

COMMUNITY OF BELIEVERS OF 'HOLY MEN'
AND 'SAINTS' OR COMMUNITY OF MUSLIMS?
THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT
OF EARLY MUSLIM HISTORIOGRAPHY

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Abstract

This study is an extended review article of Donner's *Narratives of Islamic Origins*. It will be composed of three sections: 1) a critical survey of the contents of the book, 2) some reservations with regard to a number of the topics Donner raises, and 3) comments and corrections.

I. A critical survey of the contents of Donner's book.¹

Although the central topic of this book is the development of historical narration and its main themes at the dawn of Islam, it is not limited to this alone. It deals with many varied fields of interest and study relating to early Islam, first and foremost essentially historical issues. At the same time, it touches upon central matters and processes affecting Islamic society, culture and religion.

The book is impressively wide-ranging, yet there is a fly in the ointment: the range is so wide that a single scholar cannot cover it, let alone exhaust it. Nor can a single reviewer. Obviously, my review must limit itself to a number of points and issues that interest me and in which I can claim some proficiency. Thus, there is place for additional reviews by scholars for a variety of disciplines: Quranic studies, *Ḥadīth* studies, epigraphy and of course history.

A study that covers so much ground requires wide and deep knowledge of the primary and secondary sources. Donner is certainly well-versed in the Muslim primary sources, and the collection of secondary sources is impressive, although important and central items

¹ Fred. M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, (Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam no. 14; Princeton 1998).

are occasionally missing. The great extent of the subjects under discussion in Donner's book has caused some of the studies appearing in the bibliography not to be elaborated sufficiently, and their contents and conclusions have not always been applied within the book itself.

Donner evinces in this, as in his other works, applicable knowledge of the social sciences and the philosophy of history. This knowledge often enriches his discussion and places it within wide and interesting frameworks.

The book is composed of two parts. In the first part, Donner deals with what he calls 'the rise of Islamic historiography in its intellectual context', and in the second he discusses 'the main themes of Early Islamic historical writing'. His purpose is to answer two major questions: 1) Why and when did history begin to be written? 2) How was it done — i.e., what was the history of this development and its stages?

Answering these two questions requires Donner to refer in detail and in depth to several revisionist interpretations of early Islamic history, belonging to the school Donner calls 'the skeptical approach'. This discussion forms *de facto* the third part of the book.

In the Introduction (pp. 1–35), Donner reviews and evaluates the various sources for the history of early Islam (non-Muslim sources, archaeological and epigraphic sources and the Muslim sources). He also reviews the various approaches to the sources, paying particular attention to the fourth approach, which he refers to as 'the skeptical approach', and its claims. Here the 'third part', 'a critique of the skeptical approach', (pp. 25–31 and chapter XII, pp. 282–90) begins. This section is an important contribution to the existing debate among scholars of classical Islam and its history. Donner grapples with well-known claims/conclusions that the Muslim sources are polluted, re-edited and falsified, and that it is completely impossible to reconstruct early Islamic history in their light. The entire Muslim tradition was reshaped according to later examples. With regard to this claim, Donner states (p. 27) that it is unlikely, seeing that all the sects of Islam, which he refers to as 'multiple orthodoxies', are so lacking in disagreement on most of the general lines of early Islam. Moreover, there was no supreme body with authority to enforce a single, uniform dogmatic opinion. Supporters of 'the skeptical approach' rarely bother to identify the persons and/or groups responsible for the refashioning and transformation of traditions or their purposes. Donner polemicizes with the holders of this opinion, and convincingly argues against the thesis of an 'international conspiracy' by

these anonymous authorities from Spain to India, who would have been able to take over all literary genres, every book and tradition, in such a way that no anomalous opinion was permitted. Donner holds, to the contrary, that 'some vestige of all significant opinions and events will survive in the vast Muslim tradition'. In the end, the traditional Islamic material includes enough material to reconstruct at least the central issues that the Believers debated in the early Islamic period, and also the main views of the different parties and their opponents.²

Donner devotes much space to the claims of the skeptical approach to the date of the Quranic text, and especially to those of Wansbrough, who claimed that the Qur'ān was not finally redacted before the end of the second/eighth century, or even later. Donner's conclusion (p. 49) is that 'the Qur'ān, as it now exists, was already a "closed" body of text by the time of the first civil war (35–41/656–661) at the latest'; and that it is the product of Arabia, not the Fertile Crescent (p. 60, see also p. 62). Donner's lengthy and detailed critique of Wansbrough (pp. 37ff) is apposite and correct.

Donner refutes another of Wansbrough's theses, according to which the Qur'ān and the *Ḥadīth* developed together and separated only at a later stage. He shows that there are clear and basic differences in style and content between the two bodies of texts, giving convincing examples (pp. 40–8) and sums up by saying (p. 45) that the lack of congruity between Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* on many issues is very obvious 'and suggests strongly that the two bodies of material are not the product of a common "sectarian milieu"', but rather derive from different historical contexts.

This discussion and its conclusions are most important. It would seem that, for the first time, a scholar has attempted to examine, minutely and thoroughly, some central points that have formed the catalyst for the development of major theses, mainly in the field of Qur'ān and *Ḥadīth* studies, and particularly in Wansbrough's researches. However, this discussion and these conclusions are valid for additional studies belonging to the heterogeneous 'Hagarist' school, such as those by Crone and Cook, Hawting, Bashear, Calder, Rippin and others.

Many members of this school, which Donner, as noted above, calls 'the skeptical approach', believe that until the time of the caliph 'Abd al-Malik (ruled 65–86/685–705) one cannot speak of a Muslim

² One may find in Islamic tradition vestiges of early theological and historical issues, some of which do not match later orthodoxy. Donner (1998: 30) refers to Kister's works and his scholarly methodology.

community or of Islam. They do not accept the usual schematic description of the development of Muslim history. The central question of what the Islamic world was like before the time of 'Abd al-Malik, is answered differently by different scholars of this 'school'. Some have partial and tentative answers, others have no serious answers at all.

Donner succeeds in refuting Wansbrough's central conclusions regarding the development and formation of the Qur'ān and the *Hadīth*. On the other hand, he does not accept the traditional picture of Islamic history during the first century after the *hijra*, from the days of Muḥammad onward. He develops a central thesis which combines definite Hagarist views with traditional views and descriptions. In order to fill the non-Islamic gap that Donner, too, thinks occurred between the time of the Prophet and that of 'Abd al-Malik, he creates a social-religious-political framework of non-Muslim Believers, whose uniqueness was in their piety and moral values.

Donner's discussion and conclusion as to the antiquity and authenticity of the text of the Qur'ān form a necessary bridge to the next chapter, where he treats the early community's attitude towards history and the past. His conclusion is that the Qur'ān, despite its complete lack of uniformity in style and content, transmits a single basic message to its hearer: that 'mankind should be pious'. The Qur'ān's emphasis on piety and morality runs through and connects all its parts. Piety is defined (p. 67, n. 13) 'as religious obedience — which, in the Quranic terms, means submission (*islām*) to God's revealed law for men: belief in one God and in the Last Judgment, performance of basic ritual duties—prayer, fasting, righteous and modest manner'.

After adducing some ten quotations from the Qur'ān (pp. 67–9), Donner sums up by saying: 'The emphasis on being godly and God-fearing thus appears in the Qur'ān in many guises, and in such a persistent theme, that we must conclude it to have been the essence of Muḥammad's message. To judge from the Qur'ān then, Islam began as a movement of uncompromising, indeed militant, piety, perhaps initially inspired by Muḥammad's fear that the Last Judgment was imminent' (p. 75).

So far, it would seem that, in general, there is no special innovation in Donner's ideas, perhaps too broad a generalization. His innovation is in the next conclusion, according to which the Qur'ān 'adopts a profoundly ahistorical view of the world and mankind ... the question of historical change is of no importance to the Qur'ān; the very concept of history is fundamentally irrelevant to the Qur'ān's concerns' (p. 80; see also pp. 81, 84).

Donner is aware that his opinion differs from that accepted by many scholars, saying that 'this assertion contradicts the attitude of many who have spoken of Muḥammad or the Qur'ān's "historical consciousness".³ However, he states decisively that 'it seems to me, on the contrary, that the Believers came to a sense of history only by overriding the Qur'ān's ahistorical point of view.'

This thesis is certain to arouse reactions from Qur'ān scholars, who will doubtless comment upon it in detail. This is not my specific field of research; however, it is common knowledge that the historical data in the Qur'ān is meagre, fragmentary and cannot be considered a source for the biography of the Prophet, nor, by and large, for the history of the Muslim community. Indeed, the emphases in the Qur'ān are not always historical, and yet Donner's conclusions, that the Qur'ān's approach is ahistorical and especially that the first community of Believers had an ahistorical point of view, need to be grounded more firmly and deeply. It is difficult not to go back to the well-known studies — some of which Donner quotes, but whose conclusions he rejects — which stated that these allusions, even if brief and fragmentary, to persons and events (mentioned in the Qur'ān) aroused intense interest among the first Muslims, who wished to relate to them and understand them in a broader context, and that this gave important impetus to the development of various literary genres, among them historical writing.

With regard to the Arabs' attitude to the history of the Jāhiliyya period, especially through the transmission of *Ayyām al-'Arab* traditions and pre-Islamic poetry, Donner mentions only in passing that the pre-Islamic Arabs had no sense of history and made no reference to it (in contrast with the accepted scholarly view).

Donner combines two statements, which are not necessarily connected with each other: (1) The central overt interest of the Qur'ān in piety and morals is (2) evidence of the values common to the earliest community of Believers. His third conclusion is that this preoccupation with piety continued to be the dominant element in the community of Believers even after Muḥammad's death and the canonization of the Qur'ān, thus continuing a total lack of historical awareness. We will come back to the third point later. With regard to the second point we are bound to ask, even if we agree with Donner that piety is a basic and most important element in the Qur'ān, does this indeed require the first community of Believers to have been pious? After all, this was the Prophet's demand on those who joined

³ Donner (1998: 80) citing Obermann, Rosenthal, Khālidī and Brown.

him. Did the tribesmen who joined him become pietists and moralists? I doubt it. The evidence regarding the adherence of the tribesmen to Muḥammad indicates that in certain instances, due to their objections, Muḥammad agreed to make some concessions.⁴ Donner's sweeping assertion about the character of the early Muslim community needs much broader substantiation. His documentation of this issue, based on a few quotations from the Qur'ān, is insufficient.

The third point is the kernel of the central thesis that Donner presents and develops in his book. The point can be summarized thus: the early Muslim community, by virtue of being a pietistic community, was by definition ahistorical. That is, it was characterized by a lack of interest in history, a lack of historical consciousness. This approach was expressed in their attitude to the Prophet Muḥammad (for example, p. 139). For a period of about seventy years (until the reign of 'Abd al-Malik), the community of Believers did not set itself apart as Muslims and did not identify itself collectively with the Prophet and his biography. The first Believers do not seem to have considered preserving details of the Prophet's life to be of great importance. Their primary concern was to live according to the morals and contents of God's pietistic message to the Believers, not to record how this revelation was transmitted (p. 147). The total interest in piety caused a lack of regard for Muḥammad, his prophethood, his special status as Prophet and Messenger, and the character of his mission to the Arabs and to the world (pp. 120, 149).

Only at the end of the first century after the *hijra* did the Believers begin to think of themselves as comprising a separate religious community, Muslims, differing from the Christians and the Jews. The clearest sign of this separate identity was the acceptance of Muḥammad as the Messenger of God or as a Prophet, and the Qur'ān as their holy book (pp. 149, 277).

Donner's proofs are based on three bodies of evidence: (1) the documentary evidence; (2) some non-Muslim sources; and (3) literary evidence.

(1) As for the first body of evidence, Donner uses one of the main claims of the 'Hagarist school', that the earliest documents mentioning the Prophet Muḥammad, Islam and /or Muslims are from the 70s of the first century of the *hijra*. This is also the time of the great revolution associated with the caliph 'Abd al-Malik: the creation of a unique Muslim monotheistic identity amongst the community of Believers (pp. 88–9, 121–2, 154, 164, 181, 280). Donner discusses

⁴ Kister (1979: 7, 11); Rubin (1985: 14–15, 17).

six early inscriptions, including two epitaphs, and also mentions hundreds of graffiti inscriptions from the first and second hijrī centuries with the formula 'O God, forgive...' and an expression of the desire to enter Paradise. These pieces of evidence 'appear to confirm the idea that the early Believers were obsessed with personal piety' (p. 86). Some of these inscriptions will be discussed below; here I will note that the precise dating of graffiti is difficult. It is a mistake to assume that Quranic expressions and requests for mercy and forgiveness are evidence of piety. One should remember that the wording of inscriptions became clichés, common formulae.⁵ Can they truly teach us about their authors, about early Muslim society and its character? Can such a general and sweeping conclusion be drawn from them? In my opinion, Donner's conclusion from these and other inscriptions, that 'the pious element of these inscriptions is self-evident', is not at all unequivocal. (See also below, sections II.8.2–5.)

(2) As for the second body of evidence, some early non-Muslim sources, Donner cites only a single source, which will be discussed in detail below: 'The Nestorian monk Yōḥannān bar Penkāyē...who wrote in the late 680s, described the early mhaggrāyē (as Syrian authors call the Believers) as strictly dedicated to following the law, even stating that they sentenced to death anyone who publicly opposed Muḥammad's commandments (nāmūsawh)' (p. 89, n. 92).

This is a single source, which does not confirm the existence of a community of Believers that is, as Donner puts it, 'consumed with concern for piety', but rather bears witness to the importance of Muḥammad and his status for the Muslims, in the eyes of the Christians.

According to this, they see Muḥammad as someone whose commandments are lived by, who is the central figure for Muslims. Without going into more detailed analysis of this subject, it must be emphasized that it is clear that this source reflects reality. This is how the Christians saw Muḥammad.

Greek and Syriac sources from the middle and until the end of the first/seventh century emphasize Muḥammad's centrality for the Muslims. He is mentioned as a (false) prophet and as the leader of the Arabs–Muslims.⁶

⁵ Personal communication from Professor M. Sharon.

