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**A PRE-ISLAMIC BASMALA: REFLECTIONS ON ITS FIRST EPIGRAPHIC
ATTESTATION AND ITS ORIGINAL SIGNIFICANCE**

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Abstract The Islamic *basmla* is a tripartite formula traditionally translated as ‘in the name of Allāh, the most gracious, the most merciful’.¹ It begins each chapter of the Qurʾān, except for Sūra 9, and is found in its full form in Qurʾān 27:30. Given its structure, Neuwirth has suggested that the *basmla* is a reworking of the Christological formula, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* (e.g. Matthew 28:19).² Similar invocations are found in the Ancient South Arabian monumental texts from the monotheistic period and in Gəʿəz.³ Yet, until recently, no directly comparable pre-Islamic formula in Arabic had been attested. In 2018, M.A. Al-Hajj and A.A. Faqʿas published a unique inscription from Jabal Ḍabūb in the region of al-Ḍālīʿ, Yemen: a South Arabian graffito in the latest stage of the minuscule script containing a variant of the *basmla* in a language distinct from the Late Sabaic written register.⁴ In this paper, I wish to refine the interpretation of this text, discuss its language, dating, and its significance for our interpretation of the meaning of the *basmla* in the pre-/paleo-Islamic period.⁵

Keywords Ancient South Arabian, *basmla*, *Musnad*, Paleo-Islam, pre-Islamic Arabia

¹ On the traditional understanding of the *basmla*, see Carra de Vaux and Gardet, “Basmalah.” See Reynolds, *Allah*, pp. 94-96 for a balanced discussion of the traditional opinions.

² Matthew 28:19: πορευθέντες οὖν μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος. See Neuwirth, *Qurʾan and Late Antiquity*, p. 116–117.

³ The South Arabian comparanda have been compiled by I. Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, pp. 226–231. The Christian *basmla* in Gəʿəz is በስሙ አብ፡ ወወልድ፡ ወመንፈስ፡ ቅዱስ፡ አንድ፡ አምላክ። ‘in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God’. For an excellent discussion of this invocation and its importance to the understanding of the Muslim *basmla*, see Kropp, “Im Namen Gottes.”

⁴ Al-Hajj and Faqʿas, “Naqṣ Jabal Ḍabūb,” henceforth *ed. princ.* = Editio Princeps.

⁵ I follow Al-Azmeh’s use of this term to signify the period of the formation of the proto-Qurʾānic community and the Medinian state; see Al-Azmeh, *Islam in Late Antiquity*, ch. 6.

ÉTIQUETTE, NASĪB ET BOISSON DANS LA JĀHILIYYA

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Abstract Dans la présente étude, nous considérerons les matériaux poétiques sous l'angle uniquement littéraire puisque tout aussi bien le *nasīb* que les vers bachiques ont été soumis à une étiquette très stricte issue d'une norme ancestrale. Le cérémonial a conféré aux deux premières sections de la *qaṣīda*, l'ouverture et la section chamelière, un caractère conventionnel très prononcé. Or, qui dit conventionnel dit non réaliste; dans ces deux sections le poète fait de la littérature, de la poésie et ne ménage pas ses efforts pour se démarquer de la réalité. Le cérémonial validait l'immuabilité et la pérennité des mêmes données qui ont été retenues et ne ménageait pas ses efforts pour atteindre à une perpétuation du discours poétique affectif dans ses multiples aspects tout aussi bien dans l'ouverture que dans le *raḥīl*. Ce caractère sera souligné à maintes reprises au cours de ce travail. La conclusion s'est attachée à expliciter cet attachement de l'artiste préislamique à composer un texte a-historique conforme à des usages littéraires ancestraux. Nous n'avons pas ménagé nos efforts pour prouver que les passages célébrant le vin se sont abstenus d'ancrer leurs vers dans le réel. On verra qu'il a fallu attendre Abū Dhu'ayb pour voir la réalité transpercer à travers un thème bachique annexe de sa composition, comparant la salive de Asmā', sa bien-aimée, au vin qu'il avait goûté chez Abū Burja, un cabaretier célèbre d'al-Ṭā'if à la fin de Jāhiliyya et au début de l'Islam. Il nous semble que nous nous sommes abstenus d'affirmer qu'Abū Sufyān a été un habitué des cabarets d'al-Ṭā'if et de Yathrib; pour éviter de prendre parti, nous nous sommes contentés de résumer les propos d'Ibn al-Kalbī sur la question.

