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ISLAMIC STORIES OF THE PROPHETS:

Semantics, Discourse, and Genre



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Image:

Detail, *The Expulsion of Adam and Eve*, folio from a *Falnama* (*Book of Omens*), Qazvin, Iran, 16th c. (S1986.251; courtesy Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, www.asia.si.edu)

Camilla Adang (Tel Aviv University)

“Tales of the prophets in al-Maqrīzī’s *al-Khabar ‘an al-bashar*: from Saul to Solomon”

Within the framework of the project *Bibliotheca Maqriziana* (general editor: Frédéric Bauden, see <http://www.brill.com/publications/bibliotheca-maqriziana>), a new edition with a fully annotated translation is currently being prepared of *al-Khabar ‘an al-bashar* (*The History of Humankind*) by the famous Egyptian historian Taqī al-Dīn Abū’l-‘Abbās Aḥmad b. ‘Alī al-Maqrīzī (d. 845/1442), largely on the basis of autographs. This work, which currently exists in an edition that leaves much to be desired, contains a substantial section dealing with the early prophets and the Israelites in which the author combines qur’anic verses and the accounts of well-known Muslim authorities such as Muqātil b. Sulaymān, Abū Ja‘far al-Ṭabarī, and Ishāq b. Bishr on the one hand with biblical materials, mostly derived from the book of Josippon, on the other. Sabine Schmidtke, Iqbal Abd El-Raziq and myself are responsible for publication of this section of Maqrīzī’s work, volumes 15 (*The Ancient Prophets*) and 16 (*Banū Isrā’īl*).

The proposed paper will first present a survey of the materials covered in the relevant parts of the work and the sources used, to be followed by a closer analysis of the sections dealing with Saul, David, and Solomon, in which special attention will be paid to the relative weight given by Maqrīzī to the various categories of sources. Time allowing, a comparison will be made with the historian and exegete Ibn Kathīr’s (d. 774/1373) treatment of the three kings as well.

Carol Bakhos (UCLA)

“The case of al-Kisā’ī”

Rabbinic literature is often the starting point for those interested in locating intertexts and establishing relationships between Jewish and Islamic literature. Second Temple literature, however, echoes not only in medieval Jewish texts, but also in Islamic tales about the prophets. Moreover, the worldview underlying al-Kisā’ī’s *Tales of the Prophets* is reminiscent of the distinct ordering of the world and the forces of evil depicted in *Jubilees*. Islamic depictions of Nimrod (Namrūd) usually parallel those of Pharaoh; however, Kisā’ī’s characterization of Nimrod, one of the most elaborate in the *Tales of the Prophets*, takes on a similar function as Mastema in *Jubilees* – the force of evil that keeps humanity from righteousness. This is not to suggest that Kisā’ī was familiar with *Jubilees*, nor is it to suggest that the only model for his portrayal of Nimrod is Mastema. However, in light of broader considerations of the transmission of motifs and traditions across geographic, religious, and temporal lines, an examination of the depiction of Nimrod in the work of Kisā’ī draws attention to the possibility that aspects of Second Temple literature continue to reverberate many centuries later, even if only faintly. By drawing a literary connection between Mastema and Nimrod in the work of Kisā’ī, this paper makes a modest attempt to contribute to the complicated subject of the relationship between ancient Jewish sources and medieval Islamic literature. The shared affinities do not suffice to demonstrate a direct relationship between *Jubilees* and the *Tales of the Prophets* of Kisā’ī, yet an investigation of how the motif of the arch villain functions in these two retellings of scriptural stories may be illuminating with respect to the broader issue of what, if anything, distinguishes Islamic storytelling from similar types of Jewish literature from antiquity.