⁶ See Brock (1982: 9-21); Hoyland (1977a: 57, 179–80, 186); both mention (1) The *Doctrina Jacobi* from 634 [!], a letter of a Jew from Caesarea informing of a prophet who had appeared among the Saracens (Brock (1982): the 30s of the seventh century); (2) Isho'yabb III of Adiabene (d. 659): describing the Arabs and making a clear distinction between the Arabs and the Christians, aware of the new

The Arabs' title 'mhaggrāyē' in these Christian sources denotes Muslims, and distinguishes their different religion.⁷ As Brock says: 'Earlier observers had not always been able to distinguish the religion of the Arabs from paganism, although Christians who came into direct contact with the new rulers, such as the patriarchs John and Isho'yahb [d. 659], *certainly knew better*'.⁸ Non Muslim writers of the first century A.H. (writes Hoyland) depict the early Muslims as the followers of 'Muḥammad (Thomas the Presbyter [wr. ca. 640], Sebeos [wr. 660], Chronicler of Khūzistān [wr. ca. 660s]), who was their "guide" and "instructor" [John] (Bar Penkaye) [wr. 687] whose "traditions" and "laws" they fiercely upheld (Bar Penkaye) and who prescribed for them abstinence from carrion, wine, falsehood and fornication (Sebeos).'⁹ Hoyland, in contradistinction to Donner's view, concludes that 'it is thus evident that the early Muslims did adhere to a cult that had definite practices and beliefs and was clearly distinct from other currently existing faiths'.¹⁰

(3) The literary evidence upon which Donner bases his theory is above all the *Ḥadīth* literature, which in his opinion like the Qur'ān places 'a strong emphasis on morality and piety' (p. 90). From the few examples adduced by Donner (hundreds more could of course be cited) it is impossible to state unequivocally, as Donner does, that 'we also find in the *ḥadīth* reflections of the activist or the militant piety that we observed in the Qur'ān' (p. 91). The impression given here by Donner is that everything revolves around piety. The *Ḥadīth* deals only with piety; the early scholars dealt with it and were concerned with it (p. 92, bottom); and the writing of *Ḥadīth* is connected not to the wide spectrum of beliefs, opinions and struggles

world order; (3) The Chronicler of Khūzistān (wrote ca. 660s) mentions 'the sons of Ishmael...whose leader was Muḥammad [mhmd]'. On this chronicler, see Robinson (2002: 1–5).

⁷ Brock (1982: 15); Hoyland (1997a: 148 n. 111; 179), quoting the letter of Isho'yahb III of Adiabene (d. 659 [!]): 'the Muslims Arabs (ṭayyāyē mhaggrē)'.
⁸ Brock (1982: 21); my emphasis, A.E; see also Hoyland (1997a: 180): 'Isho'yhb demonstrates his awareness of a definite distinction between the "then" and the "now", a seeming appreciation that the old world order was changing.'

⁹ Hoyland (1997a: 549).

¹⁰ Hoyland (1997a: 549–50 and 550, n. 22). Hoyland asserts that this conclusion is 'against Wansbrough, *Sectarian Milieu*, 118, who maintains that the non-Muslim testimony is "confessionally indifferent or, at least, not sufficiently distinctive to permit identification of that community." And against Donner, "From Believers to Muslims" [forthcoming], who argues that Muḥammad's community itself was confessionally indeterminate for the first decades of its existence'. The above mentioned article of Donner, is due to appear in L.I. Conrad (ed.) *Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. IV. I was unable to see this article.

in the Muslim world, but to the recording of pious sayings (p. 93, n. 109), or pious maxims or oral wisdom literature (p. 94) not *Ḥadīth*, just as the bearers of concern for piety and morality in the community of Believers are not '*Ulamā*', *Muḥaddithūn* or *Fuqahā*' but 'Saints' or 'Holy Men'. (This will be discussed at length below, section II.2).

Even if different forms of legitimation (piety, genealogical, theocratic [Chapter III]) existed in the first century, Donner maintains that these forms existed within a pietistic, ahistorical society. This society did not feel the need to record events in writing in an orderly and coherent fashion, since its members did not see themselves as belonging to a special, distinct religio-political framework (p. 114). This process, as noted, started in the time of the Prophet, and the criterion of piety as a means to legitimation continued to be central to the community of Believers in the first and second centuries (pp. 98–9). Piety was the main means of legitimation applied during political and social crises, in conflicts and quarrels. Problems were not solved through the use of criteria of tribe, class or family, or through historic ties, property, or ethnic status. All these 'do not appear as part of the original Islamic scheme of things. They do not figure in the Qur'ān, or in the "Constitution of Medina".'

Regarding 'The Constitution of Medina' (*Ahd al-Umma*), Donner adduces no proof for this view of the covenant, about which so much has been written. Some scholars regarded the *Umma* as a purely loose political confederation between several autonomous tribes (Serjeant), or a *Umma* of Believers, whose main object was to protect the sacred territory of Medina (Rubin). Despite the disputes among scholars as to the interpretation of parts of this document and its significance, they are united, on several main points: the covenant aimed at maintaining the previous tribal groupings, agreements and ties. It was a contract for defence against an external enemy, uniting new Muslims, Jews and pagans. While each group continued to preserve its blood ties and its social and religious laws, they were bound to mutual aid and support in the case of war against an external enemy.¹¹

Donner continues his idea by stating that 'one finds from an early date in the history of the community accounts in which the claims of various figures to religious or political authority are evaluated in

¹¹ See the comprehensive survey of the study of *Ahd al-Umma* by Humphreys (1988: 87–93). Humphreys surveys the views of Wellhausen, Gil (1974), Serjeant (1964: 8; 1978: 1–2) and Watt; see also Obermann (1955: 270–1). Rubin's study (1985: esp 12–16) is not quoted by Humphreys.

terms of piety' (p. 101). The examples Donner gives (pp. 101–2) are: (1) the objection of the *ṣaḥābī* Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī to Mu'āwiyā's accumulation of property. However, this is a common literary motif of early *Zuhhād* circles. Reading traditions about the great wealth attained by the first 'Believers' is enough to make one realize that this tradition and others like it are attempts to cope with the widespread phenomenon of great wealth among the Arab elite, especially among Quraysh and the *Anṣār*. (2) The description of 'Uthmān and his opponents during the first *fitna* are mainly in terms of morality and piety. (on this see below). (3) The description of the pietism of the Khawārij. (On this see below, section II.7.)

It seems to this reviewer that there is a difference between a system of general values and norms, according to which the Muslim society of the first century after the *hijra* functioned, acted and elected persons to offices, especially political or religio-political ones, and claims, criticisms and demands that could be voiced against them, even (or also) with a tinge of pietism. The pietist tinge did not determine choices, and it was not the axis around which everything revolved. It did not run the state, nor was it a crucial criterion for legitimation. The outward expression of criticism towards a ruler is often within the semantic field of religious (pietism) expressions, but our purpose as historians is to peel off, to the best of our ability, these pietistic outer layers and to reach the roots of things i.e., the political, social, economic and religious reasons. Rare examples of this procedure may be found in Hinds' study of the first *fitna* and the murder of 'Uthmān, in which he revealed the socio-economic layers of the rebellion,¹² in Kister's study of the battle of the Ḥarra,¹³ and Hasson's study of the struggle between *al-Muhājirūn* and *al-Anṣār*.¹⁴

Other methods of legitimation developed in parallel with this one. One of the most important, in Donner's opinion, is genealogical legitimation (pp. 103–9), which is ancient, yet like all forms of legitimation, was influenced by pietist legitimation, mainly due to the Qur'ān's uncompromising rejection of concern for *nasab*. However, the importance and influence of *nasab* in ancient Arabian society were very great, and Donner points out important consequences of this. One of the results of the concern with genealogies was the creation of comprehensive genealogies of the Arabs, which developed

¹² Hinds (1971); but especially Hinds (1977), not found in Donner's Bibliography.

¹³ Kister (1977).

¹⁴ Hasson (1989).

against the background of tension between the conquering Arabs and the conquered peoples — that is, the desire to prove and strengthen legitimacy, ownership and roots (p. 109). This is an accepted, familiar claim,¹⁵ although Donner defers the literary stage of this process to the second century after the *hijra*, and connects it with the struggle against the *Shu'ūbiyya* movement (p. 109).

Nasab works appeared, according to Donner, at the beginning of the first half of the second century, if not earlier (p. 107). (See discussion below, sections II.5–7.) Donner chose this dating, which seems to this reviewer to be too late, because 'the earliest believers were quite unconcerned with recording "what really happened" in their community, because their interests as Believers were moral, not historical' (pp. 114–15). Indeed, contrary to scholars who speak of natural curiosity that caused early interest in history, and of the influences of external cultures, Donner claims (p. 115) that such curiosity could not even have arisen in early Muslim society, as this was opposed to its character and, lacking historical consciousness, it could not have been affected by outside influences (p. 116). At first, the Believers did not have any 'expression of communal self-awareness' (p. 117). In light of this, Donner is surprised that historiography ever began to develop among the Muslims, even at this [relatively late] stage.

We stand before a circular argument. As Donner believes that the community's orientation was ahistorical, historical curiosity could not develop and naturally neither could historical writing. Yet, if one accepts the general description in research, of confrontation and conflict from the beginning of the Prophet's activity in al-Madīna between the values and norms of Arab tribal society, on the one hand, and the primeval basic values of Islam, naturally including pietist principles, on the other, the pietists do not emerge as the victors. Already in al-Madīna the Prophet was forced, as is well-known, to compromise on important points with those Arab ideals.¹⁶ *Ahd al-Umma* is not a pietist treaty.¹⁷ Contrary to Donner, it seems that the

¹⁵ Cf. Obermann (1955: 301–2), who argued that the expansion of genealogy and the inclusion of all the Arabs in order to prove their superiority to the conquered nations occurred while using Quranic characters and concepts and terms taken from the surrounding monotheistic world. In other words, an Arab genealogy entwined with Islam developed.

¹⁶ See for example, Kister (1979: 4, 7ff).

¹⁷ Rubin (1985: 14–15): (p. 14) 'Muḥammad was ready to accept the Jews as "believers" merely on the basis of monotheism...this fits in with what we know about the far reaching concessions Muḥammad was willing to make in the first Medinan period, in order to reconcile the Jews.' See also the discussion on p. 249 above.

historical consciousness and communal awareness of the first Believers was very early. Thus the date of writing of the different genres of Arabic literature is also very early. (On this see below, section II.5.)

'The shift from pious to historicizing legitimization' occurred according to Donner, in the 60s and 70s of the first century, and took place gradually over fifty years or more (pp. 119–20).

In the second part of his book (pp. 126–36), Donner studies the subjects that were raised (or not) by the Muslim historiographic tradition. This enables one to understand the reasons for the early Muslim interest in recording the past as history. Following Noth, he calls these issues historiographical themes. Donner examines certain issues dealt with by central histories, chronicles or quasi-chronicles, and two biographical works. This forms a passage to an important and interesting discussion of the limits of the subjects and spheres of early Islamic historical literature. After identifying, in general terms, some of the historiographical themes that make up the Islamic narrative about the origin of the community, prophecy, community, hegemony and leadership (all of which have sub-themes), he scrutinizes a few of these themes, describes their range, their contents, when and where they first appeared in the community (more or less) and their role in the life of the community. Most of these themes of early Islamic narrative tradition were well-established by the middle of the second century, and in a number of cases, much earlier (p. 145). The themes themselves appeared in writing at the end of the first century and during the first half of the second century (e.g., pp. 165–6, 203).

With regard to the theme of prophecy, interest in the *Sīra* of the Prophet began late. There is no record of the compilation of a *Sīra* work or of a biography dedicated to the Prophet before the end of the first century of the *hijra*, i.e. before 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr (d. 94/713) (p. 148). Yet on p. 158 Donner believes that part of the theme of prophecy which deals with Quranic tales and characters began to develop and to be written down already in the first half of the first century, in the form of the works of Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 34) and 'Abdallāh b. Salām (d. 43) [!] It seems that Donner, at least in this case, accepts the existence of early books, apparently following Sezgin (p. 148, nn. 32–5). Although his claim is that these traditions are not new, rather they pre-date Islam and we have here a case of the ancient custom of gathering traditions, however at the same time he asserts that these traditions explain and clarify the Qur'ān, not the Torah. The traditions that were gathered had an Islamic Quranic base (p. 157). The historiographic theme of pre-Islamic Arabia ar-

gues Donner interested *several* [my emphasis, A.E.] Believers relatively early (p. 196). It seems to have crystallized in the middle and towards the end of the first century. In this case it appears that this conclusion of Donner's also derives from the assertion of Sezgin and others that 'Abid b. Sharya (d. 50/670 or 60 or a decade later) indeed composed a book on the history of Yemen. (On this, see the discussion in section II.3).

As for the theme of *futūḥ*, the *futūḥ* books are the creation of the very end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries (pp. 175–80).

This fact, that the narrative of the themes of early Islamic historiography appeared in written form around the end of the first century or later, 'raises in acute form the question of continuity and historical accuracy of the information about Islamic origins'. And indeed, in the last chapters Donner discusses the reliability of the ancient texts and their transmission before becoming historical themes. Here, his writing is detailed and clear. Although some of his ideas are not new, for the first time they have been formulated with the most useful clarity and length.

These narratives depended upon an earlier transmission of the events of the past that had not crystallized into a narrative of a historical theme. In other words, there is no real historical writing, since according to Donner, information about the past can exist and be transmitted over time even without such (historiographical) themes. The information was transmitted orally, from generation to generation. These traditions, which were transmitted before the maturing of historical consciousness, are random and give 'incidental information about the past whose main concern is not writing of history but something else' (pp. 206–7). In order to create history, writers made use of authentic traditions about the past and unreliable, unhistorical and legendary ones alike. Of course, even fake tradition bears some resemblance to reality; thus we get what Donner calls 'verisimilitude in counterfeiting' (p. 211). That is why both experience and skill are involved in the identification of motivation and bias in traditions.

