in detail by the author.

One of the best known literary representations of the scenes of afterlife is al-Ma[°]arrī's *Risālat al-ġufrān*. This is analyzed by Ghada Hijjawi Qaddumi after a brief overview of those Qur'[°]ānic passages which are relevant from the point of view of Paradise or Hell.

The delights of Paradise, however, do not appeal to everyone as is well shown by Tamás Iványi in his analysis of two Šūfī states, *qabḍ* and *bast*, and their significance in shaping al-Bisṭāmī's extraordinary behaviour and his conception of this world and the hereafter.

These papers are followed by a short communication from Samar Najm Abul Huda who introduces the reader to what the Arabs knew about the precious stones, some of which are mentioned in the Qur'[°]ān and many of which are attributed specific magic and healing powers..

The editors gratefully acknowledge the help of the Fund for book and journal publication of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences without which the publication of this volume would not have been possible.

Kinga Dévényi

LIST OF COLOUR PLATES
between pp. 38 and 39

Plate I. (to p. 7, G. Fehérvári) The *Mi^ḥrāğ* from Nizāmī's *Hamsa*, Tebriz, c. 1505.

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JERUSALEM, GATEWAY TO PARADISE

GÉZA FEHÉRVÁRI

London

Standing on Mount of Olives and the Getsemani Garden and looking westwards, towards Jerusalem, one immediately notices that the skyline of the city is dominated by the Dome of the Rock, the Qubbat aṣ-Ṣaḥra. The Temple Mount, or the Ḥaram aš-Šarīf and the building itself is so well-known that I can leave the description here, but what is not quite clear, although it was frequently discussed by several scholars, what was its purpose, its original function?

This beautiful building, the earliest surviving monument of Islam was the subject of numerous publications and controversial opinions. Out of the numerous publications, I shall deal with only three more recent ones. The last of the three was that of Oleg Grabar and Saïd Nuseibeh (1996). However, I shall pay more attention to the other two, namely Rosen-Ayalon's (1989) monograph and the essays which were collected and edited by Julian Raby and Jeremy Johns (1992). In the introduction to this volume Julian Raby wrote that "scholars differ over whether ʿAbdalmalik was creating a rival to Mecca, a victory monument over the Byzantines and Sasanians, an earthly reflection of paradise, or a memorial to the Throne of God?" (Raby & Johns 1992:VII).

Indeed, what was ʿAbdalmalik's intention when he decided to erect this beautiful building on the site of Solomon's temple? It was definitely not intended to be a mosque. Its plan contradicts that possibility. Furthermore, his plan went far beyond the creation of a beautiful building. He altered almost everything on the platform and below. He paid such a great attention not only to the Ḥaram, but to the entire city and even the surrounding area, that the suggestion which emerges from Rosen-Ayalon's study, that perhaps it was his intention to move his capital from Damascus to Jerusalem, seems to be justified.

Rosen-Ayalon based her observations and conclusions on the excavations which began below the platform by the Israeli Department of Antiquities in 1970. The excavations uncovered the remains of three palaces. All three were

built during the reign of °Abdalmalik. Although they were built below the platform, but were attached to its southern wall, where the Mosque of al-Aqṣā is situated. It was also discovered that one of them was connected to the Aqṣā Mosque by a bridge.

These new discoveries in Jerusalem and °Abdalmalik's other building activities around Jerusalem, (cf. his milestones), gave the impetus to a new theory, strongly supported by Rosen-Ayalon, namely that the Caliph wanted to move his capital to Jerusalem. This theory was also raised by Sheila Canby and Josef van Ess in their essays in the Raby and Johns volume (1992). However, they refuted this suggestion and their argument is based partly on historical and partly on architectural evidence.

That it was built by °Abdalmalik has been recorded by several Arab historians and it is also confirmed in an inscription. This inscription was executed in gold mosaic and was placed at the summit of the inner and outer faces of the intermediate octagon. It is partly a quotation from the Qur'ān, but it also contains the date: 72/691–692. There is also the name of the °Abbāsid Caliph al-Ma'mūn (198/813 – 218/833), but originally it had the name of the Umayyad Caliph °Abdalmalik, who was the builder, but his name was substituted by that of al-Ma'mūn, probably in 831 AD. But what does this date mean? Is it a *terminus ad quem* or *terminus a quo*? Blair in her article (1992) has convincingly proven that the date is rather a *terminus a quo*, i.e. a date when the building programme commenced, rather than when it was completed. There are also historical reasons which would underline her arguments, but I shall return to that later.

Almost as important as the building itself, under the Rock there is a cave. In fact this building was erected around the rock and the cave. The rock is the place whence, according to the Holy Qur'ān and Muslim traditions, Prophet Muḥammad went during his celebrated journey (*isrā'*) and entered heaven. Here I would like to refer to the actual text of the Holy Qur'ān, in Q 17/1, where it says:

*“Glory be to [God] Who did take His servant for
a journey by night from the Sacred Mosque
to the Furthest Mosque whose precincts
We have blessed that We might show
Him some of Our signs: For He is the
All-Hearing, the All-Seeing”.*

Hence the rock played an important role in Islam and indeed, after the Ka'ba in Mecca, it became the second holy place for Islam and Muslims. So, what were °Abdalmalik's actual reasons the build the Dome of the Rock and particularly, why in this form?

Several scholars of Islamic religion and history, including Ignaz Goldziher, who was one of the most outstanding Islamic scholars, relied on the accounts of two historians, the Šī'ite al-Ya'qūbī and the Greek Eutychius. They both claimed that because ʿAbdalmalik at that time had a rival Caliph, Ibn Zubayr in Mecca, who spread hostile propaganda against him and the Umayyads, he wanted to prevent the Syrian Muslims to visit Mecca and to substitute Jerusalem as a new place of pilgrimage. Furthermore, he also intended to change the direction of prayer, i.e. the *qibla* from Mecca to Jerusalem, as it was during the first two years of the Hijra. Creswell and other art historians have also relied on these accounts and accepted this explanation. To support this argument some art historians, including Creswell, referred to the Mosque of al-Wāsiṭ. The Mosque of al-Wāsiṭ was excavated over several seasons and the excavators discovered three mosques, one above the other. The earliest one, was built by the Umayyad Governor of Iraq al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, and to it was attached his famous palace the Qubbat al-Ḥaḍrā'. It is interesting that the early mosque had a *mihṛāb*, but its orientation was wrong, the deviation was 34 degrees towards the west, i.e. towards Jerusalem (Safar 1945). This deviation, according to Ibn Taḡrībirdī, a 15th century Mamlūk historian, was due to the political circumstances which were mentioned by al-Ya'qūbī (Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Nuḡūm* I, 71).

Some fifty years ago another one of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's mosques, the Mosque of Banī Ġunayd was excavated south of Baghdad. The excavators again found that the orientation of its *mihṛāb* was likewise wrong and its deviation was 30 degrees towards the west (Ibn Taḡrībirdī, *Nuḡūm* I, 71)¹.

The question of course immediately arises: could we conclude from this two examples that ʿAbdalmalik had really intended to change the *qibla* direction towards Jerusalem and to establish Jerusalem and the Dome of the Rock as the new centre of Islam? Highly unlikely! Recent research and archaeological work in several parts of the Islamic world has shown that calculating the proper *qibla* direction was not easy and they frequently made mistakes. From my own experience I would like to refer to the pre-Fāṭimid mosque of Madīnat as-Sultān (Surt al-Qadīma, ancient Surt), where we discovered that the deviation was similarly wrong. It was 54 degrees towards the south, i.e. towards Johannesburg.

Here I would like to refer as-Subkī's treatise on "*The question of turning to the right or to the left of the qibla*". According to as-Subkī, it was the duty of every Muslim community that once they realised that the direction of the *qibla* was wrong, they had to correct the deviation, except in those places where the

¹ This information was provided to me by my good friend and colleague, Abd al-Aziz Hamid, who was one of the excavators. Unfortunately I have never seen the report of this excavation.

Prophet or any of his companions prayed. In those places they were not allowed to touch it (as-Subkī, *Fatāwā*, I, 149–155).

Thus, it was very unlikely that the above mentioned two wrongly oriented *mihrābs* give sufficient support to the theory that °Abdalmalik wanted to change the *qibla* direction or to make Jerusalem the new centre of Islam. As far as it is known he was a pious man and well before he intended to build the Dome of the Rock he contacted theologians and asked for their advice and opinion. In spite of this uncertain archaeological ground, but rather relying more on the historical references, Elad (1992) was willing to accept al-Ya°qūbī's theory.

However, when we examine the actual historical events, as those have been well pointed out by Sheila Canby, by the end of 72/692 °Abdallāh ibn Zubayr was not only defeated, but killed. Hence there was no need to create a new religious centre in Jerusalem or to substitute the Ka°ba with the Rock.

We may dismiss al-Ya°qūbī's allegation that °Abdalmalik intended to create a new pilgrim centre for Islam, nevertheless we are still faced with the major question: why did he build the Dome of the Rock in the centre of the Temple Mount and around the rock and in an annular form?

Josef van Ess, in one of his recent articles presents an interesting theory, which is not entirely new, but it puts the problem in a new and different light. He writes that “the *mi°rāğ* connected with this spot was primarily not that of Muḥammad but of God himself” (van Ess 1992:93).

In the cave below the building there are the remains of footsteps, what people now generally believe are those of Prophet Muḥammad. Van Ess, however, quotes two studies which state that those are not of the Prophet, but God himself, since the creation, according to Jewish theology, took place on Mount Zion, “from the foundation rock (*ebhen shetiyya*) which was in front of the Holy of Holies”.² Then – quoting another study – he continues that “God sat there after the creation, and from there He returned to Heaven ...and will be present again for the Last Judgement”³.

This statement has been refuted by Islamic theologians on the ground that it introduced anthropomorphism, which contradicts the basic teachings of Islam. Van Ess (1992:98) also finds it significant that °Abdalmalik did not include Q 17/1, the one quoted above. He then continues and claims that °Abdalmalik's ideas concerning the Rock were connected to God, rather than the Prophet and

² Josef van Ess (1992:95) quoting P. Schäfer, “Tempel und Schöpfung. Zur interpretation einiger Heiligtumstradition in der rabbinischen Literatur”, in: P. Schäfer, *Studien zur Geschichte und Theologie des Rabbinischen Judentums*, Leiden: Brill, 1978, 122–123.

³ Van Ess (1992:96) quoting M. J. Kister, “‘You shall Only Set Out For Three Mosques’: a Study of an Early Tradition”, *Le Muséon* 1969, 82.195. Reprinted in M.J. Kister, *Studies in Jahiliyya and Early Islam*, London, 1980.

the footsteps, he suggests that they were to be the answer to Christ's steps in the Church of Anastasis. Finally, that the Dome of Rock is a "tent over God's throne" (1992:103).

Van Ess's theory relies very much on Jewish and Old Testament traditions and I do not think that was in ʿAbdalmalik's mind when he decided to erect the Dome of the Rock in that holy place. Of course the other possibility is, and that has also been suggested before, that the Caliph intended to develop Jerusalem as the future capital of the Umayyad Empire.

These new discoveries in Jerusalem and ʿAbdalmalik's other building activities around Jerusalem, gave the impetus to a new theory: The Caliph wanted to move his capital to Jerusalem. One of the scholars who dealt with this new theory in great details is Miryam Rosen-Ayalon, who discussed all this in her monograph (1989). This question was also raised by Sheila Canby (1992) and Josef van Ess (1992). They refuted this suggestion and their argument is based partly on historical and partly on architectural evidence.

Yes, indeed, ʿAbdalmalik played great attention to the development of Jerusalem, but if he really intended to move his capital, he had both the resources and also the time. If we accept Sheila Canby's thesis, that the date of 72/692 is a *terminus a quo*, the Caliph, who died in 86/705, had plenty of time to do so. He did not, nor did his son, al-Walīd I, who succeeded him and who instead, rather converted the major church into a great mosque in Damascus which became known as the Great or Umayyad Mosque.

So, if the Dome of the Rock and the Ḥaram aš-Šarīf were not intended to be the centres, or the first and most important pilgrim place of Islam, nor the capital of the Umayyad Empire, then why did ʿAbdalmalik build it? What did it symbolise in his eyes? To find a satisfactory answer to our questions, we have look at once more at the mosaic decorations, but also at the cave beneath this holy rock.

Let's examine first the cave. Unfortunately early Muslim authors, while they gave detailed accounts of the building, either they did not mention, or only briefly the cave. When one descends by the stairs into the cave, one finds that there are two *miḥrābs* flanking it. One to the right, and one to the left. The one to the right is known as Miḥrāb Sulaymān, while the other one on the left is known as Miḥrāb Dāwūd. The earliest known reference to these two *miḥrābs* is by Aḥmad ibn Faḍlallāh al-ʿUmarī, who simply stated that "in the cave there are two prayer-niches, one to the right and one to the left, each flanked by two fine marble columns" (*Masālik* I, 154). The first modern writer not only to mention them, but also illustrating them was Gustaf Dalman⁴.

⁴ For his collection of 3195 historic photographs see the website of the Gustaf-Dalman-Insti-

Creswell (1932: I, 70) was the next one to illustrate Mihrāb Sulaymān and also suggested that it was contemporary with the building, thus that it was installed by °Abdalmalik. In my thesis I fully agreed with Creswell and added further evidence for its early date (Fehérvári 1961: I, 90–105). Here it is irrelevant whether this *mihrāb* is contemporary with the building or not, but what is important that both prayer-niches keep the proper *qibla* direction, i.e. they are oriented towards the Ka°ba.

In the southwest corner of the cave are the footsteps, what people consider as the footsteps of the Prophet from his famous *isrā'* or night journey and there is also what is called the 'head-mark of Prophet Muḥammad'. Thus, the cave has a number of connections and reflections to Qur'ān 17/1.

As to the gold mosaics, we should now quote again what seem to be relevant passages from the Holy Qur'ān. The first one which should be considered here is Q 43/70–73, which says:

70. *“Enter ye the Garden,
Ye and your wives,
In (beauty and) rejoicing.*
71. *To them will be passed
Round, dishes and goblets
Of Gold: there will be
There all that the souls
Could desire, all that
The eyes could delight in
And ye shall abide
Therein (for aye).*
72. *Such will be the Garden
Of which ye are made
Heirs for your (good) deeds
(In life).*
73. *Ye shall have therein
Abundance of fruit, from which
Ye shall have satisfaction.”*

The second *sūra* which seems to be relevant here is Q 54/54–55 which talks about the garden of paradise.

54. *“As to the Righteous,
They will be in the midst
Of Gardens and Rivers.*
55. *In an Assembly of Truth,
In the Presence of
A Sovereign Omnipotent.”*

When, in the light of these two *sūras*, we examine the mosaics of the Dome of the Rock, we realise that the Caliph intended to present the views of Paradise – as it is promised to the believers by the Holy Qur’ān – in a place that was equally important for Jews, Christians and Muslims. He tried to press its basic teachings: The inscription refutes the Holy Trinity, when it says “*lā ilāha illā Allāh*”, “There is no God, but Allāh”. The mosaics illustrate the Islamic Paradise and the Prophet’s footsteps are the remains of his *miʿrāğ*, as it is illustrated in a rather rare representation of the event. It is a miniature painting from Nizāmī’s *Hamsa*, copied and illustrated in Tebriz, c. 1505.⁵

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⁵ Robinson et al. 1976:189, no. III. 207. The Miniature belongs to the Keir collection. See the colour plates, Plate No. I.

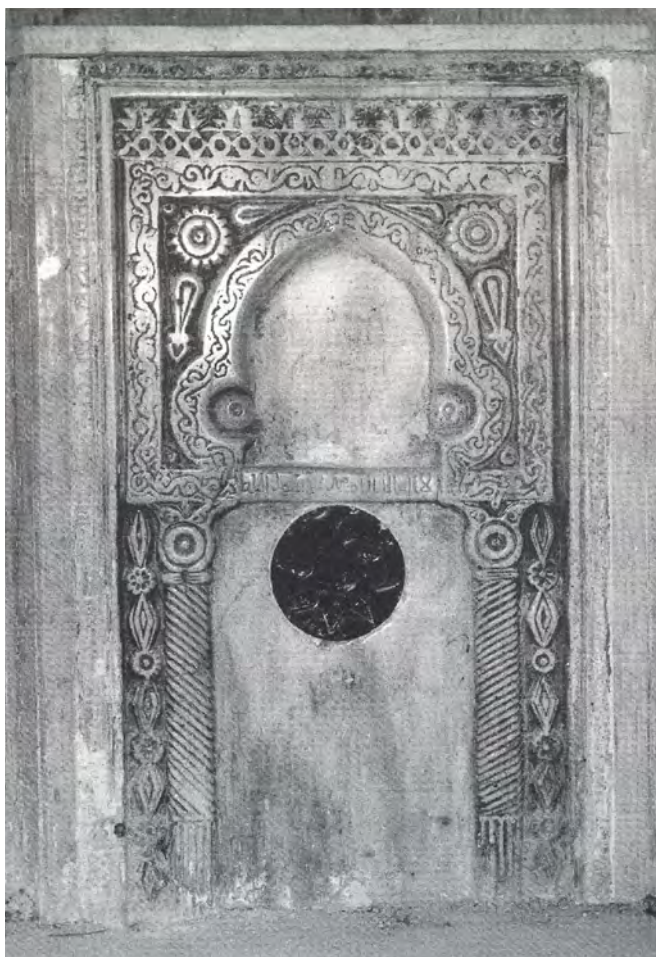
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Qubbat aş-Şahra



Mihrāb Sulaymān

A MAGICAL BANNER WITH THE REPRESENTATION OF PARADISE FROM THE TAREQ RAJAB MUSEUM IN KUWAIT

ALEXANDER FODOR

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Introduction

The Tareq Rajab Museum in Kuwait owns an interesting piece of cotton looking like a triangular banner. It is covered with inscriptions and numbers arranged in squares. The calligraphic panels are penned in black *tulut*, the doubled border lines and the squares are ruled in red. A characteristic sign in writing the numbers is the use of the figure resembling a heart turned upside down for inscribing the number 5¹. In an upright position with the fly end up and the hoist end down, the central lay-out of the elements in the field shows the figure of a stepped pyramid composed of 8 magic squares (**Fig. 1**)². This structure resembles very much the representation of Paradise in Islamic cosmology that has gained a wide popularity in the 18th-19th centuries. The paper wishes to describe this magical object and tries to shed light on the guiding principles that influenced the arrangement of the texts and the numbers in the squares. As is well-known, banners have always played an important role in Islamic politics, warfare and religion³. Starting from the latter point, this study also approaches the subject from the aspects of the relations between Paradise and tomb, Paradise and banner, banner and tomb, banner and magic. As a matter of fact, however, this banner-like object has never been hoisted on a flagpole and has never been used as a real flag. Namely, the traces of folding in the material reveal that it has been meant to be worn as a talismanic chart on the body of its owner for magical purposes.

¹ This fact might also point to India as the place of origin of the banner.

² See the colour plates, Plate No II. See also the folded plate at the end of the volume.

³ For banners in the Islamic world in general, see *EP*¹ and *EP*² s.v. “*alam, sandjak, sandjak-i sherif*”.

Description of the banner

Catalogue number: TEX 004

Length (fly): 406 cm

Height (hoist end): 246 cm

Depth of the bend in the hoist end: 43 cm

Place of acquisition: India

Date: cca 18th century

The banner has been sewn together from 4 pieces of cotton. When folded, it measures ca. 30 x 25 cm.

Inscriptions

All the inscriptions have been chosen from the Qurʾān. At the first sight interestingly, but as we shall see, applying a definite pattern, the position of the letters is the opposite of the direction of the numbers. If we read the text in front of us, the numbers appear turned upside down and vice versa. The text starts in the right corner of the hoist end and ends in the apex shaped fly end. It contains the following Qurʾānic verses (Q 48/1-26)⁴:

1. We have given you a clear **victory**⁵,
2. That God may forgive you your past sin
and your sin which is to come,
and that He may complete His blessing to you
and guide you on a **straight path**,
3. And that God may help you with mighty help.
4. [It is] He who sent down the reassurance into the hearts of the believers
that they might add faith to their faith
– **to God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth**;
God is Knowing and Wise –
5. That He may admit the believers, men and women,
to **gardens through which rivers flow**,
in which they will remain for ever,
and that he may redeem their evil deeds for them.
That is a mighty triumph with God.
6. And that He may punish the hypocrites, both men and women,
and those, both men and women, who associate others with God,

⁴ Qurʾānic verses are quoted in the translation of Alan Jones (Q 2007).

⁵ For an explanation of text in bold characters see the “Commentary” below.

who think evil thoughts about God,
 Against them is the **evil turn of fortune**.
 God is angry with them and has cursed them
 and has prepared for them **Jahannam**
 – **an evil journey's end**.

7. To God belong the hosts of the heavens and the earth.

God is Mighty and Wise.

8. We have sent you as a witness

and a bearer of good tidings and a warner,

9. That you may believe in God and His messenger

and support Him and revere Him

and glorify Him morning and evening.

10. Those who swear allegiance to you

are swearing allegiance to God.

The hand of God is above their hands.

Whoever breaks his oath breaks it against himself;

but whoever fulfils the covenant he has made with God,

He will give him a mighty wage.

11. The *bedu* who were left behind will say to you,

‘Our possession and households kept us busy;

so seek forgiveness for us.’

They say with their tongues

what is not in their hearts.

11a. Say, ‘Who possesses anything that will avail you against God,

if He desires harm for you or desires benefit for you?

No. God is informed of what you do.

12. No. You thought that the messenger and the believers would never re-
 turn to their households.

That was made to seem fair in your hearts.

You had evil thoughts and you were a corrupt people.’

13. Those who do not believe in God and His messenger

– We have prepared a **blaze** for the unbelievers.

14. To God belongs the sovereignty of the heavens and the earth.

He forgives those whom He wishes

and punishes those whom He wishes.

God is Forgiving and Compassionate.

15. Those who were left behind will say,

when you set out to take spoils,

‘Let us follow you’,

wishing to alter God’s words.

- Say, ‘You shall not follow us.
Thus God has spoken previously.’
They will say, ‘No. You **envy** us.’
No. They understand only a little.
16. Say to the *bedu* who were left behind,
‘You will be summoned against a people of great might,
whom you will fight or they will surrender.
If you obey, God will give you a fair wage;
but if you turn away as you did before,
He will punish you most painfully.’
17. There is no blame on the **blind** or on the **lame** or on the **sick**
– those who obey God and His messenger
will be admitted by Him to **gardens**,
through which **rivers** flow;
but those who turn away
– He will punish them most painfully.
18. God was pleased with the believers
when they swore allegiance to you under the tree,
and He knew what was in their hearts.
And so He sent down reassurance to them
and rewarded them with a **victory near** at hand,
19. And numerous spoils to take.
God is Mighty and Wise.
20. God has promised you numerous spoils to take,
and has hastened these to you,
and has restrained the hands of the people from you.
[This is] so that it may be a sign to the believers
and that He may guide you on a **straight path**.
21. And other [spoils] that you were not able to take
are encompassed by God.
God has power over everything.
22. If those who disbelieve had fought you,
they would have turned their backs;
and then they would find no protector or helper.
23. That is God’s practice,
which has happened in the past.
You will not find alteration in God’s practice.
24. [It is] He who has restrained their hands from you
and your hands from them in the valley of Mecca,

- after He had made you **victors** over them.
 God is observer of what you do.
25. [It is] they who disbelieved and barred you from the **Sacred Mosque**
 and [barred] the offering which was prevented from reaching its place of
 sacrifice.
 And had it not been for the believing men and women,
 whom you do not know,
 lest you should have trampled on them,
 and guilt befallen you unwittingly because of them
 – that God may admit to His mercy those whom He wishes.
 Had they been clearly separated,
 We would have punished the unbelievers among them most painfully.
26. When those who disbelieved set fierceness in their hearts,
 the fierceness of the age of ignorance,
 and God sent down his reassurance to His messenger and to the
 believers,
 and fastened on them the word ‘piety’,
 to which they have the best right and are worthy of it.
 God is aware of everything.

Here, the text of the Sūra is cut short abruptly since the last three Verses (Q 48/27-29) are missing, probably due to lack of space. After this, however, the Qur’ānic inscription is completed by the very popular Verse (Q 61/13) which reads: “help from God and a victory near”. The word *Allāh* is left out, probably due to lack of space.

1 Squares in the centre (starting from beneath, the hoist end of the banner)

1.1 Square 40 x 40⁶

The square is composed of 1600 numbers arranged in 100 squares of 4 x 4. The first component is placed in the upper right corner, directly under the *Basmala* introducing the Qur’ānic text. The numerical value of each line in these units is the same horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly⁷. The squares of 4 x 4, however, can be divided into different groups according to the characteristic numerical value of their numbers. These values can be the following in the order

⁶ See the folded table at the end of the volume.

⁷ Naturally, several mistakes committed by the copyist can be detected in the arrangement of the numbers.

of their occurrence: 29224, 29226, 29220, 29200, 29218, 29214, 29234, 29214 and the last one is again equal to 29234. As we can see, each of the 4×4 squares is composed of 2 different groups of numbers (with 8 numbers in each). The arrangement of the numbers in the 2 groups follows a well defined pattern shown by **Figs. 2, 3**.

In the starting square, the difference between the two sequences (6540, 6541, 6542, 6543, 6544, 6545, 6546, 6547 and 8065, 8066, 8067, 8068, 8069, 8070, 8071, 8072) is 1518 ($8065 - 6547$). This difference is diminishing gradually by 16 from one square to the next. In the last square (left corner, below), the difference disappears and a continuous sequence of 16 numbers appears in the small rectangles (7301- 7316). The decrease of the numbers of the first group and the increase of the numbers in the second group is illustrated on **Fig. 4** by the diminution of the black component in the squares and finally by its total disappearance in the last square.

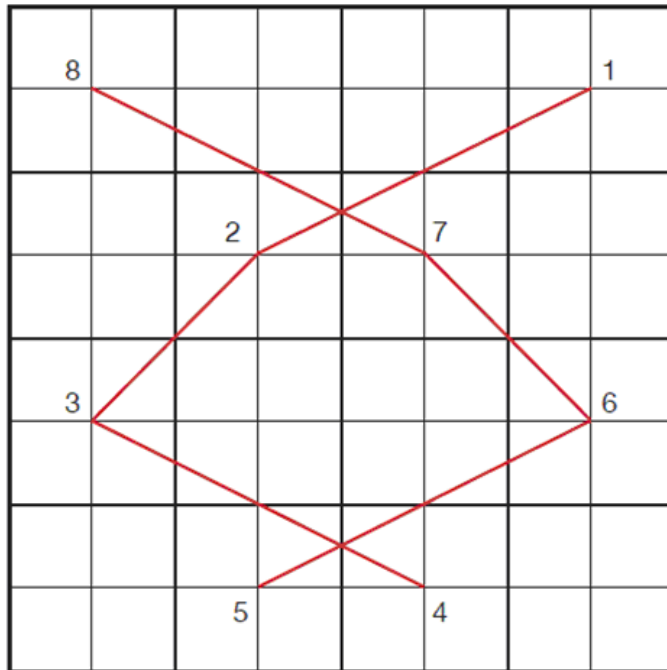


Fig. 2.