Herbert Berg (University of North Carolina Wilmington)

"Elijah Muhammad's prophets: the white Adam, the black Jesus, and the black Christ"

Elijah Muhammad (the leader of the Nation of Islam for four decades) devotes significant attention to a select few biblical and qur'anic prophets, particularly Adam, Moses, and Jesus, in his writings. Despite his claim that Islam is the only proper religion for African Americans, Adam and Jesus feature far more prominently in those writings than the prophet Muhammad. Yet Elijah Muhammad feels no need to conform to the older accounts in the Qur'an and the Bible. Further, he seems unaware of the traditional *qışaş al-anbiyā'* material. His primary goal was to redeploy the figures of Adam, Moses, and Jesus to fit his racist mythology. Although he self-identified as a Muslim and was well-versed in the Qur'an, Elijah Muhammad does not adopt or even adapt much of the Qur'an's reinterpretations of the biblical Adam, Moses, or Jesus. Rather, while seemingly ignoring the biblical and qur'anic accounts, he constantly alludes to them in order to undermine them. He makes Adam into the progenitor of the white race, and Moses into a prophet who led a hopeless mission to reform the race. Jesus is bifurcated into the last black prophet sent to the white race, who rejected and killed him, and into the prophetic metaphor for the last black god sent to the "lost-found Nation of Islam." Elijah Muhammad's Adam, Moses, and Jesus, therefore, serve as parables for the evil of the "white devil" and, in the case of Jesus, the futility and danger of Christianity for African Americans. In these portrayals, Elijah Muhammad creates a modern, non-traditional, and wholly new and independent branch within the *qışaş al-anbiyā'* genre aiming at mid-twentieth-century African Americans.

Helen Blatherwick (SOAS, University of London)

“Solomon legends in *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*”

Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan is a premodern popular epic set in legendary prehistory that tells the story of how the Yemeni king Sayf leads his people on an exodus to the (then unpopulated) lands of Egypt where he diverts the River Nile and founds a proto-Islamic Egyptian kingdom, then embarks on a campaign to conquer the realms of humans and *jinn* in the name of Islam. As with much other popular Arabic literature, this *sīra* uses intertextual references to other stories as a device through which to convey characterization, theme, and meaning, and reference to the legends of the prophets plays a key role. Given this, it is not surprising that *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan*, the story of a great, world-conquering king, uses allusion to various Solomon legends to inform its own storyline. Solomon has unique status in Islamic popular culture: he is regarded as the ultimate prophet-king, the wisest and most powerful of the four Islamic world rulers, and much of his legendary corpus is devoted to tales of his wisdom and greatness. Reference to Solomon – in the form of various heroic heirlooms, tales related by various characters within the *sīra*, and an array of structural, thematic, and motif material – are used throughout *Sīrat Sayf ibn Dhī Yazan* to create a complex network of intertextual links between the *Sayf* narrative and the Solomon pretext. In addition to this, the story of Solomon’s relationship with Bilqīs, the Queen of Sheba, is used to wide-ranging effect in the *sīra*. While many of the individual instances in which the Solomon intertext occurs function at a localized level in the text of the *sīra*, they bring thematic coherence to elements of *Sīrat Sayf* that superficially appear to be disparate, and parallels in the characterization of Sayf and Solomon inform audience expectations and narrative continuity at a global level. This paper explores some of the associations that audience familiarity with various Solomon pretexts brings to *Sīrat Sayf*, and discusses how the *sīra* uses intertextual reference to this Islamic legend corpus as a device to enhance its own narrative resonances, and to what end.

Reuven Firestone (HUC-JIR/Los Angeles)

"The *Story of the Ten Sages*: an Israelite story of the Prophet, or a Jewish *qiṣṣa* of counter-history"

Traditionally, Jews have largely avoided obvious polemical religious compositions for the simple reason that they have lived as vulnerable minority communities under the rule of Christian and Muslim sovereigns. Jews had as much desire to polemicize against their religious competitors as did Christians and Muslims, but they tended to couch their attacks in oblique language for their own protection. One strategy was to construct counter-narratives that re-tell foundation stories sacred to their religious competitors. The most famous is the *Toledot Yeshu*, a term that refers to a Jewish folkloristic, informal, diverse, and highly polemical counter-history of the life of Jesus that circulated orally in many forms for centuries. Another counter-history, and one that has hardly been noticed, is the counter-history of the life of Muhammad. This also originated as oral tales in a variety of forms that were later committed to writing in various periods and in various ways. One version tells the tale of ten Jewish sages who, through esoteric knowledge, learn of the coming power of Muhammad. In order to protect their people from the physical and spiritual depredation that was likely to come, they infiltrated the entourage of Muhammad and assisted him in his project while simultaneously implanting in the developing religion certain signs to prove that he was not a prophet, but rather only a king. In the course of the story, these Jewish sages actually write the Qur'an and embed within it certain cyphers and codes to "prove" its profane nature. The narrative is a kind of Jewish *qiṣṣat al-nabī* that finds literary and phenomenological parallels with the Muslim *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* literature. It is constructed out of a core Muslim narrative in the *Sīra* of the Prophet and from motifs found in both Bible and Qur'an, but it utilizes these in ways that advance a specifically Jewish agenda. This paper will treat the story in the context of folk literature, with special consideration of its phenomenological relationship with the *Toledot Yeshu* and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* literature.