Donner has important things to say in his discussion of the schools of historical writing (pp. 215ff). He extends the conclusions of the research of Noth and Duri, adding that historical writing during the first two centuries of Islam was in fact the creation of a very limited number of central cities. The concept of schools is relevant, not — as Wellhausen thought — to the decision as to the reliability of any particular report or tradent, but rather to the understanding of the development of the varied themes of early Islamic historio-

graphy. In different areas, writing revolved around different themes. At the end of the second century, the regional focus of several themes disappeared rapidly, due to the intrusion of themes from other centres, that took over and became the central themes. Regional themes became integrated within them to form the texture of classic Islamic historiography.

To end this part, I would like to comment briefly on several additional thought-provoking points that Donner raises in the last chapters of his book, especially chapters 10–12. One of these is Donner's attitude towards the 'skeptical approach'. I have already mentioned Donner's firm opposition to the main and basic idea of this school, which is that the framework and details of early Muslim history are late and monolithic interpretation, which does not enable us to expose the earlier layers of history. In place of this, Donner proposes what he defines as a 'traditional-critical approach', which seems to him (and, to a large extent, to this reviewer as well) to give the best hope of separating the wheat from the chaff of early Muslim tradition.

Donner objects to the central view of the scholars affiliated with the 'skeptical approach' (but not only them), who believe that the development of historical writing began by creating chronological frameworks of events, into which additional, secondary forms were later forced. Such additional forms include legal material, Qur'ān commentary, *Ḥadīth*, etc. Contrary to this point of view, Donner argues that at first the material gathered was a-chronological, without a chronology (a point that already has been raised by Noth) — and this was due to the pietistic and moralistic character of the first Believers. One does not have to accept the hypothesis of a society of pietist Believers with a definite ahistorical orientation in order to agree with large parts of this reasonable thesis of Donner's.

Interestingly enough, the central point of Donner's book, the existence of an a-historical and pietist community of Believers, is what allows him to escape the world of the 'skeptical approach' and its concepts, and to accept the general outlines according to which Islamic tradition has drawn early Muslim history and the major events it describes.

Another important point is the discussion, in part an original one, summing up the characteristics (mainly external) of the *khābar*, the single historical tradition. I refer to the transmission of the *khābar* in the form of *isnād* and *matn*, and the limitations and problems caused by this method, as well as other problems inhering to the Islamic tradition (curtailment, augmentation, omission, combined reports,

etc.). This is accompanied by an important discussion of the *isnād* in the historical tradition. (See separate discussion, below section II.9.)

Of particular importance is Donner's conclusion as to the method of relating to early Muslim sources, and its extensive theoretical and practical elaboration. Due to its importance, I will quote extensively:

'The consensus that exists among the "multiple orthodoxies" (i.e. the different sectarian groups within early Islam)...can most plausibly be taken as confirmation of the general course of events long familiar to us from the Islamic tradition. However comforting this fact may be for the modern historian, however, it does not help us to evaluate the single, isolated account; in such cases, there is no way to be sure which aspects of an account might represent the "consensus" of the tradition's view, and which the fabrications and distortions. Rather, it becomes necessary to compare an account with as many others on the same subject as possible, in an effort to gain a glimpse of the growth of the collective tradition on that subject over time. This is, of course, the time-tested approach of tradition and redaction criticism. Not by rejecting the whole Islamic tradition as "opaque", but rather by patiently unraveling the strands and layers of the complex of traditional material, will the Islamic origins story finally come, at least partially, to light' (p. 290).¹⁸

II. Some Reservations With Regard To A Number Of The Topics Donner Raises

II.1 *Al-Khilāfa Fī Quraysh*

Pp. 56, 108–9, 110–11: The struggle for leadership in the early Muslim community, and the development of the idea that was later crystallized into a well-known *ḥadīth*: i.e., that leadership in the Muslim community should belong exclusively to Quraysh. Donner defines *imām* in these *ḥadīths* as 'religious leader', *khalīfa* as "successor" of the Prophet as political leader of the Muslim community' (p. 40). Following this thought, Donner argues that 'the reference to

¹⁸ This method and approach to the Islamic primary sources has been accepted at the Hebrew University for decades. See Elad (1995: 9), 'The Arabic sources are, therefore, the best basis for studying early Islamic history. Information is to be found in the many and different kinds of Arabic literature. Examination of the Arabic sources, comparison between them and analysis of them (from internal and external aspects) can in many instances give as objective a picture as possible of the event-or of any historical process'; 'This method has been practised at the Hebrew University for some decades. Professor A. Noth reached the same conclusion (independently)' (1995: 9, n. 30). See Noth (1971: 198); note also the reservation of Crone (1980: 11, n. 63).

“the *imāms* of the Muslims” may indicate a date for the formulation of this *ḥadīth* sometime in the second century or later.’ (p. 40, n. 11) In my view this dichotomy between the terms is not justified. The topic was discussed by Arazi and Elad, who analyzed the first part of a treatise of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī dedicated to the subject (traditions mentioning the exclusive right of Quraysh to the Caliphate (*al-ahādīth al-wārīda fī ikhtisāṣ al-khilāfa bi-Quraysh*), mainly *al-khilāfa* or *al-ʿimma* or *al-mulk fī Quraysh*;¹⁹ it is argued in this work that the terms *khilāfa*, *ʿimma* and *mulk* in these traditions are synonymous, contrary to Donner’s view. These traditions, in my view, were crystallized early in the first century of the *hijra*.

Noteworthy is the mention of one of the traditions in al-Suyūṭī’s treatise, a very early attestation of the struggle between the southern tribes and Quraysh for hegemony over the Muslim community,²⁰ (emphasized again and again by Donner). But this is only one aspect of a wider picture. Many early traditions bear witness to the wish of many other tribal groups to gain a higher position and greater authority within the Arab caliphate.²¹

II.2 ‘Saints’ And ‘Holy Men’

After presenting the main points of his thesis of the a-historical character of the early Muslim community, Donner intends to strengthen this thesis and prove it through a discussion of a few persons who lived at the end of the first and beginning of the second centuries after the *hijra*. Most of them can be defined by us as *muḥaddithūn* or *fuqahāʾ*, but they are defined by Donner as ‘Holy men’ or ‘Saints’. ‘and it seems likely that many of these sayings attributed to Muḥammad were originally sayings of early “holy men” (*fuqahāʾ*) from the first or early second centuries AH, sayings that were subsequently “raised” to the status of *ḥadīth* of some companions of Muḥammad, or even of Muḥammad himself’ (p. 92, and n. 105: following Juynboll; but it seems that it was Schacht who first argued in this vein).

These pious maxims (= *Hadīth*), and also *akhbār*, have originated not with ‘*ulamāʾ*’, or early *akhbārīyyūn*, but with ‘particular “holy men”’ (p. 119, l. 27); ‘it was the piety of these early holy men [this time the phrase is not between inverted commas; p. 92, l. 11: “holy men”, l. 20: Islamic “saints” or holy men; l. 24: holy men; p. 119,

¹⁹ Arazi and Elad (1978: 232–9); not mentioned in Donner’s bibliography.

²⁰ Arazi and Elad (1978: 247): tradition no. 2.

²¹ Kister and Plessner (1976: 51–3).

l. 27: "holy men"; p. 95, l. 1: "saints"; l. 21: saint's life; l. 25: saints' lives; l. 31: early Muslim saint Khālid b. Ma'dān]...that made their sayings memorable, not their identity as associates of Muḥammad.' But the 'holy men', mentioned by Donner, are not *Ṣaḥābīs* of the Prophet; so instead of describing them as associates of Muḥammad, it would have been better to define them as associates of the companions of Muḥammad, or better, those who followed them (*al-tābi'ūn*).

Who are these 'saints' or holy men (mentioned by Donner on pp. 92, 95–6, 99–100)? Unfortunately Donner does not elaborate at length on them, nor does he mention them by name, except for five persons (Khālid b. Ma'dān al-Kalā'i (d. 103/721 or 108), al-Ḥasan b. Abī al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735–736, on him see further below, section II.2) (all three are mentioned on pp. 95 and 99), Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd al-Nakha'i (p. 100), and the Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz [!] (d. 101/718) (p. 95). Nevertheless, since we are dealing here with the core of Donner's thesis, that accompanies us throughout most of the chapters of the book, let us see what he has to say about these 'holy' men. They are described on p. 99 as follows: 'the aura of religious authority emitted by such early "holy men" as al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī...or Maymūn b. Mihrān...or Khālid b. Ma'dān al-Kalā'i...was rooted solely in their reputation for piety, as understood in their day. Like most other early Islamic "holy men," they were of humble origin — often descendants of captives of war — and could not claim the slightest degree of relationship to the Prophet, or precedence of conversion, or membership in a prominent tribe or an elite social class. Their status within the community was established solely by their piety...[and by] the norms of pious behavior.'

Donner asserts that the very many reports about them and their sayings 'focus on moral (or sometimes the ritual) aspects of piety', and as evidence he adduces a single source, Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahānī's *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, a collection of biographies with a special emphasis on early mystics. Donner claims, justifiably to a large extent, that in these biographies (referring to *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*)

'We are seldom, if ever, treated to a plausible glimpse of the holy man's personality or its development over time...likewise, we are denied much sense of the person's history...anecdotes from their lives are recounted, to be sure, but they have meaning only when anchored in a moral context, and one has the feeling that the episodes float without firm historical mooring...the saints' lives are overwhelmingly moralizing and didactic...their representation cannot be called, properly speaking historical' (p. 95).

The biographies of first and second century scholars, not only in the biographical literature of *Ḥadīth* transmitters, are indeed stereotyped and the concrete historico-social information about the scholar is very meagre. The biographies are usually limited to details that can indicate the subject's reliability as a transmitter of *Ḥadīth*, and additional criteria important to medieval Muslim biographies, but not necessarily to modern historians.

The historian's role is to find historical details about the person of interest in the various genres of the vast ocean of Arabic literature. *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, which Donner cites as an example of saints' biographies, is a special case. The author's purpose was to praise and magnify particular aspects among the persons he chose to include in his book. He is biased and problematic from the outset. His aim was to prove that the hundreds of people he selected for inclusion in his book were indeed *awliyā'*, that is, *Ṣūfī* saints, and that they clearly belonged to the *Ṣūfī* stream of Islam. Among the biographies we may find the following 'Saints': the first four caliphs, scores of Companions of the Prophet and many other notable figures, who certainly did not belong to the *Ṣūfī* trend, such as 'Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr, Qatāda b. Di'āma, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥanafīyya, Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, Mālik b. Anas, al-Shāfi'ī and Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.²² Yet, despite Donner's claim, even in such an obviously biased book as this we may find real historical information (admittedly very little), sometimes of great importance.²³ Donner mentions only five 'Saints'/'Holy men' (the terms alternate), but it is clear from his wording that there were many more, and that they lived at the end of the first and beginning of the second century. They were the prominent figures of the early community of Believers. We learn from the five names mentioned by Donner that they formed a wide range of people with different talents. They, and others of their period, would be called by us *Ḥadīth* scholars, lawyers (*fuqahā'*) and even one caliph. According to Donner, they formed a broad class, most of whose members were

²² This is only one part of the criticism by Ibn al-Jawzī of Abū Nu'aym's book, that is, the annexation of every well-known and important medieval Muslim to the *Ṣūfī* school; see Ibn al-Jawzī, (1971: 25): *idāfat al-taṣawwuf ilā kibār al-sādāt ka-Abī Bakr wa-'Umar wa-'Uthmān wa-'Alī wa-'l-Ḥasan wa-Shurayḥ wa-Sufyān wa-Shu'ba wa-Mālik wa-'l-Shāfi'ī wa-Aḥmad; wa-laysa 'inda hā'ulā' 'l-qawm khabār min al-taṣawwuf*.

²³ See, for examples of traditions containing historical material: Abū Nu'aym (1351 AH, 3: 115–16): Ḥassan b. Abī Sinān; 3: 360, 363, 369; Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri; 4: 23ff; Wahb b. Munabbih; 4: 310ff., 325, 328; al-Sha'bī, 'Āmir b. Sharāḥīl; 5: 170–71; Rajā' b. Ḥaywa; 5: 210ff; Khālid b. Ma'dān; 5: 243–4; Ibrāhīm b. Abī 'Abla.

concerned with piety, so it is not at all surprising, in his opinion, that their historical approach seems to have been very weak (p. 94).

However, it appears that the picture Donner draws does not reflect the true character of these people and of the society in which they lived. As to the Umayyad Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, he is a special and even unique figure in Umayyad history and in Islamic history in general, and it is to be regretted that his mention is very short. His image as a pious 'saint' by Donner (on p. 95) is one-sided, far from being a complete picture, and deserves a much more balanced presentation (like that of Hawting).²⁴ Donner stresses his piety according to Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, and raises the difficulty in establishing historical material from the biographies related in this source. But whoever is versed in the literature of Arabic historiography is well aware of the nature (that is, the limitations) of this work, and is obliged to use other kinds of Arabic literature.²⁵

The other people mentioned by Donner — to whom many others of their contemporaries, even merely those mentioned in *Ḥilyat al-awliyā'*, may be added — were famous scholars. Some of them, perhaps most of them, are noted as having qualities of piety and morality, even of early *zuhd*. Yet, it should be made clear that a large number of them were involved in the day-to-day life of the caliphate, and not a few of those called saints by Donner actively participated in public office on behalf of the government. Moreover, men like Khālid b. Ma'dān, Maymūn b. Mihrān (to whom we will return), 'Ubāda b. Nusayy, Ibrāhīm b. Abī 'Abla, Shahr b. Ḥawshab, and especially Rajā' b. Ḥaywa and Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī held office under a number of caliphs. They were involved in the life of government and the rulers, and were often their partners in the formulation of the religio-political structure of the caliphate. They belonged to a unique Arab-Islamic state, and they worked within it and for it. Thus they were active participants, willing and clearly aware, in historical action.²⁶

²⁴ Hawting (1986: 76–81); 'It is also clear that much of the traditional writing about him should be regarded as pious and moralistic story-telling in keeping with the need and outlook of tradition' (p. 77); on this caliph's fiscal policies, see Gibb (1955); Guessous (1996); and see the well-balanced entry on this caliph in *EP*, 'Umar (II) b. 'Abd al-'Azīz' (P.M. Cobb), *s.v.*

²⁵ As done by Donner in his work on the early historians of al-Shām during the early Muslim period, including Khālid b. Ma'dān.

