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ALLĀH AVANT MUḤAMMAD*

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Abstract Epigraphic evidence proves the existence of a polytheistic god named *al-Lāh* in pre-Islamic Arabia. Numerous theophoric personal names were formed with it. This proper name was probably derived from the general noun *al-ʾilāh* ("the god"). In Arabian onomastics, the predominant god is originally *ʾĪl* (the Arabian form of *ʾĒl*, the supreme god of the western Semites in 2ⁿᵈ millennium BCE). *This name* was gradually replaced in some areas by *al-Lāh*. It seems that *al-Lāh* was simply an Arabic translation of *ʾĒl*. In the 5ᵗʰ and 6ᵗʰ centuries CE, Christians whose mother tongue was Arabic called the monotheistic God *al-ʾIlāh* and shortened his name into *Allāh*, at least in Najrān. In addition, Quraysh endorsed the polytheistic god *al-Lāh* as the main deity of the temple of Mecca. It seems that the idea that this polytheistic god was identical to the monotheistic God of the Christians began to take form. On the one hand, it allowed people of Mecca to resist more effectively the monotheistic pressure of the Christian mission; on the other, it was likely to attract Christian pilgrims to the Meccan temple, as well as to fairs associated with this pilgrimage.

Keywords Arabia, pre-Islamic period, history of religions, God, Allāh, Arabian epigraphy, polytheism, monotheism

"THE QURʾĀN HAS BEEN BROUGHT DOWN IN SEVEN MODES OF ARTICULATION": ON POSSIBLE PARALLELS (OR ANTECEDENTS) TO AN OLD ISLAMIC TRADITION*

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Abstract According to an early Islamic tradition, the Qurʾān has been brought down (*unzila*) in seven "modes of articulation" (*aḥruf*). It has been quoted, discussed, and interpreted for many centuries, starting in the second century AH, in several branches and genres of Islamic literature: collections of traditions (*ḥadīth*), Qurʾān exegesis (*tafsīr*), traditional "Qurʾān sciences" (*ʿulūm al-Qurʾān*), works on the history of the text of the Qurʾān, and biographic

lexicons. A review of these sources as well as approaches of modern research may lead to the conclusion that there are two possible options for the "original" meaning of the term *aḥruf*: 1) modes of understanding or interpretation of the Qurʾān; 2) dialects of the language spoken by the Arab tribes at the time of Muḥammad. A Rabbinic homily on the revelation of God at Mount Sinai includes an interesting explanation of the term "voices" (Exodus 20:15) in the plural as a description of the voice of God which the Israelites heard at this occasion. Accordingly, the voice was indeed one, but each person heard a message that suited his or her individual capacity. This homily, which exists in various compilations, could have been available in an Arabic version at a relatively early date in places with a considerable Arabic speaking Jewish population. It could have also reached the attention of Muslims, and consequently lead to the acceptance of a variety of meanings and explications to one officially recognized text. This could later open the door to legitimizing non-official variant readings described as representatives of tribal dialects (*lughāt*).

Keywords *aḥruf*, Qurʾān, articulation modes, variant readings, *tafsīr*

UNMASKING *MASKH*: THE TRANSFORMATION OF JEWS INTO "APES, DRIVEN AWAY" (QURʾĀN 7: 166) IN NEAR EASTERN CONTEXT*

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Abstract This article seeks to contribute to our understanding of the Qurʾānic idea that a group of Jews were punished for desecrating the Sabbath by being turned into apes and driven-away (Qurʾān 7:166). First, I survey and engage critically with recent studies that treat this topic. Following this, I attempt to broaden the framework of enquiry considerably by showing that for Near Eastern monotheists on the eve of Islam, the divine transformation of sinners into "driven away animals" resonated loudly. A selection of Near Eastern materials that have not hitherto been drawn on in this context is introduced, including *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, the *Prayer of Nabonidus*, the Biblical *Book of Daniel* (both the Masoretic Text and Greek versions thereof), Midrashic of the Biblical *Book of Esther*, and Jacob of Serug's *Homily on Daniel* 4. Taken together, these sources allow us to demonstrate that on the eve of Islam, Jews and Christians were well aware of the idea that God can punish the disobedient by

animalizing and banishing them. It is within this broad context that Qurʾān 7:166 is to be understood.

AR. 3001 AND THE APOTHEOSIS OF MĀLIK B. ANAS*

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Abstract Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795) is much more than a famous jurist from Medina and the author of *al-Muwaṭṭaʾ,* he is also known as a larger-than-life figure who founded the Mālikī school of law. His followers recorded the most mundane details of his life, and he even appeared in dreams after his death, continuing to guide his devotees. In this article, I hope to trace some of the process by which Mālik attained this extraordinary status. It is my contention that whatever Mālik's personal gifts may have been, scholarly authority is ultimately produced by a community of followers. It is their selective memory of his life, and their transmission of his words, that help to establish his authority. In the case of Mālik, this process coincides with the transformation of scholarly writings into books, in which the master's words were carefully preserved verbatim and transmitted to future generations. Eventually, as Mālik's authority increased, so also devotion to his *Muwaṭṭaʾ* increased. We can see this process in the physical copies of this text, preserved in manuscript. While the earliest manuscripts are simple, utilitarian vehicles for recording words, later manuscripts, such as the magnificent volume preserved in the Chester Beatty library in Dublin, display impressive techniques of calligraphy and illumination, normally reserved for the Qurʾān.