Omid Ghaemmaghami (SUNY Binghamton)

“And there befell the Israelites a period of concealment: notes on Moses and the Shī‘ī messiah in early Twelver apologetic literature”

The legends of qur’anic prophets in the corpus of Twelver Shī‘ī messianic literature have to date received little scholarly attention. This paper will focus on images and conceptions of Moses in the earliest surviving Shī‘ī works written to prove or defend the occultation (*ghayba*) of the Shī‘ī messianic and eschatological figure known as the Qā’im, believed by the Twelver Shī‘a to be in physical concealment since the late ninth century. It will be shown that, perhaps more than any other prophet, Moses serves as the typological prefigurement of the Qā’im in Shī‘ī sources, with key elements of his story cast onto the myth of the Shī‘ī messiah. These elements include Moses’ secret birth; his forced concealment out of fear for his life; his triumphant return as a prophet and messenger; and his function as redeemer of his people.

Special attention will be paid to a lengthy *ḥadīth* that casts Moses into the role of the Qā’im and messianic savior of the Israelites, and links the notion of *ghayba* to the interregnum between two prophets (in this case, Joseph and Moses). According to the story recounted in this *ḥadīth*, shortly before he died, Joseph summoned his followers and family members and prophesied that a time would come when their descendants would be persecuted, before a savior was sent by God. Four hundred years later, the promised deliverer finally appeared in Moses, called “the Qā’im of the age.” This presentation will conclude by suggesting that this *ḥadīth* may have been one of the reports championed by a little-known faction that emerged after the passing of the Eleventh Imām in 874 and was convinced that an interval or break in the sequence of imams (‘*alā fatra min al-a’imma*) had occurred.

Gottfried Hagen (University of Michigan)

“Between Yūsuf and Karbalā’: suffering and salvation history in Fuẓūlī’s *Garden of the Felicitous*”

Stories of the prophets are one of the defining genres of Islamic salvation history, which, if conceived as a cyclical progression towards the perfection of the divine message (and the messenger), may be understood as an essentially optimistic narrative in which humanity ultimately receives all the necessary means towards salvation. By contrast, I will present alternative narratives from the Ottoman period that reflect a much more pessimistic outlook. The *Dreambook* (*Khwāb-nāme*) of Veysī (d. 1628) is a treatise in the manner of ‘mirror for princes’ that summarizes the line of the prophets and their missions as a sequence of violence and transgression against which there is no political remedy. Even more dire is the outlook of Fuẓūlī’s (d. 1556) martyrology, the *Garden of the Felicitous* (*Ḥadiqatu s-su’adā’*, a Turkish rendering of Wā’iẓ-i Kāshifī’s work). Here the prophets appear primarily as saintly men bearing afflictions in this world with exemplary piety.

Mahmoud Ayoub has analyzed Shī’ī martyrology in his seminal study of “redemptive suffering.” The applicability of his interpretation to Fuẓūlī’s work deserves closer scrutiny, especially as it connects to a concept of “salvation” or “revelation history” in which not the message, but the suffering of the messenger, constitutes the axial event. Which afflictions are visited upon the prophets? Can we speak of a coherent theology of suffering? How does it relate to the emotional dimension and poetic expression? How does the narrative of the suffering of the Prophet and his descendants provide an entry point for emulation and identification by the believer? How does such an outlook on history help to give meaning to the human condition? I argue that in Fuẓūlī’s salvation history the catastrophe of Karbalā’ is, in Erich Auerbach’s terms, *jederzeitlich* (omnitemporal), as it is “prefigured” in the stories of earlier prophets, Jacob in particular, leading essentially to a denial of historical progression and teleology. Given the enormous popularity of Fuẓūlī’s work among Ottoman readers, the question needs to be posed how this specific form of religiosity fits into the religious landscape of the Ottoman Empire, both at the time of writing and in subsequent centuries of reception.