²⁶ The case of al-Zuhrī was exhaustively dealt with by Lecker (1996: 23ff., 33, 37–40); see also the observations of 'Athāmina (1992: 159, 166 and Livne-Kafri (1989: 51–2), both quoted by Lecker (1996: 23, n. 11); see also Donner (1987) where he discusses in great detail several important scholars in the Umayyad period

Thus the building of the Dome of the Rock by Rajā' b. Ḥaywa at the command of 'Abd al-Malik should be viewed in light of the above. Rajā' (d. 112/730–1) is described as a *zāhid* and an *'ālim*, and was a *faqīh* and *muhaddith*. He was a member of one of the families of the southern tribe of Kinda, and held important offices under the Umayyads, from 'Abd al-Malik until his son Hishām (reigned 105/724–125/744). His origin and that of his family was from Beth Shean in the province of al-Urdunn. At some stage Rajā' moved to the province (*jund*) of Filastīn, possibly following his appointment by 'Abd al-Malik as overseer of the construction of the Dome of the Rock. This move to *jund* Filastīn may be the source of his title *Sayyid Ahl Filastīn*, the leader of the Arabs of Filastīn.²⁷

'Ubāda b. Nusayy (d. 118/736–7), a member of another family of Kinda, who lived in the province of al-Urdunn,²⁸ should be regarded in the same way. He was a scholar, a specialist on law, and as such served as a *qādī* of the district of al-Urdunn.²⁹ At the same time [?] he was the governor of the province on behalf of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (reigned 65/685–86/705) and 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz (reigned 99/717–101/720). He is called *Sayyid Ahl al-Urdunn* or *Sayyid al-Urdunn*.³⁰ 'Ubāda is even said to have been the *'arīf* of Rajā' b. Ḥaywa.³¹ The meaning of the term, *'arīf*, is one appointed by the government, with civil and military powers (taxation, pensions — *al-'atā*). Evidence from the beginning of the Muslim Period indicates that this official was a commander of a military unit.³²

Maymūn b. Mihrān (d. 117/735–6, mentioned as a 'holy men' by Donner on pp. 95 and 99) was indeed a well-known scholar, whose

and their relations with the regime; Elad (1995: 19–21); for additional information concerning the relations between distinguished scholars and the Umayyad regime, see Abū Zur'a (1980, 1: 351, 370, 432–3; 2: 700–701; al-Fasawī (1410 AH, 2: 396); Goldziher (1971, 2: 48); Juynboll (1983: 80–1); and especially, Livne (1985: 32–5) (a detailed discussion on the close relations between the early *Zuhhād* and '*Ulamā'* and the government).

²⁷ On Rajā' see Bosworth (1972); Gil (1992: 121, no. 153); Elad (1998: 32–3) and the bibliography there; on *Sayyid Ahl Filastīn* see: Gil (1992); Ibn 'Asākir (1982: 44–5).

²⁸ On him see Gil (1992: 121–2, no. 155); Donner (1987: 9–12); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 24: 209–20).

²⁹ Ibn 'Asākir (1989, 8: 871); Ibn Ḥajar (1325–7 AH, 5: 113); Donner (1987: 9).

³⁰ Elad (1998: 35), following Ibn 'Asākir (1982: 40, 44–5); (1996, 26: 210, 213–14, 216; 213): *al-Urdunnī, sayyiduhum*.

³¹ Elad (1998) following Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 26: 216, 45); it means that 'Ubāda was the *'arīf* of the tribal group to which Rajā' belonged.

³² *EP*, 'Arīf', s.v. (Ṣāliḥ A. el-'Alī and Cl. Cahen).

pious traits are highly emphasized by the sources. But he was also a cloth merchant, who owned a store (*ḥānūt*) and was in charge of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) of Ḥarrān on behalf of its governor, Muḥammad b. Marwān b. al-Ḥakam. When 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz ascended the caliphate he was appointed by this caliph as the judge and tax collector of al-Jazīra. From another tradition we learn that he was the secretary of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. His son, 'Amr was in charge of the *Dīwān* [al-Jaysh?].³³

A few other examples of well-known scholars will be briefly mentioned:

Shahr b. Ḥawshab al-Ash'arī al-Ḥimṣī *mawlā* of Asmā' bt. Zayd b. al-Sakan, al-Dimashqī (some say al-Ḥimṣī) (d. between 98/716 and 112/730–1). He was a well-known *Muḥaddīth*. He arrived in Syria in 680 and later went to al-'Irāq to al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf. He was in charge of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*; according to another tradition he was in charge of the treasury [state store -rooms? *khazā'in*] of Yazīd b. al-Muhallab), and was accused of stealing from it. This accusation was most probably the reason for the distrust and reservation towards him by some Muslim critics of *Ḥadīth*, although a few scholars thought highly of him.³⁴

Three important scholars of *Ḥadīth*, known to be students of al-Zuhri are:

Sulaymān b. Dāwūd Abū Dāwūd al-Khawlānī, al-Dārānī (the first half of the second/eighth century), a transmitter of *ḥadīth*, who also served as the chamberlain (?) (*ḥājib*) of Caliph 'Umar b. 'Abd al-

³³ On Maymūn b. Mihrān, see Ibn Sa'd (1958, 7: 477–8); Ibn al-Qaysarānī (1994, 1: 98); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 61: 336–68); Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 10: 349); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 29: 210–26); cloth merchant, owner of a store and in charge of the treasury of Ḥarrān: Ibn Sa'd (1958: 478); in charge of the judging and collection of [land?] tax (*al-kharāj*): Ibn al-Qaysarānī (1994, 1: 98); al-Dhahabī (1982–85, 5: 74); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 29: 225); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 61: 351); *ibid.*, 353: the secretary (*kātib*) of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz.

³⁴ On Shahr b. Ḥawshab, see 'Aṭwān (1986: 100–102, 225–6); and the note of Lecker (1996: 40, n. 78); a selected bibliography: Ibn 'Adī (1988, 4: 36–43); Ibn al-Jawzī (1406 AH, 4: 36–9); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 23: 217–39); Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 4: 324–6); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 4: 372–5); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 12: 578–83); his arrival in Syria: Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 1: 160); on the *khazā'in* of Yazīd: *ibid.*, 23: 231; al-Mizzī (1985–92: 582); the attitude of Muslim scholars towards him: Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 23: 223, 226): a trusted transmitter; *ibid.*, 235ff: untrusted (more scholars mentioned), especially due to his despised character [as a thief]; p. 230: accused of stealing a leather bag (*'ayba*) from a pilgrim on the way to Mecca; he is mentioned 170 times in Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh*; 18 *ḥadīth* traditions are transmitted in his name in Nu'aym b. Ḥammād's *Kiṭāb al-ḥadīth*.

'Azīz. According to another tradition he was one of the secretaries (*kuttāb*) of this caliph.³⁵

Muḥammad b. al-Walīd b. 'Āmir al-Zubaydī, al-Ḥimṣī, (b. during the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik [!] d. between 146 and 148), a *muhaddith* and *qāḍī* of Ḥimṣ. He was one of the close and devoted transmitters of al-Zuhrī (d. 124/742), with whom he stayed for ten years in al-Ruṣāfa, where he was also in charge of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) of the Caliphate. His position at the court was not an obstacle to his being highly valued and esteemed (as a transmitter of *ḥadīth*) by important critics of *ḥadīth*.³⁶

Shu'ayb b. Abī Ḥamza, al-Ḥimṣī, the *mawlā* of the family of Ziyād b. Abihi (d. 162/779 or 163). He was also highly appreciated as a trustworthy *Ḥadīth* transmitter by well-known critics of *Ḥadīth*, one may say, in spite of the fact that he was a secretary in the bureau of expenditures (*al-naḥḥāt*) of the Caliphate, and perhaps not less interesting that he heard and recorded al-Zuhrī's lectures given orally on the order of Caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik].³⁷

Yaḥyā b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, al-Kinānī al-Madanī (was active in the middle of the second century of the *hijra*), was a *kātib*, the head of the *shurṭa* of al-Madīna, and a transmitter of *ḥadīth*.³⁸

³⁵ On him, see Ibn Abī Ḥātim (1952, 4: 110); Ibn 'Adī (1988, 3: 274); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 22: 303–14); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 11: 416–22); *ḥājjib* of 'Umar II: the full text in al-Mizzī (1985–92: 417): quoting *Tārīkh Dārayā* of 'Abd al-Jabbār b. 'Abdallāh al-Khawlānī (on him, see n. 203, below): he was the *ḥājjib* of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and was honoured above others by this caliph (*kāna ḥājjiban li-'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz wa-kāna muqaddaman 'indahu*; one of the secretaries of 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz: Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 22: 309).

³⁶ On him, see 'Aṭwān (1986: 194) (according to Abū Zur'a (1980, 1: 432); Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 9: 503); see also Ibn Ḥibbān (1975, 7: 373); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 56: 189–98); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 6: 245: *Shaykh Ḥimṣ*; idem., 281–4): his biography; Ibn Ḥajar (1325–1327 AH, 9: 443); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 26: 586–91); his birth: al-Dhahabī (1982–5: 281); his great merit as a *Ḥadīth* scholar and the great esteem for him by *Ḥadīth* critics: Ibn 'Asākir, *op.cit.* 191 (Ibn Sa'd) 193, 194 (al-Zuhrī himself and al-Awzā'i); copied by al-Mizzī (1985–92: 589); and al-Dhahabī (1982–5: 282).

³⁷ On him, see Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 23: 89–102); Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 4: 307); Ibn al-Qaysārānī (1994, 1: 221–3); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 7: 187–92); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 12: 516–20); 'Aṭwān (1986: 195–7). Recording the lectures of al-Zuhrī in front of the ruler (*al-sulṭān*) or rulers (*al-wulāt*), see the discussion of Lecker (1996: 27, nn. 22–3); al-Dhahabī (1982–5: 188) (=Lecker, *op.cit.* n. 23) explains that the *sulṭān* (ruler), is Caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik (*ya'nī bi-'l-sulṭān Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik*); secretary in the bureau of the expenditures of Caliph Hishām (*wa-kāna min kuttāb Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik 'alā naḥḥāṭihī*): Abū Zur'a (1980, 1: 433; 2: 715); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 56: 196; 23: 99) (= Lecker, *op. cit.*, n. 22); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 7: 189); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 12: 519).

³⁸ On him, see note 71 below.

Hishām b. al-Ghāz (d. between 153/770 to 156/772–773), a well-known Syrian *Muḥaddith*, is called the pious (ascetic) and virtuous (*kāna 'ābid fāḍil*), was in charge of the treasury (*bayt al-māl*) of al-Manṣūr.³⁹

Another example is Khālīd b. Ma'dān al-Kalā'ī al-Ḥimṣī (d. 103/721),⁴⁰ to whom Donner devotes a relatively large amount of space (pp. 95–6, 99). He, together with 'Ubāda b. Nusayy, transmitted many *futūḥ* traditions.⁴¹ Khālīd was one of those 'Saints' or 'Holy men' whose entire being, according to Donner, was ahistorical piety. However, this is a one sided depiction of such an important character. Khālīd was one of the eminent scholars of law and *Ḥadīth* of his day. He was closely connected to the Umayyad government. Under Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya (reigned 61/680–64/683), he held the office of *Ṣāhib al-Shurṭa*,⁴² and answered the caliph's letters on matters of *fiqh*.⁴³

His biographies are indeed full, as Donner rightly saw, of descriptions of his honesty and great piety, and even call him by the titles of early *Ṣūfīs*, *zāhid*, *'ābid* and *badīl*. From the tradition describing his death it may be understood that he died at Anṭarsūs (Ṭarṭūs), where he may have stayed as a *murābiṭ*.⁴⁴

Khālīd b. Ma'dān is mentioned as one of the *abdāl* (singular: *badīl*).

In the research literature the *abdāl* have been discussed within the framework of *Ṣūfī* belief-systems. From the ninth century onward this concept became one of the foundation stones of the *Ṣūfī* ranking of their hierarchy of saints. Within the framework of this belief, the *abdāl* play an important role in the preservation of the universe. At the final stage of formulation of *Ṣūfī* doctrine, according to accepted opinion, they stood in the fifth rank out of ten in the hierarchy of

³⁹ Al-Mizzī (1985–92, 30: 258–61); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 7: 60); on him see n. 152 below.

⁴⁰ On him, see Abū Nu'aym (1351 AH, 5: 210–21); al-Ṭabarānī (1989, 1: 39, 228, 405; 2: 64, 131, 166–201, 423); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 4: 536–41); Ibn 'Asākir (1989, 16: 189–205); Abbott (1967, 2: 225); Donner (1987: 7–9); 'Aṭwān (1986: 97–8, 222–3), emphasizing his conquests and early Islamic history traditions, besides those relating to the *Sīra*; Madelung (1984: 14); Livne (1985: 32); (1996: 123, 127); Elad (1998: 41).

⁴¹ Donner (1987: 9) with strong reservations about the validity of Khālīd's *futūḥ* traditions.

⁴² Ibn 'Asākir (1989, 16: 189, 195); Donner (1987: 7).

⁴³ Elad (1998) (according to Abū Zur'a [1980, 1: 694]); Ibn 'Asākir (1989: 195); Donner (1987: 7).