À notre sens, notre conception qui considère la poésie du Préislam dans sa dimension uniquement "belle-lettriste" convient le mieux pour une étude pertinente de cette masse textuelle dont l'authentification ne peut qu'être aléatoire.

Keywords al-A'shā, les cabarets d'al-Ḥīra, étiquette littéraire, les *fityān*, l'hédonisme, la jactance, la *khamriyya* préislamique, les *nasīb*-s, les orgies, le *raḥīl*

**FLOGGING, BANNING, LAPIDATION:
WHAT WAS THE PUNISHMENT FOR FORNICATION AND ADULTERY IN
EARLY ISLAM?***

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Abstract In the Qur'ān, there are several references to *zinā* (meaning both fornication and adultery), which stress the social ills that follow from committing such a sin. The Qur'ān makes it clear that those found guilty of *zinā*, regardless of their marital status, will be liable to receive a punishment of one hundred lashes, whilst slaves, married or unmarried, should receive fifty lashes (Q. 24:2). Nonetheless, the complexities surrounding the issue of adultery, and in particular the issue of its punishment, gave rise to a heated debate in the early Islamic juristic circles, which coalesced into a number of traditions conveying a growing strictness with regard to the punishment for adultery, especially towards married adulterers. In this paper I offer an interpretation of the most significant among these narrations in the early sources. In particular, I provide an account of the issue from the perspective of the early Ibādī sources, which are often neglected in mainstream Islamic studies, in order to trace the Ibādī contribution to the early juristic debate on fornication and adultery. My hypothesis is that a focus on Ibādī sources, which have been proven to preserve some very ancient material, provides a stronger basis for the study of the early centuries of Islam.

Keywords early Islam, *ḥadīth* criticism, Ibādī law, *li'ān*, *mut'a*, punishment for adultery or fornication (*zinā*)

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HOW DID ARABIC PREVAIL IN THE MELKITE CHURCH OF JERUSALEM?*

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Abstract Following the Muslim conquest Arabic gradually became the dominant language in significant parts of the conquered territories that had previously been under Byzantine rule. Palestine was the spearhead of this process, and, in comparison to other regions, the swiftness in which Arabic became the prevalent language is striking. This paper attempts to outline the factors which stood behind this unexpectedly rapid process.

The paper proposes that in the forefront of this process stood the Christian Arab community, which was centered in Palaestina Tertia, and was until then virtually mute. This community was now not only released from its previous social and linguistic bonds, but actually benefitted greatly from the newfound status of the Arabic language and the rapid spread of Arabic writing. Behind this advantageous position also lurked the temptation of conversion to Islam which opened the way to swift integration into the new ruling class. A major part of the community's writings were therefore aimed at facing this challenge.

Keywords Christian Arabs, conversion, CPA, Jerusalemite liturgy, Melkites, Middle Arabic (early neo-Arabic), Palaestina Tertia, Patriarchate of Jerusalem

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions from which I greatly benefited. All errors remain mine alone.

**INNA HĀDHĀ 'L-'ILMA DĪNUN FA-'NẒURŪ 'AMMAN TA'KHU DHŪNA-HU:
RELIGION, KNOWLEDGE OF TRANSMITTERS, AND THE TYRANNY OF THE
HIGH ISNĀD***