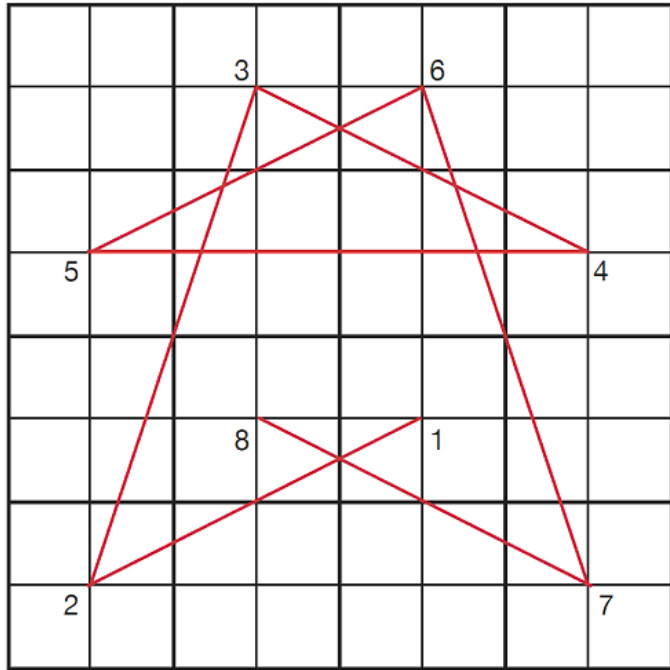
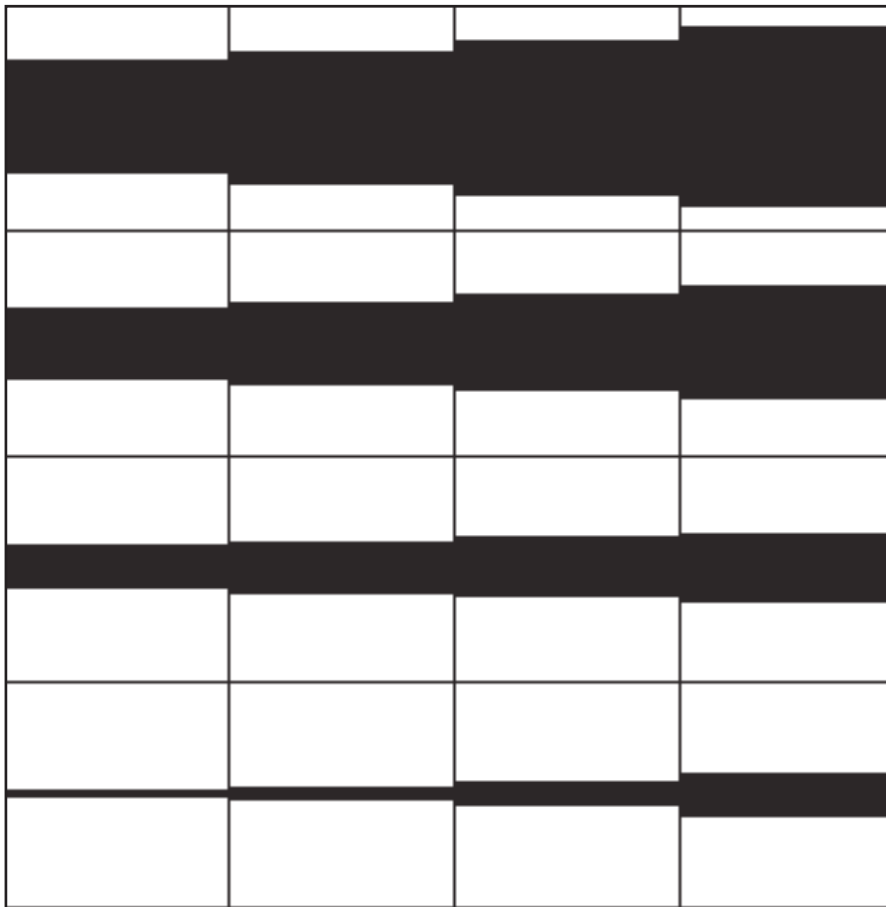


Fig. 3.

**Fig. 4.**

1.2 Square 20 x 20

40	263	266	33	32	271	274	25	24	279	282	17	16	287	290	9	8	295	298	1
265	34	39	264	273	26	31	272	281	18	23	280	289	10	15	288	297	2	7	296
35	268	261	38	27	276	269	30	19	284	277	22	11	292	285	14	3	300	293	6
262	37	36	267	270	29	28	275	278	21	20	283	286	13	12	291	294	5	4	299
80	223	226	73	72	231	234	65	64	239	242	57	56	247	250	49	48	255	258	41
225	74	79	224	233	66	71	232	241	58	63	240	249	50	55	248	257	42	47	256
75	228	221	78	67	236	229	70	59	244	237	62	51	252	245	54	43	260	253	46
222	77	76	227	230	69	68	235	238	61	60	243	246	53	52	251	254	45	44	259
120	283	286	113	112	291	294	105	104	299	302	97	96	307	310	89	88	315	318	81
285	114	119	284	293	106	111	292	301	98	103	300	309	90	95	308	317	82	87	316
115	288	281	118	107	296	289	110	99	304	297	102	91	312	305	94	83	320	313	86
282	117	116	287	290	109	108	295	298	101	100	303	306	93	92	311	314	85	84	319
160	243	246	153	152	251	254	145	144	259	262	137	136	267	270	129	128	275	278	121
245	154	159	244	253	146	151	252	261	138	143	260	269	130	135	268	277	122	127	276
155	248	241	158	147	256	249	150	139	264	257	142	131	272	265	134	123	280	273	126
242	157	156	247	250	149	148	255	258	141	140	263	266	133	132	271	274	125	124	279
200	203	206	193	192	211	214	185	184	219	222	177	176	227	230	169	168	235	238	161
205	194	199	204	213	186	191	212	221	178	183	220	229	170	175	228	237	162	167	236
195	208	201	198	187	216	209	190	179	224	217	182	171	232	225	164	163	240	233	166
202	197	196	207	210	189	188	215	218	181	180	223	226	173	172	231	234	165	164	239

This square is composed of 400 numbers (using the numerals from 1 to 300) arranged in 25 squares of 4 x 4. The organizing principle is the same as in the 40 x 40 square. The numerical value of each line is the same horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly (apart from the copyist's occasional mistakes). The squares can be divided into 2 groups on the basis of their numerical values: each of the first 10 quadrates give the sum 602 while each of the remaining 15 has 802. The arrangement of the 16 numerals in 2 different groups follows the pattern in the 40 x 40 square. The difference between the two sequences in the first square is 285 which gradually decreases and finally disappears in the last square where the order of the numbers gives the following sequence: 193 – 208.

1.3 Square 16 x 16

32	218	221	25	24	226	229	17	16	234	237	9	8	242	245	1
220	26	31	219	228	18	23	227	236	10	15	235	244	2	7	243
27	223	216	30	19	231	224	22	11	239	232	14	3	247	240	6
217	29	28	222	225	21	20	230	233	13	12	238	241	5	4	246
65	186	189	58	57	194	197	50	49	202	205	42	41	210	213	34
188	59	64	187	196	51	56	195	204	43	48	203	212	35	40	211
60	191	184	63	52	199	192	55	44	207	200	47	36	215	208	39
185	62	61	190	193	54	53	198	201	46	45	206	209	38	37	214
97	154	157	90	89	162	165	72	81	170	173	74	73	178	181	66
156	91	96	155	164	83	88	163	172	75	80	171	185	67	72	179
92	159	152	95	84	167	160	77	76	35	168	79	68	183	176	71
153	94	93	158	161	86	85	166	169	78	77	174	177	70	69	172
119	122	125	112	111	130	133	104	103	138	141	96	95	146	149	88
124	113	118	123	132	105	110	131	140	97	102	139	148	89	94	147
114	127	120	117	106	135	128	109	98	143	136	101	90	151	144	93
121	116	115	126	129	108	107	134	37	100	99	142	145	92	91	150

The square has 256 rectangles and uses the numbers from 1-247 which are arranged in 16 squares of 4 x 4. The method of arrangement is again the same as in the case of the square of 40 x 40. The difference between the 2 groups (1 – 8 and 240 – 247) in the first square is 232. This is decreased by 16 from one square to the next and the final square presents the sequence of numbers from 112 to 127.

1.4 Square 11 x 11

11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	11	10
7	6	5	4	3	2	1	11	10	9	8
5	4	3	2	1	11	10	9	8	7	6
3	2	1	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
1	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	11
8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	11	10	9
6	5	4	3	2	1	11	10	9	8	7
4	3	2	1	11	10	9	8	7	6	5
2	1	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3

This square has 121 numbers and uses the numbers from 1 – 11 as they appear in this order in the first line. Each line contains these numbers but in a different arrangement. The organizing principle is based on the following method: In every line following the first one, the number 1 starting the sequence is forwarded by 2 places, the sequence is continued until the end of the line and then the remaining numbers are placed at the beginning of the same line. The total sum of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 66, the equivalent of the numerical value of the letters of the word *Allāh*.

1.5 Square 8 x 8

141	176	179	134	133	184	187	126
178	135	140	177	186	127	132	185
136	181	174	139	128	189	182	131
175	138	137	180	183	130	129	188
157	160	163	150	149	168	171	142
162	151	156	161	170	143	148	169
152	165	158	155	144	173	166	147
159	154	153	164	167	146	145	172

The square is composed of 4 squares of 4 x 4 created by 2 different sequences of numbers. The numerical value of the numbers in each of the squares horizontally vertically and perpendicularly is 630. The 36 numbers contain the numbers from 126 to 189. The difference between the 2 groups of numbers in the first square is 56 which gradually disappears until the sequence of 150 – 165 appears in the last square.

1.6 Square 6 x 6

4	10	30	32	34	1
31	18	21	24	11	6
29	23	12	17	22	8
9	13	26	19	16	28
2	20	15	14	25	35
36	27	7	5	3	33

The square contains the numbers from 1 to 36. The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 111, the equivalent for the numerical values of the letters of the word *kāfi* ('Sufficient', one of the 'Most Beautiful Names' of God).

1.7 Square 4 x 4

9	3	7	1
6	2	8	4
3	9	1	7
2	6	4	8

The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 20 which is equivalent to the numerical value of the words *wadūd* ('Devoted', one of the epithets of God) and *budūh* (corresponding to the even numbers 2, 4, 6, 8 in the basic 3 x 3 square composed of the numbers 1-9). Seemingly, the square uses the numbers from 1 to 4 and from 6 to 9. Each of these numbers appears twice. In the original square, however, the number 5 is shown at the end of the second line instead of 6. It is difficult to decide whether this was a mistake on the part of the copyist or it was done on purpose. Namely, if we leave the 5 in its place, the numerical value of its lines is 19, a favourite symbol for the *Basmala* written in 19 letters.

1.8 Square 3 x 3

21	28	23
26	24	22
25	20	27

The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 72 which might stand for *bāsiṭ* ('Extending', one of the 'Most Beautiful Names' of God).

2. Squares on the left side (starting from beneath, the hoist end of the banner)

2.1 Square 3 x 3

2	3	8
5	7	9
6	1	4

The square is almost identical with the basic 3 x 3 square, called also *budūh* as a reference to the letters that can stand for these even numbers (*b, d, w, h*). The only difference is that in the original form the number 5 is placed in the centre. The change must have been made on purpose since the same arrangement occurs in all of the similar squares that are represented on the banner. The square is placed under the *Basmala* which starts the Qur'ānic text.

2.2 Square 5 x 5

This square uses the numbers from 1 to 25. The numerical value of each line horizontally and vertically is 65.

17	24	1	8	15
23	5	7	14	16
4	6	3	20	22
10	12	10	21	3
11	18	25	2	9

2.3 Square 3 x 3

See Square 1.8 (3 x 3) in the Centre

2.4 Square 4 x 4

See Square 1.7 (4 x 4) in the Centre

2.5 Square 3 x 3

See above Square 1.1 (3 x 3)

2.6 Square 10 x 10

4	99	95	94	89	88	14	11	10	1
3	22	81	80	75	69	30	28	19	98
8	24	36	27	63	62	46	33	77	93
15	25	35	50	53	56	43	66	76	86
18	29	40	58	44	49	54	61	72	83
84	70	60	45	58	51	48	41	31	17
85	74	64	52	47	46	57	37	27	16
92	78	68	34	38	39	59	25	23	9
96	82	20	21	26	32	71	73	79	5
100	2	6	7	12	13	87	90	91	97

The square contains the numbers from 1 to 100. The numerical values of the lines is varying, most of them are 505.

2.7 Square 8 x 8

1230	1229	1281	1282	1283	1284	1224	1223
1238	1237	1273	1274	1275	1276	1232	1231
1263	1264	1244	1243	1242	1241	1269	1270
1255	1256	1252	1251	1250	1249	1261	1262
1247	1248	1260	1259	1258	1257	1253	1254
1239	1240	1268	1267	1266	1265	1245	1246
1278	1277	1233	1234	1235	1236	1272	1271
1286	1285	1225	1226	1227	1228	1280	1279

The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 10036. The arrangement of the numbers shows certain regularities: the numbers in the rectangles from 3 to 6 present sequences and in a similar way, the numbers in the 2 rectangles on the right and on the left are also sequences. The direction of the order of the numbers in the sequences is changed in every 2 consecutive lines (from left to right and vice versa).

2.8 Square 3x3

See above Square 2.3 (3 x 3)

2.9 Square 6 x 6

9	35	3	34	32	1
7	11	28	27	8	30
24	14	16	15	23	19
13	20	22	21	17	18
25	29	6	10	26	12
36	2	33	4	5	31

The square contains the numbers from 1 to 36. The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 111, the equivalent for the numerical values of the letters of the word *kāfi* ('Sufficient', one of the 'Most Beautiful Names' of God). For a different version with the same numerical value, see Square 6 (6 x 6) above in the Centre.

2.10 Square 4 x 4

250	203	206	243
205	244	249	204
245	208	201	248
202	247	246	207

The square uses 2 groups of numbers (201 – 208 and 243 – 250) according to the geometric pattern applied in the 40 x 40 and other squares. The numerical value of each line horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 902.

2.11 Square 3 x 3

See above Squares 1, 5, 8 (3 x 3)

2.12 Square 5 x 5

Fāṭima	115	130	93	°Alī
95	107	137	117	127
119	129	Muḥammad	109	134
106	136	116	131	94
Ḥusayn	96	108	133	Ḥasan

The numerical value of the numbers (including the numerical values of the names) horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 583. The numerical value of the names is also 583.

2.13 Square 4 x 4

8345	114	147	2416
613	26	77	125
33	616	93	66
934 10	55	44	62 1587

No evident organizing principle can be discovered.

2.14 Square 3 x 3

3155	3150	3157
3156	3154	3152
3151	3158	3153

The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 9462.

2.15 Square 4 x 4

See above Square 1.7 (4 x 4) in the Centre

2.16 Square 3 x 3

See above Square 8 (3 x 3) in the Centre

3 Squares on the right side

They are identical with the squares on the left side except for one which is a slight variant of Square 2.14 (3 x 3) on the left side because the numbers are completed in the 4th line by 2 invocations to God and by another to Muhammad.

3155	315	3157
3156	3154	3152
3151	3158	3153
yā Allāh	yā Muḥammad	yā Allāh

The numerical value of the numbers horizontally, vertically and perpendicularly is 9462. As for the orthography of the word *Allāh*, we may note that the letter *lām* is written only once, probably in an effort to avoid writing three vertical strokes.

Commentary

1. As a magical object, the banner belongs to the group of the so called talismanic charts and talismanic shirts that are characterized by the presence of an enormous quantity of numbers arranged in squares and inscribed on cotton, paper or gazelle skin (Maddison & Savage-Smith 1997:106-123). The present banner distinguishes itself by the peculiar arrangement of the squares in a stepped pyramid form which resembles a well-known form of representation of the Islamic Paradise. However, not only the geometrical form, but also the accompanying Qur'ānic Sūra (Q 48) is a perfect choice to connect the banner to the idea of Paradise. This frequently used Sūra, called *al-Fath*, 'The Victory' was revealed on the occasion of the Ḥudaybiya Treaty. Seemingly, it was a setback for the Muslims who wanted to perform the Pilgrimage in the year 628 but could not because they were returned by the Qurayš and agreed to postpone it to the next year. The Prophet, however, considered it as a great victory for the cause of Islam as is evident from the text of the Sūra.

So, this piece of Revelation was very appropriate to convey the good news about immediate victory. The message must have been very important for the owner of the banner. Apart from the references to this victory in the Sūra (e.g. 'victory', 'victory near', 'victors', 'the hand of God is above their hand', indicated by bold characters in the text), there are other expressions that evoke the idea of the Paradise ('gardens through which rivers flow', 'gardens', 'rivers'). The references to Hell, the opposite of Paradise, can also be found ('Jahannam', 'an evil journey's end', 'blaze'). Finally, there is a hint to *ṣirāt mustaqīm*, the 'Straight Path' which separates Paradise from the Hell.

The cosmological aspect in the arrangement of the text on the banner is further emphasized by the occurrence of the declaration 'to God belongs the hosts of heavens and the earth' (twice) in the border band which contains the first eleven verses, so symbolically and practically surrounds Paradise which is above the seventh heaven according to Islamic cosmology.⁸

2. If we look for parallels for the stepped pyramid constructed from the magic squares in the central field of the banner, we can find the best illustration for it in the *Maʿrifetnāme*, the famous Encyclopaedia written by Ibrāhīm Ḥaqqī in the 18th century (Fig. 5).⁹ The illustration shows the eight stepped pyramid symbolizing Paradise with *sidrat al-muntahā*, the 'Lotus Tree of the Boundary' painted in gold. On the right side, the *liwāʾ al-ḥamd*, 'the Banner of Glory'

⁸ For Islamic cosmological ideas, see *EI* (1st and 2nd edition) s.v. 'djanna', 'djahannam'.

⁹ See the colour plates, Plate No. III. The photo is taken from a Manuscript of the *Maʿrifetnāme* in the Tareq Rajab Museum in Kuwait (not catalogued).

painted in red represents the Prophet's banner. In the centre, the Ka'ba is shown separating the seven heavens and the seven earths. At the lower part of the picture, we see *Ĝahannam*, Hell represented by an abyss enclosed between two seven stepped sides. The Tree of Hell painted in black – in sheer contrast to the golden Tree of Paradise – is also represented. Above Hell, we can see the *ṣirāṭ mustaqīm*, the 'Straight Path'. Evidently, the pictures of Paradise and Hell complement each other, as the stepped pyramid can be inserted into the abyss of Hell. Accordingly, the two components together suggest the idea of perfect unity. The popularity of this sacred or magical cosmology in the 18th – 19th centuries is also attested by a similar picture of Paradise and Hell in a *Hilya* of the Tareq Rajab Museum which contains the description of the Prophet's physical and moral qualities and was dated to 1819 A.D. (Fig. 6.)¹⁰

Practically, the quest for this unity can be discovered in the structure of the squares, in the simultaneous decrease and increase of the two groups of numbers composing the numerical sequences in the squares of 40 x 40, 20 x 20, etc., the arrangement of the sequences in alternately opposite directions (Square 2.7). The reverse directions of the position of the letters in the text and of the numbers in the squares also illustrate the complementary character of the unity.

In a way, the border band inscribed with the Qur'ānic text (with reference to God as the Lord of the hosts of heavens) surrounding the field of the banner symbolizes the constant element in the cosmos, while the squares with the numbers in perpetual movement stand for the active manifestation of God in the world. The ardent belief in the unity of the world is best exemplified by the squares with numerical values that symbolize God (Squares 1.4, 1.6, 1.7). This whole construction created in a very meticulous way can be best interpreted on the basis of reverse analogy: All the symbolic movements in the squares are characterized by the reverse directions in the sequences.

In addition to this, the geometrical representations of these magic squares give the onlooker the possibility to view them as manifestations of a special art form and look at the constructions as tessellations. Accordingly, the squares of 4 x 4 can be considered as geometrical forms that are fitted exactly together to create a two-dimensional plane with no gaps between them. This characteristic is further enhanced by the fact the last (fourth) number in the first line of each square is continued by the number coming after it in the first rectangle of the next square. (So, for example, 6547 is followed by 6548 in the first two components of the Square 40 x 40, etc.)

If we turn to the arts to find illustrations for the above mentioned features in the squares: the use of reverse analogy, the play with the opposites (like the

¹⁰ See the colour plates, Plate No. IV.

black and white on Fig. 4), the merging of the contrastive elements, the idea of unity in the world, we can discover them in the works of the Dutch graphic artist, M.C. Escher. His famous woodcuts and lithographs like the “Sky and Water I, II”, the intarsia panel for the Leiden Town Hall, the “Day and Night”, the “Fishes”, the “Encounter”¹¹ might give a clue to perceive the world view hidden in the seemingly boring magic squares.

In the Islamic world, the best and most enthusiastic exponents of this cosmological system characterized by the ceaseless search for the manifestation of God in the unity of the world were the Šūfīs (Nasr 1968:92-97, Cammann 1969a:201, Fodor 2002, 2006).

3. There is a clear evidence which shows that the banner must have been made for a member of the Šīʿa community. The Square of 3 x 3 on the right side completed by the names of ʿAlī, Fāṭima, Muḥammad, Ḥasan and Ḥusayn reveals the evident Šīʿa background. Apart from this, some other elements, in a way hidden, might also indicate this Šīʿite character. Concerning the characteristic number in the first Square (40 x 40), 40 has a special importance for the Šīʿa, too. *Arbaʿīn*, ‘Forty’ is the name of the important event when the Šīʿites commemorate the martyrdom of Ḥusayn on the 40th day after ʿAšūrā on Šafar 20 when millions of Šīʿites make the pilgrimage to Kerbela. According to Šīʿī belief, a prophet after his death can stay on the earth for forty days before he is lifted up to the heaven (al-Muqarram 1979:132, n.1.). A 40 day fasting is also a frequent prescription for magical practices (Ibn Ḥaṭīr ad-Dīn, *Ġawāhir* 345-352). The use of a special group of 40 names termed *al-asmāʾ al-idrīsīyya*, ‘the Idrisid Names’ attributed to as-Suhrawardī is considered a powerful device in magic (as-Suhrawardī, *Hawāṣṣ*).

The banner in itself enjoys a distinguished place in Šīʿī tradition. According to it, the Prophet gave his standard to ʿAlī during the battle of Ḥaybar (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Manāqib* 142). More important than this is the tradition which claims that the Prophet promised ʿAlī that he would carry the Prophet’s standard (*liwāʾ al-ḥamd*, ‘the Banner of Glory’) on the Day of Resurrection and the People of God will march in its shade. Finally, ʿAlī clothed in the garment of Paradise will be honoured by a place in the shade of the Throne between Abraham and the Prophet (aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Manāqib* 184-186). This ‘Banner of Glory’ had also an inscription in three lines: the *Basmala*, the *Šahāda* and the *Ḥamdala* (*al-ḥamdu li-l-lāhi rabbi l-ʿālamīn*, ‘Praise be to God, Lord of the Worlds’) (al-Muqarram 1979:185).

¹¹ Most of his works are exhibited in the Escher Museum in The Hague.

The triangular form of the banner indicates that its origin should be sought in the Eastern part of the Islamic world, namely in Mughal India or Persia. The form is not of Arabic origin (Kratchkowskaya 1937:468) but occurs very often on illustrations coming from these regions. To cite but a few examples, the characteristic triangular banners painted in different colours on illustrations usually depicting battle scenes, can always be discovered¹². In the Ottoman world, banners of rectangular form became popular as we have seen the representation of the Prophet's banner on the picture illustrating the Universe in the *Maʿrifetnāme*.

Even in modern popular representations of Šīʿī religious scenes we can discover the triangular banner painted in red. It appears, e.g. on a coloured print depicting the battlefield at Kerbela (Dayal & Schulz 2009: Fig.31).

4. There is a definite connection in Šīʿī imagery between the stepped pyramid as the symbol of Paradise and the stepped tomb with a palm branch over it. On a magic bowl from India (Fodor 2006), probably from the North and datable to the 18th century, on the exterior, the tomb of Ḥusayn is depicted as a four stepped edifice with a palm branch inside a mosque (**Fig. 7**)¹³. The accompanying Qurʾānic text (Q 2/257) makes it clear that the tomb symbolizes Paradise ('God is the protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light') while on the opposite side of the bowl, *Dū l-Faqār*, the Sword of ʿAlī stands for Hell ('Those who do not believe – their protectors are idols. They bring them out of the light into darkness. They are the companions of the Fire, in which they will dwell for ever').

We may also cite another example for the representation of a stepped tomb with three storeys topped by a dome which allegedly belonged to Abraham (**Fig. 8**)¹⁴. The picture decorates a magical manuscript on talismans which might come from the Delhi Sultanate or Central Asia and can be dated to the 15th century (Christie's, 2002:28, Lot 25).

It is worth noting that people in the Šīʿī processions commemorating ʿĀšūrā carry models of Ḥusayn's tomb made from wood or paper in the form of stepped pyramids (Dayal & Schulz, 2009, Figs. 20-24).

5. Although the banner with its exclusively Qurʾānic text and the squares gives the impression of a piece of strictly orthodox religiousness without any indication of a magical character, there are some words in the Qurʾānic verses which

¹² For the 16th century, see e.g. Thompson & Canby 2003: 97 (No. 4.14); 120 (No.4.32); 128 (No 4.36). For the 17th century, see Lukonin & Ivanov 1996: CAT. No. 214.

¹³ See the colour plates, Plate No. V.

¹⁴ See the colour plates, Plate No. VI.

might, however, imply a magical connotation. The simple occurrence of the expressions ‘no blame on the blind’, ‘no blame on the lame’, ‘no blame on the sick’ or the verb ‘envy’ might be taken as a sign of intent to guarantee the protection of the holder of the banner against these calamities. This might be corroborated by the use of another expression which has a definite prophylactic character: *dā'irat as-sū*, ‘the evil turn of fortune’ will afflict those who ‘think evil thoughts about God’ (Verse 6). The notion of *dā'ira*, ‘circle’ in itself is considered as a powerful magical device for protecting the good and containing the bad.

In connection with the magical use of the banner and the *Sūrat al-Faḥ*, it is worth to quote a passage from a highly interesting magical work of Šīfī character. It is the previously cited book, *Kitāb al-Ġawāhir al-Ḥams* written by Sīdī Muḥammad ibn Ḥaṭīr ad-Dīn ibn Bāyazīd Ḥawāḡa al-ʿAṭṭār, a Šūfī author who lived in India in the 16th century¹⁵. Speaking about the uses of a famous invocation called *ad-Duʿā as-sayfī*, ‘The Invocation of the Sword’, the book mentions that ‘he who writes it with the *Sūrat al-Faḥ* and rolls it up in wax, then hangs it on *rāyat al-Imām*, ‘the banner of the Imam’ (ʿAlī), and confronts the enemy, his enemy will be defeated without doubt’ (*Ġawāhir* 303).