⁴⁴ Elad (1998: 41, n. 191) and the references there; Ibn 'Asākir (1989: 201): his death in Ṭarṭūs and his title *badīl*.

saints. Each of the ten ranks is responsible for a particular area. That of the *abdāl* is Syria.⁴⁵

The *abdāl* are mentioned already in early traditions from the end of the first/seventh and the beginning of the second/eighth century. Obviously, these early *abdāl* (who number Khālid b. Ma'dān among them) have no connection to later *Ṣūfī* doctrine. The traditions do not elucidate the origin of the word and the concept. However, it is clear that the world exists due to them and that the *abdāl* play a vital role in the continued existence of the world and its functioning: 'When Prophecy ceased to exist and the [prophets] became the pillars of the earth (*awtād al-ard*), Allāh brought in their place forty men from the community of Muḥammad, *ṣal'am*, called *al-abdāl* and they are the pillars of the earth.'⁴⁶ 'Thanks to them rain falls, thanks to them men have livelihood, thanks to them enemies are vanquished and thanks to them one is rescued from troubles and tribulations and from [sinking into] despair.'⁴⁷

The *abdāl* received their special status not through much prayer nor through fasting or giving charity, but through the generosity of their hearts, through their being pure and spotless, and through their trustworthy advice to the leaders of their community: *lā yanālu mā nālū bi-kathrat ṣalāt wa-lā ṣiyām wa-lā ṣadaqa wa-lākin bi-sakhā' al-naḥs wa-salāmat al-qulūb wa-'l-naṣīḥa li-'a'immatihim*.⁴⁸

These traditions about the *abdāl* emphasize that they are not ascetics, are not withdrawn from the worldly vanities. They are involved in their community and active within it, even at the ruler's (the caliph's) court. Moreover, one who lives an ascetic life and scorns and mocks the rulers is not counted as one of the *abdāl* (*fa-lā...mutamāwit wa-lā ṭa' 'ān 'alā 'l-'a'imma fa-innahu lā yakūnu min-humā al-abdāl*).⁴⁹

These traditions contradict other ones expressing ascetic trends — abandonment of worldly vanities, avoidance of contact with the rul-

⁴⁵ *EP*, 'Abdāl', *s.v.* (I. Goldziher); Livne (1996: 122–4).

⁴⁶ Ibn 'Asākir (1951, 1: 291); the *isnād*: 'Uthmān b. Muṭī' from Sufyān b. 'Uyayna [d. 196/811] from Abū al-Zinād [ʿAbdallāh b. Dhakwān al-Qurashī al-Madanī, d. 130/747–8 or 131 or 132]; al-Suyūṭī (1982: 251); Elad (1998: 40–1).

⁴⁷ Ibn 'Asākir (1951: 277, 278); al-Suyūṭī (1982: 242, see also pp. 245–6, 251); Ibn Ḥanbal (1895, 1: 112) with slightly different ending; Elad (1998: 40, n. 184).

⁴⁸ Al-Suyūṭī (1982: 242), with other versions, instead of *a'immatihim: li-'l-muslimīn*, or: *li-jamī' al-muslimīn*; *ibid.*, 245, 247, 251; Ibn 'Asākir (1951: 279, 291).

⁴⁹ Al-Suyūṭī (1352 AH: 457–8); Ibn 'Asākir (1951, 1: 322–3); al-Bakrī (1945, 1: 292), correct 'Urwa b. Rudaym to...b. Ru'aym.

ers and of acceptance of governmental posts — which were already common in this period, but do not form a major school of thought. The early traditions identifying the *abdāl* with well-known scholars of the Umayyad period, such as the above mentioned Khālid b. Ma'dān, Rajā' b. Ḥaywa and 'Ubāda b. Nusayy, are evidence of this. A tradition going back to Maslama b. 'Abd al-Malik says: 'Indeed among Kinda are to be found three, by means of whom Allāh the Mighty and the Exalted makes the rain fall, and by means of whom He protects from enemies: Rajā' b. Ḥaywa, 'Ubāda b. Nusayy and 'Adī b. 'Adī.'⁵⁰ (d. 120/737–8).⁵¹

The merits of the three leaders of Kinda mentioned in the above tradition are identical to the merits of the *abdāl*. A widespread tradition claims it is thanks to *abdāl* that rain falls on the Muslims and thanks to them, they overcome their enemies.⁵²

According to early traditions, in Beth Shean there were two or four *abdāl*.⁵³ Of the three leaders of Kinda mentioned in the tradition, Rajā' b. Ḥaywa was born in Beth Shean and 'Ubāda b. Nusayy lived in the province of al-Urdunn (apparently in Tiberias). The qualities required of the *abdāl* in the early traditions — that is, generosity, integrity and giving trustworthy advice to the rulers, not extraordinary prayer or charity⁵⁴ — characterize the above-mentioned leaders of Kinda and other people, Syrians of this period, who are reported to have been numbered among the *abdāl*, like Khālid b. Ma'dān. These traditions were invented and fashioned for them. Again, it must be emphasized that at this early stage (end of the first/seventh and beginning of the second/eighth centuries), the *abdāl* should not be identified with a strict ascetic trend among the *zuhhād*.

⁵⁰ Abū Zur'a (1980, 1: 337; 2: 711); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 26: 215; 40: 143); idem (1982: 45); Ibn Ḥajar (1325–7 AH, 5: 114).

⁵¹ On him, see Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 40: 137–45 [1989, 11: 505–11]); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 19: 534–6). 'Adī is described by Ibn Sa'd (1958, 7: 476) [= Ibn 'Asākir (1996: 139, 143 [1989: 505, 508]) and al-Mizzī (1985–92: 534)] as *ṣāhib* 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and as the governor of al-Jazīra Armenia and Ādharbayjān under Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik (reigned 99/715–101/717). Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 40: 140): he is called *ṣayyid Abl al-Jazīra*; *ibid.*, quotes from the book of Abū Zakariyyā Yazīd b. Muḥammad b. Iyās al-Azdī, *Kitāb Muḥaddithī Abl al-Mawṣil*, that 'Adī b. 'Adī was governor of Mosul and spent time there. He is described as a *faqīh* and *muḥaddith*. I did not find this piece of information in the printed part of al-Azdī's book *Tārīkh al-Mawṣil*. Note that Ibn 'Asākir mentions a book with a different title; is he quoting from another book by al-Azdī, or from another part of the book, that has not reached us?

⁵² Ibn 'Asākir (1951, 1, 277–8); al-Suyūṭī (1982: 242, 245–8, 251).

⁵³ Elad (1998: 45ff).

⁵⁴ Ibn 'Asākir (1951: 279, 291); al-Suyūṭī (1982: 242, 245–51).

The identification of the *abdāl* with Syrian persons and scholars demanded response from the learned circles of al-ʿIrāq, who could not leave the field free for their Syrian rivals. Thus traditions about ʿIrāqī *abdāl* developed as well, a trend that continued with renewed vigour during the beginning and middle of the eighth century.⁵⁵

An ʿIrāqī scholar identified as one of the *abdāl* was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), mentioned as one of Donner's five 'Saints', and one of the greatest scholars of al-Baṣra. He is indeed considered one of the founders and trail-blazers of the early *zubbād*, although as is well known, many other sects within Islam lay claim to him, most famously the *Muʿtazila*.⁵⁶

These scholars, like Khālid b. Maʿdān, Rajā' b. Ḥaywa and others, saw no fault in serving the Umayyad government. When bits of information about them that can be considered realistic and/or of historic value are gathered together, it turns out that they were far from scorning this world. This is also true of their predecessors among the Companions of the Prophet, about whom the obfuscation is even greater, as the Islamic tradition formulated an unshakeable consensus regarding their holiness and heavenly purity. Of course, from time to time one comes across traditions that place everything in slightly more earthly proportions, such as the reports about the vast wealth of some of the Companions, who were far from rejecting worldly and material matters.⁵⁷

Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhri (d. 124/742), perhaps the greatest scholar of the first and second centuries, arrived in Damascus penniless.⁵⁸ At

⁵⁵ Elad (1998: 45ff).

⁵⁶ On him, see Ritter (*EP*, 'al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī', s.v.); Sezgin (1967, 1: 591–4); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 6: 95–127) and the exhaustive bibliography therein. For his identification as a *badīl*, see al-Suyūṭī (1982: 245), quoting a tradition related by al-Ṭabarānī in *al-Muʿjam al-Awsaṭ*, according to which Qatāda b. Dīʿāma (60/679–118/736), an early Qurʾān commentator (on whom, see Sezgin [1967, 1: 31–2]; al-Mizzī [1985–92, 23: 498–517] and the rich bibliography there), confirms that al-Ḥasan is one of the *abdāl*. In another place (al-Suyūṭī [1982: 246, 250]), he hopes that al-Ḥasan will be numbered among the *abdāl*.

⁵⁷ Much information on this issue has been compiled by al-Kattānī (n.d., 2: 397–403): the great wealth of Ṭalḥa, al-Zubayr, al-Miqdād b. al-Aswad, Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAwf, Zayd b. Thābit, Saʿd b. Abī Waqqāṣ, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ, ʿAmr b. Ḥurayth al-Makhzūmī, Ḥuwayṭib b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzā and many others.

⁵⁸ Since al-Zuhri's father fought at the side of ʿAbdallāh b. al-Zubayr against ʿAbd al-Malik (Lecker [1996: 47]), this caliph ordered the removal from the *Dīwān* of the names of the members of this family (Ibn ʿAsākir [1989, 15: 991, 997] = idem [1984–8, 23: 227]); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 5: 229, 230); Ibn al-Jawzī (1992, 7: 232); see also Abū Zurʿa (1980, 1: 408) and other Arab tribes (al-Fasawī [1410

the time of his death he was wealthy, from the money and lands he had received from the Umayyad rulers (despite apologetic attempts to present him as poverty-stricken and destitute).⁵⁹

Most of the scholars mentioned here were Arabs. This fact does not agree with Donner's assertion that they were non-Arabs, of base origin, and that 'their status within the community was established solely by their piety' (p. 99). Khālid b. Ma'dān, Rajā' b. Ḥaywa, 'Ubāda b. Nusayy, and of course, 'Umar II were Arabs from important and respected tribes. The initial conclusions of the research of Monique Bernards and John Nawas show that there were more Arabs than non-Arabs among the scholars of the first and second centuries.⁶⁰

II.3 *The Beginning Of Historical Writing*

In several places in his book, Donner repeats his main thesis that historic consciousness, and the creation of historiographical themes that followed suit, started at the end of the first, or the beginning of the second century of the *hijra* (p. 279). The beginnings of historical writing can be traced to the last quarter of the first century (pp. 219, 280). This phase involved getting out of the ahistorical phase, developing an interest in the past, and asserting the importance of past events for the uniqueness of the community (pp. 126, 141). This applies to the case of the *Fitna* theme, perhaps first developed in al-Kūfa by the supporters of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (p. 278). Donner is most probably correct in this supposition, but it seems that the first written work could be dated much earlier, to the middle of the first century (the case of 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi', see further below).

Even though Donner is right in saying that the different centres of the Muslim world (e.g., al-Madīna [p. 219]) served as centres of learning, he still stresses that it is clear that writing started in the end of the first century. This poses a problem: Donner mentions a few scholars, whose date of death ranges from 94 until 124 ('Urwa b. al-Zubayr to al-Zuhri).

AH, 1: 627]; Ibn 'Asākir (1984–8, 23: 229). 'Abd al-Malik renewed and even increased the annual pension to al-Zuhri, appointed him as one of the *Ṣaḥāba* of the Caliph, with the salary of that class (Ibn 'Asākir [1989, 15: 992]; Ibn al-Jawzī (1992: 234); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 5: 331), and paid his debts (Ibn 'Asākir [1989: 977] = idem [1984–8, 23: 241]); al-Dhahabī (1982–5: 329).

⁵⁹ See Lecker (1996: 36, 40 n. 83, esp. pp. 50–5).

⁶⁰ Bernards and Nawas (1998; 1999; forthcoming a and b); Bernards (2001); Nawas (2001).

As for 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr, Donner is inclined to agree with Landau-Tasseron, that he had no written *Sīra* work⁶¹ but definitely collected traditions on this theme, since it was related of him that he was the first author in this genre. That is to say, he had collections of traditions in the last third of the first century of the *hijra*. Another of Donner's conclusions based on this assertion is that 'the fact that no books on the *sīra* are attributed to any one before 'Urwa's activity means also that before his time no one was actively gathering and maintaining accounts on the Prophet's biography, even as collections of notes' (p. 146) [Emphasis is mine, A.E.].

The question then is, at least with respect to some of the scholars mentioned by Donner, whether it is possible to antedate their interest in the writing of the historical themes by at least a quarter of a century. Donner's assertion requires these scholars to have shown interest in the themes they were transmitting or writing about, only at a very old age. It seems plausible that some of these scholars started their scholarly occupations during the first and second quarters of the first century (certainly 'Urwa, Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab, al-Zuhrī [who was most probably born between 49 to 52 AH],⁶² and maybe even Abān b. 'Uthmān [d. 105/723]).⁶³

Donner adds that the list of scholars mentioned by him is not complete. A longer list can be constructed on the basis of Sezgin's list⁶⁴ of scholars and authors who lived during the latter part of the first century and later. It seems that Donner agrees with the idea, that the scholars mentioned by Sezgin were indeed occupied with the themes of the *Nubuwwa* and *Umma*, although they had not all necessarily written a work (p. 219, n. 32).

Of more interest is the list of scholars recorded by Sezgin a few pages earlier, who lived at the beginning or middle of the first century and had written books. This stands in contradistinction to Donner's main thesis. An examination of these authors and the works attributed to them shows that in more than a few cases the evidence presented by Sezgin concerning the existence of a written composi-

⁶¹ Donner (1998: 145); Landau-Tasseron (forthcoming) has arrived at this conclusion in her well-known but still unpublished paper.

⁶² See Lecker (1996: 43–4); Elad (1995: 154–5).

⁶³ On him, see A'zamī (1981: 27–8); Kister (1999: 222, 233); (both relying on a most interesting tradition in *Kitāb al-Muwaffaqiyyāt* of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār); in Kister's view (1999: 215), 'The *Sīra* literature (that is, the Biography of the Prophet Muḥammad) came to the world during the period after the death of the Prophet. It developed during the first half of the first century of the *hijra*; until the end of this century the first complete literary composition have appeared.'

⁶⁴ Sezgin (1967, 1: 275–302).

tion or notes, is not unequivocal. One example is that of al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr (d. 107/725). Donner, following Sezgin, says that he composed a *Maghāzī* book.⁶⁵ But the references provided by Sezgin for this matter⁶⁶ are far from conclusive and do not attest to a written work/s by al-Qāsim.⁶⁷ On the other hand, some scholars mentioned by Sezgin most probably did write books not later than the middle of the first century. For the sake of argument, even if such early compositions did not exist at such an early period (which I find most implausible),⁶⁸ this list is clear-cut evidence for the great interest in the different themes of early Islamic history, interest that aroused great intellectual activity already in the second quarter of the first century of the *hijra*; this activity was the vessel through which people living in this period expressed their awareness of the great historical processes they were taking part in.