Marianna Klar (SOAS, University of London)

“Textual stability in al-Kisā’ī’s Shu‘ayb narrative”

In his 1970 article “Kisā’ī’s Werk *Kitāb Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*,” Ján Pauliny describes the manuscript tradition of al-Kisā’ī’s *qiṣaṣ* collection as testament to the fluidity of the Kisā’ī corpus [1970:201]: “al-Kisā’ī,” he posits, is almost a topos, comparable to the labels “Wahb b. Munabbih” or “Ka’b al-Aḥbār” applied quite interchangeably to cited material within Kisā’ī’s collection [1970:209]. Yet a comparison of the three printed editions of Kisā’ī does not sit entirely comfortably with this description of the text. A scrutiny of Isaac Eisenberg’s early twentieth-century edition of Kisā’ī’s *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā*, which is based primarily on a 781/1379 Leiden manuscript, alongside al-Ṭāhir bin Sālimah’s recent critical edition of this work, which takes as its basis a 1220/1805 Tunisian manuscript, does show numerous and significant lacunae in Eisenberg’s edition. The number of lacunae is comparable to the gaps that al-Ṭāhir bin Sālimah’s edition exposes in Khālid Shibl’s 2008 edition of a single 1274/1857 manuscript, even though, in the majority of instances, these textual gaps do not correspond. However, while the amount of variation between the three texts, on the lexical and often the sentential level, is indeed striking, even more striking perhaps is the degree of textual stability that is nonetheless maintained. This is evident in the consistent reproduction of individual episodes and motifs, with all three printed editions including the same narratives, in the same order, with almost 100% uniformity, but it also displays itself in the presence of countless instances of overlapping vocabulary. This would appear to suggest that every manuscript bearing Kisā’ī’s name is in some way connected to a single, strong textual tradition.

Through a close comparison of the various printed Shu‘ayb narratives with the variants of this tale exhibited in the Kisā’ī manuscripts in the British Library, this paper will seek to ascertain whether it is possible to trace a number of distinct strands within the Kisā’ī textual tradition. It will also, however, address the issue of what constitutes an authoritative edition of a relatively fluid text.

Shari L. Lowin (Stonehill College)

“*Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ in an Andalusian poem of desire”

Under normal circumstances, when one studies the stories of the prophets in the Islamic tradition, one looks for them in their expected milieu: the exegetical literature or the collections of *isrāʾīliyyāt* materials. This paper will address the appearance of *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ narratives in a most unusual and unexpected setting: secular poems of desire (‘*ishq*’) written in Muslim Spain. Perhaps not unpredictably, references to religious storylines and characters do not abound in Andalusian Arabic poems of desire. After all, for the most part the composers of Andalusian secular poetry were representatives of the secular world. As such, when they incorporated cultural referents into their poetry, they drew from history, from Arabic literature, and even from pre-Islamic poetic heroes and heroines. This was true not only in the poetry of the secular poets but also in the works of the religious poets, who joined their secular compatriots in yearning for the taste of a beloved’s mouth, for his/her touch, or for the intimacy of his/her kiss. Even more surprising than the fact that religious scholars, jurists, exegetes, and *khatībs* composed hetero- and homo-erotically charged lust poems is the fact that they – and they alone – frequently incorporated sacred characters and story-lines into their poems of desire. Many did so by drawing from the Qurʾan itself. For example, religious scholar-poets often compared their burning passion to the fires of Abraham (Q. 21:51–70) or Moses (Q. 20:10 etc.)

This paper will discuss a homo-erotic poem by the Cordoban Zāhirī jurist Ibn Ḥazm (994–1064) in which the poet compares his love for his beloved to the *qīṣaṣ* account of the miraculous healing of Jacob’s blindness by Joseph. Importantly, I will ask why Ibn Ḥazm chose the *qīṣaṣ* version over the qurʾanic account and what messages about human love and desire Ibn Ḥazm’s poem thereby sends. I will also investigate here the possible influence of this *qīṣaṣ*-inflected poem on a Hebrew poem by Ibn Ḥazm’s one-time friend, the religious Jewish scholar-poet Samuel ha-Nagid (993–1055).