WAS KAʿB AL-AḤBĀR A PROPHET IN SYRIA?

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Abstract Kaʿb al-Aḥbār's many apocalyptic prophecies as recorded in the early Syrian collection of Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād, and mainly focused around the middle Syrian city of Ḥimṣ raise the question: on what authority did he issue these prophecies? This article examines some of these prophecies, and comes to the conclusion that Kaʿb was most likely viewed as a prophet or at least with prophetic capabilities.

Keywords Prophecy, Syria, early Islam, apocalypticism, judgement

AL-MASJID AL-AQṢĀ DURING THE UMAWĪ PERIOD: SEVEN *MIḤRĀBS* WITH SEVEN DOMES*

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Abstract This article deals with one of the architectural components of the Umawī al-Masjid al-Aqṣā[1] during ʿAbd al-Malik's reign (r. 65/685-86/705), namely, the existence of seven *miḥrābs* under seven domes, most probably in the southern part (wall?) of the mosque. It also discusses the controversy among early Muslim scholars, who flourished from the end of the first/seventh to the mid-second/eighth century, regarding the *miḥrāb* (pl. *maḥārīb*) in the mosques, mainly according to *ḥadīth* literature.

Keywords Early Umawīs, Muʿāwiya, ʿAbd al-Malik, *ḥadīth* literature, Arculf/Adomnán, *miḥrāb*, early Islamic mosques, The Dome of the Rock, al-Aqṣā Mosque, Mediaeval Islamic Jerusalem

CRITERIA FOR DATING EARLY *TAFSĪR* TRADITIONS: THE EXEGETICAL TRADITIONS AND VARIANT READINGS OF ABŪ MIJLAZ LĀḤIQ B. ḤUMAYD

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Abstract The question of the beginnings of Qurʾānic exegesis has been highly controversial in Western scholarship for more than a century, with positions ranging from a beginning of exegesis at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad to its emergence not before the first half of the second/eighth century. The opposing positions arise from very different approaches to the sources taken by different scholars as well as the underlying assumptions that guide their research. This article aims to overcome these differences by developing criteria that allow for the dating of allegedly early exegetical traditions and for the assessment of the reliability of their ascription to specific authorities of the first/seventh century. These criteria will then be applied to the exegetical traditions attributed to Abū Mijlaz Lāḥiq b. Ḥumayd, a Baṣran scholar who died sometime before 110/728. The article will show that the traditions circulated in the name of Abū Mijlaz must be considered to go back to him and thus allow us to get an insight into Qurʾānic exegesis in the first century. It will also demonstrate that the focus on minor figures, rather than on major authorities, is the most promising approach to unearthing authentic traditions from the first century of Islam.

Keywords Qurʾānic exegesis, tafsīr, methodology, early Islam, Abū Mijlaz Lāḥiq b. Ḥumayd, variant readings, qirāʾāt

VISITED PLACES ON THE PROPHET'S TRACK IN MECCA AND MEDINA*

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Abstract To my knowledge, it was Ignaz Goldziher in his *Muhammedanische Studien* who dealt with the consecration of memorial places ("Gedenkorte") in early Islam for the first time, on the assumption that these places had been neglected in the earliest times.[2] As outlined

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[2] *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle 1890), vol. 2, p. 305 et sqq.

elsewhere,[3] we have textual evidence supporting the consecration or veneration of some well-known places, where the Prophet took a rest or was active, already at the end of the first century AH. The evolution of such spots to celebrated places after Muḥammad's death have been primarily transmitted in the topographical reports about Mecca and Medina, i.e., in the essential work by al-Azraqī (d. about 250/865): *Akhbār Makka wa-mā jāʾa fī-hā min al-āthār,*[4] in the *Taʾrīkh al-Madīna al-munawwara* by ʿUmar b. Shabba (d. around 264/877)[5] and also in collections of *ḥadīth*.

Keywords *ḥajj*, ablution, *muṣallā*, Baqīʿ, *ḥums*, *ḥill*, Namira, ʿArafa

ARABIC SCRIPT AND LANGUAGE IN THE EARLIEST PAPYRI: MIRRORS OF CHANGE*

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Abstract With the arrival of the Arabs in Egypt in the mid-seventh century CE, Arabic became the third administrative language, joining Greek and Coptic, in which most Egyptians continued to operate. Arabic papyri produced by the Muslim administration use standardised administrative formulae, which were shared throughout the Islamic empire, but which were consistently different from local practices. This suggests that these formulae have a common origin and that the Arab conquerors introduced them. The script and orthography in the Arabic papyri, however, do not show a similar consistency, pointing to the introduction of various scribal practices representing local Arabian customs. As scripts continued to develop, one writing style appears to have become dominant, but this was not a linear process. Archaic and newer letter forms existed side by side, sometimes even in the same document. The role of the chancery, where interaction with Coptic and Greek practices took place as well, was crucial. The development of a uniform chancery writing style also led to a divergence between the way texts were penned in different social domains, depending on the legal, political and commercial/private context. One striking example is the development of the

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logogram that appears in Arabian inscriptions as well as early Arabic papyri and Qurʾān manuscripts with the meaning 'son of' and follows the writing of Nabatean *bar*, 'son'. This article traces the developments in administrative Arabic writings from Egypt, connecting them to political and social changes taking place in the first hundred years of Muslim rule in the province.