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Abstract The tradition *inna hādhā 'l-'ilma dīnun fa-'nẓurū 'amman ta'khudhūna-hu* (“This knowledge is religion; therefore examine those from whom you learn it”) has been widely attested in *ḥadīth* literature since the third/ninth century. Its chains of transmission (*isnāds*) mostly converge on the early Baṣran authority Muḥammad b. Sīrīn (d. 110/728). Concerned with uprightness (*ʿadāla*) as a foremost attestation of transmitter reliability, the *ʿilm-as-dīn* tradition may offer a glimpse into the formation of *ḥadīth* criticism and the science of transmitters (*ʿilm al-rijāl*), which has been a contested issue in recent *ḥadīth* scholarship. In this essay, I examine the origin and transmission history of the *ʿilm-as-dīn* tradition, based on a method of *ḥadīth* scrutiny, known as *isnād-cum-matn* analysis. I argue that, despite the apparent multiplicity of *isnāds* carrying the tradition, many of them are either weak or impossible to ascertain. Rather than Ibn Sīrīn, the earliest possible disseminator of the tradition is the Baṣran client (*mawlā*) ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAwn (66–151/686–768). In the second part of the article, I observe that most of the tradition’s *isnāds* were shaped under the sway of the conception of highness (*ʿuluww al-isnād*), which requires that the fewest number of transmitters intervene between a *ḥadīth* collector and the original speaker or a key figure above the level of the original speaker.

Keywords *ʿālī*, common link, high *isnād*, relic, transmitter criticism, *ʿuluww*

* I am grateful to the two anonymous readers of the article for their extensive comments on various aspects of my analysis. Some of their suggestions have been incorporated in the text, while others are discussed in footnotes. The author is solely responsible for all errors of fact and opinion.

**THE BOOK OF FOODS:
A THIRD/NINTH CENTURY IMĀMĪ-SHĪʿĪ GUIDE TO EATING**

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Abstract Nearly a thousand traditions in one of the earliest Shīʿī *ḥadīth* compilations extant, *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn* by Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Barqī (was active in the late third/ninth century), are devoted to food and eating. The hypothesis standing at the background of the present article is that an analysis of this substantial amount of material may lead to insights with regard to early Imāmī-Shīʿī thought that are not restricted to practical aspects of food and eating. This study demonstrates how different kinds of foods, as well as various phenomena related to eating, are strongly interwoven with the Imāmī-Shīʿī cosmological and historical narratives and with this community's self-perception as God's elect. The extensive preoccupation with food and eating from these perspectives inevitably portrays this universal issue as an essential building block of the Shīʿa's confessional and sectarian identity. Shīʿīs, the findings in *Kitāb al-maḥāsīn* show, do not eat the same way as others.

Keywords abstinence, al-Barqī, eating, food, geophagia, gluttony, Imāmī *ḥadīth*, satiety, Shīʿa

**RITUAL HUNTING AND WILD SACRIFICES:
THE PAGAN ORIGINS OF THE PRE-ISLAMIC ABRAHAM CULT
IN ARABIA**

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Abstract This paper examines how Muslim exegetes and jurists appropriate to their definition of the prescribed *ḥajj* sacrifice what they report as pre-Islamic pagan hunting activities. Specific rituals, exemplified by the practice of the prophet Muḥammad, for acquiring, transporting, killing, and apportioning the sacrificial victim continue customs linked with pre-Islamic fertility rites. Certain hunting rituals, including the offering of wild animals to goddesses to ensure the fertility of springtime lambing and calving, are attested in epigraphic and archaeological evidence from pre-Islamic Arabia. An investigation of rock art sites, ancient hunting grounds including kites and other natural traps, and the practices of modern pastoralists are consistent with what Arabic Islamic sources describe as hunting rituals performed in and around Mecca and other desert and mountain sanctuaries. The *ḥajj* rituals performed by Muslims outside of Mecca, from ‘Arafāt to al-Muzdalifa and Minā, closely parallel the ritualized hunt-like competitions reported to have been a part of the pre-Islamic *ḥajj* at the Dhū al-Majāz fair. Muslim jurists themselves confirm the continuity of these sacrificial practices, stipulating a series of small differences between the pagan and Islamic versions of the rituals.

Keywords camel, goddesses, *ḥajj*, hunting, Mecca, Muḥammad, prophet, ritual, sacrifice, storm god, ‘*umra*