Tilman Nagel (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

“How to achieve an Islamic interpretation of the *qışaş al-anbiyā*”

Fifty years ago the pattern of cultural history (*Kulturgeschichte*) was predominant in German research on Islam. Islam was considered a black box that had absorbed the heritage of antiquity in order to release it to western science and philosophy, if necessary. Islam as a *religious* entity of its own, which would be able to impress its own hallmark on that heritage, was almost absent in the learned discussions of that day. In his *Die Religion des Islam*, a standard textbook, Richard Hartmann conceived of Islam as sheer eclecticism, as a mixture of Jewish and Christian elements, lacking a center of gravity of its own. In this intellectual situation, research on the *qışaş al-anbiyā* could mean nothing else but identifying the sources of the prophets' tales told in the Qur'an and describing the later amplifications, the so-called *isrā'iliyyāt*. Already at that time I became aware of the insufficiency of that method, and instead of looking for the pre-Islamic sources of the *qışaş al-anbiyā* I tried to tackle the topic as part of Arab-Islamic literary history.

Yet the serious insufficiency remained. Turning to other fields of research, I came across further aspects of our lack of knowledge as to the religious identity of Islam. It was only when I started working on the biography of Muhammad that I gradually succeeded in forming an idea of that identity. It proved closely related to a new interpretation of the *qışaş al-anbiyā* as an *Islamic* genre of narrative literature. Its outlines can be sketched by referring to part of the story the Qur'an tells about Adam. In Q. 2:31 ff. God teaches Adam the names of all created beings. Afterwards Adam is able to demonstrate this knowledge to the angels. In contrast to the Qur'an, in Genesis 2 one reads that Adam himself finds the names, appropriate to each of the created beings God shows to him. In his treatise *De opificio mundi*, Philo of Alexandria explains the reason for God's generous permission: God did not want to be responsible for man's failures and sins. The slight difference in contents between the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'an leads us, as I try to demonstrate, to a better understanding of the specific religious substance of Islam, which will prove instrumental in a genuine Islamic interpretation of the *qışaş al-anbiyā*.

Ayşe Polat (University of Chicago)

“The human Jesus: a 1922 Ottoman periodical debate”

The proposed paper investigates a series of publications on the conception, death, and miracles of Jesus, printed in the Ottoman periodical *Tevhid-i Efkar*. The series began with an article written by the Ottoman intellectual Ömer Rıza on the occasion of Christmas, December 1921. It then continued – between Ömer Rıza and two other Ottoman intellectuals, Mehmet Ali Ayni and Milaslı İsmail Hakkı – until February 1922, when censorship may have resulted in the premature closure of the debate.

This study undertakes a close textual and comparative analysis of the interpretations of the qur’anic Jesus proposed by each of these Ottoman intellectuals. It examines the grounds on which they built their arguments within the larger framework of debates about miracles and the issue of the ambiguity or clarity of the qur’anic text with specific regard to prophetic narratives. It pays close attention to the ways in which Rıza’s ideas deviated from predominant Muslim accounts of Jesus. Although Rıza’s interpretation bore similarities to contemporary rationalist and scientific exegetical approaches, such as understanding Jesus’ miracles in allegorical and figurative terms instead of literal and physical ones, his approach was also different from the majority of them in completely refuting Jesus’ “extraordinary” virginal conception by Mary. In this respect, the paper also looks at how Rıza’s ideas were influenced by a contemporary non-Sunnī movement developing in India.

Meira Polliack (Tel Aviv University)

“The term *qiṣṣa/qiṣaṣ* in medieval Judeo-Arabic biblical exegesis and its wider implications”