6. Summing up what has been said above, we can come to the conclusion that the banner might have belonged to a member of the Šīʿa, who might have been an adherent of a Šūfī *ṭarīqa* in India, possibly, the Niʿmatullāhi order¹⁶. Very probably, he was not a simple warrior but a warlord who could have taken part in military campaigns. Judged by the quality of the banner, the fine craftsmanship manifested in the execution of the work, the owner must have belonged to the upper class. As a soldier, he must have been in great need of a protective device not only to defend him in the battlefield but also to assure him the admittance to Paradise in case of his death.

¹⁵ The book was banned in Egypt a few years ago because of its magical contents.

¹⁶ For the relationship between Šūfism and the Šīʿa, see Nasr 2008.

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Plate I



Plate II

اشكال هيئت اسلام

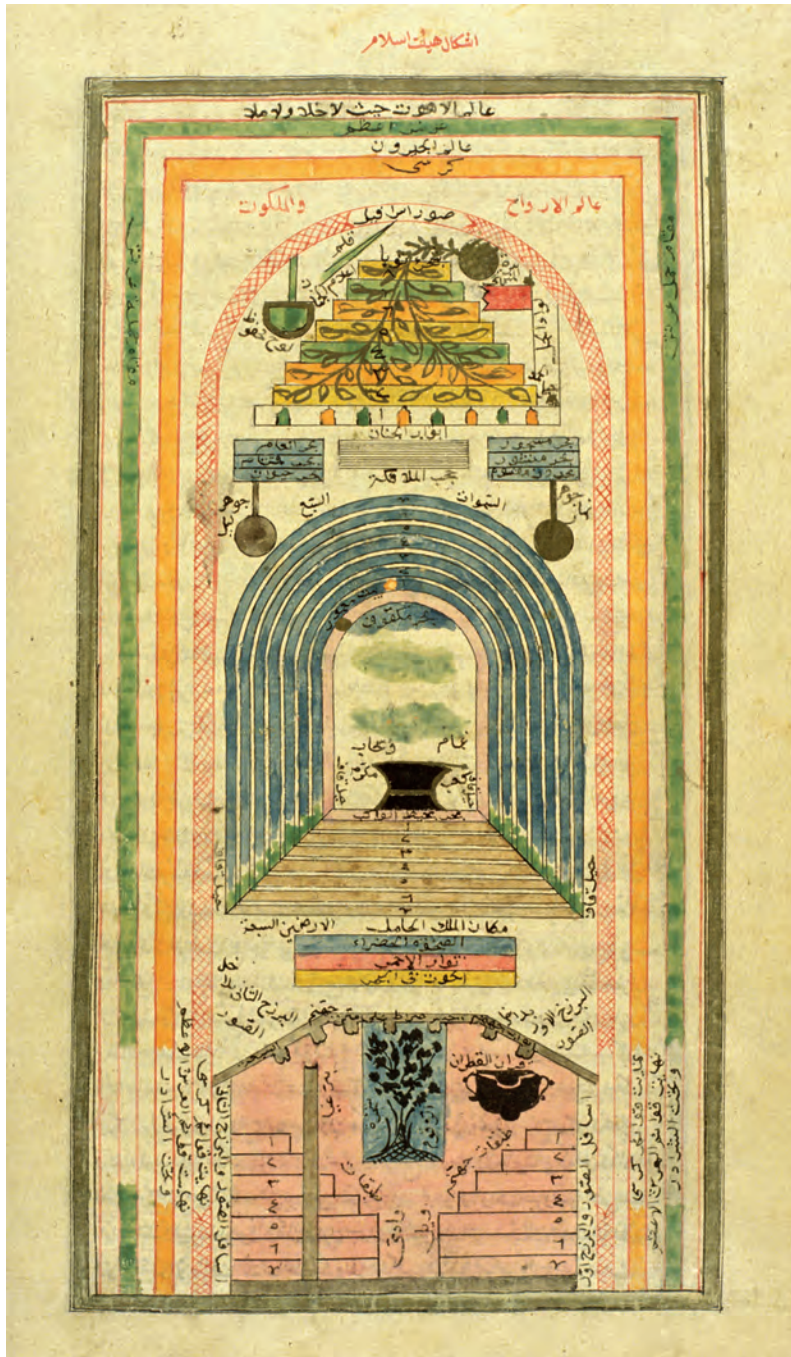


Plate III



Plate IV

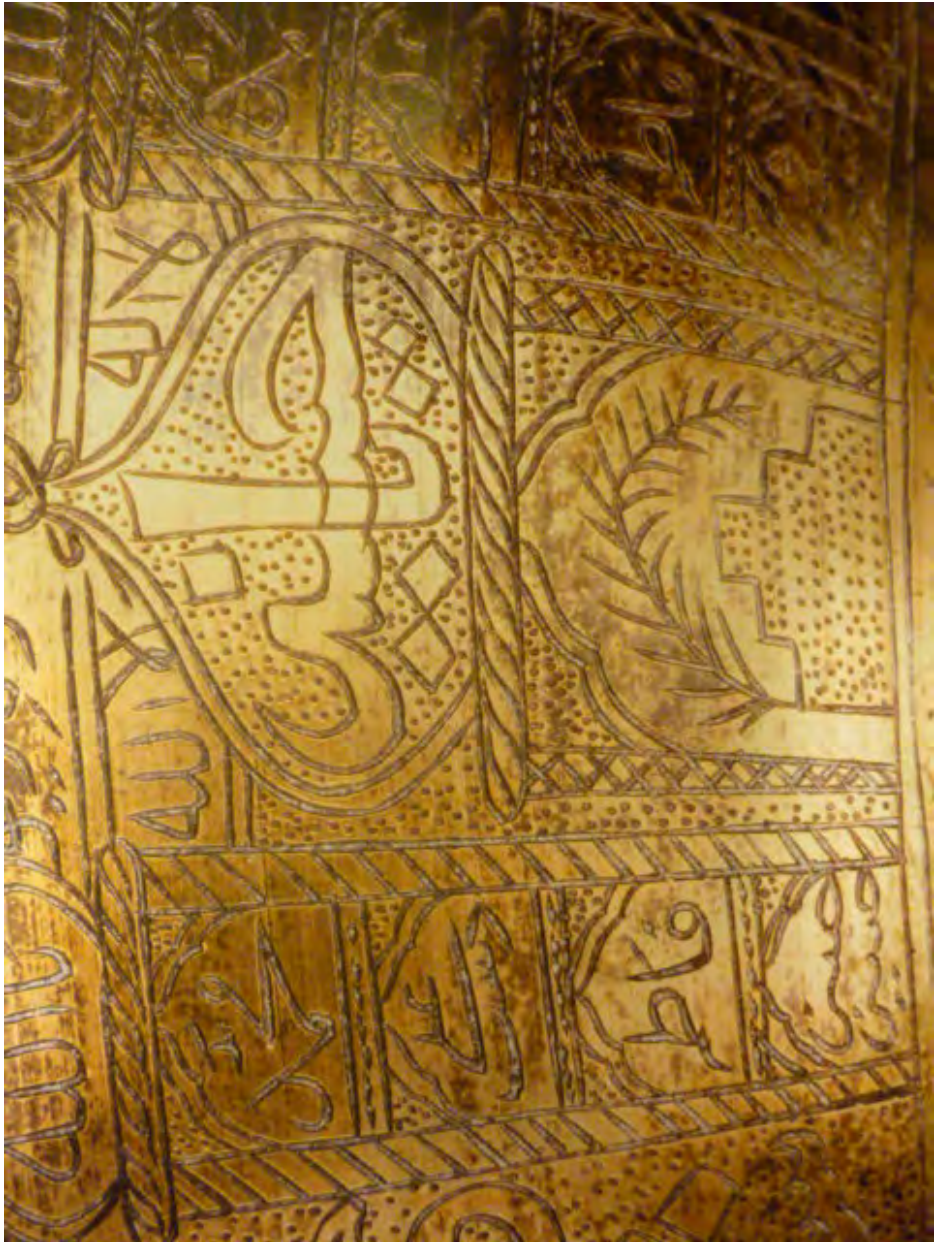


Plate V



Plate VI



Plate VIII

TWIN SPIRITS
ANGELS AND DEVILS
PORTRAYED IN SHAH TAHMASP'S SHAH NAMEH

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This *Shah Nameh* was probably started by Shah Tahmasp's father, Shah Ismail but largely completed during the reign of Shah Tahmasp. In his later years, Shah Tahmasp became increasingly preoccupied with political concerns. When the Ottoman Sultan, Suleiman the Magnificent died during the siege of the castle at Szigetvár in 1566, there were fears that his successor, Selim II might not adhere to the treaty signed by the Persian and Turkish rulers in 1555 to settle the western frontier of Persia. Consequently in 1567, a Safavid delegation travelled to Turkey and met the Ottoman Sultan at Edirne in February of 1568. Two of the most outstanding gifts were this *Shah Nameh* and a Qur'ān possibly written by the Imam 'Alī.

The *Shah Nameh* remained in Constantinople until the late nineteenth century but in 1903 it had entered the collection of Baron Edmond de Rothschild. During the Second World War it was looted by the Nazis and taken from France but recovered by Edmond's son, Maurice de Rothschild who died in 1957. At the sale of Maurice de Rothschild's books, it was purchased by Arthur A. Houghton. The volume was subsequently disbanded so that individual leaves could be displayed at various places and separate leaves entered private collections. The most recent event concerning this great work took place in 1994. The carcass of the manuscript, text, illumination, binding and 118 remaining miniature paintings was returned from the United States to Iran in return for an oil painting by Willem de Kooning. The final exchange took place after protracted verification in true Cold War style on the tarmac of Vienna airport. The manuscript is now housed in the Reza-i 'Abbasi Museum in Tehran where 31 leaves are currently on display.

It was Stuart Cary Welch who devoted so much time and analysis to this work, which resulted in the major two-volume publication with Martin Dickson

in 1981. Much of the information on the subject matter of the paintings has been taken from this work.

However before examining the miniature paintings, in particular those with devils and angels, it is necessary to examine some of the general beliefs that lie behind these illustrations.

The early chronology of the great Persian religious leader, Zoroaster and his revealed faith (“the only prophetic religion ever produced by the Aryan race” according to Zaehner 1961) remains somewhat obscure. It may even be the case that Zoroastrianism is the world’s oldest revealed religion, dating as far back as 1700 BC¹. There is also no doubt that many of Zoroaster’s teachings seem to have been elaborated in Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is, however, the radical dualist vision of Zoroaster’s teachings that is of relevance to this topic, namely the Twin Spirits that are perennially in conflict. These spirits are Spenta Mainyu, the Beneficent or Holy Spirit and Angra Mainyu, the Hostile or Destructive Spirit. They epitomize the conflicting moral choices between *asha* (truth) and *druj* (untruth). The One Supreme deity was called Ahura Mazda (or Wise Lord) and in time this became altered to Ohrmazd or Hurmuzd while Angra Mainyu (the Hostile Spirit) became changed to Ahriman².

One of the fundamental beliefs of Zoroastrianism is free choice, so the question is whether Ahriman was evil by his nature or by his choosing. It seems more probable that because of the emphasis placed on free choice by Zoroastrianism, Ahriman chose the path of “untruth” and doing “worst things”. It appears that Ahriman chose from the very beginning to incarnate and inaugurate the ways of evil thoughts, words and deeds and became the great adversary of Ahura Mazda or Hurmuzd. The struggle between the Holy Spirit and Good Creation and his evil Twin Spirit becomes irreconcilable, though Ahriman is destined to be defeated and paralysed by Hurmuzd at the end of time. The *Yasna* or Acts of Worship describes these two spirits in the following way:

“Neither our thoughts nor teachings nor intentions, neither our preferences nor words, neither our actions nor conceptions nor our souls are in accord” (*Yasna* 45:2)³.

Man is confronted with the same moral choice of the two ways of good or evil in the constant war between the Holy and Destructive Spirits. Man’s use of his free will and choice will be judged at the immediate individual judgement

¹ Kriwaczek 2002:206. The author makes a strong case that Zoroaster lived around 1200 BC, i.e. at about the same period as Moses.

² Some of this background material has been taken from Stoyanov 2000:21-28.

³ Dedications to a Deus Arimanius, including a statue unearthed in York, may suggest that this was a Romanised version of Ahriman, the force of all-evil in the world. See Kriwaczek 2002:123.

of the soul at death on the so-called “Bridge of the Separator” as well as at the Universal Judgement during the final renovation of Hurmuzd’s Good Creation. The First Judgement elevates the righteous souls to the Zoroastrian Heaven or “House of Song”. It relegates the wicked souls to the Zoroastrian Hell, known as the “House of Worst Thinking” or “House of Untruth”, where these souls are condemned to “a long age of misery, of darkness, ill food and the crying of woe” (*Yasna* 31:20). Those souls whose good and evil deeds appear in exact balance are sent to Hamistagan (the region of the mixed). As in the old underworld kingdom of the dead, these souls lead a grey existence, lacking both joy and sorrow Boyce (1979:27). Following the resurrection of the bodies during the Last Judgement, the saved will be sent for three days in Paradise while the damned will face another three days of punishment in Hell. The Zoroastrian idea of the renewal of the *macrocosmos* also serves to epitomise the pre-ordained victory of Ahura Mazda while Angra Mainyu is thrown out of the sky. He is rendered powerless and is cast into the darkness where his destructive powers and weapons will be sealed up forever.

Whether or not the first Achaemenid rulers, Cyrus and his unstable son, Cambyses (d. 522 BC) were adherents of Zoroastrianism is not known. However there is evidence that Darius (521–486 BC), who founded the new capital of the Achaemenid Empire at Persepolis, was a Mazda worshipper. During the Achaemenid period, the earlier Zoroastrian belief that the Twin Spirits were beneath Ahura Mazda began to change. During this period, a gradual process began whereby Ahura Mazda began to merge with that of Spenta Mainyu, the Holy Spirit and it was this kind of theological belief that eventually emerged as the orthodoxy of the Zoroastrian state-church during the Sassanian Empire in Persia (c. 224 to 642 AD) Within this stricter dualist system of beliefs there were contrasts between Hurmuzd as the Creator who is “all goodness and all light” and lives in the Endless Light above, while Ahriman, or the Lie, is the destroyer who is “all wickedness and full of death” and lives in the abyss of Endless Darkness below. The contrasts are not only between goodness and light and evil and dark but also between the hot, moist, bright and light substance of Hurmuzd and the cold, dry, heavy and dark essence of Ahriman. The Jewish ideas of opposition between the Prince of Light and Angel of Darkness may be considered to be a reflection, or even modified version, of this Iranian dualism.

For about four centuries the Sassanian Empire and the Roman and later the Eastern Roman Empire were to come into constant collision. Eventually, the Sassanians were to meet their match in the person of the Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius who took his armies into Sassanian territory eventually sacking the Sassanian Emperor’s palace at Dastagird. This significant defeat and the rising force of Arab armies to the south were ultimately to lead to the Arab conquest of

Iran and the deposition and assassination of the last Sassanian ruler, Yezdegird III in 652 AD. The great Sassanian King Khusrau I said that the “King of Kings”, as ruler of this material world was an intermediary between humanity on earth and Hurmuzd, Lord of the Spiritual Realm. However, with the foundation of the Arab Umayyad caliphate, Zoroastrianism was disestablished in Iran and some anti-Zoroastrian persecution and the turning of some of the fire temples into mosques accompanied the advance of Islam. Nonetheless for three centuries or so Zoroastrianism lingered on in the former heartland of the Achaemenid Empire, namely the province of Fars.

This idea of two co-eternal beings causes difficulties to followers of all monotheistic faiths such as Islam, which believes that one God is creator of all. How then can evil exist in a God-ordained world? Either God is not all-good or He is not all-powerful? Islam does not readily resolve the problem of evil and its sources but puts the question in a different context. God is Creator (*al-hāliq*) of all things (Q 13/16). “He turns astray whom he wishes and guides whom He wishes” (Q 6/39 amongst others.) Al-Aš‘arī and his followers, for example, thought that Divine omnipotence was absolute and that there was no limit to God’s freedom and power. Evil was defined as that which is forbidden by God and it was not necessarily the act itself that was wicked⁴. There is also an interesting dialogue between the Devil or Iblīs and Mu‘āwiya in the *masnavī* of Rūmī⁵. In this the Devil says that it is Man who is responsible for his acts, and not Iblīs. This text also describes Iblīs in different forms such as a thief, an archangel radiating light, a friend of God who changes in to a spy, a gardener and so on. Such transformations can be seen in some of the paintings in this *Shah Nameh*. Indeed, one of the main themes within this great poem is the need facing Man to make moral choices. This takes us back to the dualist argument of two Spirits competing for power over mankind.

The contrast between good and evil and the final victory of the former is, as Rypka (1968:159) says, a thread running through a considerable part of the epic *Shah Nameh*. King Jam, or Jamshid, is invited, but declines, to be the bearer of Ahura Mazda’s message to mankind. In the *Shah Nameh* he reigns for 700 years not only over men but also over birds, fairies and more importantly, demons. He becomes so proud with such a string of achievements that he is eventually overthrown and killed by the usurper Zahhak. Zahhak represents the snake Azhdahak of the *Avesta*. Zahhak had two snakes growing from his shoulders requiring a daily intake of human brains and is, significantly, changed into an Arab appearing as a tyrant and chosen instrument of the Devil who leads Zahhak from his

⁴ See Antes 1977.

⁵ Translated into French by Kappler 1987.

previous innocent vegetarianism to eating animal food and ultimately cannibalism. The symbolism here refers of course to the Devil's desire to rid the world of mankind. A miniature on folio 26 verso, attributed to Sultan Muḥammad, shows Zahhak with snakes growing from his shoulders attended by various courtiers and doctors. It is interesting that this painting includes two angels in the upper architectural register. These are shown holding a water sprinkler and casket and are the first example of angels shown in this great manuscript.

Within this *Shah Nameh* there are a large number of textual references to Ahriman and Iblīs as well as a few references to Hurmuzd. Both text and illustrations refer to the archangel Surush, representations of which will be examined as a counterweight to the prevailing larger number of textual and illustrated references to the forces of evil. There is something of a counterweight in Surush who makes an appearance on two occasions but this does not substantially alter the eight-fold balance of illustrations in favour of the forces of darkness. This is rather unexpected. If, as Milan Kundera (1996:85-86) proposes, we see the Devil as a partisan of Evil and an angel on the side of Good, the suggested demagogy of the angels would lead one to expect a far greater number of images of the forces of good and of Divine Creation.

Zoroaster's teachings are revealed early in this manuscript. An illustration on folio 20 verso shows the Court of Gayumars, where we read that Gayumars came to the throne to rejuvenate the world. Yet though life was idyllic under Gayumar's just rule, Ahriman was already plotting the downfall of man. In this his vicious son, the Black Div, assisted him. Although the archangel Surush had warned mankind of what was to come, Gayumars' son, Siyamak, was killed by the Black Div though his son, Hushang remained to carry on the fight. Ordered by his grandfather to lead a holy war against the forces of evil, Hushang was assisted by an army of angels and animals that put to flight the lesser demons while Hushang killed the Black Div, thus achieving some retribution for his slain father. This particular miniature painting on folio 21 verso, attributed to Sultan Muḥammad is a particularly busy one (**Fig. 1**). Hushang is shown astride the Black Div, pinning him to the ground and this portrayal of good triumphing over evil is echoed in the flying angel who is about to strike down a fallen white demon. Other demons are shown cowering before one of Hushang's allies while a fleeing demon on the left of the painting points his finger at a leopard that is about to attack him in the same way that two lions are already mauling a demon in the centre of the painting. Two angels are shown appearing just below the text block and to the right of the painting. This scene in many ways encapsulates much of what has already been said about the forces of good and evil as portrayed in dualist theories and is one of the few to show the struggle between the twin angelic and demonic spirits.

Three folios later, we can see a representation, also attributed to Sultan Muḥammad, of Hushang's son, Tahmuras continuing his father's good work by defeating Ahriman and the divs. (folio 23 verso, **Fig. 2**) However he spared their lives in return for their promise to teach a new and valuable art, namely the ways of writing thirty scripts, including Greek, Arabic, Persian, Soghdian, Pahlavi and Chinese.

Although the reign of Jamshid was to usher in a golden age and reign of 700 years, Jamshid was to be punished for his pride and his failure to continue to worship God. Jamshid's demand that he be worshipped in place of God led to God's withdrawal of divine support and as punishment, God unleashed Ahriman, who was later to incite Zahhak to kill Jamshid. A miniature painting on folio 24 verso shows two carpenters sawing a piece of wood in half, referring to the manner of Jamshid's death. At this stage, we can see how the Zoroastrian teachings still preserved an overall Supreme God with the lesser Twin Spirits subservient to him.

The different ways in which the Devil may appear has already been mentioned in the context of the dialogue between the Devil and Mu'āwiya. In folio 25 verso that shows the death of King Mirdas, the Devil appears in the guise of a well-wisher. With a black beard and wearing a blue coat, boots and turban the Devil is shown in the act of having led Zahhak to murder his father, the just and God-fearing Mirdas. King Mirdas used regularly to go at night to a secluded place in the palace grounds where he performed ritual ablutions in private. On this occasion the Devil led Zahhak to allow him to dig a pit in the King's path, line it with branches and grass. King Mirdas fell in to the pit, broke his back and died. This painting is important as it shows the actual moment of death as well as the Devil and Zahhak as onlookers of this evil act.

In a painting entitled "Rustam's fourth course: he cleaves a witch" (folio 120 verso) we see the Devil in a girl's clothing (**Fig. 3**). Rustam and his horse, Rāhš had come to a clearing where, beside a stream, lay a roasted sheep, wine and various sweetmeats. After drinking some wine, Rustam picked up the lute and began to sing, whereupon this attracted the attention of one of a party of witches whose meal had been interrupted by Rustam's arrival. This witch is none other than Ahriman who took on the disguise of a young girl scented with musk and dressed in colourful attire. Rustam invited her to join him for some wine but when he thanked God for His generosity, she turned black. Rustam caught her with his lasso and she turned in to an ugly wizened witch. This could also be seen as a representation of the ghastly hag who meets the evil souls as they cross the "Bridge of the Separator", seizes them as they try to cross the bridge that has shrunk to the size of a blade width and plunges down to Hell with them. The painting shows Rustam cleaving her through with his scimitar. The background

of the landscape shows two other witches watching these events unfold. Food has here been used as a form of temptation.

Three paintings in fairly rapid succession show Rustam grappling with the forces of evil in the form of various divs or devils. In folio 122 verso Rustam is shown killing Arzhang the Div General. Rustam slew this div by tearing off his head. This painting also contains some groups of demons hurling boulders at Rustam. On folio 124 recto, we can see the progress made by Rustam as he battles with, and kills, the White Div. Three other demons look on from the safety of some rocks as the fight becomes ever more deadly with limbs being torn from the White Div by the hero Rustam. Another painting in this sequence (folio 127 verso) shows the Div King, the Shah of Mazanderan being brought before the now freed Kay Kavus. Kay Kavus had been captured by the Div King and his ally the White Div when Kay Kavus had set out on an expedition to Mazanderan. When Rustam had captured the Div King, he had turned himself into a stone so heavy that only Rustam could carry it. When brought before Kay Kavus and threatened by Rustam that he would hack the stone to pieces, the Div King reappeared in human form, only to be cut in two by the royal executioner. This sequence of paintings shows to good effect what Dhalla refers to as “the infernal crew”, namely the divs or demons who have entered into a compact with Ahriman to mar the good creation of Ahura Mazda or Hurmuzd (Dhalla 1914:49). It is interesting to note that in Zoroastrian theology a corresponding angel and archangel representing exact counterparts of goodness, match these retinues of male and female demons who dwell at the court of Ahriman.

A further miniature that contains the two embodied elements of devils and angels is that which illustrates the account whereby one of the divs responds to Iblīs’ efforts to wean the Shah from God. The div persuades Kay Kavus that he deserves to rule heaven as well as earth and, misled by this idea, Kay Kavus and his advisors work on a solution whereby eagles carry his throne heavenwards or as the *Shah Nameh* puts it “rose to the reaches of the angels”. On his return to earth, Kay Kavus is shamed, does penance and prays to God to forgive him for his pride. This illustration is shown on folio 134 recto.

To decide on who should succeed Kay Kavus on his abdication, the Shah decided on a competition. Whoever should manage to capture Bahman Castle, a stronghold of the divs, would become his successor. The painting on folio 221 recto shows Kay Khusrow performing this seemingly impossible task. In his letter fixed to the castle walls, the prince warned that “if it be Ahriman – Satan himself – who dwells within this castle, let him know that by the power of the *farr* (i.e. pomp or splendour) that God has graced me with, I will bring him crashing down from his vainglorious heights.” The painting in question has a variety of illustrations showing the divs being killed by Kay Khusrow’s soldiers or being led out across

the drawbridge to captivity. Kay Khusrow stayed on in this province constructing a new city including the erection of a fire temple dedicated to Azar Gushasp, the spirit of fire and lightning, thus reaffirming Zoroastrian elements of worship.

As we saw earlier, the devil may appear in a variety of forms. On folio 294 recto, he appears in the form of an onager, which kept on attacking Kay Khusrow's horse. Rustam was sent for to kill this div who was in reality Akvan, a div that brought great harm and suffering to the people. This painting by Muẓaffar °Alī is a masterly portrayal of movement with the sense of pursuit by Rustam and the helpless galloping in different directions of the horses that takes the observer's eye to both sides of the page.

There are some very dramatic illustrations to the various deeds undertaken by Isfandiyar including the killing of monster wolves, the evil simurgh and a dragon (folio 434 verso). These are outside the scope of this paper but it is worth drawing attention to the miniature on folio 435 verso where Isfandiyar is shown killing the sorceress, known by the name of Ghoul (**Fig. 4**). Isfandiyar ensnared her by slipping round her waist a precious chain that had been brought down from paradise by Zoroaster, who had himself wound this chain round Isfandiyar's arm. This chain protected its wearer from any backsliding in the faith. The painting shows Isfandiyar having killed the witch, a scene that reinforces the sense of opposing twin spirits of good and evil

So far the emphasis has been entirely on evil spirits and the forces of darkness. Perhaps that says something about the text in question or the degree to which man must guard against these negative forces. The *Shah Nameh* does not give anything like the same prominence to angels and the powers of good. Ahura Mazda had a number of ministering angels, which take a prominent place in the old Iranian faith. These were known as Amesha Spentas or "Immortal Holy Ones" and within the Zoroastrian hymns we come across references to Ahura Mazda and his associates meaning these angels. Each of them is known by an individual name and each of them has a twofold character since each embodies some specific virtue such as devotion or righteousness while on the physical side each presides over some material object as its guardian spirit. Next in rank to these associates are the Yazatas. This literally means "the adorable ones". If Amesha Spentas are the archangels in Zoroastrian theology, then Yazatas are the angels (Dhalla 1914: 96).