Sezgin mentions several scholars who lived in the mid-first century of the *hijra* and composed books. Some are mentioned in Ibn al-Nadīm's *Fihrist*.⁶⁹ Two deserve a special discussion. The first, who was not a scholar but a statesman, was Ziyād b. Abīhi, Mu'āwiyā's brother and the governor of al-'Irāq (d. 53/673), who [allegedly] composed a book on the calumnies of the Arabs (*Mathālib al-'Arab*). Sezgin (accepting the report of Ibn al-Nadīm) and Pellat (relying on a different report in *Kitāb al-aghānī*), seem to accept the authenticity of the report.⁷⁰ From an interesting anecdote in *Kitāb al-aghānī* we learn that Ziyād's *Mathālib* were read to caliph 'Abd al-Malik, who became very angry and ordered it to be burnt.⁷¹ Even if it is a stere-

⁶⁵ Donner (1998: 194; after Sezgin [1967, 1: 279]).

⁶⁶ Sezgin (1967) quotes 25 references from al-Ṭabarī and other sources but none of them attests to a specific written work.

⁶⁷ Donner (1998: 200) is more cautious: 'The lost *maghāzī* work of al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad...if it existed...'

⁶⁸ See Elad (Forthcoming a).

⁶⁹ Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2: 89–90); (1971: 101); partly taken from Ibn Qutayba (1850: 265–7).

⁷⁰ Sezgin (1967, 1: 257, 261–2); Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2: 89; 1971: 101); see also Pellat (*EP*, 'Mathālib') according to al-Isfahānī (1960, 20: 21; 1927, 20: 77; 1284 AH, 18: 9).

⁷¹ Al-Isfahānī (1927, 20: 78): The *isnād* goes back to:... 'Umar b. Shabba (173/789–264/877) < Muḥammad b. Yahyā Abū 'Uthmān (sic! read Abū Ghassān) (b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd...al-Kinānī al-Madanī, a secretary [*kātib*] who belonged to a family of secretaries; on him, see al-Dhahabī [1995, 8: 188]; Ibn Ḥajar [1404/1984, 9: 456–7]; *idem* [1986, 7: 378]; al-Mizzī [1985–92, 26: 636–8]); < his father, Yahyā b. 'Alī, who was a secretary (*kātib*), the head of the *shurṭa* in al-Madīna, and also a transmitter of *ḥadīth*, who transmitted *ḥadīth* from Muḥammad b. Iṣḥāq (d. 150/767) and Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Muslim, the nephew of al-Zuhrī

otype literary device, and so the anecdote is not authentic, for those who invented this tradition in the middle of the second century of the *hijra* and those who listened to them, the existence of Ziyād's book of *Mathālib* was a fact, and so they built their story around it.

The second person is 'Abīd/'Ubayd b. Sharya al-Jurhumī, who (according to the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm), while in Mu'āwiya's court and at his request, gave lectures on the 'traditions of the past, the kings of the Arabs and the non-Arabs and the reasons for the Babel of tongues and the divisions of the people in the land'.⁷² Mu'āwiya ordered his lectures to be collected in a written register and be attributed to 'Abīd b. Sharya (*fa-amara Mu'āwiya an yudawwan wa-yunsab ilā 'Abīd b. Sharya*).⁷³ Great reservations and scepticism were raised by both Muslim and modern scholars regarding the historicity of the only extant book of 'Abīd b. Sharya, *Akhhbār al-Yaman wa-ash'āruhā wa-ansābuhā*.⁷⁴ Donner's view regarding this author is not clear cut.

In one place he writes 'Several works on this theme [i.e. the theme of pre-Islamic Arabia, A.E.] are known from later references and quotations, and a few have even survived. 'Abīd b. Sharya (d. ca. 50/670) wrote *Akhhbār al-Yaman...*' (p. 196). Donner casts some doubts on this author, but does not explicitly tell us what he really thinks about the historicity of his work.⁷⁵ Later on, while discussing this historical theme, Donner remarks that 'it is noteworthy that the first historical books in Arabic identified by Sezgin are works dealing with South Arabian history, culture and kingship... 'Abīd b. Sharya (d. 60) [? on p. 196 the date was ca. 50/670)] wrote a *Kitāb fī akhhbār al-Yaman wa-ash'āruhā wa-ansābuhā...* and Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 114) wrote a *Kitāb al-mulūk*.' (p. 224). But immediately after he raises reservations about Sezgin's view regarding the existence of these

(d. 152/769–770 or 157/773–774); on him, see al-Mizzī (1985–92, 25: 554–8), see (ibid., 24: 638) (a *kātib*, head of the *shurta* and transmitter of *hadīth*).

⁷² Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2) (quoting Ibn Qutayba [1850: 265]); the translation is Dodge's (1970, 1: 194).

⁷³ Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2); Dodge's translation of this section is completely faulty; see also, Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 5: 115) (*fa-kataba [Mu'āwiya] ilayhi ya'khdhu minhu al-akhhbār fa-allafahā kitāban*).

⁷⁴ Reservations of Muslim scholars: Ibn Qutayba (1972, 1: 283); Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 5: 115); Rosenthal (*EP*, 'Ibn Sharya'), following the scepticism of these Muslim and modern scholars regarding the historicity of this author and his published book, writes that 'Abīd b. Sharya 'died at the age of over 220, 240 or 300 years during the reign of 'Abd al-Malik'; see also his biography in Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 38: 203–5).

⁷⁵ Donner writes (1998: 196, n. 36): 'On this author, whose very existence has been the subject of much dispute, see Crosby, *Akhhbār al-Yaman* (a Ph.D. dissertation from Yale University, unavailable to me, A.E.); *GAS*, I, 260.'

early books saying 'This fact is significant even if we argue, *pace* Sezgin, that these "titles" represent only coherent foci of interest rather than defined written texts.' The next sentence is not clear to me: 'Sezgin identifies 'Abīd's *Kitāb fī akhbār al-Yaman* and Wahb's *Kitāb al-mulūk*; we add the second title of 'Abīd's, which only seems to strengthen the case'. (p. 224, n. 45). But Sezgin distinctly speaks of 'Das erste Buch, *Akhbār al-Yaman wa-aš'āruhā wa-ansābuhā* von 'Abīd b. Šariya al-Gurhumī...'.⁷⁶ The 'original' title given by Ibn al-Nadīm, is *Kitāb al-mulūk wa-akhbār al-mādīyyīn*.⁷⁷

It seems that Donner most probably accepts as genuine the reports on the writings of 'Abīd b. Sharya, or at least his occupation with collecting traditions about al-Yaman.⁷⁸ It seems to me that this is the reason for his assertion that the 'Theme of Pre-Islamic Arabia' had developed already by the middle and later first century (p. 197), and it 'appears to have been the interest to *some* believers' (p. 196; emphasis is mine, A.E.).

The main source of information for 'Abīd b. Sharya's written works is *al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, which was the main source for Sezgin (on whom Donner relied). The stories about 'Abīd revolve around the great interest of Caliph Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān ([reigned 18/640: as the governor of al-Shām] 41/661-60/680: as Caliph) in the historical traditions and the poetry of South Arabia, an interest, one may assume with certainty, shared by the entire Arab-Muslim elite and not only by 'some believers'. This interest caused him to summon 'Abīd to the court. The great interest of Mu'āwiya in the Arab heritage and his concern to preserve it in writing is well-known.⁷⁹ One of the important examples of this concern was his command to collect the ancient Arabic Poetry (*al-Mu'allaqāt*).⁸⁰

'The deep interest of Mu'āwiya in poetry, his close contacts with contemporary poets and the high esteem in which he held them are well attested. 'Abd al-Malik's familiarity with poetry was not less than that of Mu'āwiya. The circumstances mentioned for the composition of the collection [of ancient Arab poetry] of Mu'āwiya for the prince

⁷⁶ Sezgin (1967, 1: 244).

⁷⁷ Ibn al-Nadīm (1871-2).

⁷⁸ It seems that this was also Goldziher's view (1971, 1: 169).

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Kister (1970: 30-3); 'Aṭwān (1988: 116-21), both scholars quote the same reference from Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr, *al-Manthūr wa-al-manzūm* (ed. Muḥsin Ghiyās, Beirut, Dār Turāth 'Uwaydāt, 1977, p. 40), who records the tradition of Abū 'Alī al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Ḥirmāzī ('Aṭwān did not see Kister's article); and see 'Aṭwān (1988: 111-55), for a comprehensive study of the great interest of Mu'āwiya in Arabic culture, especially in ancient Arabic poetry.

(it was probably Yazīd) are quite plausible: Mu'āwiya wanted to give him *a literary education in the manner of Arab society, to teach him the poems which were considered the best and probably most widely discussed and recited in the circles of the chiefs and governors whom he had to meet*. It was the heritage of Arabism which he had to absorb and display. It was probably the same aim that 'Abd al-Malik pursued when he decided to compile his anthology: to educate the crown prince within the Arabic tradition of poetry. It was evidently the same reason which caused al-Manṣūr to employ al-Mufaḍḍal al-Ḍabbī and to engage him to compile the anthology of the *Mufaḍḍaliyyāt*.⁸¹ [My emphasis, A.E.].

This deep interest in the early Arabic poetry reflects the conviction among Muslim scholars in the early Islamic period that the pre-Islamic poets 'were the only organs of historical memory',⁸² or that 'la poésie est la mine de sciences des anciens Arabes (*al-šī'ru ma'dīnu 'ilmi l-'Arabī*), le livre de leur sagesse (*sifru ḥikmatihā*), les archives de leur histoire (*dāwānu akhbārīhā*), le trésor de leurs grands journées [= leurs batailles] et la tranchée qui garde leur gloire (*al-sūru l-maḍrūbu 'alā ma'ātirihā*)'.⁸³

II.4 Early Shī'ī Compositions: The Case Of 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi'

Donner's mere conjecture that the earliest books were most probably composed in Shī'ī circles, is in all probability true, but on the other hand, from the case of 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi', it seems that historical writing in Islam has begun much earlier than Donner's asserted date.

According to al-A'zamī, 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi' (d. ca 80/ca 700), wrote a book about the battle between 'Alī and Mu'āwiya.⁸⁴

'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi' was the secretary (*kātib*) of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. His father, originally a slave of al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, became the *mawlā* of the Prophet.⁸⁵ His brother, 'Alī was also the secretary of 'Alī. In the Shī'ite biographical literature 'Ubaydallāh is mentioned as the author of several works, including *Kitāb qadāyā*

⁸¹ Kister (1970: 31–2).

⁸² Goldziher (1971, 1: 169).

⁸³ Arazi (1999: 205). I am grateful to Professor Arazi for this reference.

⁸⁴ Al-A'zamī (1981: 18), quoting wrong pages in al-Ṭabarānī's *al-Kabīr*, also referring to another work of his (1396 AH), quoting al-Ṭūsī's *Fihrist* (the page in the footnote is missing, though).

⁸⁵ Ibn Ḥajar (1325–7 AH, 12: 7, 10); Shī'ī biographical literature: al-Ṭūsī (1960: 133); al-Barqī (1342 AH: 4); al-Ḥillī (1342 AH: 217); Ibn Sharāshūb (1956, 3: 90); al-Najāshī (1988: 61–7); al-Khū'ī (1983, 11: 62–3).

Amīr al-Mu'minīn (The *fatāwā* law cases? or legal decisions? of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib), and *Kitāb tasmīyat man shahida ma'a Amīr al-Mu'minīn 'alayhi al-salām al-Jamal wa-Ṣiffīn wa-'l-Nahrawān min al-Ṣaḥāba raḍīyā allāh 'anhum*. (The Book that contains the names of the Companions of the Prophet who witnessed [that is, took the side of and fought] with The Commander of the Faithful [that is 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib] at the battles of al-Jamal, Ṣiffīn and al-Nahrawān).⁸⁶ This book is of special interest to us within the context of the topic discussed. It is also mentioned and quoted by non-Shī'ī sources. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī quotes al-Muṭayyan (Muḥammad b. 'Abdallāh b. Sulaymān al-Ḥaḍramī al-Kūfī, d. 297/909),⁸⁷ that the *Ṣaḥābī* Jubayr b. al-Ḥubāb al-Anṣārī is mentioned in (*fi*) *Siyar 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi' fi tasmīyat man shahida Ṣiffīn ma'a 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib* (The History book[?])⁸⁸ of 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi' in the List of Names of Those who Participated with 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib in [the battle of] Ṣiffīn). According to al-Baghdādī, al-Muṭayyan composed a book entitled *Kitāb Ṣiffīn*.⁸⁹ 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi's book was quoted many times by later sources, usually by stating *wa-fi*, or *fi Tasmīyat man shahida ma'a 'Alī*.⁹⁰ One source specifically speaks of a book, which contained the lists of the *Ṣaḥābīs* who witnessed with 'Alī: *fi Kitāb 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi' fi tasmīyat man shahida ma'a 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib*.⁹¹

II.5 The Beginning of Writing: Nasab: Sezgin And The Earliest Books On Nasab

In another place in his book, Donner argues that, 'compilations devoted to the genealogy of various tribal groups appeared, beginning in the first half of the second century AH, if not before'. He brings the claim of 'Sezgin, citing al-Jāḥiẓ that books of tribal genealogy were already composed before the rise of Islam', but Donner's next sen-

⁸⁶ Al-Ṭūsī (1960: 133); note that al-Najāshī (1988: 64), attributes *Kitāb qadāyā Amīr al-Mu'minīn* to Abū Rāfi', 'Ubaydallāh's father; on his brother see (ibid.: 62, 65); (p. 65): the author of a work on jurisprudence (*fiqh*); Sezgin (1967, 1: 525), mentions only Abū Rāfi' and 'Alī, his son. He does not mention 'Ubaydallāh b. Abī Rāfi'.

⁸⁷ On him, see Sezgin (1967: 163).

⁸⁸ Here, I prefer this meaning of *Siyar*, to 'The Laws of War'.

⁸⁹ Al-Baghdādī (1955, 2: 23), mentioned by Kaḥḥāla (1960, 9: 218); Sezgin (1967: 163) does not mention this and other works quoted by Kaḥḥāla.