The paper discusses the literary and semantic functions of the term *qiṣṣa/qiṣaṣ* in medieval Judeo-Arabic exegetical sources. The wider implications of the term’s usage in medieval exegesis of the Bible will also be noted, as well as its relationship with Islamic sources in light of the interlocking of cultures in the Islamic milieu. The paper focuses on examples from the works of Karaite Jewish exegetes, who considered ancient oral traditions to be embedded in the Hebrew Bible. They used the term *qiṣṣa/qiṣaṣ* in order to specify types of orally-transmitted materials in their analysis of biblical prophecy and narrative discourse. It will be shown how, despite their staunch scripturalism, the Karaites attempted to retain the prestige of orally-received Jewish tradition through envisioning a distant oral past, which in some way informed various genres of the Hebrew Bible. In this context, the leading tenth-century exegete Yefet ben ‘Eli gave voice to the theories developed in the Karaite Jerusalem school about ancient author-compilers (*mudawwinūn*) who, at various stages, fashioned oral materials – designated in his Judeo-Arabic commentaries as “reports” (*khavar/akhbār*) and “stories” (*qiṣṣa/qiṣaṣ*) – into written compositions. These *mudawwinūn*, mostly anonymous writers and editors who lived during the lengthy biblical time-period, were responsible for the textualization of the “raw” varied materials into individual biblical books, and also for the gradual formation of larger biblical sub-collections (such as the Twelve Minor Prophets), eventually overseeing the final codification of the Hebrew Bible, sometime during the Greek period. The examples will show how traces of such sources are identifiable, according to Yefet and other Karaite exegetes, in certain features of the biblical text, which reflect its composition and editing process as a written text. Finally, the paper will focus on how, in explaining this process, the Karaite exegetes appropriated certain notions pertaining to the writing down of Islamic tradition literature (*tadwīn al-ḥadīth*). The submerging of “the oral” within “the written” was part of the medieval Karaites’ subversive dialogue with rabbinic and Islamic traditions, appropriating the prestige of *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’* (and of traditional Jewish oral law), while rejecting its continuing oral dimension.

Michael Pregill (Boston University)

“When is a *qīṣaṣ* not a *qīṣaṣ*? *Taʿwīl*, propaganda, and political prophetology”

The unpublished British Library manuscript Or 8419 is catalogued in the library’s handlist of Oriental manuscripts acquired from 1909 to 1921 as “Stories of the Prophets and Patriarchs of Islam.” The more recent subject guide to the British Library’s Arabic holdings labels it simply as a collection of *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. However, upon inspection, it becomes clear that the work is not a *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* at all, but rather a collection of *Ismāʿīlī taʿwīl* traditions, drawing direct comparisons between the lives of the prophets of Israel, the mission of Muhammad, and the histories of the *Shīʿī* imāms. This work, seemingly a unique representative of its genre, blurs the boundaries between *sīra*, *tafsīr*, *taʿwīl*, and *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*. Based on a number of factors, I have argued that the work is a Fāṭimid propaganda text produced in the early tenth century. The identification of the work as a *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* is understandable, given the text’s references to figures from Israelite history on virtually every page. Moreover, the constant comparison of episodes from biblical history and those of Muhammad and the ʿAlid imāms provokes reflection on the nature of such analogies and their deep roots in early Islamic hagiography and historiography.

Here, I will argue that this work of *taʿwīl* reflects an ancient tendency that was originally deeply ingrained in Islamic historiography: the positioning of the history of the Israelites so as to culminate with Muhammad in order to project a supersessionist message to Jews and Christians. This supersessionist impulse lies at the heart of the endeavor to elaborate, transmit, and gather *qīṣaṣ* traditions, although when *Sunnī* authors came to abandon, or at least de-emphasize, this particular understanding of both history and prophetology, the path was paved for *qīṣaṣ* to become a more purely ‘literary’ genre – that is, one less overtly dedicated to political aims. Or 8419, a unique example of “popular” *Ismāʿīlī taʿwīl* aiming at the persuasion and conversion of *Sunnīs*, reminds us that political considerations continued to inform *Shīʿī* understandings of prophetology and thus the impulse to compile *qīṣaṣ* traditions into discrete literary works.

Joseph Sadan (Tel Aviv University)

"The prophet Job (Ayyūb) and his wife Raḥma: a post-qur'anic dramatic composition"

The Book of Job is one of the most problematic biblical texts; its complicated nature is due to the profound dialogues between Job and his three friends (or four people, if we include Elihu). However, in the Qur'an, all these long lines of moral and philosophical deliberation are forgotten, except for a few vague traces. Since the qur'anic text relating to this prophet deals mainly with his agony and how God tested him and apparently abandoned him till the very end of his suffering, nothing prevents the Qur'an from developing a relatively uncomplicated and dramatic style (as A.H. Johns has shown).