The Yazatas of the Avestan period became known as Izads during the Pahlavi period. These Izads or angels are immortal and Surush is one of the most prominent, becoming one of the judges of the dead. There is only one significant representation in this *Shah Nameh* of Surush, his very importance in the panoply of angels more than offsets this. On folio 708 verso there is an illustration of the angel Surush rescuing Khusrow Parviz from a *cul de sac* (**Fig. 5**). Pursued by

Bahram-i Chubineh and three followers, Khusrow had rushed into what he had thought was a cave but in fact was a grotto and a solid wall of rock. Trapped and with his enemies in hot pursuit, Khusrow called out to the Lord. A roar issued from the mountainside and Surush was at his side. In this painting, the winged Surush, mounted on a dapple-gray horse, assists Khusrow to mount and later sets him down out of harm's way. Khusrow gives thanks to the Lord and asks the identity of his deliverer. "I am Surush", replied the angel "but now that you are safe and sound, what further need to cry?" We know from Zoroastrian beliefs that Surush, in the final struggle between angels and devils, will smite his adversary and join with Hurmuzd in celebrating the final destruction of evil. In a much earlier painting, on folio 36 verso (**Fig. 6**), there is another representation of Surush interceding to save Zahhak who has been struck down by Faridun. In this painting by Sultan Muhammad, Surush is shown swooping down, advising that Faridun should spare Zahhak and saying that his time had not yet come. The inscription over the doorway to the right reads: "O opener of the gates!" This is a reminder of the Qur'anic description of God as "the opener of the gates" to paradise or to hell.

The eternal battle between goodness and evil, represented by angels and devils, is one of the most enduring elements of Zoroastrian beliefs. It is these eternal beliefs that have preoccupied mankind over the centuries and it is these beliefs, in particular the opposition of the twin spirits of good and evil or devils and angels, that can be seen so vividly illustrated in this outstanding example of Persian literature and book production.

Perhaps it would be fitting to leave the last word to the Prophet Zoroaster himself. In one of the *gathas* there is a hymn to the Prophet that encapsulates much of what I have described from these Shah Nameh illustrations:

Hear with your ears the Best; look upon it with clear thought. When deciding between two beliefs, each for himself before the great consummation, think that it be accomplished to our pleasure.

The two primal spirits, who reveal themselves in vision as twins, are the Better and the Bad, in thought and in word and in action. And between these two, choose aright, the foolish not so.

In the beginning, when those two Spirits came together, they created Life and Not-Life, and at the end, the followers of the Lie shall inherit Worst Existence, but Best Existence shall be for those who follow the Right.

Of the two Spirits, he that followed the Lie chose the Worst. The holier Spirit, he that clothes himself with the massy heavens as with a garment, chose the Right. So should likewise they do that would please Lord Mazda by dutiful action.

The Daevas also chose wrongly between the two. Infatuation came upon them as they took counsel together, so that they chose Worst Thought. Then together they rushed to Violence, that they might enfeeble the world of men.

If, O mortals, you shall hearken diligently unto those commandments which Mazda has commanded you, of happiness and pain, long punishment for the followers of the Lie, and blessings for the followers of the Right, then hereafter all shall be well⁶.

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⁶ Quoted in Kriwaczek 2002:227.

⁷ No edition is mentioned because standard references are given.



Fig. 2. Folio 23v: *Tahmuras defeats the divs*
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970. /1970.301.3/)



Fig. 3. Folio 120v: *Rostam's Fourth Course: He cleaves a witch*
(The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970. /1970.301.17/)



Fig. 4. Folio 435v: *Isfandiyar's Fourth Course: He slays the sorceress Ghoul*
 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York,
 Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970. /1970.301.52/)



Fig. 5. Folio 708v: *The angel Surush rescues Khosrow-Parviz from a cul-de-sac*
 (The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York
 Gift of Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., 1970. /1970.301.73/)

PARADISE AND HELL IN ISLAM
THE LITERARY ASPECT AS REPRESENTED IN
RISĀLAT AL-ĠUFRĀN

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Introduction

The Holy Qur'ān, the foremost authority for Muslims, stipulates three cardinal elements of belief: belief in Allah as the sole and only God, of His Messenger Muḥammad and of the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-ḥisāb*). The latter embodies three components: belief in the resurrection of the dead (*al-ba'ṭ* or *al-ma'ād*), belief in accountability (*al-ḥisāb*) that entails reward (*ṭawāb*) or punishment (*ʿiqāb*) and belief in the two realms of Paradise, as designated for the blessed, and of Hell, as assigned for the damned (Abū Farḥa 1998:132).

In the Holy Qur'ān, both Paradise and Hell are repeatedly mentioned under a variety of names and adjectives. They recur time and again in many verses. Paradise, for example, has many such names as: *ḡanna*, *firdaws*, *na'im*, *dār al-muqāma*, etc., which are repeated approximately in more than 160 verses. Hell, on the other hand, is referred to as: *nār*, *ḡaḥīm*, *ḡahannam*, *saqar*, *sa'ir*, *lazā*, *ḥuṭama*, etc., and recur in more than 280 verses, i.e., a hundred times more than Paradise. The result of this rough statistical calculation, which shows the difference between the two numbers, is a clear indication that man tends to fall in self-indulgence, avoiding to resort to his reason and will to bring his earthly passions under control. Because of such deepening possibilities of evil in man's nature (*inna n-naḥṣa la-ammāratun bi-s-sū'* Q 12/53), man needed to be repeatedly reminded of the sufferings and torment that await him in the afterlife, if he insists on choosing the evil.

The inconceivable metaphysical realms of Paradise and Hell in the Holy Qur'ān are conveyed to man through earthly physical descriptions devised for his understanding. Hence, they are given a sort of verbal structural description out of which one can construct a clear conceivable picture in his mind.

Paradise

Paradise seems to have different spheres and ranks (*darağāt*) one above the other. The highest – *ʿazamu darağatan* (Q 20/75) – is assigned for the believers who worked righteous-good deeds (*al-muttaqūn*). Paradise is illustrated literally, for example, as a spacious area whose width measures that of the Heavens and the Earth: *wa-ğannatin ʿarḍuhā as-samawātu wa-l-arḍu* (Q 3/133; similar expression in 57/21). This area is a huge complex of gardens, the wall of which has gates (*mufattaḥatun lahum al-abwāb* Q 38/49-50) with gatekeepers (*ḥazanatuhā* Q 39/73), confines within it large dense trees with huge branches among which are *sidr* (lotus) and *ṭalḥ* (Q 56/28, 29). The first tree (*sidr*) looks like a jujube tree with nice fruit and fragrant leaves used as hair shampoo and the other (*ṭalḥ*) is large and fragrant (Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*). There are as well groves of palm trees and vineyards (Q 2/266; 16/11,67; 23/19 etc.) as well as fruit trees like pomegranate (Q 55/68) and other delicious fruits for which they crave (Q 52/22; 77/42), in addition to olive trees (Q 16/11; 6/99). Aromatic plants or flowers are available (*rawḥ wa-rayḥān*) Q 56/89). All of this is irrigated with a network of underground flowing rivers: *tağrī min taḥtihā al-anhār* (many verses in many chapters are cited). Game is also provided (Q 52/22). Moreover, there are rivers of sweet drinking water, of fresh milk, tasty wine, and pure honey (Q 47/15), as well as gushing water springs (Q 36/34; 44/52) like Salsabīl (Q 76/18), and Tasnīm (Q 83/27). The drinks are mixed with camphor (*kāfir*) and ginger (*zanğabīl*) (Q 76/5, 17).

In the midst of these peaceful idyllic surroundings, beautiful houses (*masākin tayyiba* Q 9/72; 61/12; 66/11), lofty palaces (*ğuraf* Q 29/8; 39/20; 34/37), tents (*hiyām* Q 55/72) and canopies or domed structures containing sofas or divans (*arāʾik* Q 36/56) are erected for the blessed. Such abodes are furnished with beautiful rugs spread on the floors (*zarābī mabṭūta* Q 88/16) topped with small cushions set in rows (*namāriq masfūfa* Q 88/15). Some of the rugs are of green colour (*raḫraf*) with beautiful bolsters (*ʿabqarī*) (Q 55/76). The mattresses (*furūš*) on which the blessed lean are lined with thick brocade (*istabraq*) (Q 55/54), some of which are raised (*marfūʿa*) Q 56/34), or set on thrones encrusted with precious stones (*surūr mawḍūna* Q 56/15). The blessed are provided as well with gold and silver utensils such as plates (*ṣiḥāf*) and cups (*akwāb*) (Q 43/71), as well as carafes (*abārīq*) and glasses (*kaʿs*) (Q 56/18).

They are dressed in the finest attire of silk (*ḥarīr* Q 22/23; 35/33) and in thin green as well as thick brocade (*sundus wa-istabraq*) Q 18/31; 44/53; 76/21), wearing bracelets, some made of silver (Q 76/24) and others of gold (Q 22/23; 18/31; 35/33) and bejewelled (bedecked) with pearl strings (*luʾluʾ* Q 22/23; 35/33).

It is worth selecting from the Holy Qur'ān two scenes that give a clear picture of such peaceful, eternal atmosphere of inexhaustible joy and timelessness. In the first, the blessed, especially the righteous, sit in gardens of dense trees and water springs leaning, with their pure and chaste mates, on mattresses lined with thick brocade (*hum wa-azwāḡuhum fi zilālin °alā l-arā'ik muttaki'ūn*) Q 36/56), surrounded by trees whose fruits are within reach (*qutufuhā dāniya* Q 55/46-60). Nearby are other dense gardens and two water springs, with palm trees and pomegranates. In the midst are tents furnished with green carpets (*raḡraf*) on which sit fair young girls with beautiful eyes (*ḡūrun*) leaning on nice bolsters (*°abqarī*) (Q 55/62-76).

The other scene portrays the inhabitants of Paradise facing each other (*mutaqābilīn*) on thrones encrusted with precious stones while lads (*ḡilmān*) serve them drinks with cups, carafes and glasses filled from flowing fountains of clear drinks (*ma°īn*) that neither cause headache nor intoxication (*la yuṣadda°ūn °anhā wa-lā yunzifūn*). They are surrounded by trees of delicious fruits they choose (*yataḡayyarūn*) and accompanied by beautiful-eyed young girls (*ḡūr °ayn*) as a reward for their good deeds. No frivolity or nonsense and no obscene words (*lā ... laḡwan wa-lā ta'īman*) are uttered in their conversation, where one keeps hearing the words of peace (*salāman salāman*) repeatedly. (Q 56/10-26; 37/40-49).

Hell

It is an abyss (*ḡābiya*) with unlimited size as it keeps on asking for more fuel (*taqūl ḡal min mazīd*) (Q 50/30) consisting of people and stones (*waqūduḡā an-nās wa-l-ḡiḡāra*) (Q 66/6). It has a wall with seven closed gates (*sab°at abwāb*) (Q 15/44) with 19 robust well-built gatekeepers (*ḡazana*) (Q 39/71; 40/49; 67/8; 66/6; 74/26-30). Within the walls there is an extremely deep pit (*ḡahannam*) (mentioned around 77 times) with an unsubsiding, ever-burning (*sa°īr*) (c. 16 verses) and constantly blazing fire that breaks and destroys anything it encounters (*ḡuṡama*) (Q 104/4-5). Such fire, with a blaze (*lahab*) and spits of sparks (*ṡarar*) as high as castles and as big as black camels (*ḡimālat ṡufr*) (Q 77/33), melts everything whether bodies or souls (*saḡar*) (Q 54/48; 74/26). Its drinking water and rain is burning hot (*ḡamīm*) (Q 22/19; 44/48). While Paradise has ascending levels and degrees (*daraḡāt*), Hell, on the other hand, has different descending levels (*darakāt*), the lowest of which is kept for the hypocrites (*inna l-munāfiqīna fī d-darak al-asfal min an-nār*) (Q 4/145). This verse suggests that Hell's physical structure corresponds to a moral hierarchy. °Abdarraḡmān b. Aslam said: "The steps of Paradise ascend upwards and those of Hell descend downwards" (al-Aṡḡar 1986:25).

It is worth introducing an overall scene of the conditions of the damned in Hell. The sinners enter in a state of blindness, dumbness and deafness (*umyan wa-bukman wa-ṣumman*) (Q 17/97). Some of them are dragged on their faces (Q 54/48) with reins around necks (*aḡlāl*), chains (*salāsīl*) in hands (Q 40/71; 76/4), bound in fetters (*asfād*) (Q 14/49) and beaten with iron maces (*maqāmi^c min ḥadād*) (Q 22/21). Their skin is roasted or cooked (*tanduḡ*) (Q 4/56). Their faces stirred (*tuqallab*) in fire (Q 33/66) and swept with intense flames until they become dull-grey (*kāliḥūn*) (Q 23/104). Boiling water (*al-ḥamīm*) pours over their heads melting their skins, and the contents of their stomachs (Q 22/19-20). They are clothed with fire (*tiyābun min nār*) (Q 22/19) or with bitumen (*qatran*) (Q 14/50). Their mattresses (*mihād*) and blankets (*ḡawāṣin*) are of live coal (Q 7/41). Their food is live coal or fire (Q 2/174; 4/10), thorny bushes (*ḡarṯ*) which neither nourishes nor satisfies hunger (Q 88/6-7), and the awful fruit of the *zaqqūm* tree (Q 37/62-67) which boils inside stomachs like molten brass (*muhl*) (Q 44/43-46; 56/52-53). They quench their burning thirst with hot drinks (*ṣarāb min ḥamīm*) (Q 6/70; 56/54; 38/57). With such overwhelming torture, the damned keep asking the Hell gatekeepers to alleviate their torture (*yuhaffif^c annā yawman min al-^cadāb*) (Q 40/49), and calling the people of Paradise to supply them with proper foods and drinks: *aḡḡū ^calaynā min al-mā* (Q 7/50).

Islamic religion permeates almost all corners of a Muslim's life. It is not a mere religion but also a way of life. The Holy Qur'ān, which deals with the spiritual side in man's life and his religious observances, also regulates man's life with laws, rules and a set of values which, if observed, will earn him an eternal life in Paradise. Those who choose otherwise will be destined to punishment in Hell waiting patiently for Allah's forgiveness.

The Qur'ānic portrayal of Paradise and Hell, which is used as an instrument of encouragement to moral virtues and a device of deterrence from earthly vices, has influenced all Muslims in varying degrees. It inspired many men of letters, poets, philosophers, thinkers, mystics and others.

The above-mentioned general introductory picture of both Paradise and Hell, according to what is portrayed in the Qur'ān, is meant to show how far it influenced the repertoire of Arabic literature in terms of concepts, language, images and expressions. One can say here that men of letters, poets and other writers had found within their reach a treasure of raw material ready for them to use.

It seems that such descriptions whetted the imagination of Abū l-^cAlā' al-Ma^carrī (366-449 A.H./973-1057 A.D.), one of the most renowned among Muslim intellectuals whose work *Risālat al-ḡufrān* (*Epistle of forgiveness*) is the best example of such Qur'ānic influence. I singled it out in this paper to represent the literary aspect of Paradise and Hell in Islam.

The *Risālat al-ġufrān*, a highly enjoyable literary masterpiece of the 11th century, is a unique imaginative work of literature that deals with an imaginary journey after death to the realms of Paradise and Hell, in an excitingly vivid and witty narration. al-Ma^carrī is considered a pioneer in Arabic literature in venturing to fashion such an imaginary topic of the afterlife in the most attractive narrative style (al-Ḥabbābī 1988:29). Some scholars see that the *Epistle* is inspired by the nocturnal journey of Prophet Muḥammad to the Heavens (*al-mi^crāġ*), where he, according to Ḥadīṭ (Ibn Kaṭīr, *Tafsīr* IV, 239-278) met with some of his peers, the late Prophets, whereas al-Ma^carrī meets through Ibn al-Qāriḥ, some of the poets and philologists like him (pre-Islamic and Islamic)¹. This epistle appears to be written or dictated² as an introduction to al-Ma^carrī's reply to a letter which he had received from ^cAlī b. Maṣṣūr, known as Ibn al-Qāriḥ, a man of letters from Aleppo (*Risāla* 191). This introductory epistle, al-Ma^carrī's reply to Ibn al-Qāriḥ's letter, is the apparent reason behind this work of literature. Yet, the real objective is al-Ma^carrī's urge for fame which drives him to present his literary skill, his beliefs and contemplations in a creative work of literature, using the dialogues he formulated as a vehicle for raising linguistic and moral issues. Through such device he displayed his wide knowledge and philological excellence. He, as well, implicitly presents his ideas and beliefs in addition to his critical views about the social corruption, the ideological conflicts, and the political situation in his time. To realize this, al-Ma^carrī picked up, from the Qur'ānic images and vocabulary what suited his subject, and arranged his ideas, in his own style according to his taste and objectives, within a refined literary framework out of which he created a fantastic narration of this imaginary journey. The majority of the characters he created to serve the linguistic purpose are pre-Islamic and Islamic poets and philologists (al-Ma^carrī, *Risāla* 72). The dialogues he composed to reflect his own philological ideas and religious beliefs revolve around linguistic and moral issues. The setup he constructed for the stage consist of Paradise and Hell scenes borrowed from Qur'ānic and poetic images and vocabulary.

Owing to the conflicts at that period between the intellectuals and the theologians, al-Ma^carrī did not want to get himself directly involved in this risky imaginary journey to the afterlife. To avoid clash and confrontation with fanati-

¹ It is worth mentioning here that the 13/14th century epic, Dante's *Divina commedia*, is also inspired by the *isrā' wa-l-mi^crāġ* of Prophet Muḥammad. A comparison between the two works has been carried out in many studies (cf. Asin Palacios 1980:66-87). In addition to the general framework and the spirit of both works, which try to emphasize Allah's mercy and forgiveness, both deal with the moral quality of man's actions on earth which puts him either in Paradise or Hell.

² Since al-Ma^carrī lost his sight in his childhood.

cal theologians, he chose Ibn al-Qāriḥ – the man to whose letter al-Maʿarrī is writing a reply – to represent him in this trip. Nevertheless, one feels through the course of the journey, that al-Maʿarrī is hiding behind Ibn al-Qāriḥ, who shadows him, prompting his ideas in the topics he tailored for the dialogues between Ibn al-Qāriḥ on one side, and the poets, philologists and other characters in Paradise and Hell on the other. To al-Maʿarrī, Ibn al-Qāriḥ fits this mission quite well, being morally eligible to enter Paradise (*Risāla* 60) and being professionally qualified, as a man of letters (*Risāla* 5), to run the intellectual linguistically oriented conversations.

al-Maʿarrī imagines Ibn al-Qāriḥ in Paradise, sitting under huge shady trees, the roots of which are irrigated with water canals replenished by al-Kawṭar river³. Water, milk and wine are all scooped from the rivers with gold cups and emerald carafes (*Risāla* 61). The utensils on the banks of these rivers are fashioned in the shape of cranes, peacocks and geese (*Risāla* 64). Such images are drawn from poetry where one reads in a verse:

*ka'anna abārīq al-mudāmati baynahum
iwazzun bi-a'lā l-taffi ʿūḡu al-ḥanāḡiri*

carafes of wine that circulate among them
are like geese with bent necks (*Risāla* 63).

In the wine rivers swim fishes made of gold, silver and precious stones (*Risāla* 72).

Allah has selected for Ibn al-Qāriḥ an entourage of men of letters (mostly poets) meeting in a harmonious amicable atmosphere, free of malice and hatred, enjoying the pleasant idyllic surroundings, and the delicious foods and tasty drinks (*Risāla* 72-73). The components of the scene are almost copied literally from the Qurʾānic descriptive images of Paradise yet with few poetic additions.

In a farther step, Ibn al-Qāriḥ goes for a ride on a dromedary, created of rubies and pearls, crossing dunes of amber and densely forested lands (*Risāla* 74), where he first meets a number of pre-Islamic poets like al-Aʿšā, whose sight was restored (*Risāla* 75-77), Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā who looks young, and ʿAbīd b. al-Abraṣ who was tortured in Hell for a while and then released. The first, known for his indulgence in drinking wine, was saved because of his belief in the Prophet Muḥammad and his message which is demonstrated in one of his poems (*Risāla* 75-77). Each of the last two poets is given a palace in Paradise (*Risāla* 77-79). The first was granted forgiveness as a reward for a verse in which he says:

³ A river of Paradise mentioned in Q 108/1.

*falā taktumunna llāha mā fī nufūsikum
li-yahfā wa-mahmā yuktami llāhu ya'lamu*

never try to hide your intentions from Allah
who knows whatever is hidden within your minds (*Risāla* 77-79).

The third attained forgiveness for his verse:

*man yas'al an-nās yahrimūhu
wa-sā'il Allāh la yahīb*

he whoever asks help from people will not get it,
but he who asks it from Allah will not be failed (*Risāla* 79).

Labīd b. Rabī'ah and an-Nābiġa aḏ-Ḍubyānī as well as the Christian °Adī b. Zayd and others were granted forgiveness because of their good deeds and due to their belief in God rather than idols. al-Ma°arrī declares, by choosing to give the above mentioned pre-Islamic poets forgiveness, his belief in Allah's divine mercy and forgiveness (*Allāh ġafūrun raḥīm*), which gave such poets a chance to attain a place in Paradise for their good intentions, contrary to the view of the fanatical theologians of his time who place them in Hell (al-Ḥabbābī 1988:24).

The encounter begins with interrogations posed by Ibn al-Qāriḥ, about their credentials that made them worthy of Allah's forgiveness. It is followed by recitals of poetry, intimate conversations, and linguistic arguments, not to mention the dinking party complemented by music and singing performed by a school of geese transformed into beautiful young girls (*Risāla* 93). The gathering thrilled the group and prompted Ibn al-Qāriḥ to thank Allah, through reciting a verse from the Qur'ān (35/34-35), for settling them in Paradise where there is no sorrow, toil, nor sense of weariness (*Risāla* 100). It is worth mentioning here that Ibn al-Qāriḥ (*i.e.* al-Ma°arrī) quotes the Qur'ān in many instances during the conversations.

Ibn al-Qāriḥ continues his ride, after the dispersal of the gathering, and encounters a group of five poets from the Qays tribe, who were partially blind (one-eyed), and now have the most beautiful eyes among the dwellers of Paradise (*Risāla* 107). Abū l-°Alā' must have imagined himself here with his sight restored, putting an end to the utter darkness that surrounded him since his early childhood. Each of the poets narrated his experience before entering Paradise. One of them, °Amr b. Aḥmar, described the chaotic scene of Resurrection, through quoting the Qur'ān (22/2), after which he indulged in a lengthy linguistic conversation with Ibn al-Qāriḥ (*Risāla* 108-112). Ibn al-Qāriḥ summoned another to whom he recounted his story, beginning with his presence at the Day of Judgment until his entrance to Paradise which took six months, in the most

vivid and expressive language (*Risāla* 114-122). He describes his anxiety while standing by the gate of Paradise trying to bribe the gatekeeper Raḍwān by praising him with poems to let him enter. Finally, Allah's forgiveness was granted to him after he had managed to reach Prophet Muḥammad who saw the stamp of repentance on the register of his deeds.

Before his visit to Hell, Ibn al-Qāriḥ thought of organizing a banquet for the pre-Islamic and Islamic poets, linguistics and philologists, as well as those who appreciate literature. All kinds of meat and game were served in silver bowls and plates on gold tables (*Risāla* 126-128). The banquet was followed by a drinking party with singing and dancing (*Risāla* 130-132). After having retreated, Ibn al-Qāriḥ sat with two beautiful young girls of Paradise, one of whom had perfumed breath and the other a skin as white as camphor. Both turned out to be two worldly women. One was from Aleppo, whose husband divorced her because of her stinking breath, and the other was a black girl from Baghdad, who used to serve at Dār al-ʿIlm (*Risāla* 134-136). Then an angel passed and led Ibn al-Qāriḥ to gardens where he was asked to open any fruit he chooses, from which a beautiful girl sprang out to be at his disposal. Ibn al-Qāriḥ was supposed to fashion the girl into the form he prefers (*Risāla* 137).

On his way to have a glance at the people in Hell, Ibn al-Qāriḥ passes by the Jinns' Paradise (*ḡannat al-ʿafārīt*), talks to them and to a few animals as well (*Risāla* 138-148).

From the furthest end of Paradise, Ibn al-Qāriḥ watches the poet al-Ḥuṭay'a. From that point overlooking Hell, he saw the poetess al-Ḥansā' watching her brother Ṣaḥr in Hell standing as a mountain with flames emerging from his head, just as she had described him in one of her poems as "a standard with fire at its top" (*ka'annahu ʿalamun fī ra'sihi nār*) (*Risāla* 148-149).

Ibn al-Qāriḥ watched Satan (Iblīs) with the varying types of torture inflicted on him. He also saw the sufferings of some pre-Islamic poets, like the drunkard Baššār b. Burd who praised Iblīs (*Risāla* 150), Imra' al-Qays (*Risāla* 152-158), ʿAntara b. Šaddād whom he pitied (*Risāla* 159), ʿAmr b. Kulṭūm (*Risāla* 162), Ṭarafa b. al-ʿAbd with whom he sympathizes (*Risāla* 165), Aws b. Ḥaḡar who gave up Allah's forgiveness (*Risāla* 167), and al-Aḥṭal who erred twice, once in not embracing Islam, and then in being a boon-companion of the Umayyad Caliph Yazīd known for his indulgence in lust (*Risāla* 172). In spite of their horrible situation of torture, Ibn al-Qāriḥ (shadowing al-Maʿarrī) did not spare a chance of discussing their poetry and some of the problematic linguistic issues.

Leaving Hell behind and returning to his place in Paradise, Ibn al-Qāriḥ encountered Adam on the way and had a lengthy conversation with him. Adam told Ibn al-Qāriḥ that he was speaking Arabic in Paradise, and when he de-

scended to the Earth he spoke Syriac, and now – in Paradise – he switched back to Arabic (*Risāla* 180-182).

Finally, Ibn al-Qāriḥ returned to Paradise from his trip to Hell and found the beautiful young girl, who had sprung out to him from the fruit he had broken, waiting for him. She followed him crossing dunes of amber and musk (*Risāla* 187).

In this peaceful state, he remembered the wine intoxication that creeps gradually in body and mind. He chose a drink that gives the nice relaxing feeling without losing the wits. When elated, he leaned on a mattress of green thin brocade, ordered the beautiful young girls surrounding him to put the mattress on top of a throne made of emerald or gold. The girls grasped the gold rings at the corners of the throne carrying Ibn al-Qāriḥ to his house in the abode of eternity. Wherever he passes branches of fruit trees dangle down for him to pick whatever he desires. All the way, he was greeted by the people of Paradise all uttering praise to Allah for his Grace (*Risāla* 189-191).

As seen from the above, al-Ma^carrī derived the settings, the images and the language from both the Qur’ān and Arabic literature. Even the basic idea of the journey in the *Risāla* is inspired from the journey of the Prophet Muḥammad to the Heavens, *al-isrā’ wa-l-mi^rrāğ*.

In literature, men of letters, prose writers and poets tried to create a Paradise in words and images. In art, artists and craftsmen portrayed it in colours and design. Architects on the other hand, fashioned Paradise in concrete terms on Earth. Breathtaking buildings with gardens emulating Paradise were constructed for caliphs and emperors, and are still built for kings and high-ranking officials. Among the extant Islamic paradisiacal buildings and gardens are, among others, the Alhambra in Spain, and the Taj Mahal in India. We come across detailed description of Islamic architectural wonders in Islamic books of history and literature. Some ^cAbbāsīd palaces in Baghdad adopted names given to Paradise in the Qur’ān, such as Qaṣr al-Firdaws (“the Paradise Palace”) (Ibn az-Zubayr, *Hadāyā* 152) and Qaṣr al-Ḥuld (“the Abode of Eternity Palace”) (*Ibid.* 121).