⁹⁰ Al-Ṭabarānī (1983, 2: 287; 3: 223; 4: 14, 197, 199, 203, 217; 5: 60, 69); Ibn Kathīr (1401 AH, 3: 521); Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (1960, 4: 1712); Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 5: 598); al-Haythamī (1407 AH, 10: 6); Ibn al-'Adīm (1988, 4: 2817).

⁹¹ Al-Ṭabarānī (1983, 2: 259).

tence seems to contradict the one that preceded it, namely, that some compilations appeared, according to Sezgin, 'as early as AH 60'.⁹²

Although books did not exist (according to Donner) at such an early date, there did exist a very early interest 'in pre-Islamic Arabian history which crystalized quite early as an historiographical theme, probably already by the middle and later first century AH...' This interest was not the result of simple historical curiosity, as argued by other scholars, 'but [was] firmly grounded in the search for legitimation within the community'. (p. 197). This argument, however, contradicts the general thesis raised by Donner throughout his book, that is, that the interest in historiographical themes, and especially, their being put into writing started only from the last third [sometimes the last quarter] of the first century of the *hijra*.

For an overview of the attitude of the Arabs to genealogy and the development of the *Nasab* literature Donner quotes the works of Rosenthal and Caskel. But he should have made it clear to the reader that Rosenthal's view is the complete opposite of his own, since the latter writes that 'it appears clear that interest in genealogy somehow found written expression already in pre-Islamic Arabia, in whatever language this may have been...[and that] there can be no doubt that genealogical relations were put into writing in the first century of Islam'.⁹³

An important piece of evidence (noticed and discussed by Sezgin), is recorded by al-Jāhīz, who attributes *Nasab* works to scholars who were active in the mid-first century of the *hijra*.⁹⁴

Some of the earliest authors and *Nasab* experts, *nassābūn*, mentioned by al-Jāhīz are:

- 1) Ṣuḥār b. al-'Abbās ('Ayyāsh), who died ca 50 AH.⁹⁵ (see also the discussion below).
- 2) Zayd b. Kayyis al-Namarī (active ca.50 AH.), the *rāwīya* of 'Abīd b. Sharya.⁹⁶
- 3) Al-Nakhhār b. Aws al-'Udhri (d. 60/680).⁹⁷

⁹² Donner (1998: 107, n. 36) quoting Sezgin (1967: 245).

⁹³ Rosenthal (*EP*, 'Nasab')

⁹⁴ Sezgin (1967: 244–5, 261–8), according to al-Jāhīz (1958, 3: 209–10); text (p. 209): *kutub al-nasab allatī tudāfu ilā...*

⁹⁵ Sezgin (1967: 261) according to Hārūn, the editor of *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, 1: 90, n. 4, he died ca. 40/661

⁹⁶ Sezgin (1967: 263).

⁹⁷ Sezgin (1967: 267); Sezgin attributes to him a book on *Amthāl* (quoting al-Jāhīz [1958]), but it should be of course a *Nasab* book; see also Ibn Hajar (1981, 6: 494); *wa-kāna 'allāma bi-'l-ansāb*; Ibn Mākūlā (1990, 1: 15; 7: 256): *min wuld 'Abd al-Manāf b. al-Ḥārith b. Sa'd Hudhaym min Qudā'a, wa-kāna ansab al-'Arab...*; p. 314.

4) Wiqā' b. al-Ash'ar, known as (Ibn) Lisān al-Ḥummara (active in the mid first century H.).⁹⁸

5) Daghfal b. Ḥanzala b. Zayd al-Shaybānī (d. 65/685).⁹⁹

6) Mathjūr b. Ghaylān al-Ḍabbī (d. 85/704).¹⁰⁰

Sezgin mentions other early authors of *Nasab*, but the evidence for their authorship is not unequivocally attested by the sources.

This is the case of 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-Kawwā' al-Yashkurī (d. 80/699), who was a Khārījite (see discussion further below). Sezgin also mentions very early scholars, who were known for their great knowledge in genealogy, but there is no evidence of them being the authors of books on this topic. Among them one may note:

7) Ḥuwayṭib b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā al-Qurashī (d. between 52 and 54/671-674).¹⁰¹

II.6 The Establishment Of Dīwān al-'Aṭā' And The Development Of The Nasab Literature: Its Implications For The Main Thesis Of Donner

It seems that Donner (following Puin) accepts the authenticity of the traditions about the establishment of *Dīwān al-'Aṭā'* by 'Umar.¹⁰² It seems though that he does not give it the real historical importance it deserves. It has a direct bearing on his main thesis.

Sezgin is right in his claim that three scholars, who had composed the registers of the Arabs according to their *nasab* for 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb's *Dīwān al-'Aṭā'*, had written a *Nasab* work. The three scholars are:

8) Abū Ṣafwān, Makhrama b. Nawfal b. Uhayb al-Zuhrī, al-Qurashī (d. 54/674).¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Sezgin (1967: 262): *warqā'*, but cf. Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2: 90); Ibn Qutayba (1850: 266); Ibn Durayd (1958: 354): Wiqā'; Ibn Qutayba (1850), *wa-kāna ansab al-'Arab*.

⁹⁹ Goldziher (1971, 1: 168–9); Sezgin (1967, 1: 263–4); three more works on different subjects by Daghfal are mentioned by Sezgin; but see Rosenthal's reservations regarding the historical information on Daghfal and 'Abīd b. Sharya, and the authenticity of their works, Rosenthal (*EP*, 'Nasab').

¹⁰⁰ Sezgin (1967, 1: 263).

¹⁰¹ On him, see Sezgin (1967, 1: 261).

¹⁰² Donner (1998: 169, n. 32): 'See on the *dīwān*, esp. Puin, *Der Dīwān von 'Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb*, who after careful study clearly accepts the historicity of 'Umar's innovation of the *dīwān*'; Donner's attitude towards this topic can also be gleaned from the next sentences in his book, when he compares the traditions on the establishment of the *Dīwān* and those about the coinage reform of 'Abd al-Malik, to others dealing with a different topic whose factual value is open to debate.

¹⁰³ On him, see Sezgin (1967, 1: 259).

9) 'Aqīl b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 60/680).¹⁰⁴

10) Abū 'Adī, Jubayr b. Muṭ'im b. 'Adī b. Nawfal (d. between 56 to 59/679).¹⁰⁵ All three are defined as *Nussāb Quraysh*, that is, the experts of genealogy of Quraysh, who were summoned by 'Umar to compose the registers of the *Dīwān*.¹⁰⁶

Within this framework, I will discuss briefly Jubayr b. Muṭ'im (no. 10 above).

The attitude of Caliph 'Umar to *Nasab* may be gleaned from other traditions relating to Jubayr b. Muṭ'im. Some well-known scholars from the second and third centuries of the *hijra*, two of whom were also the authors of books on genealogy, describe Jubayr's great knowledge and expertise on the genealogy of Quraysh and the Arabs in general.¹⁰⁷

Jubayr b. Muṭ'im was one from among several men of Quraysh who were experts in the *Nasab* of the Arabs. To the three names mentioned above, Makhrama b. Nawfal, 'Aqīl b. Abī Ṭālib and Jubayr b. Muṭ'im, one may add that of the first Caliph Abū Bakr, who is described as one of those most knowledgeable of the *nasab* of the Arabs.¹⁰⁸ Members of the family of Jubayr b. Muṭ'im transmitted traditions describing his great knowledge of the genealogy of the Arabs, emphasizing the fact that he received this knowledge of *Nasab* from Abū Bakr. According to one such family tradition 'Umar asked

¹⁰⁴ On him, see Sezgin (1967, 1: 259); Goldziher (1971, 1: 167, n. 1) (editor's note).

¹⁰⁵ On him, see Sezgin (1967, 1: 258); Goldziher (1971); see also, Ibn Khayyāt (1982, 1: 9: year 57); Ibn Ḥajar (1325–7 AH, 2: 64): years 56, 58, 59; al-Mizzī (1985–92, 4: 506–9).

¹⁰⁶ Sezgin (1967), according to Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* (1958, 3: 295); al-Ṭabarī (1964, 1: 2750–1).

¹⁰⁷ Al-Mizzī (1985–92, 4: 507), from al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (172/788–256/870; on him, see Sezgin [1967, 1: 317]; p. 508), from Muṣ'ab b. 'Abdallāh al-Zubayrī (d.236/851, on him, see Sezgin [1967: 271–2]); Ch. Pellat, (*EP*, 'Muṣ'ab b. 'Abdallāh b. Muṣ'ab', *s.v.*): *kāna yu'khadhu 'anhu al-nasab*; *ibid.*, Muḥammad b. Ishāq (the well-known author of the *Sīra*, [115/733–150/767]; on him, see Sezgin [1967: 288–90]) from Ya'qūb b. 'Utba (b. al-Mughīra al-Thaqafī, *ḥalīf Banī Zubra*, one of the scholars well-versed in the traditions of the *Sīra* of the Prophet and one of Ibn Ishāq's sources for these traditions; d. 128/745–746 or 129/746–747; on him, see al-Dhahabī [1982–5, 6: 124]; Ibn Ḥajar [1404/1984, 11: 341]; al-Mizzī [1985–92, 32: 350–2]) from a *shaykh* of the *Anṣār* from Banū Zurayq: *kāna Jubayr b. Muṭ'im min ansab Quraysh li-Quraysh wa-li-'l-Arab qāṭiba*.

¹⁰⁸ Goldziher (1971, 1: 166–7), and the additional evidence of the editor in note 1; Watt (*EP*, 'Abū Bakr'); Ibn Hishām (1411 AH, 1: 120); Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 4: 171); Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (1960, 1: 232); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 4: 508–9); al-Suyūfī (1952, 1: 43).

him for the lineage of al-Nu'mān b. al-Mundhir, and as a reward 'Umar gave him al-Nu'mān's sword.¹⁰⁹

'Umar nominated Jubayr b. Muṭ'im, for a short period as the governor of al-Kūfa.¹¹⁰

Even if some (or even most) parts of the traditions about 'Umar are fictitious, it is nevertheless undeniable that from the beginning of the first century onwards some distinguished personalities were occupied with *Nasab*. Some of them were well-known scholars of *Ḥadīth* and *fiqh*, like Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab [12 or 14/636 or 638–94/713]¹¹¹ and the *Ḥadīth* scholar and Qur'ān exegete, Qatāda b. Dī'āma [60/679–118/736].¹¹² They are mentioned by al-Jāhīz among 17 experts in the science of genealogy.¹¹³ His text: *Kutub al-nasab allatī tuḏāfu ilā...* (The *Nasab* books attributed to...) served for Sezgin as a proof of their being authors of books about *Nasab*. For the sake of argument, let us suppose that the majority of those mentioned by al-Jāhīz did not write a book (something that seems too far fetched); what his report shows us then is the vast interest in the genealogy of the Arabs by the Arabs from the Jāhiliyya to early Islam. Let us return to Sa'īd b. al-Musayyab. Sa'īd was born in 12/636 or 14/638 and died in 94/713. He could have well started collecting *Nasab* material in the middle of the first century, or even earlier. This would mean that traditions on this theme existed much earlier than the end of the first century of the *hijra*. This argument is also valid for the argument raised by Donner regarding an alleged *Futūḥ* work by this scholar (p. 175, n. 4). (See further discussion below).

The intensive and uninterrupted occupation with *Nasab* certainly received a decisive push from the establishment of *Dīwān al-ʿAṭā'* by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. From this short discussion it is clear that the

¹⁰⁹ Al-Mizzī (1985–92) (a parallel tradition: Ibn 'Abd al-Barr [1960, 1, 232]) the *isnād*: al-Zubayr b. Bakkār (the author of *Nasab Quraysh*; on him, see note 107); < 'Umar b. Abī Bakr al-Mu'ammilī (al-Mawṣilī, al-ʿAdawī, *Qāḍī* of the district of al-Urdunn; on him, see Ibn 'Asākir [1996, 43: 547–50, his biography; *ibid.*, 1: 33; 3: 54; 7: 78, 350; 9: 305]; he is the direct transmitter of al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, in most of the 48 instances that al-Zubayr b. Bakkār is quoted in Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh*; on 'Umar b. Abī Bakr, see also al-Dhahabī [1995, 5: 221–2]; Ibn Ḥajar [1981, 3: 264; 1986, 4: 287]) < 'Uthmān b. Abī Sulaymān (b. Jubayr b. Muṭ'im [that is, the grandson of Jubayr]; on him, see Ibn Ḥajar [1984, 7: 111]; see also Ibn 'Asākir [1996, 3: 74, 79], for other family traditions related by 'Uthmān b. Abī Sulaymān).

¹¹⁰ Al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 3: 97); Ibn 'Abd al-Barr (1960, 2: 609); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 10: 313).

¹¹¹ On him, see Sezgin (1967, 1: 276).

¹¹² On him, see Sezgin (1967, 1: 31); Ch. Pellat, (*EP*, 'Qatāda b. Dī'āma', *s.v.*).

¹¹³ Al-Jāhīz (1958, 2: 209–10).

early Muslims were extensively occupied with this historiographical theme of genealogy. It is highly plausible then that special works on *Nasab* were written from the middle of the first century onwards. The establishment of *Dīwān al-ʿAṭā* by ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb certainly served as an incentive for the quick development and blossoming of the *Nasab* literature.¹¹⁴ This view and the arguments raised here are certainly not new. They follow in the footsteps of those held by prominent scholars such as Goldziher, Obermann, Rosenthal and Kister, who emphasized the uninterrupted continuity of the interest in, and active and obsessive occupation with *Nasab*, from the pre-Islamic period to early Islam; and the social-economic as well as the political background in the early Islamic period that caused the rapid development of the *Nasab* literature.¹¹⁵

Nasab was one of the main, if not the main, characteristics of the Arab ideals. This and other worldly materialistic Arab ideals pre-occupied the mind of the early Muslims, and were dominant in the new Arab-Muslim society of the first and second centuries of Islam. This view is in utter contradiction to the main thesis of Donner, that is to say, that the prevailing thoughts and ideas among the early 'Believers' were those of piety and morality. Once again it must be emphasized that this view is not new. Earlier scholars remarked upon this topic, arguing that pious circles were against the transition and the transmission of the Arab heritage in the first Islamic century. But their number was small and their attitude was not the prevailing one.¹¹⁶ '*Nasab* was diligently studied and gained orthodox approval'.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ This is a common view held by scholars, e.g., Obermann (1955: 290); Rosenthal (*EP*, 'Nasab'); Kister and Plessner (1976: 51).