However, my present contribution will deal with the dramatic character of a post-qur'anic text, namely the *Story of Job*, as presented in a relatively late unpublished manuscript that has not yet attracted the attention of researchers in Arabic literature and the *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* genre. The dramatic features of this small work verge upon "live-theater" (at least according to Shmuel Moreh's definition). The plot of some of the dramatic "scenes" deals with the story of Job's wife Compassion (Raḥma in Arabic; this name was not chosen accidentally) who shares her husband's agony till the very happy end. Her role here is very different from other traditions on the story of Job (especially the *Testament of Job* in the apocryphal literature). Her resistance to the Devil's attempts to seduce her supplies a wonderful background for the dramatic development of the main story.

Walid Saleh (University of Toronto)

“On a Mamlūk treatise on al-Khiḍr: Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyya (d. 874/1470) and India Office Islamic 1529”

The India Office manuscript Islamic 1529 belongs to an established genre of composition on the life and miracles of the famous al-Khiḍr. I will argue that this work is the same as Princeton Ms. 832 (Mach no. 4400), and in the process introduce the author Ibn Imām al-Kāmiliyya. In recent years there has been a proliferation of new publications of treatises from the medieval period which dealt with Khiḍr. The problem with the current state of scholarship on Khiḍr is that little if any of this literature is available in English, and most of the secondary literature does not offer any examples of this genre. We lack anything comparable to the work of Patrick Franke (*Begegnung mit Khidr*, Beirut 2000). This article will introduce this genre of *qiṣaṣ* literature, and will attempt to investigate the reason behind the sudden proliferation of such compositions from the thirteenth to the sixteenth centuries.

The paper will also deal with the phenomenon of the reconfiguring of the genre of *qiṣaṣ* in the age of print. Much of the medieval Islamic folk (or *qiṣaṣ*) literature has fared badly in the age of print; some of the most popular works of this nature have simply disappeared from the horizon due to the fact that they have not been edited. Yet this literature was the main form of popular entertainment in the period, providing the medium through which high culture and popular culture met. Most of the treatises on Khiḍr were written by the leading scholars of their age like Ibn Hajar al-‘Asqalānī. We need to reposition our scholarship such that it reflects the centrality of this genre in the medieval Islamic period.

Jens Scheiner (Georg-August-Universität Göttingen)

“Did the *quṣṣāṣ* narrate *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*?”

In his seminal study on the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* genre, Tilman Nagel treats the popular story-tellers (*die volkstümlichen Erzähler*) as a distinctive group that transmitted *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* narratives in addition to the famous compiler-authors al-Thaʿlabī and al-Ṭarafī. According to Nagel, such narratives were compiled in particular by al-Kisāʾī. Following Goldziher, he also accepts the idea that the *quṣṣāṣ* presented their narratives in a style that differed from that of the more “sober” *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* authors in order to attract a popular audience in the streets.

In this presentation I want to question the (linguistic) correlation between the *quṣṣāṣ*, i.e. the “story-tellers,” as players in the field of classical Islamic education and culture and the narratives pertaining to mostly pre-Islamic prophets (*qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ*). Instead of basing my study on stylistic criteria which contain a highly subjective element, I will focus on the analysis of various biographical dictionaries that include characterizations of individual narrators. The following questions will be answered through this approach: Who was identified by the biographical tradition as a *qāṣṣ*? And with which scholarly discipline or literary genre were these narrators associated? On the basis of several *tarjamas*, a comprehensive answer will be given to the question of whether *quṣṣāṣ* did narrate *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ* and, if so, to what extent.

Roberto Tottoli (Università di Napoli L'Orientale)

"*Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* texts and editions: bibliographical questions regarding al-Tha'labī's '*Arā'is al-majālis*'"

The preservation and edition of manuscripts of *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* is complex and problematic, and our perception of the history of this literary genre is deficient in a number of ways. Many medieval works remain unpublished, unstudied, and unknown, while the editions we do have tend to be produced uncritically. The recent editions of al-Kisā'ī's work, and the various edited versions of al-Hayṣam b. Muḥammad's *Qīṣaṣ al-Qur'ān*, raise a number of questions connected to the manuscript traditions of these works, their preservation, re-elaboration, and the final versions which are offered to readers in printed editions. The case of the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* by Abū Ishāq al-Tha'labī is rather different. Considered as the major work on the topic, it has been available in print since the days of the early Calcutta printed editions. Yet significant work has not been carried out on its manuscript tradition, nor on its printed history.