Yet, special attention and emphasis was given to the emulation of the gardens of Paradise. For instance, *ğannat al-^carīf*, in Granada, with its trees, water streams is a living example. Abbasid palatial gardens of the 11th century are cited by Ibn az-Zubayr. For example, the Ğawsaq Palace of Caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 295-320/908-932) was built “... between two gardens (*bustānayn*), in the center of which was a pool thirty cubits long, built of Qalṭī lead surpassing polished silver. Opposite to this garden lay a grove (*bustān*) with 400 palm trees, all of the same height, each coated from base up to the beginning of its top with carpentered teak wood. The majority of these palm trees bore wonderful dates. The grove was surrounded by large citron trees, all bearing fruits” (Ibn az-Zubayr, *Hadāyā* 152).

The same Caliph was invited in the year 312/924 to the farm (*bustān*) of his uncle who “sealed off its streams, and coated some of them with lead and tossed into them fifty thousand *raṭls* of ice; then he made water and drinks flow into them. Food was placed on the banks of the streams in small decorated, round baskets lined with leather. He suspended on all of the farm’s trees roasted lambs, chickens, fowl, pullets, partridges and other birds” (Ibn az-Zubayr, *Hadāyā* 152). Muslim architects and landscapers tried their best to make of a garden a small Paradise. The Iranian and Indian gardens are living examples of such emulation, and the full embodiment is realized in the Taj Mahal gardens.

Moreover, the luxurious furnishings and utensils that adorned the Islamic palaces were given special attention. Weavers, especially in court workshops, used their talents and skill in weaving the most beautiful carpets, silk and brocade curtains, wall hangings, cushions and bedcovers. They spent months and years in fashioning all types of jewellery in gold, silver and precious stones. Goldsmiths made various objects of gold and silver as well as precious stones and rock crystal such as tables, trays, bowls, plates, cups, etc. Such luxurious furnishings and utensils remind us of those used by the dwellers of Paradise mentioned in the Holy Qur’ān.

To conclude this paper, I would like to draw attention to the fact that the description of Paradise and Hell in the Holy Qur’ān is not necessarily as literal as it seems to be, and it could be very far from man’s interpretations since his intellect cannot go beyond the physical sphere. The metaphysical is beyond his reach as reason’s sphere of operation is limited.

It is worth noting here that due to the active movement of translation into Arabic, during the late 8th and 9th centuries, Muslims were exposed to the Greek rational approach and many theologians, philosophers and especially scholastics were influenced by it. This influence became more evident during the 10th and 11th centuries, i.e. the time of al-Maʿarrī, where debates among conflicting trends of thought, dealing with theology and philosophy, were prevailing. al-Maʿarrī, like many others, was confronted with his faith (Islam) and reason (of Greek philosophy). The conflict between both, which occupied his soul and mind, resulted in a sort of scepticism which was manifest in his poetry. Although he sounds, in his *Epistle of Forgiveness* which is mostly inspired by the Holy Qur’ān, like a good Muslim believer, his scepticism and doubts of the whole concept of Paradise and Hell shine through the lines. For instance, he says: Nobody came to me since his death to tell whether he dwelt in Paradise or in Hell⁴.

This conflict between faith and reason had even resulted in a tone of sarcasm about such topic. One scholastic of the 10/11th century, Abū Ishāq an-Naṣībī, ex-

⁴ *Mā ḡā’anī aḥadun yuḥabbir annahu fī ḡannatin mud māta aw fī n-nār.*

pressed his doubts in a sarcastic way by wondering how the dwellers of Paradise do not get bored with such a static, dull and carefree way of life (at-Tawḥīdī, *Hulāṣa* 171). al-Ḥayyām in his *Rubāʿiyyāt* constantly questions the possibility of an afterlife as he said:

“Who said that there will be a hell?
Who’s been to hell, who’s been to heaven?” (*Rubāʿiyyāt* 48).

He said as well:

“Nobody, heart, has seen heaven or hell;
Tell me, dear, who has returned from there” (*Rubāʿiyyāt* 69).

This topic forms a big question mark in man’s life, and will continue to do so until he dies whereby he will experience life-after-death personally, but will not be able to come back to tell us about his experience.

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ON TWO ŠUFĪ TERMS: *QABḌ* AND *BAST* AL-BIṢṬĀMĪ'S ASCENSION AND HIS REFUTATION OF THE DELIGHTS OF PARADISE

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In the mid-ninth century Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, whose everlasting influence had always been enormous on the later development of the Šufī orders, once reached the dangerous point in his ecstasy to exclaim: *subḥānī, subḥānī, mā a'zama ša'nī*, that is “Glory be to me, glory be to me, how great is my state”, instead of glorifying God by saying *subḥān Allāh*¹. He was sincere and truthful, when he uttered these strange words, according to the alleged sayings of his contemporaries².

Since earlier he had made many similar exclamations, most of his followers left him after this event and common people were said to have regarded him as a madman³. A man whose dismal lot it was to be his companion during these years told that this was the period of al-Biṣṭāmī's *qabḌ*, ‘constriction’ or depression as one would call it nowadays, and that things would have been very different had he had the good fortune to be with him during his *bast*, his ‘extension’ or ‘elation’ in modern term⁴. R. C. Zaehner in his book on *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism* comments on this report as follows: “The alteration of extreme elation and intense depression is known to psychology as a manic-depressive psychosis, and the fact that Abū Yazīd (i.e., al-Biṣṭāmī) was indeed considered by his contemporaries to be mad would indicate that he may very well have suffered from

¹ See al-Biṣṭāmī, *Maǧmū'a* 49. Or in another version of the story: *mā a'zama subḥānī*, Badawī 1978:186. He also declared answering a question that he was the well-kept table (*al-lawḥ al-mahfūz*), *ibid.*, 123, al-Biṣṭāmī, *Maǧmū'a* 47. Zaehner regards it the characteristics of mania, the megalomania and takes it for a sign of the deceptive expansion against which al-Quṣayrī warned, i.e., *bast*, not *qabḌ*. See Zaehner 1994:117.

² See Badawī 1978:38 on the famous *subḥānī* exclamation and its place in Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī's spiritual way. See as-Sahlaǧī, *Nūr* 101 and 186. See also Badawī 1978: 28 ff., 35 no. 7.

³ as-Sahlaǧī (*Nūr*) quotes Ḍū n-Nūn al-Miṣrī saying: “My brother Abū Yazīd lost himself in the love of God and now he has started to seek it together with the seekers” (Badawī 1978: 95).

⁴ See as-Sahlaǧī, *Nūr* 133. Cf. Zaehner's remarks (1994:117-118).

this affliction”⁵. Zaehner saw *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ* as the opposite poles of this maniac depressive psychosis⁶.

A well-known story from as-Sahlaḡī’s book⁷ also shows what was meant by being in the state of *qabḍ* for a long time. “Once a man came and knocked on Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī’s door. What are you looking for – asked him Abū Yazīd. I am looking for Abū Yazīd – answered the man. I myself have also been looking for Abū Yazīd since twenty years – said al-Biṣṭāmī.” This state is what al-Ġunayd, himself a sober Ṣūfī, tried to explain by saying that in *qabḍ* God obliterates the Ṣūfī’s existence⁸.

According to another story told by one of his students, who had been in the company of Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī for thirteen years, he had woken Abū Yazīd up every morning for thirteen years, but the latter had not spoken a word during these years, only had sighed a little, and had put his head on his knees, then had lifted it again. “This had been caused by his having been in the state of *qabḍ* during all these years” – added the *faqīh* who handed over the report. Had he (i.e., Abū Yazīd) been in the state of *baṣṭ*, his companion would have heard from him what other people had heard”⁹.

The state of *qabḍ*, as related in these narratives, may have served as the starting point later on for both types of what was called *malāmatī* behaviour¹⁰. For the novice (*murīd*) *malāmatiyya* meant an extravagant way of conducting everyday life, inciting the blame (*malāma*) of ordinary people as the above story shows, while for a gnostic (*‘ārīf*) it meant hiding one’s true devotion, speaking nothing about one’s friendly terms with God (*walāya*) as exemplified in the previous story by al-Biṣṭāmī’s thirteen years of silence¹¹.

⁵ Zaehner 1994:118. He also quotes al-Quṣayrī’s *Risāla* to support his opinion. See al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* 58-60.

⁶ Zaehner 1994:118, referring to al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla*. Others consider al-Biṣṭāmī’s behaviour and words as a sort of psychological “escape from the responsibilities of life”. See, e.g. az-Zayn 1988:9ff.

⁷ *an-Nūr min kalimāt Abī Ṭayfūr*. Also known as *Manāqib Abī Yazīd*. In: Badawī 1978.

⁸ See as-Sahlaḡī, *Nūr*. In: Badawī 1978:141. al-Biṣṭāmī says: “I have also been looking for him for twenty years.”

⁹ That is, ordinary speech. See as-Sahlaḡī, *Nūr* 178-179.

¹⁰ See as-Sulamī, *Malāmatiyya* and its French translation by Deladrière (1991). Cf. aš-Šiblī, 1982:544-553, cf. also Addas 1993:71. The chief antagonists of the *malāmatīs* were the so-called *ṣūfīs* in Nīšāpūr at that time who were in reality ascetes (*zuhhād*), begging and showing off their piety. Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī once said: “The gnostic is interested in what he may hope (i.e., his future) while the ascete is interested in what he may eat (i.e., begging)” (as-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 74). This is another sign that al-Biṣṭāmī’s behaviour was similar to that of the *malāmatīs*.

¹¹ See also Badawī 1978:157 for Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī’s other communication: “I was absent from God for thirty years”. In the earliest version of Abū Yazīd’s 30 years of contemplation he said. “I have worked in fighting (my soul)” (Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt* 70).

The famous Baghdadi Šūfī, al-Ġunayd explains the strange stories about al-Biṣṭāmī, and at the same time relieves him from the accusations¹²:

“The stories about Abū Yazīd differ widely, and those quoting what they heard from him are also of different kinds of people. All this may be explained by the fact that these people met him in different moments (of his spiritual life) and at different resting places specified for him.” Here he may have referred to the *qabd* – *baṣṭ* alternation.

“Therefore everyone rendered his words precisely” – however contradictory these reports may seem superficially – “and delivered what they had heard from the details of his exclamations suiting his relevant resting places. These words of Abū Yazīd are drawn from a sea uniquely made for him alone. Then (after hearing all these different stories) I saw how far the end of his state was. It was such a state that only a few could understand his words about it or could give expression of them” – i.e., give back the exact wording of his exclamations – “when they had heard them. No one can give back such words who is not able to comprehend their meaning. If the hearer himself is not in this special disposition (*hay’a*), he refuses everything what he hears from Abū Yazīd¹³. al-Huġwūrī also shows understanding towards the extremism of Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī, saying: “He is the greatest of the Shaykhs in state and dignity, so that al-Ġunayd said: “Abū Yazīd holds the same rank among us as Gabriel among the angels”¹⁴.

Without these introductory remarks it cannot be understood why al-Ġunayd, considered by his contemporaries and the succeeding generations as a sober mystic, could accept and speak highly of such an extremely eccentric Šūfī like Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī. The explanation is that he regarded and valued Abū Yazīd’s words and the stories about him in the light of his momentary spiritual dispositions, even allowing for a long duration of these alternating states which he calls ‘resting places’ because of their temporal length. But he warns, at the same time, that these exclamations and peculiar behaviour were only allowed to

¹² as-Sarrāġ, *Luma*^c 459ff: in the “Chapter on the ecstatic words (*ṣaḥīyyāt*), related from Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī and explained partly by al-Ġunayd”.

¹³ See as-Sarrāġ, *Luma*^c, ed. Nicholson, 381. Cf. Zaehner 1961:114, and fn. 2 there. He omits from his translation a key word, *hay’a*. Badawī (1978:39) also mentions al-Ġunayd defending Abū Yazīd.

¹⁴ Nicholson 1911:106. al-Huġwūrī did not believe the stories about Abū Yazīd having said the above mentioned extreme exclamations and wrote: “He was a lover of theology and a venerator of the sacred law, notwithstanding the spurious doctrine which has been foisted on him by some persons with the object of supporting their own heresies”. Comparing these contradictory views one should think that they only serve to affirm the theory of his “alterating states” proposed by Zaehner. A similar view is expressed by some modern Arab defenders of al-Biṣṭāmī, see e.g. Maḥmūd 1985:59ff.

Abū Yazīd, because he is unique in having a special sea of spiritual knowledge created by God exclusively for him.

At this point the question of madness, supposed or pretended, has to be faced. Since in my view this special state of the soul or heart, or way of conducting life called *qabḍ* contrasted with *bast*, is also a spiritually highly esteemed state, it cannot be simply identified with the notion of ‘manic-depression’ of modern psychiatry – although al-Bisṭāmī may have been a madman or maniac independently of the problem of characterisation of these two Ṣūfī states. However, simply on the basis of this *qabḍ* hypothesis he cannot be called mad. As for his pretending madness, it is completely out of question. Though the way he conducted his life might easily have been mistaken for madness. In this respect I would like to mention a story from as-Sahlaḡī’s *Nūr*, the final source of what allegedly are al-Bisṭāmī’s own words. It runs as follows¹⁵:

“A man from the people of Bisṭām who had always been present at his master’s (i.e., al-Bisṭāmī’s) sessions, never being late or leaving them before the end, once told al-Bisṭāmī: ‘Oh Master, I had been fasting in the last thirty years at daytime and had not been sleeping at night. I had suppressed all my desires and I believe in everything you have said, still I could not reach the knowledge you had been speaking about. Why?’ al-Bisṭāmī responded: ‘Had you been fasting for 300 years and spending the night awake you would have not found a grain of this knowledge.’ ‘Why, Master?’ ‘Since you are veiled by yourself.’ ‘Is there a medicine for it?’ – asked the man. ‘Yes – answered al-Bisṭāmī – but you will not accept and will not do what I suggest.’ ‘O yes, I will accept everything you say.’ al-Bisṭāmī then gave him his medicine, saying: ‘Go immediately and shave your head and beard, take off these elegant clothes and put on a simple cloak. Then hang on your neck a copper dish, full of nuts. Go out to the street, call all the boys around you and tell them: Boys, I give a nut every one of you who hits me on the face. Afterwards go in this state to your market place where everybody knows you and reveres you.’

‘O Abū Yazīd, do you really want all this from me? – asked the man – Show me any other way and I will follow it.’ ‘There is no other way – said al-Bisṭāmī – You have to start with dropping your rank and breaking your haughty self. Then, and only then I will show you what is good for you. But (it seems to me that) I cannot do that. I told you that you would not do (what I prescribed to you).’ This story may shed light on the real meaning and significance of this behaviour in the purification of the heart connected with the *qabḍ* state which appeared and still appears for many as pure madness.

¹⁵ See the story in full details in Badawī 1978:112-113.

Now the question arises how to interpret these narratives in the light of al-Biṣṭāmī's Ascension (*miʿrāğ*) story? He seems to refuse when in this state both the worldly and the heavenly pleasures. The complete *zuhd* means for him the renunciation of everything that prevents reaching his goal, the intimate proximity of the Almighty God. He considers even the Paradise as a veil because 'it is other than Him'¹⁶.

According to later reports al-Biṣṭāmī claimed that he had ascended to the seven Heavens, i.e., he had made the *miʿrāğ* on the model of the Prophet Muḥammad's *miʿrāğ*¹⁷. The most detailed and celebrated description of this event is given by the 12th century Persian Šufī author, Farīd ad-dīn ʿAṭṭār in his *Tadkiratu l-awliyā*¹⁸. Since the hypothesis mentioned above about the nature of these two states is widely accepted it seems desirable to examine, if only shortly, the oldest description of al-Biṣṭāmī's so called heavenly journey or *miʿrāğ*, in which we can find possibly the first mention of *qabḍ*. There is a relatively early Arabic account, dated from the beginning of the 11th century, a chapter in the book *al-Qaṣd ilā Allāh*, written by an anonymous author, which is titled *Bāb fī ru'ya Abī Yazīd fī l-qaṣd ilā Allāh taʿālā wa-bayān qiṣṣatihi*, "On the Vision of Abū Yazīd in his Quest for God, and the Explanation of his Story". It should be noted that in this version the *miʿrāğ* is described as a dream (*manām*)¹⁹. In this we are told that at the first Heaven (*as-samā' ad-dunyā*) God spread before him the carpet of His gifts (*baṣaṭa lī bisāṭ al-hadāyā*) – said Abū Yazīd, but he refused to accept it. The relevant part of the text runs as follows:

"It is related that the servant of al-Biṣṭāmī said that he had heard Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī say: I dreamed that I ascended to the Heavens in quest of God, seeking to be united with God, who is glorious and exalted, on the terms that I should abide with Him forever; and I was put on a trial which the heavens and the earth and they that inhabit them would not withstand, for He was spreading before me the carpet of His gifts, one kind after another, and offered to me the kingdom of

¹⁶ See Biṣṭāmī, *Mağmū'a* 47: *al-ğannatu hiya l-ḥiğābu l-akbaru li-anna ahla l-ğannati sakanū ilā l-ğannati wa-kullu man sakana ilā l-ğannati sakana ilā siwāhu*.

¹⁷ For a comparison between the Prophet's heavenly journey and the Šufī ascension see ar-Rifāʿī 1993: especially 217-278.

¹⁸ Parts of this work, among them those about Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī's ascension have been translated by Arberry 1966:105-110. Ernst (1994:167-169) summarizes Rūzbihān Baqlī's version of al-Biṣṭāmī's vision which differs largely from the others.

¹⁹ The oldest extant version of al-Biṣṭāmī's heavenly journey is found in a manuscript in Hyderabad which bears the title *al-Qaṣd ilā Allāh* and is attributed in the MS to al-Ġunayd. This chapter was published as an additional chapter in al-Quṣayrī's *Miʿrāğ* and the editor, refusing the above mentioned authorship, attributes it to al-Quṣayrī, on the basis of Nicholson's research, who also published this short chapter in 1926:402ff. al-Quṣayrī, *Miʿrāğ* 129-135, Chapter Nine: *Bāb fī ru'ya Abī Yazīd fī l-qaṣd ilā Allāh taʿālā wa-bayān qiṣṣatihi*, 129: *innī ra'aytu fī l-manām*.

each Heaven, but during this I was averting my eyes from them, because I knew that he was testing me therewith, and in reverence for the holiness of my Lord I paid no attention to them, saying all the while: ‘O my Beloved, what I desire is other than what You offer me’²⁰.

Now we should remember that all this happened at a time when al-Bisṭāmī, according to his companion’s testimony, was in the state of depression, *qabḍ*²¹. These Ṣūfī states and their psychological realities cannot, however, so easily be inserted into a rigid, preconceived and static system. It has to be taken into serious consideration that Mediaeval mystics did not comprehend the nature, significance and meaning of the world in a way as other, sober men would do and did not as well share their aims in the world. In the above story, when al-Bisṭāmī declined to accept what God presented to him, this offer is expressed by the verb *basaṭa* (spread) which is the origin of the technical term *baṣṭ* (extension), the state or station of the greatest rejoice. He refused the divine presents, which anyhow were offered for him only as a trial, since his goal lies in reaching God and remaining with him forever²². To achieve (or to hope to achieve) this end one should, according to the descriptions, remain extendedly in the state of contraction, i.e., *qabḍ*, later on considered a sad, sorrowful state²³.

al-Qaṣḍ ilā Allāh says²⁴ that the quest of God requires the *qabḍ* state the external features of which are in reality *at-taḡrīd* (*min ʿalāʾiq ad-dunyā*), depriving one’s self or soul from everything that is not God or does not belong to God, and *al-infirād* (*ilā Allāh*), turning exclusively towards God. Originally there may have been a strict bond between the states expressing similar notions, *qabḍ* and *taḡrīd* on one side, and *baṣṭ* and *infirād* on the other, since every Ṣūfī notion has, generally speaking, two sides, showing us how to handle the affairs of this world for the sake of our bliss and then concentrating on the proper behaviour in connection with the Beloved, God²⁵.

The tragic contradiction in trying to attain this goal, and also in the state of *qabḍ*, lies in its paradoxical impossibility which becomes clear at the end of the

²⁰ al-Quṣayrī, *Miʾrāḡ* 129-135, Chapter Nine: *Bāb fī ruʾyā Abī Yazīd fī l-qaṣḍ ilā Allāh taʿālā wa-bayān qiṣṣatihi*. Offering and refusal in the first Heaven p. 129.

²¹ Cf., e.g., Badawī 1978:178-179 and many other places.

²² “A certain Aḥmad b. Ḥaḍrawayhi once said: “Once I saw in my dream the Lord of Power who said to me ‘Oh, Aḥmad, everyone requests from me something except for Abū Yazīd, since he requests me’.” (Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt* 401.10-11.)

²³ Cf. Schimmel 1975:129, quoting ʿAṭṭār’s *Muṣībatnāme* 42: “constraint means the compression of the soul to make one’s home in a needle’s eye” – darkness, the oppressing desert of loneliness in which the mystic spends days and sometime months of his life. In the 13th century, as-Suhrawardī defined *qabḍ* as the “sadness of soul” (*ḥuzn an-naḥs*), cf. as-Suhrawardī, *Maqāmāt* 73.

²⁴ al-Quṣayrī, *Miʾrāḡ* 131 in describing his arrival to the Lowest Heaven.

²⁵ Ibid., *taḡrīdī ʿamman siwāhu*.

story: after achieving his goal, and reaching the Divine Throne and “melting as lead melts” (*kuntu adūbu ʿinda dālika kamā yadūbu r-raṣās*)²⁶ from God’s words. He has to go back to the Earth with a mission to fulfil: to give the salutation of the Prophet Muḥammad’s Spirit (*rūḥ*) to his people. However, the Prophet fortifies him, expressing his estimation towards him²⁷. This is the ‘returning’ (*ruḡūʿ*), the obligatory last state of the Şūfī way for those who want to be masters²⁸. It means that although he had reached the peak of his journey, attaining his goal, he could not realise his desire to remain with God forever. His *fanāʾ* (annihilation) is completed (although the word itself is not used here), since he is invited to sit on the carpet of God’s Sanctity. At that point, he may well have been described as in the state of rejoice, but then the return means again constriction, tension after relaxation (*aš-šidda baʿda l-faraḡ*). Dū n-Nūn al-Miṣrī said in relation with this: “The bird flew off to its nest and then returned to the cage”²⁹. al-Ġunayd was once asked by a man: “Which of his times does the lover (of God) feel sorry for?” And he answered: “For the time of *baṣṭ* which gives way to *qabḍ* and for the time of *uns* (intimacy) which gives way to *waḥṣa* (desolation)”³⁰.

But the ‘returning’ is at least as important and necessary in the mystic voyage as the ascension itself. The distraction stemming from it, however, is not simply the depression of the unfulfilled aim – it is a state elevated by God’s words (‘you are my chosen one’)³¹, which is required by further similar journeys to God, but from now on they will be taken in the heart. Thus we can see that though the mystical states have psychological relevance, there is no one-to-one correspondence between the mystical and the psychic sides as stated by modern psychology.

Now interestingly enough, *qabḍ* plays a role similar to that of al-Biṣṭāmī’s heavenly journey in one of the initiation stories of the Uwaysī path of Şūfism, as presented by Julian Baldick³². We are informed that a certain al-Ḥaraqānī,

²⁶ al-Quṣayrī, *Miʿrāḡ* 134: “It happened after God had known the truthfulness of my will to reach Him.”

²⁷ Ibid.: “The Prophet said: ‘God has really preferred you to many people’ (to his many creatures)”.

²⁸ See, for example, Ibn ʿAḡība, *Futūḥāt* translated by Munawwarah & al-Ustadh 1998:77: “The people depart and travel to the presence of the Real. In it they depend upon a guide who has inner sight of the travel and of the speech, who has travelled the path and returned to brief the people about what he has gained.”

²⁹ ʿAyn al-Qudāt, *Šakwā* (Arabic text) 54-55, (French translation) 241, (Arberry 1969:56-57) quotes Dū n-Nūn al-Miṣrī’s simile about the Şūfī way.

³⁰ Ibn Mulaqqin, *Ṭabaqāt* 129.5-6.

³¹ al-Quṣayrī, *Miʿrāḡ* 134: *anta ḥayratī min ḥalqī*.

³² *The History of the Uwaysis*, by Ahmad of Uzgen, around 1600. It is a collection of biographies almost always of people that never existed, that played a major role in the sect’s development.

who according to the story, happened to be one of al-Biṣṭāmī's followers, was distinguished by a special state: sadness. The Persian word for sadness (*anduh*) is doubled with the Arabic *qabḍ* here. al-Ḥaraqānī's contraction is contrasted in the report with the 'expansion' (*baṣṭ*) of a Ṣūfī contemporary. al-Ḥaraqānī explains that his own special road to God is that of sadness, granted to him in reply to a request for a road on which others would not be able to join him. But he tells others to weep much and laugh little, and speaks of an elite of young manly ones, whose sadness (*qabḍ*) cannot be contained by this world and the next put together³³. Although this story – originating from the 16-17th century – is much later than that of al-Biṣṭāmī's, it seems to have conserved an early shade of meaning of the term *qabḍ*. Eventually al-Ḥaraqānī received his initiation into the Uwaysī order at the tomb of al-Biṣṭāmī³⁴.

On the basis of the above stories the first meaning of the Ṣūfī term *qabḍ* may have been 'the special concentration of the soul/heart needed to achieve the goal of reaching God (*al-qaṣḍ ilā Allāh*), in contrast with the relaxed, detached state of the heart, which tries to reach the more conventional aims of a true believer. The *qabḍ* /*baṣṭ* relation may have been originally parallel to that of the conventional love and *ʿudrite* or Platonic love.

The usage of these two words had quite early been supported by meanings received from a special interpretation of a Qur'ānic *āya* (2/245): *Allāhu yaqbiḍu wa-yabsuṭu*, "God straitens and is bountiful"³⁵. The orthodox interpretation from aṭ-Ṭabarī on had always been that "God is the provider of the *rizq*, sustenance, livelihood, and he gives little or much, makes one poor or enriches the other, as he wishes"³⁶.

The Ṣūfīs, naturally, gave this verse a spiritual meaning or at least a secondary Ṣūfī interpretation³⁷. The first extant Ṣūfī commentary, as-Sulamī's *Ḥaqā'iq at-tafsīr* at the end of the 10th century, gives the following exegesis, attributed to Ibn ʿAṭā'³⁸: *yaqbiḍuka ʿanka wa-yabsuṭuka bihi wa-lahu*, i.e. "God restrains you

³³ See Baldick 1993:23-24.

³⁴ Id., 24. To reach illumination or inspiration to the knowledge of the divine world is a common phenomenon in Ṣūfism. See, e.g., Ibn ʿArabī's account on his illumination in the cemetery of Murcia when he was 17. In: Addas 1993:72-73. What is extraordinary in the case of Uwaysis is that they received or imagined to receive this initiation exclusively from dead saints as a body. For a picture of his tomb, see the colour plates, Plate No VIII.

³⁵ Alan Jones' translation (2007:57). For another translation, see Marmaduke Pickthall's (n.d.:49): "Allah straiteneth and enlargeth".

³⁶ aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* II, 351-352 on Q 2/245.

³⁷ On the Ṣūfī commentaries in general see Sands 2006:especially on pp. 67-78. See also ad-Ḍahabī 1995: II, 365-450.

³⁸ Abū l-ʿAbbās Ibn ʿAṭā', one of the first Ṣūfī Qur'ān commentators of the 9th-10th centuries, died in 922. His commentary was preserved partly in as-Sulamī's commentary.

from yourself and then makes you happy by himself and for himself”. Then, referring to al-Wāsiṭī³⁹, he adds: *yaqbiḍuka ‘ammā laka wa-yabsuṭuka fīmā lahu*, i.e. “He refrains you from which you have and makes you happy by what He has”. And citing a certain Baghdadi, as-Sulamī adds: *yaqbiḍu ay yūḥišu ahl ṣafwatihī min ru’yat al-karāmāt wa-yabsuṭuhum bi-n-naẓarāt ilā l-karīm*, i.e. “He refrains, i.e., alienates his chosen people from the divine miracles or favours and makes them happy by allowing to them to look at the most favourable, the miracle maker (i.e., God)”. Its aim is surely to purify the Šufī movement⁴⁰. Later Rūzbihān Baqlī at the end of the 12th century in his Šufī Qur’ān commentary, *‘Arā’is al-bayān* repeats it *verbatim*, adding the commentary of al-Wāsiṭī⁴¹.

Meanwhile, in the 11th century, al-Quṣayrī explains this *āya* in his *Laṭā’if al-iṣārāt* first in the traditional way as provision and almsgiving or, on the contrary, restraining them. Then he gives a Šufī interpretation as follows: “It is said that God grasps the hearts with his turning away (from them), inciting fear; and extends the hearts with his turning towards them, arousing hope. *Qabḍ* serves the heart’s subjugation, it is for (keeping) his secret, it is for those, who want (i.e., to reach God), while *basṭ* is for his piety, for the exposure of the secret, for those who are wanted (by God).” al-Quṣayrī also repeats Ibn ‘Aṭā’s commentary. And finally he says: “*qabḍ* is his right (i.e., your duty towards Him), while *basṭ* is your fortune (from Him)”⁴². At the end he gives eleven slightly differing commentaries, without quoting his sources, saying only: ‘it is said’⁴³.

The meaning of Q 2/245 is further supported by Q 29/62: “*Allāhu yabsuṭu r-rizqa li-man yašā’u min ‘ibādihi wa-yaqdiru lahu*”. Traditionally interpreted it can be translated as “God makes generous provision for those of His servants whom He wishes or measures carefully for them”⁴⁴. It is then on the basis of this verse that Q 2/245 is also interpreted as “God, the provision maker”.

The Šufī commentator, al-Quṣayrī⁴⁵ says that the provision is of two kinds, provision of the apparent things and provision of the hearts and secrets (*sarā’ir*).

³⁹ Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Wāsiṭī, died after 932. His sayings and commentaries are scattered in later Šufī compendia. See Schimmel1975:78.

⁴⁰ Richard Gramlich translates this commentary as follows (1995:134): “2.245. *Gott packt und lässt los. Oder: Gott macht eng und macht weit. Gott packt dich von dir weg und lässt dich los durch sich und für sich. Oder: Er macht dich dir gegenüber eng und durch sich und für sich weit.*”

⁴¹ Ruzbihān Baqlī, *‘Arā’is I*, 49: *yaqbiḍuka ‘ammā laka wa-yabsuṭu fīmā ‘alayhi*.

⁴² al-Quṣayrī, *Laṭā’if I*, 190-191.

⁴³ al-Quṣayrī, *Laṭā’if I*, 190. One of the most interesting comments says that *qabḍ* is for the novices (those who want God), while *basṭ* is for the masters (those wanted by God). This opinion may have derived from al-Ġunayd.

⁴⁴ In Alan Jones’ translation (2007:368). In Pickthall’s translation (n.d.:528): “Allah maketh the provision wide for whom He will of His bondmen, and straiteneth for whom (He will)”.

⁴⁵ al-Quṣayrī, *Laṭā’if II*, 104-105.

Thus this verse is meant to support the fundamental source for the mystic meaning of *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ*.

As we have seen in the commentaries, the meanings of the two words had changed during the century between al-Biṣṭāmī and as-Sulamī then al-Quṣayrī, and *baṣṭ*, meaning hope, became the positive, while *qabḍ*, fear, the negative side: God gives and holds back⁴⁶. It is interesting to compare the Ṣūfī commentaries (where the two terms are still uncertain and undefined as to their place in relation to other Ṣūfī notions) with what al-Quṣayrī has to say about *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ* in his great *oeuvre*, the *Epistle on Ṣūfism*⁴⁷. Here the two terms are inserted into the hierarchy of other Ṣūfī concepts, *qabḍ*, a state of the gnostic (*ʿarīf*) being superior to fear (*ḥawf*), since the latter always refers to the future (fear from the disappearance of the beloved, or from some unknown danger, or from Hell) and so it is the state of the beginner (*muṣṭaʿnif*). Similarly, *baṣṭ* is superior to hope (*raġāʿ*), since the latter refers to the future: meeting the beloved, or passing from danger and trouble⁴⁸.

There are, however, some interesting, hostile features of al-Quṣayrī's attitude to the terms examined here. First, they are not listed with the other Ṣūfī states and stations but are put in a chapter on mixed terms called "the words they use". Second, it is noted that they are among the most dangerous states, from which one must seek protection (*istiʿāda*). Finally, *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ* may have originally been the most elevated states of their kind, just before annihilation, here they are capped with two even more exalted, but much milder states: *hayba* (reverence) and *uns* (intimacy)⁴⁹. The sole reason for that seems to be to lessen the significance of the two dangerous modes of behaviour.

This latent hostility is explained by Zaehner with the fact that al-Quṣayrī had a personal grudge against one of the most enthusiastic followers of al-Biṣṭāmī in his age, Abū Saʿīd b. Abī l-Ḥayr, a Ṣūfī extremist, and he had chosen the latter's personal traits when he described these states⁵⁰. In my view, however,

⁴⁶ It is the Moroccan Ṣūfī Ibn ʿAġība at the end of the 18th century who sums up the relation between the two terms: "For the Ṣūfīs the constriction and the spreading are two states which follow each other like night and day" (*al-qabḍ wal-baṣṭ ʿinda ahl at-taṣawwuf ḥālatāni tataʿāqabāni taʿāquba l-layli wa-n-nahāri*), Ibn ʿAġība, *Baḥr* I, 272.

⁴⁷ See al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* 51ff.

⁴⁸ al-Quṣayrī, *ar-Risāla* (ed. Zirriq) 58-59. See also with the commentary of al-Anṣārī 68-69, where the chapter is called somewhat differently: *Bāb fī tafsīr alfāz tadūru bayna ḥādihi ṭ-ṭāʿifa wa-bayān mā yuškilu minhā*.

⁴⁹ See al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* (ed. Zirriq) 60-61. See also the commentary of al-Anṣārī, 69-70.

⁵⁰ Zaehner 1994:118: "When Qushayrī describes *baṣṭ* and its evil effects, then we may be sure that he had Abū Saʿīd in mind".

al-Quṣayrī's hostility is rather connected with the negative judgement of al-Biṣṭāmī in his age and with the possible Šī'ite origin of the *qabḍ/baṣṭ* terms⁵¹.

°Ayn al-Qudāt al-Hamaḍānī (d. 1131) in his *Complaints (Šakwā l-ḡarīb)*⁵², written in the prison, protested against the accusation that his doctrines would be of Šī'ite origin⁵³. Defending his extraordinary usage of Arabic words he says that every science has its special terms and the Šūfī's terms are *fanā'*, *baqā'*, *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ*⁵⁴. He characterises the latter two terms in question in the following way: *baṣṭ*, 'expansion', is a state, in which the mystic, united with God, is not freed, detached from the external world; while *qabḍ*, 'contraction', is a state, in which the union with God removes, frees the mystic from the external world. This sense of freedom from every worldly bond may also have played part in judging *qabḍ*, and also its pair, *baṣṭ*, to be dangerous notions⁵⁵.

Although, as I have pointed out, in the early centuries hardly any of the important Šūfī sources mention *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ*, later on they were put into almost every Šūfī manual or book on the rules of conduct for the novices (*ādāb al-murīdīn*)⁵⁶.

The cause of this change of attitude is possibly to be sought in the fact that the arguably most influential moderate mystical thinker, who is considered in every order as one of the spiritual fathers, the 9th century al-Ḡunayd of Baghdad spoke positively of the two terms. It is not so surprising if one takes into consideration that it was also he who defended al-Biṣṭāmī against critics interpreting his words and deeds in a dispassionate way⁵⁷. There is, however, another pecu-

⁵¹ On Šī'ite influence in Sūfism, see aš-Šiblī 1982.

⁵² °Ayn al-Qudāt, *Šakwā*. Cf. also its translation by Arberry (1969).

⁵³ °Ayn al-Qudāt, *Šakwā* 35-36, Arberry 1969:34: He says that he who has no Shaikh is without religion, but he protests against the accusation of spreading Ismā'īlīte doctrine by this saying that the Shaikh cannot be identified with their infallible imam.

⁵⁴ On the accusation of using strange words, see Arberry 1969:34. The special terms of Šūfīs are defended on p. 41f.

⁵⁵ °Ayn al-Qudāt, *Šakwā* (287-288, 292) sums up the author's opinion in connection with the above mentioned Šūfī terms in the following way: "*al-baṣṭ*: l'expansion; état où tout en étant uni à Dieu, on n'est pas "abstrait" du monde extérieur; *al-qabḍ*: la contraction: état où l'union avec Dieu "abstrait" l'homme du monde extérieur; *at-tafriqa*: la séparation; *al-ḡam'*: la réunion par opposition à *at-tafriqa*; *al-ḡam'* consiste à penser au Réel en faisant abstraction de tout ce qui n'est pas Lui; *at-tafriqa*, c'est penser à ce qui n'est pas le Réel, à la création, qui n'a de réalité que par la toute-puissance du Réel et non en soi." Cf. as-Sarrāḡ, *Luma'* 343, Huḡwīrī, *Kaṣf* 374, al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* 35, Q 2/245)

⁵⁶ See for an early example the al-Harkūšī, *Tahḍīb* (382-383): "*dīkr al-qabḍ wa-l-baṣṭ*". He first quotes the above mentioned Abū Sa'īd's definition.

⁵⁷ Cf. Zaehner (1994:118) writes: "When Abū Yazīd vented himself of these strange ejaculations, Junayd maintains, he was speaking in ecstasy and his words were not to be understood literally".

liarity of his handling of these and two other terms: *gamc*, ‘joining together, unification’ and *tafriqa* or *farq* ‘separation, partition’. He did not use them as terms in the nominal forms but only as verbs. He writes in *The Book of Differentiating sincerity and truthfulness (al-Farq bayna l-iḥlāṣ wa-ṣ-ṣidq)*⁵⁸:

“Fear distresses me, Hope comforts me, Reality unites me with God and God’s right⁵⁹ separates me from God. When God distresses me with fear, he obliterates my existence and takes care of me (so that I need not take care of myself). When he comforts me with hope, he returns my existence to me after my absence and commands me to take care of myself. When he unites me with Him through the real (vision of God) He causes me to be present before Him and invites me”⁶⁰.

al-Ġunayd does not use here the terms *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ* as the distinct, higher grades of fear and hope – ‘as contraction surpasses fear and spreading surpasses hope, i.e. in its strength’ adds al-Anṣārī⁶¹ – but instead, he combines the four terms, using the verbal forms – *qabaḍa* with fear and *basaṭa* with hope – in accordance with the Qur’ānic text. This usage seems to have preceded their later nominal terms⁶².

“When I am before God I savour the taste of my existence – would that God obliterate my existence and cause me to enjoy His vision, or that He would make absent from myself and give me respite from that which is due to Him as formal ritual. Would that God show me complete *fanā*’ (annihilation), in which there is eternal life for me”⁶³. al-Ḥarkūšī finishes his chapter on *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ*

⁵⁸ “*al-ḥawf yaqbiḍunī wa-r-raġā’ yabsuṭunī wa-l-ḥaqīqa taġma’anī wa-l-ḥaqqu yufarriqunī fa-īdā qabadanī bi-l-ḥawf aḥnānī ‘annī bi-wuġūdī fa-ṣānanī ‘annī wa-īdā basaṭanī bi-r-raġā’ raddanī ‘alayya bi-faḍlī fa-amaranī bi-ḥifẓī wa- idā ġama’anī bi-l-ḥaqīqa aḥḍaranī wa-da’anī*” al-Ġunayd, *Aḥmāl* 256-269, esp. 263 in the sixth fragment. See also in Abdel-Kader 1976:53, English translation 173-174.

⁵⁹ It may mean the Muslim ritual, *‘ibāda*, according to the 18th century Moroccan Ṣūfī, Ibn ‘Aġība. See Ibn ‘Aġība, *Baḥr* I, 271-272 on Q 2/245, esp. p. 272. He qualifies *qabḍ* and *baṣṭ* as ‘prescribed behaviour’. In the state of ‘compression’ the suitable behaviour is to wait for the relaxation from the Beneficent and Forgiving (God).

⁶⁰ Within the chapter “*Muṣṭalahāt aṣ-ṣūfiyya*” 4. *al-qabḍ wal-baṣṭ*, al-Quṣayrī also quotes al-Ġunayd’s above saying /*Risāla* (ed. Rizzīq) 59-60/. The same text is translated from *ar-Risāla al-quṣayriyya* by Sells (1996:107): “Fear of God grips me. Hope unfolds me. Reality draws me together. The real sets me apart: When he seizes me with fear, he annihilates me from myself. When he unfolds me with hope, he returns me to myself. When he recollects me in reality, he makes me present”.

⁶¹ Cf. al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* (with al-Anṣārī’s commentary) 69.

⁶² For instance, the Qur’ān uses *ġāhada*, instead of *ġihād* and *hāġara* instead of *hiġra*.

⁶³ Quoted by al-Quṣayrī, *Risāla* 59-60. Also quoted *verbatim* much earlier by al-Ḥarkūšī, *Tahḍīb* 383.

with the following summary: “Fāris b. ʿĪsā said: ‘First *qabḍ*, then *bast*, then neither *qabḍ*, nor *bast*, and it is the place of stillness’”⁶⁴.

al-Ġunayd makes apparent in these definitions what one can observe covertly from the stories and some of other definitions, too, quoted above – that is, the dynamic nature of these two terms and also the dynamism of the two other, strongly related terms, *ḡamʿ* and *tafriqa*. In reality they are not states but, at least in the case of al-Biṣṭāmī, ways of behaviour and conducting life.

Ruzbihān Baqlī speaks about the two polar states *qabḍ* and *bast* in the following way: “These are two noble states for gnostics. He [God] gives them constriction with the wrath of unity, the veils of authority, the accumulated lights of greatness, and the mounting of magnificence in their hearts, so that they are removed from the qualities of humanity. When He gives them expansiveness, with the beauty and loveliness of the Attributes and the delights of speech (with Him), He gives them intoxication and purification with the state of ecstasy, so that they dance and listen to music, speaking and giving. The principle of constriction is the annihilation of conscience in eternity, while the principle of expansiveness is the subsistence of conscience in the witnessing of post-eternity”⁶⁵.

al-Biṣṭāmī is also credited with saying that a true gnostic would come back even from Paradise if he could not see there his Lord, just as the people of Hell strive to come out of Hell⁶⁶. He also said that “true Paradise does not have significance for the people of love, since the people of love are veiled by their love”⁶⁷. It is also related that Abū Yazīd had said: “Paradise hath no value in the eyes of lovers, and lovers are veiled (from God) by their love”⁶⁸. His ideal is reflected also in another saying of his: “There are two Paradises – the Paradise of (God’s) graces and the Paradise of (God’s) knowledge. The Paradise of knowledge is eternal, while the Paradise of graces is temporary”⁶⁹.

Finally, to complement al-Biṣṭāmī’s refusal of the delights of Paradise and his search for the Divine knowledge and love, I would like to quote a comment

⁶⁴ See al-Ḥarkūṣī, *Tahqīb* 383.

⁶⁵ Rūzbihān Baqlī, *Šaḥīyyāt* 551. For the English translation, see Ernst 1996:32-33. He also speaks about the ecstatic experience of lovers (Corbin 1991:223-228).

⁶⁶ Badawī 1978:141: *inna lillāhi ḥawāṣṣa min ʿibādīhi law ḥaḡabahum fī l-ḡanna ʿan ruʿyatīhi sāʿatan istaḡāṭū bi-l-ḥurūḡ min al-ḡanna kamā yastaḡīṭu aḥlu n-nār bi-l-ḥurūḡ min an-nār*. See also Badawī’s remarks in the introductory part of the *Šaḥāhāt* (Badawī 1978:34 no. 19).

⁶⁷ as-Sulamī (*Ṭabaqāt* 70) quoting al-Biṣṭāmī’s words: “*al-ḡannatu lā ḥaṭara lahā ʿinda ahl al-maḥabbati wa-aḥlu l-maḥabbati maḡḡūbūn bi-maḥabbatihim*”.

⁶⁸ See Nicholson 1911:107.

⁶⁹ Badawī 1978:114: *ḡannat an-naʿīm wa-ḡannat al-maʿrifa*. Cf. *ibid.*, 109: “God has devotees who, had the Paradise appeared to them with all its ornaments, they would have cried loudly (from its appearance), just as the people of the Hell cry loudly from (the appearance of) the Hell”.

from Ġalāl ad-Dīn Rūmī from his *Fīhi mā fīhi* on the inhabitants of Hell. He says that they will be happier than they were on the Earth, since while they were on the Earth they were not aware of God. But in Hell they will know God and nothing can be sweeter than the knowledge of God⁷⁰.

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ARE THE JEWISH PARADISE AND HELL COMPARABLE TO THOSE IN ISLAM?

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The concepts concerning the Day of Judgement, Reward and Punishment, Immortality of the Soul, Resurrection, Reincarnation, and, of course Paradise and Hell are generally shared by Judaism and Islam, as part of their view of eschatology. That is to say, the idea of life after death and the pleasures of Paradise, as opposed to the sufferings in Hell, are repeatedly emphasized by the two religions, giving the believers of the two faiths something to look for and to look forward to, a hope to cling to, thus reducing the psychological fear of death and the dread of the unknown world to come, which is shrouded in mystery, so to speak.

Judaism has many names and epithets for Paradise, such as

gan ʿeden (= Garden of Eden);
ha-ʿolam ha-ba (= the World to come);
ʿolam ha-emet (= the World of truth);
ʿolam she-kullo tov (= the World that all of it is good);
shamayim (= Heaven), and even
Yerushalayim shel maʿla (= Upper Jerusalem);
ʿolam she-kullo shabbat (= a world that all of it is Sabbath) and
heiḳo shel Avraham avinu (= the bosom of Abraham, our Father).

In medieval poetry the plurals *gan ʿadanim*, *ginnat ʿadanim* and *gannei ʿadanim* are also found (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:4340, “ʿeden”).

Hell is called in Hebrew tradition *gei Hinnom* (= the valley of Hinnom) or *gei Ben Hinnom* (the valley of the Son of Hinnom), which was originally a name of a place situated south-west of Jerusalem, near the east gate of the Old City, and which, according to the Book of Jeremiah (7:31-32; 19:2; 32:35) and the Second Book of Chronicles (28:3; 33:6), was the place where children were sacrificed, mainly by their parents, to the god Molekh). Other biblical synonymous names for Hell are *Tofet*, *Gei ha-haregah* (= Valley of Slaughter), *sheol*,

shahat, dumah, tsalmavet and *avadon*. It is this concept of Hell that later developed in Judaism to mean the place where the sinners are punished after their death. Thus, we find in the Book of Isaiah (14: 4-24) a vivid description of the descending of the King of Babel from heaven, his high position, to *sheol* (Hell), which receives him with fury. Another biblical name '*azazel*', which was later associated with Hell, derives its meaning from the name of a place to which the scapegoat was sent away, carrying with it all the sins committed by the Israelites that were consequently atoned.

According to post-biblical sources, Hell has seven names: *sheol, avadon, beer shahat, bor shaon, tit ha-yeven, tsalmavet* and *erets tahtit*. (*ᵀEruvin*, 19a). Other names are *bakha, emek ha-bakha, ᵀevrah, ᵀaluqah, ᵀeleq, puqah, ur, tsar* and *kaf* or *kaf ha-qela'* (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755-756).

However, it is intriguing that in spite of the fact that the Old Testament speaks of the Day of God, the Day of Judgement and Reward and Punishment, it makes no reference to Paradise or Hell as the final destinations of the souls. Instead, *gan ᵀeden* is only the Garden of Eden in which Adam and Eve had dwelt until their expulsion. It is also used as a simile to denote a flourishing place (*Ez.* 36:35). *Ha-ᵀolam ha-ba* (= the World to come) is also not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible. The Apocrypha and the Dead Sea Scrolls refer, however, albeit seldom, to Paradise, and mainly to Hell.

Post-biblical literature, such as, the *Talmud*, the *Midrash*, the *Aggadah*, the *Kabbalah* and many writings by Medieval and post-Medieval Jewish authors and thinkers largely refer to the World to come, whether Paradise or Hell, providing minute details, regarding their 'inhabitants' and their 'agenda'¹. In brief, they all claim that God created Paradise for the righteous (*Yevamot* 47a), whereas Hell was created for the wicked (*Hagigah*, 15a; *ᵀEruvin*, 19a). A man has the choice between Paradise and Hell (*Berakhot*, 28b), and his deeds in the present world will determine which of them he will reach after his death (*Yer. Peah* 16b), although R. Yohanan ben Zakkai was not sure to where he would be led (*Berakhot* 28b). One may, however, conclude from a eulogy where exactly a deceased person will end up in (*Shabbat*, 153a).

The *Mishnah*, incidentally, has only one reference to the Garden of Eden² and five references to Hell: The sinners are tried in Hell (*ᵀEduyyot* 2:10); The disciples of Bilᵀam reach it (*Avot* 5:19); The arrogant dwells in Hell (*Avot* 5:20); he who speaks at great length with a woman "will inherit Hell" (*Avot* 1:5) and the best physician will end up in Hell (*Qiddushin* 4:14, 66b). Incidentally, only few commentaries and late *responsa* provide us with an explanation for this odd

¹ See *Aggadah* 444-446 and examples below.

² A shy person reaches it (*Avot*, 5:20).

statement. They basically claim that the reason for why the best doctors should go to Hell is because doctors often do not study the illness carefully but rely too much on themselves. Consequently, negligence and wrong treatment may prove fatal. Another reason is that some doctors refuse to treat the poor who cannot afford paying them a fee³.

According to the *Talmud*, the Garden of Eden was created before the whole Universe (*Pesahim*, 52a; *Nedarim*, 39b). Some believe that it was created on Tuesday (*Bereshit Rabbah*, 15,3), probably because the Scriptures use uniquely the word *tov* (“good”) twice with reference to the things which were created on Tuesday, but not in the context of other days. Furthermore, Paradise is the symbol of abundance and affluence and the whole world ‘drinks’ from it (*Ta’anit*, 10a), and in particular the people of the Kingdom of Sheba (*Aggadah*, 96). Moreover, since the only place where Adam was truly happy was in the Garden of Eden (*Sanhedrin*, 59b), it is only natural that the righteous will be transferred to Paradise after their death. This will be their reward (*Ta’anit*, 11a). The notion of the return to Paradise, being the eternal place of utmost happiness, symbolizes in Judaism ‘closing of the circle’: a departure from a place of goodness and prosperity (= Paradise), passing through suffering and struggle (= this world) and then returning to Paradise.

Who reaches Paradise?

Surely the righteous who purposely suffer in this world in order to reach Paradise (*Qiddushin*, 40b), since God granted the Israelites three things through suffering: the *Torah*, the land of Israel and the world to come (*Berakhot*, 5a). And more specifically, he who lives in Erets Israel, uses the holy tongue, earns his living honestly and recites the prayer “Hearken O’ Israel” (*Sheqalim*, 3,3). Moreover, it suffices for a person to walk four yards in Erets Israel to reach Paradise. Even a Canaanite slave-girl who lives in Erets Israel will reach the next world (*Ketubbot*, 111a).

Also the following will reach Paradise:

- He who relies on and trusts in God (*Menahot*, 29b).
- He who prays daily (*Berakhot*, 4b).
- He who says ‘Amen’ loudly after benedictions (*Shabbat*, 119b).
- He who gives money to charity (*Pesahim*, 8a).
- He who respects his parents (*Yerushalmi*, *Peah*, 81a).
- He who respects his friend (*Berakhot* 28b).

³ See *Qiddushin* 4:14 and Rashi’s commentary *ad. loc.*

- He who fulfils even one command of God, the command welcomes him in the World to come (*Sota*, 3b).
- He who considers himself inferior to the Torah, like a slave in respect of his master (*Bava Metsia*, 85b).
- He who praises the Lord in this world will continue to do so in Paradise (*Sanhedrin*, 91b).
- He who teaches the law in this world will continue to teach it in the next (*Ibid.*).
- He who leads the community gently in this world, will continue to do it in the next (*Sanhedrin*, 92a).
- He who starves himself for the sake of the Torah the Lord will make him content in the next world (*Sanhedrin*, 100a).
- He who blackens his face in this world for the sake of the Torah, the Lord will brighten his face in the next world (*Ibid.*).
- Students of the Torah (*Bava Batra*, 10a) and their wives (*Ketubbot*, 62a) who do not sleep in order to study more will enjoy the glory of God in the world to come (*Bava Batra*, 10a).
- He who only dreams that he makes love to a married woman (*Berakhot*, 57a).

In brief, all the Israelites have a place in the next world (*Sanhedrin*, 104a), and even non-Jews who are pious (*Tosefta*, *Sanhedrin*, 13a). Good examples are a non-Jew official who saved the life of Raban Gamliel by sacrificing his own life (*Ta'anit*, 29b), and a roman executioner who saved Rabbi Hanina ben Teradyon from being burnt slowly at the stake and jumped together with him into the fire (*Avodah Zarah*, 18a).

Incidentally, the concept of Paradise and its merits is used metaphorically to denote the good things in life. The Talmud says that human beings in this world have been granted three things which are 'quasi' or a 'sort of' Paradise: Sabbath, the Sun and sex (*Berakhot*, 57b). (All the Hebrew words for these concepts contain the letter 'sh' at least once).

The following are 'saved from Hell', i.e. they too will go to Paradise:

- He who visits a sick man (*Sanhedrin*, 40a).
- He who gives donations to charity (*Gittin*, 7a).
- He who eats three meals on Sabbath (*Shabbat*, 118a).
- Those who do good deeds in general (*Yevamot*, 102b).
- Those who suffer in this world: the poor, the sick, and the one oppressed by the authority.