My paper will deal with how Tha'labī's '*Arā'is al-majālis*' was transmitted from Calcutta, through Cairo, on to the other printed versions of the text. It will seek to establish whether, as in many other cases in the early history of Arabic and Islamic printing, fresh editions were simply copied from those that preceded them, such that the Tha'labī printed tradition represents a single (or at best extremely limited) manuscript witness. This bibliographical inquiry will try to make sense of the problems and inconsistencies in onomastics evidenced in the printed editions and, as a consequence, in the translations by H. Busse and W.M. Brinner. With this end in mind, a number of early, significant printed editions of Tha'labī's '*Arā'is al-majālis*' will be analyzed alongside manuscript copies of the text. The aim is to reconstruct a bibliographical history of this work to contribute to a better knowledge of this text as it is circulating in printed editions today, and to further contribute to bibliographical studies in Arabic and Islamic literatures.

George Warner (SOAS, University of London)

“*Qīṣaṣ al-aʿimma*? The true, the miraculous, and the interesting in Imāmī Shīʿī stories of the prophets and imāms”

During the tenth century there blossoms a rich Imāmī Shīʿī literature telling wondrous stories not just of previous prophets, but also of the Twelve Imāms. In contrast to the theological formulations of the imamate which are developed during the same period, these tales have yet to receive serious study in their own right, and have much to tell us about how the Imāmī community perceived, justified, and represented their own idiosyncratic model of revelation. Commencing with their first substantial appearance in the work of al-Kulaynī (d. 941), and examining the developing uses of these stories in Imāmī literature across the tenth century, this paper will ask how, on the one hand, the development of this genre reflects internal intellectual changes within the Imāmī community and, on the other hand, what their compilation may tell us about Imāmī authors’ engagement with their wider literary context.

The stories emerge from an Imāmī community increasingly devoted to forging a systematic, textual intellectual identity following the dwindling of the line of imāms. Meanwhile, this need for routinized knowledge production was colored by the opening for Imāmī scholars of the hitherto largely closed doors to participation at court, compelling them into conversation with the dominant intellectual currents found therein. Buwayhid *adab* culture’s appetite for the interesting and the edifying had to be fed, but not at the expense of the credibility of Imāmī claims to legitimacy in the face of miracle-shy, narration-critical Muʿtazilism. As they represented the exploits of their imāms and the long prophetic history of which they must be the completion, Imāmī scholars walked a fine, perhaps invisible, line between depicting curiosities to be wondered at and miracles to be believed and heeded. While they had available the luxury of evoking a distant, even mythical past, they faced too the unique urgency of asserting that no less extraordinary a figure, the Twelfth Imām, still walked the earth, enlightened, invisible, undying. What we see in these works is a fascinating mingling of these subjects and objectives, portraying an imamology far outstripping solely theological explanation.

Brannon Wheeler (United States Naval Academy)

“In the footprints of the Buddha: comparing the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ to the Jatakas”

This paper proposes to examine the structural function of the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ genre in juxtaposition to the Buddhist genre of the Jatakas or tales of the former lives of the Buddha. This comparison suggests a fresh perspective on the place and role of the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ in Muslim society and scholarship.

Some of the major points of comparison proposed include the following. The Jatakas narrate the former lives of the Buddha while the *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ relate the lives of the previous prophets culminating in the prophet Muhammad as the “Seal of the Prophets.” The “telling” of each Jataka tale by the Buddha to his disciples and others during his lifetime include revelation of the past lives of those present. The *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ entail the prophet Muhammad commenting on the revelation contained in the Qur’an to his followers, potential followers, and critics. Commenting on the lives of the Buddha and his teachings results in the production of merit, expanding upon the *dharmakaya* or scriptural body of the Buddha, not unlike Muslim exegesis of the Qur’an, as an uncreated act of God, is an act of Muslim piety. Just as the physical body of the Buddha (*rupakaya*) is stored in containers (including the stupas that were created and spread through conquest) featuring scenes from the Jatakas, so mosques, madrasas, and other buildings are established through conquest as places of learning about the prophet Muhammad, rituals in imitation of his practice, and holding physical relics related to his life and mission. Both the Jatakas and *qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā*’ narrate and reify the salvation history of each respective religion – in Buddhism representing the cosmic cycle of the three worlds and its culmination in the appearance of past, present and future Buddhas, and in Islam, the biblical story of history from creation to the final Day of Judgment.