- Some add to this list those whose wives are wicked, indicating that they suffer in life as if they are already in Hell (*‘Eruvin*, 41a).⁴

Who are the dwellers of Paradise?

We find in many places in post-biblical literature that several personalities, who were known for their good deeds during their lifetime, have reached Paradise after their death, e.g.: Abraham, Isaac Jacob, Reuben, Judah, Moses, Manasseh Job, the Ten Jewish martyrs, as well as all the righteous people. However, the rabbis realize that all men are fallible, and, consequently, if a man commits a sin he may think that he will never reach Paradise. Hence, they state that those whose record shows more ‘credits’ (*zekhuyyot*) will reach Paradise (*Sanhedrin*, 27b). Even Esau ‘the rascal’, Jacob’s brother, will cover himself with his shawl and will sit in Paradise with the righteous in the future (*Nedarim*, 38b).

What and where is Hell ?

Hell or *Gehinnom* is a place of calamity and is often used as a deterrent or an incentive for reaching Paradise. Hence, it is clearly associated with punishment. The Greeks distinguished between *hades* the place reached by the spirits of the dead (the biblical Hebrew equivalent is *sheol*), and *tartaros* the place where sinners are severely punished. According to the Apocrypha (*Baruch*, II,4, 3-6), Hell looks like a monstrous serpent who swallows up the sinners, and its voice is similar to the voice of those who are being tortured there (*Enoch*, I, 22, 5). Moreover, it is so loud that it goes from one side of the world to its other side (*Avodah Zarah*, 17a).

Quoting the Essens’ sources, Josephus describes Hell as a cold and dark cave (*The Jewish Wars*, II, 8;11). Post-biblical Jewish sources postulate that the souls of the righteous go to Paradise. Hell is reserved for the sinners (*‘Eruvin*, 19a). Its mouth, which is found between two palm trees (*Sukkah*, 32a), is narrow, belching out eternal smoke (*Menahot*, 99b). Its dimensions are immeasurable (*Ta’anit*, 10a): it is sixty times bigger than Paradise, and, therefore, if it is compared with a pot, the whole world is its lid (*Pesahim*, 94b). Its borders are not marked. Hence, it is infinite, although the Garden of Eden is surrounded by *meusim* (fouls) and Hell is surrounded by *ta’anuqim* (pleasures) (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755). However, the distance between Paradise and Hell is less than a handbreadth (*Pesiqta*, 2). Hell can talk (*Shabbat*, 104a), and can also scream. It, or the angels at its entrance, often beg God to direct all the sinners towards it

⁴ See also *Yevamot* 63b where a wicked woman is compared to Hell.

(*Avod. Zar.*, 17a; *Eliyahu Zuta*, 20). Hell is situated underground, under the sea, in heaven or behind the mountains of darkness (*Tamid*, 32b). The high temperature of the spas of Tiberia is explained by the fact that they are built above Hell (*Shabbat*, 39a). The fire in Hell is so fierce that the setting sun ‘recharges’ itself with it. (*Bava Batra*, 84a).

Like Paradise (Eisenstein 1915:84), Hell has several gates⁵, and seven sections (*Sotah*, 10b). It has many rivers of fire and smoke, and it is covered with darkness, though some claim that it is lit (*Pesahim*, 54a; *‘Eruvin*, 19a). The light in Hell, which was created on Monday (*Pesahim*, 54a), cannot affect Jewish offenders of the Law and the students of the Law (*Hagigah*, 27a), although no explanation is given to the question as to what the latter are doing there in the first place, when all students of the Law have been promised to be in Paradise after their death (e.g. *Hagigah*, 12b, 14a).

There are several Angels in Hell among whom are: Nagrisel or Arsiel or Samael or Qippod, then Qushiel, Shaftiel, Matniel, Avniel, Hadarniel and Rogziel. As expected, all these names except Qippod end with the word *el* referring to God. Nagrisel stops the righteous to pray to God to spare the sinners, Arsiel gives the sinners to drink poison and Qushiel flogs them with a whip of fire (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755-756).

The two *Talmuds* and the *Midrashs* discuss extensively the sins for which those who have committed them are punished in Hell. To avoid the ordeal, we find in various places in these sources long discussions or short dicta stating what one should do or should not do in order “to be saved from the domain of Hell”.

Who reaches Hell?

Inevitably the wicked and the arrant sinners, whether Jews or non-Jews (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a; *Bava Metsia*, 82b), since even when they stand at the gates of Hell they refuse to repent (*‘Eruvin*, 19a). Hence, they are doomed to be in Hell for ever (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a). Also pagans will walk over the Bridge of Hell and will fall into it (*Pesiqta Rabbah*, 35-37). The School of Shammai asserts that only arrant sinners stay in Hell for ever, the petty offenders go down to Hell to ‘purify’ themselves and then they go up to Heaven. The School of Hillel, however, claims that the petty offenders do not go down to Hell at all. More serious rascals and criminals go to Hell for a year, and only those who deny resurrection or those who cause other people to sin remain in Hell for some generations. (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16-17; *Shabbat*, 31b). To these the *Talmud* adds

⁵ Some claim that it only has three: one in the desert, one in the sea and one in Jerusalem (*‘Eruvin*, 19a).

other cases of those who will descend to Hell and will never ascend back: the adulterer, the one who insults another person in the presence of other people, the one who defames his friend (*Bava Metsia*, 51a) and the one who causes trouble between a married couple (Eisenstein 1915:92).

The following are those who will reach Hell:

- He who has sex with a married woman (*Sotah*, 4b).
- He who ‘walks behind a woman when crossing a river’ (*Shabbat*, 61a; *‘Eruvin*, 18b).
- He who tells gossip about a pious person who has died (*Berakhot*, 19a).
- He who is a sycophant (*Sotah*, 41b).
- He who is uncouth (*Avodah Zarah*, 78b).
- He who is arrogant (*Bava Batra*, 10b; *Avodah Zarah*, 18b).
- He who offends his friend (*Bava Metsia*, 59a; *Sanhedrin* 107a).
- He who refrains from studying the Torah⁶ (*Avodah Zarah*, 71a).
- He who teaches a dishonest student (*Hullin*, 133a).
- He who uses obscene language (*Shabbat*, 33a).
- He who is jealous of the students of the Law, upon reaching Hell his eyes will be filled with smoke (*Bava Batra*, 75a).
- He who recites the prayer “Hearken O’ Israel” carefully, if commits a sin he will find that Hell has been cooled for him (*Berakhot*, 15b).
- He who follows the advice of his wife goes to Hell (*Bava Metsia*, 59a).
- He who banter or chaffs (*Yerushalmi*, *Berakhot*, 82, 5-8).
- He who pays money to a woman in order to look at her (*‘Eruvin*, 18b).

Who dwells in Hell?

The wicked and rascals will end up in Hell (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 16b). The *Talmuds* and the *Midrashim* provide several examples, such as: Some biblical personalities e.g. Bil’am and his disciples, King Ahab, Abshalom, Jerobo’am the son of Nebat and his friends (*Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a)⁷. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babel, the people who perished in the Flood, the people of the city of Sodom, Qorah and his comrades, the Israelites who were not allowed into Canaan [except Moses (*Temurah*, 16a)], the ten tribes (*Sanhedrin*, 110b) and the wealthy people in Babel (*Beitsah*, 32b).

⁶ Literally, the one who separates himself from the company of the students of the Law.

⁷ Since God offered to him to repent and he refused (*Sanhedrin*, 102a).

What can the sinners and the righteous expect in the world to come?

The dwellers of Hell can only expect torture and suffering, especially that the wicked will be punished by God pressing him from above and the chief of Hell from below ('*Arakhin*, 15b), or by the Angels of Hell. The various sanctions include being hung by the 'sinning' limbs, roasted in fire, usually fire which comes from inside the sinner, choked with smoke or eaten by worms, eating sand. (Eisenstein 1915:91-92; *Yalkut Shim'oni*, *Bereshit*, 20). Sometimes the sinner is struck by blizzards of snow or ice, and sometimes he is tortured by both (*Yerushalmi*, *Sanhedrin*, 81b). The wicked is also hit by a strong east wind (*Beshallah*, 2,4), is flogged by a whip of fire and is forced to drink poison (Ben-Yehudah 1908-1959:755).

The righteous, however, will enjoy the following privileges in Paradise: God will make the righteous sit in a circle while He will be sitting among them (*Ta'anit*, 31a). He will also erect a tabernacle for them made of the skin of the leviathan (*Bava Batra*, 74a), and they will enjoy food prepared from the flesh of the female leviathan (*Ibid*), and the flesh of the wild ox (*Bava Batra*, 75a) and the best of wines (*Berakhot* 34b). Thirty barrels will be filled with wine made of one grape (*Ketubbot*, 111a). Incidentally, the body of the leviathan diffuses bad smell, and had it not been for the fact that his head is in Paradise, no other creature would have been able to bear his smell (*Bava Batra*, 75a). According to *Midrash Jonah* the Prophet Jonah had told the leviathan who wanted to swallow the big fish inside whom he had found a shelter, what was going to happen to him in Paradise and the leviathan fled with fear "to a distance of two days" (*Tanhuma*, *Leviticus*, 8, 5).

What we may learn from the 'menu' which will be served in Paradise is that since the flesh of the leviathan is non-kosher, and the wild ox is not clearly identified⁸, it implies that no dietary restrictions i.e. kosher food will apply in Paradise, although in another place in these sources we are told that there will be no food, drink or sex in the world to come (*Berakhot*, 17a). Presumably, these earthly needs are not needed over there.

Finally, the following personalities, who reached Paradise after their death, were shown the world to come during their life time: Abraham, Moses, Isaiah, Daniel and a few rabbis of the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*. Some of them were even shown Hell.

⁸ In another text it is called *behemot* (*Pesiqta Rabba*, 16).

Medieval Jewish sources

Medieval and later Jewish literature also deals with questions concerning the world to come without reaching unanimous views about it. Maimonides, one of whose Thirteen Principles speaks of resurrection, gives the impression that he is sceptical about the existence of Paradise and Hell. He quotes various views in favour of their existence without mentioning names, but avoids any firm statement in support of any view (*Commentary, Sanhedrin*, 10a, pp. 195-209). In another work he takes a more rational view of the world to come where he claims that Hell only means the deprivation of immortality with which the righteous is promised (*Hilkhot Teshuvah*, 8, 1.5).

The Kabbalah advocates the existence of two realms which are equivalent to Paradise (the upper realm) and to Hell (the lower realm). The soul goes through the lower section, which includes expiation by fire and ice, mainly for the purpose of purification, and then it goes up to Paradise, as the person has now been clean of sins. However, the souls of those who have committed very serious crimes, such as murder and idolatry will remain in Hell for ever. This idea was challenged by some Cabbalists who have regarded it as a contradiction to the concept of repentance and the idea of a forgiving God (Waite 1976:324-332). Some of them believe that each of the realms, i.e. Paradise and Hell, had two sections, upper and lower, and the final place for the soul was decided according to the person's behaviour during his life (*EH* 651). This explains why the process takes twelve months before the final destination has been reached (Cf. *Rosh ha-Shanah*, 17a).

In this context, medieval Jewish philosophy at large concentrates on questions such as life after death, good and evil, reward and retribution, rather than dealing with how Paradise and Hell look like. In general, Jewish thinkers in the Middle Ages hold the view that Hell purifies the soul from the sins committed in this world in preparation for its move to Paradise.

And what about Islam?

Since some of the papers which have been read in this colloquium have extensively dealt with the Muslim attitudes towards Paradise and Hell, I will confine my own discussion to some aspects of the subject which both faiths have in common.

Similarly to late Jewish sources, as has been discussed above, the Qur'ān and other Muslim religious literature emphasize the existence of Paradise and

Hell. Paradise is called in the Qurʾān *al-ġanna* (the Garden) (66 times), *ġannāt ʿAdn*⁹ (the Gardens of Eden) (69), *an-naʿīm* or *ġannat/ġannāt an-naʿīm* (the pleasant or the Garden(s) of pleasant) (16), *malakūt as-samāwāt* (the Kingdom of Heavens)¹⁰ (2); *firdaws* (garden)¹¹ (2) and *ʿilliyūn* (high places) (1). Other names which are metaphorical are also used.

Hell is referred to as *ġahannam*¹² (77), *ġaḥīm* [fire] (16), *an-nār* (the fire) (145), *saqar* [burning, light] (4), *laẓā* [blazing fire] (1), *al-hāwiya* (abyss) (1) (the root exists in biblical Hebrew in the sense of ‘disaster’), and *dār al-bawār* (house of perdition) (1). Later sources include other metaphorical names for both places.

The Qurʾān, the Ḥadīth and other theological and philosophical works speak at length about the two places, emphasizing clearly and vividly the contrast between them, and highlighting their role as places of reward and punishment. Similarly to Judaism, Islam too recognises seven spheres in each place¹³, each of which has a separate name. The Qurʾān, however, uses the seven names as synonyms, and only Muslim commentators sometimes distinguish between the different divisions, in reference to the type of fire and its ‘victims’. Thus, *ġahannam* is the place into which Muslim sinners will be consigned, *laẓā* is for Christians, *ḥuṭama* is for the Jews, etc. (Hughes 1935c). Moreover, the ‘Jewish’ Hell and the ‘Muslim’ Hell seem to be compatible: They both emphasize the severe punishment inflicted upon the sinners, which is usually carried out by glowing fire. Paradise in both faiths promise the righteous pleasures of the body and the soul. The only difference is that Muslim ‘menu’ includes ordinary ingredients, whereas the Jewish one talks about extraordinary food, consisting mainly of non-kosher products. Hence, although none of the two religions mentions the consumption of pork in Paradise, Jews will, as we have seen, be allowed to eat non-kosher flesh in Paradise whereas Muslims will be allowed to drink wine. Thus we are told by the Qurʾān that Paradise has rivers of water, milk, wine and pure honey, delicious fruit (Q 47.15) and poultry [The Jewish Paradise has rivers of milk, wine, honey and persimmon (Eisenstein 1915:84)]. The righteous will be sitting on couches covered with precious materials and jewellery. They will be served by young males and females (*ḥūr al-ʿayn*), more precisely, beautiful virgins with big eyes (Q 56, 14-24). The *houris*, by the way,

⁹ The equivalent to *Gan ʿEden* in Hebrew.

¹⁰ Hebrew *malkhut ha-shamayim*; Aramaic *malkhuta di-shmaya*.

¹¹ *Pardes* in Hebrew is an orchard, both the Arabic and the Hebrew come from Persian, which is the etymology of the word ‘Paradise’.

¹² From Hebrew *gei Hinnom*.

¹³ Although some sources refer to eight sections in Paradise and only seven in Hell, since the number of the righteous will exceed the number of sinners.

are only referred to in Sūras which came down in Mecca. Those which came down in Medina usually speak about the place in Paradise for the female-believers or the wives of the male-believers. This is another point Judaism and Islam have in common, that is to say, both do not discriminate between the men and women, as both sexes will reach either Paradise or Hell (Q 9,72). On the other hand, there are many Ḥadīṭs which postulate that “women are the chief population of Hell” (Wensinck 1971:96).

The question as to whether the righteous arrive in Paradise and the sinners go to Hell immediately after their death is discussed at length by Muslim theologians. Many of them believe that the sinner receives his punishment first in his grave, whereas both arrive at their final destinations after the Day of Judgement (Hughes 1935b). This certainly echoes the motive of *hibbut ha-qever* (beating in the grave) in Judaism, which appears in the *Aggadah* and in the Kabbalah and which refers to the punishment inflicted upon the sinner while in his grave. The Angel of Death carries out the action with a fiery chain. Those exempted are those who died in Erets Israel, those who are buried on Friday before sunset, those who give money to charity, those who recite their prayers devotedly and tell the Angel their Hebrew name for which they use a biblical verse in which the first and last letters correspond to their name¹⁴.

The idea of assisting the poor is also stressed in Islam as one of the ways which will help the Muslim to reach Paradise (Q 2/214-215). Similarly to Judaism, Islam also distinguishes between serious crimes (*kabā'ir*) and ‘mild’ offences (*ṣaḡā'ir*). However, there is no unanimous agreement between Muslim theologians about the exact differences. Nevertheless, Allah, solely, as the Almighty, can forgive the sinner, and like Jewish theologians, Muslim theologians too claim that punishment in Hell is temporary. Another point is that the Prophet Muhammad and other prophets before him will act as intercessor (*ṣafīr*) speaking in favour of Muslim sinners in order to save them from Hell (Hughes 1935d) as Abraham and Moses will plead for the Jews.

On the other hand, the *Talmud* tells us that the righteous in Paradise asked Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses to recite a benediction in praise of God after a feast and they all refused, because they believed that their record was not clean of misconduct, only King David agreed (*Pesahim* 119b). The Ḥadīṭ, on the other hand, tells us that the believers will gather on the Day of Resurrection and will ask Adam, Noah, Abraham Moses and Christ to intercede for them with God, and they will all reject the request because of various sins they had committed. Only the Prophet Muhammad will accept the task (*Hadith Qudsi*, 131-135).

¹⁴ *JE* II, 464 “Hibbut ha-Kever”. See also Hughes 1935b.

The Resurrection will take place on the Day of Judgement when Allah will decide the fate of all creatures, after they were tried briefly by the Angels Munkir and Nakīr. Unlike Judaism which speaks generally about the Day of Judgement, Islam provides details of the procedures. Various *sūras* mention blowing horns, all people die, except a few, many people turning into animals or will have bodily defects. Only the righteous will come back to life unharmed. The Day will be very hot, the Books will be opened and the Scales will be used. People will walk over a very narrow Bridge called *ṣirāṭ*. The wicked will fall in Hell and the righteous will pass to Paradise. The idea of the Bridge is found in Judaism too (*Shabbat*, 32a). Similar to Moses' visit to Paradise, we are told by the Ḥadīth about Muḥammad's visit of the place on his way to Heaven (Gardet 1960ff).

Another common factor between the Jewish and the Muslim Hell is the belief that Hell is not content with the number of sinners it admits. Hence, in a dialogue with God it "asks for an addition" (Q 50,30).

Finally, while both religions refer to physical pleasures as a reward to the righteous, both emphasize the fact that the greatest pleasure is achieved by the righteous in Paradise in their being close to God.

Conclusions

Both Judaism and Islam strongly stress the existence of Paradise as the place of reward for the righteous and Hell as the place of retribution for the wicked. Furthermore, while both faiths leave the choice in the hand of the individual, while in the present world, the message is unequivocal: Do good and go to Paradise, commit sins and reach Hell.

Moreover, since Islam was heralded in the seventh century, when the concepts of Paradise and Hell and the whole ethos behind them had already been well-established in both Judaism and Christianity, it is not surprising that Islam has followed suit in introducing its followers to the intricacies of the world to come.

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THE ARABS AND THE KNOWLEDGE OF PRECIOUS STONES

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It is not known exactly when a person picked up for the first time an attractive piece of stone or bone or volcanic glass and used it as an ornament. Archaeological evidence shows that the interest in unusual and attractive stones began with early man. Prehistoric drawings show figures decorated with teeth from various animals and ornaments made from seashells, volcanic glass or just any coloured stone hammered down to a small size easy to wear. As men developed and civilizations were born, their knowledge of these stones began to develop too and they started differentiating between stones.

So what were the characteristics that differentiated what became to be known as “precious stones” from others, perhaps equally attractive and unusual, but not considered exclusive enough to be treasured as a precious stone?

- First of all, there was *rarity*. Stones that were abundant and of common quality were not interesting. Only very fine pieces are suitable to be fashioned into gemstones, and these are rare.
- Then there was *durability*. A stone had to be hard enough to endure the ravages of time without disintegrating or breaking or losing its original beauty and attractiveness.
- But perhaps the most important criteria was *beauty*. Here colour played a major role, although size and shape were also important. Only in the case of diamond was the absolute lack of colour of the stone of major importance.

These three conditions are still valid today.

All civilizations valued precious stones. In Indian mythology, holy cities were described as having emerald pillars, ruby and diamond cupolas, sapphire crossroads, highways blazing with gems, and trees that carried precious stones instead of fruit.

All holy books mention precious stones. In the Torah, the breastplate of the High Priest of Judah was decorated with several precious stones, in fact twelve stones representing the twelve tribes of Israel.

In Christianity, the Heavenly City was described as being gem-encrusted also with twelve precious stones, which led some Christian writers around the 8th century to assign the twelve stones of the Heavenly City to the Twelve Apostles.

In the Qur'ān, only pearls (*lu'lu'*), rock crystal (*ballūr*), and ruby (*yāqūt*) are mentioned. The word *marḡān* is also mentioned, but it then referred to small pearls and not to coral, which nowadays is called *marḡān*. Several *ḥadīṡs* mention also *zabarḡad* (peridot) which is a green stone that looks very much like emerald. It is found in St. John's Island (Ḡazīrat az-Zabarḡad) in Egypt. It is also reported that the Prophet wore a silver ring with a carnelian (*ʿaqīq*) stone, with which he used to seal his letters to the different rulers.

The Arabs started writing on precious stones at least as early as the 8th century. The first study of gemstones started probably well before 300 BC, but the only surviving manuscript on the subject was written by a Greek author called Theophrastus around 300 BC. This book dealt with the supposedly magical powers of stones. After that, and until late in the 15th century, there was only a handful of Western authors who wrote on gemstones. It is worth noting here that these early books dealt mostly with the supposedly magical properties of gemstones. They were not scientific books, but rather a compilation of folklore and superstitions related to stones.

During this time, Arab scholars were not idle, and many wrote extensively on gemstones. In his bio-bibliography written in the 10th century, Ibn an-Nadīm mentions literally dozens of authors on the subject.

The most prolific one was a certain Ḡābir al-Ḥiraqī, who wrote a series of books devoted to gemstones, such as “*Kitāb al-Aḡḡār al-awwal*, *K. al-Aḡḡār at-tānī*, *K. al-Ḡawāhir al-kabīr*; *Rasā'il fī l-ḡaḡar*, *K. az-Zumurruda*, *K. al-ʿAqīqa*, *K. al-Billawra* (“rock crystal”). Unfortunately neither the author nor his books are known to us today.

It could very well be that some of these apparently lost works are still lying undiscovered, as, it is estimated that there are about several million manuscripts, only a small part of which are catalogued and indexed.

The earliest Arabic lapidary, *i.e.* a book on precious stones, that is still extant, is the *K. Khawāṣṣ al-aḡḡār* of ʿUṡārid b. Muḡammad al-Ḥāsib, dating from the 3rd/9th century, and dealing mostly with the magical properties of gemstones.

So what is a precious stone? With the exception of pearl, coral and few other organically produced materials, *i.e.* materials produced by living creatures, all gems are attractive, lustrous and bright minerals found in rocks.

Originally, the Greeks used to call rock crystal *krystallos*, because they believed that rock crystal was fossilized ice, that is, ice frozen so hard that it could never melt again. Nowadays, the word crystal means a mineral substance frozen into its solid state, with characteristic molecular patterns for each different mineral. Whether the stone is microscopic or several meters long, it is still the same material with the same attributes. The appellation “precious” and “semi-precious stones” is not valid from the point of view of gemmology, and is based primarily on the actual value of the stone. All beautiful stones suitable for wearing in a piece of jewellery or simply just worthy of being admired, should be called “precious stone”.

As for the Arabs, they called gemstones *al-aḥḡār al-karīma*, meaning stones that are noble, valuable, expensive, rare and precious at the same time. The rarest and most valuable were also called *al-aḥḡār al-mulūkiyya*, or royal stones.

To study gemstones, we study many aspects: their family, chemical composition, crystallographic habit, hardness, colour range, specific gravity, and other scientific characteristics.

The hardness of a stone is an important factor in deciding its value. Of course, the hardness of a stone is also useful in differentiating between stones that are similar in appearance. To measure the hardness of a stone, we use what is called the Mohs scale of hardness. This scale was devised by the German scientist Friedrich Mohs in 1812, and depends on the fact that a harder material will scratch one that is softer, and where gemstones are classified from 1 (being the least hard stone, such as soapstone) to 10 (with diamond the only stone with this hardness). In the Mohs scale, the hardness from one level to another does not denote equal degrees. This means that diamond with a hardness of 10 is 140 times harder than ruby which has a hardness of 9, but 1000 times harder than quartz for example, with a hardness of 7, and hundreds of thousands of times harder than amber, with a hardness of 2.

When we look at this scale, we note that only those stones that have a hardness of 7 and above are the ones that are in fact the most precious and valuable stones. These include: a family of stones called beryl which includes the green emerald, the blue aquamarine, the pink morganite, and other coloured beryls; it also includes the yellow topaz, and another family of stones called corundum which includes ruby, sapphire, and all the other colours of sapphires, including pink, green, yellow, all shades of blue, and all shades of red; and finally, diamond. The only exception to the rule is pearl, which, far from being the romantic gem that women adore, is in fact an organic substance excreted by the pearl mollusc, to fight an intruder in its shell, and which has the hardness of 2½ to 3½ depending on its variety.

These stones that are considered nowadays as the most important ones are exactly those that the early Arabs valued most. As they conquered other lands and assimilated their cultures, they also acquired their tastes for beauty and luxury. Their love and admiration for precious stones was inherited from the Persians, Indians, and early Egyptians, with whom they had extensive commercial links. The Silk Road was not only about rich silks, precious woods, valuable spices and frankincense; it exposed the Arabs to the magnificent gems and jewellery of the neighbouring cultures.

Very soon, the Arabs competed with their neighbours, and we read in many books descriptions of the love of many caliphs for precious stones and beautiful jewellery, especially during the Umayyad, °Abbāsīd and Fāṭimid periods.

The Umayyad caliphs used to decorate their house utensils, bowls, dishes, etc. with precious stones, and used to wear jewels themselves, like all the ladies in their harem. One of the earliest caliphs, °Abdalmalik b. Marwān (r. 685-705) owned a huge, and perfectly flawless spherical pearl called *al-yatīma*, “the orphan” because it could not be matched. It is also reported that many caliphs used to reward good poets by filling their mouth with as many jewels as it could take. Others used to change jewellery daily according to the clothes they wore.

Hārūn ar-Rašīd (r. 786-809), owned the famous ruby called “the mountain” which kings and rulers competed to buy for their own collections, and he had his name engraved on it.

Precious stones came from many different countries, including India, Sri Lanka, Iran, Afghanistan, Central Africa, Egypt, and other countries, but Baghdad was the market and showplace for the most expensive jewels. Extravagant pieces of jewellery were commissioned, like the Persian sapphire of about 1500 carats that was carved into the shape of a slave girl, or the life size palm trees that were made for the Persian Husraw and the °Abbāsīd caliph al-Muqtadir (r. 908-932), which were entirely of gold, and decorated with all sorts of gemstones, to imitate the bunches of dates hanging from the tree.

History books describe exceptional jewellery made to please the rulers, caliphs and viziers alike. The mother of the vizier Ġa°far al-Barmakī (767–803), for example, had an emerald crystal as long as an arm, with a bird made of ruby sitting on top. This long emerald rod was probably made of several emerald crystals joined together with metal threads. Another caliph owned a peacock of solid gold, its body completely covered with pearls and its eyes were two glowing rubies; as well as a deer of gold all studded with large and small pearls. Here again, these animals were apparently life-size.

Even carpets were woven from gold and silver and decorated with all kinds of precious stones. It is reported that one such carpet cost the astronomical sum

of 130 million dirhams at that time. The caliphs' beds were also made of pure gold and studded with gems.

Weddings were the occasion to display magnificence and riches: On his wedding day to Būrān, the caliph al-Ma'mūn (813-833) gave her 1000 of the best rubies and a carpet woven entirely from gold, all decorated with pearls and rubies. On that occasion, he threw hundreds of pearls on the people attending his wedding. As did Būrān's grandmother the following night, as he went to his bride.

Fāṭimid rulers continued this tradition of luxury and love of precious stones, and many left behind crates filled with several kilograms of emeralds, pearls, and hundreds of drinking vessels made of bezoar, which is a secretion from the deer and was then considered to be a most precious stone, as it was seen as the most effective antidote against all kinds of poison. Bezoars were collected from all over and placed well guarded in the safe of the sultan, for use whenever necessary, either for the sultan himself, or for any other person in his domain. The crates and chests themselves, which were used to store these stones, were decorated with precious stones. Even the saddles of their horses were covered with gold and studded with all kinds of gems.

Later on, the Mamlūk rulers of Egypt also left immense treasures consisting of magnificent collections of the rarest and best of gemstones.

So, why is this insatiable love for precious gems? Of course, their value made them important in the eyes of the rulers, and the richer their treasury, the nobler and more important their reign was. Owning beautiful and rare things was also thrilling, and no doubt the beauty of a perfect pearl inspired many poets and satisfied many rulers.

But there was also another reason: Almost all gemstones were supposed to possess magical and medicinal properties.

The ancients believed that gemstones possessed magical properties if they were used properly; that is if they were engraved with the appropriate picture, if they were set during a specific time of the day that depended on the purpose wanted from the gemstone and on the gemstone itself; and if they were worn taking into consideration specific conditions required, such as what to eat or what not to eat, how to dress, and so on.

The general idea was that certain figures were engraved on specific stones during specific times of a specific day of the week, while certain planets were in particular houses. Often, special herbs or seeds or even the tongues of certain birds were also placed under the stone as it was set in gold, copper or more often silver or steel. This was enough to guarantee success of a mission, or to become knowledgeable of the secrets of the underworld, or to have special insight for locating treasures, or even to control the minds and deeds of people.

It was also believed that wearing pendants set with brilliant gems could attract the attention of the beholder and thus protect from the mysterious and dangerous evil eye, just like a lightning rod could divert the electric discharge.

Many gemstones were attributed specific magic and healing powers:

- Pearls were supposed to strengthen the optic nerves, regulate heartbeat; prevent heart attacks, chase away fear and anguish, stop haemorrhages, polish teeth and acted as a powerful antidote against poison.
- Rubies, sapphires and other corundums were believed to strengthen the self confidence of the wearer and his standing and respect amongst his people; prevent heart palpitations and recurrent anxieties; shield persons from lightning and stop haemorrhages and blood clotting.
- Emerald could improve eyesight, safeguard against epilepsy, cure stomach pains, repel poisonous animals, bring good luck and guard against evil.
- As for coral and turquoise, they also were beneficial for the eyes, protect children against the evil eye and evil spirits. Coral was especially effective against tooth decays and gum diseases; it was powdered and used for massaging the teeth and the gums.

The belief in the powers of precious stones did not die out with time. Today still, many people believe in the healing power of amber against gout and arthritis, the ability of turquoise to protect its wearer against the evil eye, the use of pearls as a calcium supplement. As a matter of fact, people in China, India and Japan powder pearls nowadays and swallow them as they provide a precious source of calcium. It is true, as the chemical composition of pearls is almost exclusively calcium carbonate, and as such, they do comprise a substantial amount of calcium.

Even dreams could be explained with precious stones. It is reported that a book dating back to the 8th century and written by a certain Ahmad interpreted all kinds of dreams, based on Indian sources. If, for example a crown appeared to a king, this was supposed to bring increased power and success for the sovereign, but this depended on the colour and nature of the jewels that decorated the crown.

- If the gems were red and of the kind known as garnets or rubies, the dream indicated that the king would have great joy and good fortune and would be feared greatly by his enemies.
- If the stones were blue, this was a bad omen, and it meant that the king would probably lose part of his kingdom.

- If the stones were light green, then this king would gain a great name in the world through his deeds, faith, and the greatness of his kingdom.

This idea of associating colour with certain moods, or diseases found some analogy between the colour of the gem and the character of the diseases to be cured.

Thus, yellow stones were supposed to be effective against jaundice, red stones, such as ruby, coral and carnelian could stop violent haemorrhages, the green emerald was regarded to be beneficial for the eyes, and one modern application of this belief is found in many of our modern hospitals, where the walls and the uniforms of the doctors are all green.

The interest in coloured stones was probably the reason why diamond was not considered to be the most important gemstone. As a matter of fact, until the 13th century, the Arabs valued pearl and ruby above all other stones. Diamond was mostly used for cutting and drilling stones, and also for killing people. We are told that diamond was hit until it was powdered, then it was mixed with salt or sugar. Whoever swallowed some of this powder with their food would soon die with terrible pains, as the tiny pointed crystals of diamond would tear at his intestines. Also, yellow-tinged diamonds were considered as more precious than colourless diamonds, for the same reason that colour was the most important criterion of beauty in a gemstone.

In addition to the well-known precious stones with which we are familiar nowadays, there were many stones that were also considered to be very valuable, either because of their exceptional properties, or simply because the legend and lore surrounding them conferred to their wearer unknown and mystical powers.

For example, al-Bīrūnī (973-1048) mentioned several stones, unknown to us nowadays, like the stone that could remove the hair from any part of the body if rubbed against it, the stone that could be used to make casts for broken bones, etc.

Other old Arab manuscripts mention a stone that could desalinate salty water and make it sweet, rain-making stones, stones that could turn a normal person into a deranged one and that could turn a deranged person into a normal one; stones that could counteract the poison of any poisonous creature, and so on.

The use of gemstones in healing and in medicine was largely documented by the Arab authors. However, their most important contributions to the field of gemmology were the scientific ones, especially those of al-Kindī, al-Bīrūnī, and al-Tifāṣī, which firmly established the roots of the science of gemmology.

In the 9th century, Ya^cqūb b. Ishāq al-Kindī wrote *Fī l-ḡawāhir wa-l-aṣbāh*, or “On Gemstones and their Imitations”. al-Kindī was the first one to mention that ruby (and the other corundums) was the heaviest of precious stones. He was also

the first one to differentiate between spinel and ruby. As for pearls, al-Kindī was the first to point out the concentric nature of pearls, which, he said, grow layer over layer, like an onion, all made of mother-of-pearl, preceding the remarks of the French scientist Reaumur (1683-1757) by 900 years.

In the 10/11th century, al-Bīrūnī's contribution was even more substantial. In his book, *al-Ġamāhir fī maʿrifat al-ġawāhir*, he covered all gemmological issues and mentioned all known gemstones. He referred to such scientific phenomena as double refraction in ruby and rock crystal, which was noted only in the 18th century in Europe, the dispersion test that he used to test diamond, which is no other than the same dispersion test we use nowadays, and which consists of checking whether the stone under examination shows splitting of the light into its rainbow colours, and other phenomena such as pyroelectricity which he described as the ability of tourmaline and amber to attract dust when heated.

He also listed the different colours of diamond, including white, silver, yellow, green, blue, red, and black. As a matter of fact, these colourful varieties of diamonds are considered some of the most valuable, and are called fancy diamonds. A very important piece of information given by al-Bīrūnī concerns the different cuts of stones. He described how to cut gemstones into different shapes, including the square and rectangular ones. But al-Bīrūnī's greatest contribution to the science of gemmology is undoubtedly the establishment of the Specific Gravity of stones, whereby he accurately calculated the Specific Gravity of many stones in order to ascertain their nature. His results were remarkably exact, and the modern calculations using computers are almost identical.

His scientific observations on gemstones probably laid the foundation of the science of gemmology, which, with at-Tīfāšī's work in the 13th century, became a firmly established science in the Arab and Islamic world.

Aḥmad b. Yūsuf at-Tīfāšī's *Azhār al-afkār fī ġawāhir al-aḡḡār* or "Best thoughts on the best of stones" can truly be considered to be the first scientific book on gemstones, as the information therein is classified according to our modern concepts of gemmology, including colour, variety, chemical composition, crystal habit, hardness, specific gravity, locality, heat treatment, and so on.

at-Tīfāšī (d. 1253)

- was the first one to establish a hardness scale for testing gemstones, preceding Friedrich Mohs by 500 years. If we compare the two scales, we note the great similarity between the hardness numbers allocated to the various gemstones in both scales. As a matter of fact, only two stones do not have matching hardness in these two scales.

- He also described the cubic crystal habit of diamond. He also described cleavage, which is the weak spot in diamonds along which the stone could break, or which is actually used for cutting rough diamonds.
- He also pointed out that ruby, sapphire and the other corundums all belonged to the same family. He also pointed out the types of inclusions – or impurities – in gemstones, and the way to treat some of them, which is the first reference to inclusions in gemmology.

Another important piece of information given in his book concerns the heat treatment of stones, specifically of ruby, for the purpose of improving the stone and thus making it more attractive and valuable. The heat treatment that at-Tīfāšī described in great detail is the first record of such an improvement method carried on gemstones, and it is still carried out today in India and Sri Lanka.

But there is even more puzzling information: For example, how could Aḥmad at-Tīfāšī ascertain in the 13th century that the beautiful blue colour of turquoise was due to the presence of copper? In Europe it was only in the 20th century that copper was discovered to be behind the beautiful colour of turquoise. And how did he discover that iron entered into the chemical composition of amethyst, although it is only in the 20th century, with the help of sophisticated electronic instruments, that scientists actually discovered that iron forms the basis of the chemical composition of amethyst. He was also the first one to differentiate between emerald and peridot (Arabic *zabarġad*), although the two stones are very similar in colour and were confused one for the other until then.

Through simple observation and modest experiments, the early Arab scientists were able to make discoveries and advance theories the accuracy of which amazes the modern gemmologist. There is no doubt that the genius of these early Arab scholars paved the way for our modern science of gemmology, just like their predecessors did for other sciences, such as astrology, astronomy, chemistry, algebra, and others.

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REVIEWS

Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān. Ed. by STEFAN WILD. (*Diskurse der Arabistik*, 11.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006. 169p. ISBN 978-3-447-05383-9

The present volume under review consists of seven papers which were read in a symposium titled “Self-Referentiality in the Qur'ān” held in May 2004 at the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and is introduced by Stefan Wild, the editor and the convenor of the Symposium.

In connection with an important passage of the Introduction I would like to make a general remark. Stefan Wild writes (p. 14.): “The Qur'ān is also the first written and published book in Arabic culture.” Gregor Schoeler has shown, how, in the history of Arabic learned tradition, orally transmitted material is normally supported by written notation and how gradually this written notation to support memory ends up in becoming a collected and “published” book. Here he refers to Gregor Schoeler’s excellent paper titled “Schreiben und Veröffentlichen. Zu Verwendung und Funktion der Schrift in den ersten islamischen Jahrhunderten” (*Der Islam*, 1992:1-43) which was translated into English and published in a collected volume of his studies, entitled *The Oral and Written in Early Islam* (London: Routledge, 2006). In the Preface of this book Schoeler makes a sad remark (p. viii) concerning his original papers written in German: “... since scholars in the Arabic speaking world (if they do so at all) take note only of Western studies on Islam written in English, my work has remained almost unknown in the Arabic speaking scholarly world.” Surveying his articles, however, it becomes evident that he himself does not take notice of one single modern Arab scholar who published work on the same field of studies. He does not seem to be aware of the book of Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Asad *Masādir aš-šīr al-ġāhilī*, published in 1956, neither does he know ʿIzz ad-Dīn Ismāʿīl’s most significant work *al-Maṣādir al-adabiyya wa-l-luġawiyya fī t-turāt al-ʿarabī* published in 1980, both in Cairo. This latter arrived at similar results in 1980 as Schoeler in 1992. This example reflects well the lack of communication between Western and Arab researchers.

Wild’s Introduction serves as a good basis for appreciating the following articles, even providing short summaries of each one at the end of the Introduction. It gives a wide panorama of the issues connected with the Qur'ān as text and the various peculiarities of this text. However, this panoramic summary even proves to be too wide. One can hardly imagine what makes the first part of

the Introduction, “Revelation and Modernity” necessary for the question of self-referentiality of the Qur’ān, since self-referentiality means “making reference to itself, its author or creator, or their other work, especially of a literary or other creative work” (*The New Oxford Dictionary of English*). This subsection deals with the underdeveloped, un-intellectual nature of Islamic thinking which can be the topic of an independent work on its own right. Although I disagree with Wild on many points, this kind of discussion is hardly in its place in a volume on the self-referentiality of the Qur’ān.

Putting aside these critical remarks, Stefan Wild’s introductory “Why self-referentiality” is an interesting and thorough presentation of the question how and why the Qur’ānic text refers to itself, listing the different names which the Qur’ān uses for itself and the various verbal ways of references, too. Here (p. 10) he remarks that “sometimes, these verbs do not have a Qur’ānic nominal equivalent – such as *frđ* I (to impose a divine command)”. This basically correct statement leaves the reader, however, feel that the author lacks a deeper insight into the Qur’ānic language. We can say with an exaggerated generalization that Qur’ānic text, as a rule, evades nominalization. The nouns *hiğra* or *ğihād*, for instance, do not occur in the Qur’ān, only their verbal counterparts do. Although the form *ğihād* occurs in the Qur’ān, but not as an independent noun but only as the final part of a *maf’ūl muṭlaq* construction (*figura etymologica*), together with the verb.

This overall picture drawn by the Introduction on the self-referentiality of the Qur’ānic text is needed first of all because the papers that follow do not really deal with this problem. Four of the seven articles do not deal with self-referentiality as their central question and of the rest only Madigan’s article concentrates on the theme given by the title of the volume. All of them, however, can be considered as Qur’ānic textual analysis and the Qur’ānic text forms the core of these studies.

Gerard Hawting’s “Eavesdropping on the Heavenly Assembly and the Protection of the Revelation from Demonic Corruption” discusses Qur’ānic passages that talk of demons as prevented from “listening in” or obtaining “a hearing” of the divine revelations. It also mentions the theory of human corruption of the revelation (*tahrīf*). The author compares the Qur’ānic places with a Jewish tradition on the theme of the shooting stars preventing the demons from “stealing a hearing” in the heavenly assemblies. Unfortunately, the author does not find parallels in the bedouin life of Arabia with these Qur’ānic passages although the *ğāhiliyya* poems are full of references to similar events, eavesdropping and spying within a tribe done not by demons but human beings. Perhaps this important *topos* of early poets may have played some role in the Qur’ānic concept of eavesdropping.

Thomas Hoffmann in his “Agonistic poetics in the Qur’ān. Self-referentiality, refutation and the development of a Qur’ānic self” tries to establish the development of the concept of self-referentiality in the Qur’ān and to distinguish different levels in it. At the same time the author points out the contradiction between the Qur’ān’s own assertion several times of not being poetry and its apparent poetic characteristic.

Daniel Madigan’s paper “The Limits of Self-Referentiality in the Qur’ān” deals with the possible references of such expressions in the text as *kitāb* and *qur’ān*. According to him such verses originally referred to pre-canonical entities or even to Jewish or Christian scriptures, not the Muslim canon. Interestingly enough Madigan, too, cannot think of possible parallels with the vocabulary of tribal poetry which contains ample reference to *kitāb* as is shown also by Schoeler in the book mentioned above (*The Oral and Written in Early Islam*).

Angelika Neuwirth in her paper “Oral Scriptures in Contact. The Qur’ānic Story of the Golden Calf and its Biblical Subtext between Narrative, Cult and Intercommunal Debate” speaks about the adaptation of one and the same story to the different demands of the emerging Muslim community.

Matthias Radscheit’s “The Qur’ān – Codification and Canonization” stresses the necessity to distinguish between codification and canonization. In this popular theme of modern Arabic scholarship it is most astonishing that the author knows none of their writings. It again shows the tragic split between Western and Islamic research.

Nicolai Sinai’s paper “Self-Referentiality and Self-Authorization in the Qur’ān” aims at outlining the genetic dimension of Qur’ānic self-referentiality as a whole.

Stefan Wild’s contribution “The Arabic Recitation. The Metalinguistics of Qur’ānic Revelation” concentrates on the linguistic medium of the self-referential statements.

This volume on the whole serves exceptionally well the most important aim of modern Islamic studies, *i.e.* the better knowledge of the Qur’ān as a text.

Kinga Dévényi

A Critical Edition of the Grammatical Treatise Taḍkirat Jawāmi‘ al-’adawāt by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd. By ARIK SADAN. (*Arabische Studien*, 8.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012, 150 p. ISBN 978-3-447-06775-4

“*Taḍkirat Jawāmi‘ al-’adawāt* by Muḥammad b. Aḥmad b. Maḥmūd, whose scholarly edition is the focus of this book, is largely devoted to a discussion of the syntactic and semantic roles of various particles in Arabic” – writes the editor of this Arabic grammatical manuscript. It thus belongs to the genre known

as *‘ilm al-adawāt*, “the science of grammatical instruments or particles”. The editor tells us that he first found an MS of this work in the Oriental Manuscript Collection in the University Library in Leipzig and having been impressed by its contents tried to locate other MSS of the same booklet. He succeeded in finding eleven different copies all over the Eastern and Western libraries and then he decided to edit the work on the basis of these MSS.

In his introduction, Arik Sadan first gives information about the most famous works of the *adawāt* genre based on Ḥāğğī Halīfa’s *Kašf az-ẓunūn*, then he sets out to present the eleven MSS of the *Tadkira*. Only after making the principles of the edition known to the reader speaks the editor about the author confessing that we know about him nothing, not even the century in which he lived, but perhaps it is nearer to the 13th century than to the 11th. The edition itself occupies 104 printed pages, the MS consisting of 12-15 folios differing according to the various copies. There is an Appendix containing chapters 1-32 as they appear in MSS, i.e., the MS found in the Manisa Library (ms D). The reason for this is that this manuscript is very different from the others, both in the order and the content of the chapters.

Sadan’s principles of edition are a bit outdated since he does not edit one of the MSS with references to the others, but instead he makes a super-text selecting places from each one according to his own judgement. Notwithstanding the text remains sometimes quite puzzling and incoherent.

Kinga Dévényi

The Structure of Mehri. By JANET C. E. WATSON. (*Semitica Viva*, 52.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2012. xxviii + 479 p. ISSN 0931, ISBN 978-3-447-06736-2

This work under review is a unique contribution to the study of the modern Mehri dialects and helps scholars to attain a better knowledge of the South-Arabian language on the whole. The book is based mainly on the author’s collection of data from some Mehri speakers of Oman and therefore lays emphasis on the description of the Mehreyet dialect spoken in Oman. The author, however, compares her data with those of the Mahriyōt, the dialect of Yemen, thus the book rightly bears the title “The Structure of Mehri”. Since about two thirds of the Modern South-Arabian speakers use Mehri, it is far the most important language in this branch of Semitic languages. Watson estimates their number between 100,000 and 180,000, while Soqotri is spoken by 60,000 and Šheret or Jibbali only by 10-30,000 according to her. This last data, however, may be an

underestimation of the real number of Jibbali speakers since they can be met all over in Oman, not only in Dhofar.

The book consists of four large chapters. The first (pp. 1-46) is an overview of phonetics and phonology, comprising sections not only on the classical phonological entities but also on what is called in modern linguistics morphonological phenomena like prosody, syllable structure, melodic processes, syncope and syllable contact. The description of Mehri consonants and vowels is not only thorough and sufficiently detailed but it also gives a summary of the results and problems presented by earlier writers on this theme. What one misses, however, in a grammar of such impressive size are precise definitions of the phonological terms used since these traditional denominations, like ‘voiced uvular fricative’ are not always unambiguously understood.

The second chapter (pp. 47-137) deals with the grammatical categories – the different types of nouns, pronouns, verbs, verbal aspect and mood, particles, etc. – always making comparisons between the various forms of the two main dialects of the Mehri, Mehreyyet and Mahriyōt. The nominal morphology is shown in its amazing abundance which is the clear characteristic of an unstandardized language state. The different formal clusters are presented in separate, lucidly arranged tables, which make them easy to survey for the reader. These tables, however, do not always reflect real morphological correlations between their elements, because owing to the descriptive linguistic principles followed by the author, lexical relations mingle with morphological ones. On page 59, for instance, we are informed that the plural of *wōz* (‘goat’), is *rawn*, and on page 60 that the plural of *nhūr* (‘day’) is *yōm*, although neither of these two couplets may form morphological pairs and thus could not have been put among other regular couplets like *bōkar* (‘young she-camel’) and *bkūr*. The above examples are important lexical data but have nothing to do with morphology.

The above two chapters seem to serve only the preparation for the greater structural units of the language, since they are followed by two main parts without decimation: Phrase Structure (pp. 138-228) and Clause Structure (pp. 229-405), though these large chapter headings are only mentioned in the table of contents and are lacking in the book itself. The phrase structure part contains chapter 3 on attribution (pp. 138-175), chapter 4 on annexion (pp. 176-196) and chapter 5 on complementation (pp. 197-228). The clause structure part contains chapter 6 on predication (pp. 229-270), chapter 7 on coordination (pp. 271-309), chapter 8 on negation (pp. 310-346) and chapter 9 on supplementation (pp. 347-405). This last chapter, contains both the supplements of simple sentences and subordinate clauses. Probably it would have been more fortunate to deal with these two types of supplementation separately. The grammar is supplemented

by chapter 10 (pp. 406-470) containing oral texts. The book ends with the references and (regarding the size of the grammar) a very short index.

All in all the Mehri grammar of Jane C.E. Watson may constitute a milestone and starting point for further research in the field of the Modern South Arabian language and is an important contribution to Semitic studies in general.

Kinga Dévényi

Textes en parler arabe des musulmanes de Meknès (Maroc). By ARSÈNE ROUX, ed. by HARRY STROOMER. (*Semitica Viva*, 42.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008. xix + 109 p. ISBN 978-3-447-05520-8

The Arabic texts in the Moroccan dialect of Meknes occupy the first 66 pages of the book written by the author's hand. The French translation of the texts is printed in 41 pages (pp. 69-109). There is a preface written by the editor of the book, Harry Stroomer (pp. ix-xv), followed by a very short introduction by the author, Arsène Roux (pp. xvii-xix). The texts have been found by the editor in the archives of the outstanding French scholar of Berber studies, Arsène Roux (1893-1971) in Aix-en-Provence. He was also an expert of the Moroccan Arabic dialects, having spent eight years in Meknes between 1919 and 1927. During this period he prepared his doctoral thesis in 1925 titled "*Le parler arabe des musulmanes de Meknès*", which remains in MS. In this thesis he analyzed the dialect of Meknes, laying special emphasis on the language use of the women speakers of the town. The original work, i.e., the doctoral paper, consists of 310 pages, divided into three sections: (i) Arabic texts with French translation (pp. 1-133), (ii) the phonetics and phonology of the dialect (pp. 134-193), (iii) the morphology – verbs, nouns, articles, demonstratives, pronouns, verbal and nominal pronominal affixes (pp. 194-309). According to the editor's opinion the second and third sections of the thesis have become outdated, but the first part, consisting of 28 texts, remained interesting and worth publishing. We can only regret this view, and can only hope that he might change his opinion in the future and make available for the scholarly public the remaining chapters, which it is quite hard to imagine in what way could have become outdated since they deal with the sounds and forms of a language in a given period of time. At the moment, however, let us content ourselves with what we have.

The editor lists some peculiarities of the language usage of the women recorded in the texts comparing them with the common Moroccan dialect. The main aim of Roux's thesis was to illustrate in his texts the three regular phonetic changes which have taken place in the women's language in Meknes: š → s,

ž → z and r → ġ. Although one can understand why the Arabic transcription of the texts was not re-typed, the fact remains that it is very inconvenient to read not because of the handwriting but because of the intensive greyness of the paper. One wonders whether it would not have been possible to whiten the paper a little. Notwithstanding the difficulties of reading this is an important publication which helps us to a better knowledge of an interesting segment of the Moroccan Arabic dialect area.

Kinga Dévényi

Die Chronik des ibn Wāṣil. Ġamāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad ibn Wāṣil: Mufarriġ al-kurūb fī aḥbār Banī Ayyūb. Kritische Edition des letzten Teils (640/1248-659/1261) mit Kommentar. Untergang der Ayyubiden und Beginn der Mamlukenherrschaft. By MOHAMED RAHIM, (*Arabische Studien*, 6.) Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2010. xlvī + 308 p. ISBN 978-3-447-06149-0

The final part of Ibn Wāṣil's Ayyūbid history is particularly interesting for the historians of that age because the author was a contemporary of the fall of the Ayyūbid dynasty and the coming into power of the Mamlūks. This new edition was necessitated by the lack of a critical edition and also the lack of explanatory notes in the previous editions. After a brief introduction Mohamed Rahim gives a detailed biography of the author, evaluates the *Mufarriġ* from the point of view of historiography, and also as a literary piece of work. Then he compares it with other historical works of this era and states how the text was transmitted.

The editor made an enormous effort to bring about a critically acceptable and useful text. However, his editorial notes overstep the usual and sensible level. Although additions to the text of the edited MS from another MS are to be welcome, Rahim brings this method to excesses. It seems superfluous, for example, to mention the shortcomings of the non-edited MSS. On p. 108 the editor mentions, that the name Muḥammad ibn °Abd al-Muḥsin al-Anṣārī is shortened to Muḥammad al-Anṣārī in another MS, which is evidently the result of the copyist's negligence. The same holds true when he notes the grammatical errors of the non-edited MSS. These might be interesting in an edition of poetry but not in a historical work. The vast amount of questionable editorial notes disturbs the reader and unnecessarily grows the size of the book. The same may be said about the explanatory endnotes of the editor. While it is certainly useful to be informed that Munyat °Abdallāh is nowadays called Mīt al-Ḥūlī °Abdallāh (en. 464) and is situated on the Eastern bank of the Nile in the Daqahliyya district, it seems to be quite superfluous to tell the same kind of information about

such places as the citadels of Damascus and Cairo, or the big Egyptian cities like Manṣūra and Asyūṭ. It is quite unnerving for the reader to glance at a note and find only that Arīḥā is Jericho, or that the congregational mosque at that time was al-Azhar (it is told twice!), and so on. Though the majority of the notional explanations may prove useful, there are many that form part of common knowledge of any reader of Classical Arabic: the meaning of *waqf* or *ismāʿīliyya* and many similar notes. The too many explanatory notes lessen their value and are tiring for the reader. If, however, this book were a university textbook or these endnotes were attached to a German or English translation of the Arabic text they would be justified. Summing up my critical remarks I think that less footnotes and endnotes may have been more.

The result of this remarkable editorial work on the whole, in spite of these excesses mentioned above, is a readable and reliable text with many important references to the works of other historians dealing with the same age and clarification of many personal and place names. Thus the publication will serve as an important source book for a turning point of the Medieval Islamic history.

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