¹¹⁵ Goldziher (1971, 1: 15, 36, 52, 56, 75, 79-87) (on p. 167 Goldziher says that 'the administrative considerations...made genealogical registers a political necessity in the days of the old Caliphate...Sprenger has illustrated this fact...and has evaluated 'Umar's importance in the furtherance of this genealogical work. Administrative considerations also determined genealogical work.') Obermann (1955: 287-8, 290-1, 301); Rosenthal (*EP*, 'Nasab'); Kister and Plessner (1976: 50): 'The uninterrupted transmission of genealogy from the time of the *jāhiliyya*...;in the first period of Islam knowledge of *nasab* was made necessary by the administrative needs of the *dīwān*...'; see also *ibid.* 51: '*Nasab* turned to be a considerable factor in differentiating between the upper class of the conquerors and the population of the conquered countries'; or: 'for the Arabs it was a means of self-identification: to be aware of Arab descent'.

¹¹⁶ Obermann (1955: 290) (mentioned in Donner's Bibliography); Kister and Plessner (1976: 53).

¹¹⁷ Kister and Plessner (1976: 54) (quoting Obermann).

II.7 Piety Versus Nasab: The Case Of The Khawārij.

Donner, following the accepted view among scholars on the Kha-wārij, defines them as 'communities of saints',¹¹⁸ who were 'the most uncompromising in their observance of this demand for piety during the first century AH' (p. 102). They were strongly against what Donner calls a 'genealogical legitimation', that is to say, 'true to the principle of pious legitimation, [they] argued that the Quraysh had no monopoly of the caliphate at all, and that the most pious Muslim in the community should be caliph, regardless of his tribal origin, "even if he were an Abyssinian slave", that is, of the social group that was, by traditional Arabian criteria, considered to be the lowest standing.' (p. 110)

Now as already mentioned, this is (one may say was) the accepted opinion of scholars. On p. 110, n. 47, Donner, sends the reader to p. 42, n. 23, for the references to the *ḥadīth*, quoted above, about the black Abyssinian slave; he also adds that 'For a recent study of this tradition, see Crone, "Even an Ethiopian Slave".'¹¹⁹

But Crone's arguments and conclusions in the above quoted work are totally in contrast to Donner's depiction of the specific tradition and the sect in general. Crone convincingly argues, following the observations of earlier scholars, e.g. Goitein and Lewis (these specific studies are not mentioned by Donner in the Bibliography), that 'the tradition in question has nothing to do with Khārijite views on the caliphate'.¹²⁰ 'The Ethiopian slave tradition...is not a Khārijite statement, nor is it concerned with qualifications for the imāmate. As Goitein observed, the tradition is Sunnī;¹²¹ and 'as Lewis points out the tradition voices Sunnī quietism not Khārijite egalitarianism'.¹²² Concluding this topic, Crone asserts that 'there does not in fact appear ever to have been a Khārijite doctrine regarding the eligibility of slaves to the Imāmate: rather, medieval Sunnī came to identify the Ethiopian slave tradition as a Khārijite statement.'¹²³

¹¹⁸ Donner (1998: 102–3), following and quoting M. Watt; see also Donner (1998: 42, 108, 110, 286).

¹¹⁹ But on p. 42, n. 23 Donner does not mention Crone's study. He cites three *Ḥadīth* books for the tradition (those of Abū Dāwūd, al-Bukhārī and al-Dārimī) while Crone mentions two of his citations with many additional parallels with different versions.

¹²⁰ Crone (1994: 58).

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 60–1.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 59.

II.7.1 *Khawārij And Nasab*

It seems that Donner's depiction of the Khawārij does not fit some other characteristics of this sect as already portrayed by other scholars. Like most of their Arab contemporaries they were preoccupied with Arab genealogy and ancient Arab poetry. As an example of their attitude towards Pre-Islamic poetry, Goldziher and Obermann quote two traditions from *Kitāb al-aghānī*, where a leader of the Khawārij Azāriqa sect, 'Abīda b. Hilāl, is portrayed as an expert on Arabic poetry. His warriors prefer him to recite for them Arabic poetry rather than Qur'ān verses.¹²⁴ Even if these traditions are sheer inventions, they were beautifully invented, that is, they reflect the true spirit of the Arabs in the first and second centuries of the hijra. 'The Arabs [says Goldziher] always preferred to hear the songs of the heroes of paganism rather than holy utterances of the Koran'.¹²⁵

There is ample evidence testifying to the intensive interest of the early Khārijites in *Nasab*:

- a) Ṣuḥār b. al-'Abbās ('Ayyāsh) b. Sharāḥīl al-'Abdī [from 'Abd Qays]. He is described by Ibn al-Nadīm as a Khārijite, who lived during the reign of Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān (reigned 41/661–61/680), and was one of the specialists well versed in the science of *Nasab* and also known for his oratory.¹²⁶ He most probably was the author of a book on *Nasab* (see the discussion below).
- b) Abdallāh b. 'Amr b. al-Kawwā' al-Yashkurī (d. 80/699), a Khārijite, who, according to Sezgin, composed a book on *Nasab*, but this is not attested to by the sources.¹²⁷ However, he was an expert on genealogy.¹²⁸
- c) It is highly possible that Dāwūd b. al-Ḥuṣayn, Abū Sulaymān, al-Madanī, a Khārijite (d. 135/752), was also an author of a *Nasab* book.¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Goldziher (1971: 44) (chapter 1: *Muruwwa* and *Dīn*); Obermann (1955: 296–7), both relying on al-Iṣfāhānī (1284 AH, 6: 7; 8: 42–3).

¹²⁵ Goldziher (1971).

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2: 90) (*aḥād al-nassābīn wa-l-khutabā' fī ayyām Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān*); on Ṣuḥār al-'Abdī, see Sezgin (1967: 261).

¹²⁷ Sezgin (1967: 263), quoting Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 1: 103); but this citation is incorrect; a Khārijite: Ibn Durayd (1958: 340): *wa-kāna khārijī*.

¹²⁸ Sezgin (1967), quoting Ibn Qutayba (1850: 266): *wa-kāna nāsib 'ālim kabīr*.

¹²⁹ On him, see Sezgin (1967: 268), who remarks that Ibn al-Kawwā' was quoted many times (according to Ibn Sa'd's *Ṭabaqāt*) by 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Umāra in his book *Nasab al-Anṣār*. But since Ibn al-Kawwā' appears many times as a transmitter in al-Wāqidi's *Maghāzī*, this may also attest to a work (or a collection of traditions) on the *Maghāzī*.

II.8 The Documentary Evidence:

II.8.1 The Hijrī Date And Its Meaning.

Donner says that the system was established by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Documentary evidence from the 20s and 30s of the *hijra* bears witness to its early existence.¹³⁰

Donner argues that the *hijrī* date was used only by government officials, not by the writers or transmitters of history. In Donner's view these transmitters did not make use of the *hijrī* date in the first place, because the material that reached them, that is, through an oral transmission or a personal unofficial communication, was not dated. (p. 237). Donner argues that these early pietist Believers did not need to establish chronological order in their narratives (p. 231 and n. 4). It seems, however, that early transmitters of the *Futūḥ* traditions and compilers of works on the Conquests of Syria, who lived in the last third of the first century of the *hijra*, and even earlier, used the *hijrī* date in their works.¹³¹ It is noteworthy that two of the early inscriptions mentioned by Donner are not official but 'private' tombstones, on which the *hijrī* year was engraved. A third inscription from the year 64 is not an official inscription either, it has some praying formulae that can be found in the *Hadīth* collections.¹³² This may indicate that there was not such a clear cut dichotomy between official use of the *hijrī* date and its use by scholars. The *hijra* served as a crucial meaningful turning point for the Arabs in the young Muslim state. They were well aware of its historical significance.

It is of interest to note that the Christians, living within and outside the Islamic world, used the *hijrī* date in their religious and official literature as well. It is found, for instance, in a colophon to a Nestorian manuscript of the New Testament completed 'in the year

¹³⁰ Donner (1998: 237, n. 24): the earliest papyri bearing a *hijrī* date are from the year 22; the earliest coins are from 23, or maybe even earlier (years 21 or 22); the earliest inscription is from the year 31 (but see the discussion on the Cyprus tomb stone of 29 AH below); see also Hoyland (1997a: 180, n. 24); (1997a: 193), on additional papyri from Egypt and Palestine, from 54 and 55 AH. (quoting Worp (1985: 109); I was unable to check other studies quoted by Hoyland on this subject.

¹³¹ This is the case of Yazīd b. 'Abīda, who was the author of a book on the conquests (most probably of al-Shām, on him, see Elad [forthcoming a]); for *futūḥ* traditions of his which have *hijrī* dates, see for instance, Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 1: 227; 2: 109, 141, 167; 14: 385) (= Ibn al-'Adīm [1988, 6: 2823]); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 25: 488; 26: 154; 39: 517; 58: 453; 59: 116; 65: 230); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 1: 461; 3: 135; 4: 274; al-Mizzī (1985–92, 28: 112).

¹³² Hoyland (1997b: 79, 91); I am preparing a study on this inscription.

993 of the Greeks, which is the year 63 of the Muslims (mhaggrāyē), the sons of Ishmael son of Hagar [and] son of Abraham.¹³³

In this text, one finds a double recognition of the Muslim entity of the Arabs by the Christians; that is, they are unique in their different religion, and also by their dating system.

There are other examples for Christian use in the *hijrī* date, bearing the years, 57, 59, 67 and 69.¹³⁴

It is possible that some or even many of the Christians were not aware of the significance of the *hijrī* date for the Muslims; the Muslims certainly were aware of it.

II.8.2 Papyri And Inscriptions: General Observations.

Generally, Donner asserts that 'the little truly documentary evidence of this kind that has been available until recently has tended to fit reasonably well into the framework of traditional interpretations of Islamic origins, and have not required a dramatic re-thinking of the traditional view, at least in its externals. This situation may change with the full publication of new archaeological information now coming to light — but more often than not, the historical outlook of the interpreter determines his or her evaluation of the archaeological evidence, rather than vice-versa' (p. 3). In note 4 Donner gives two examples for this observation:

(1) the interpretation of the orientation of the *qibla* in the earliest mosques, e.g. the opinions of Crone-Cook (one could add Bashear and Sharon as well), versus that of King, but it seems that the problem is solved now by Hoyland's most convincing arguments, against the arguments of the 'Hagarist' school.¹³⁵

(2) The other example is the study of Nevo and Koren on archaeological remains from the Negev as evidence for the very late origins of Islam, but this study has raised a lot of severe criticism, both among archaeologists and Islamicists. It seems that this study cannot serve as a well-founded base for a different reconstruction of Islamic history.

Donner argues that there is little use in the classical Islamic narrative tradition of what he defines as 'durable documents', 'even, for instance, of ones as important as the inscriptions on major early monuments. To the best of my knowledge [adds Donner], no narrative source quotes or otherwise uses as evidence the inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock, the Prophet's mosque in Medina, or the

¹³³ Hoyland (1997a: 193).

¹³⁴ Ibid., 192–3.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 560–73; Rubin (2000: 19–21).

mosques of al-Kūfa, Damascus, etc.' Following this, Donner brings three rare exceptions, and refers the reader to some additional examples by Rosenthal (p. 208, n. 12).

The quoting of inscriptions is much more common than Donner assumes.

Many other examples can be quoted here; they are to be found in different kinds of the Arabic literature, mainly in the travel literature, like in the work of Nāṣir-i Khusraw (1047) who quotes inscriptions he saw in Mecca and al-Aqṣā Mosque and the Ḥaram of Jerusalem.¹³⁶ Other works on the Merits (*Fadā'il*) of Jerusalem, like those of al-Maḡdisī (d. 1364),¹³⁷ and Mujīr al-Dīn (d. 1522),¹³⁸ al-Harawī (d. 611/1215), (see the discussion further below); al-'Abdarī (lived in the second half of the thirteenth century) and Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (d. 1368?9 or 1377);¹³⁹ books on local histories quote inscriptions, for example, al-Azraqī's (d. after 248/862-863) History of Mecca;¹⁴⁰ of utmost importance is al-Ḥarbī's (d. Dhū al-Ḥijja 285/30 Dec. 898-16 Jan. 899) long, detailed and verbatim quotations of the many inscriptions from the mosque of al-Madīna, from the early Umayyad period to the early 'Abbāsids;¹⁴¹ a detailed accurate quotations from the Prophet's Mosque in al-Madīna are recorded by the geographer Ibn Rusta (wrote between 290/903 and 300/913)¹⁴² and al-Samhūdī (d. 1506), recording inscriptions in al-Madīna and Ḥijāz;¹⁴³ al-Jah-

¹³⁶ Nāṣir-i Khusraw (1945: 54) (al-Ramla, an important inscription recording the earthquake of 1033); 58, 59, 61, 62, 64, 67, 69 (Jerusalem, the Ḥaram, several inscriptions, see also Elad (1995: 41) and 87); Nāṣir-i Khusraw (1945: 130, 131) (Mecca).

¹³⁷ Al-Maḡdisī (1994: 177); Elad (1995: 87); on this author, see Elad (1995: 5, n. 12; 87, n. 52).

¹³⁸ Mujīr al-Dīn (1973, 1: 145, 148, 484; 2: 49, 62-3, 72, 78, 79).

¹³⁹ Al-'Abdarī (1968: 204): a tomb in al-Madīna; (1968: 217): the Mosque of al-Madīna; (1968: 149, 232): Ashqelon [=Asqalān]; (1968: 227): mosque of al-Yaqīn near Hebron (=Ibn Baṭṭūṭa [1893, 1: 119]); cf. Elad (1987: 264-5)); as shown by Elad (1987), most of the description of Syria and Palestine was copied by Ibn Baṭṭūṭa verbatim from al-'Abdarī.

¹⁴⁰ Al-Azraqī is one of Rosenthal's six examples (1968: 126) for the use of inscriptions in Arabic literature; some more examples: al-Azraqī (1969, 2: 73, 74, 84, 89, 97); see also Grabar (1996: 69-70, for literary evidence of inscriptions from Mecca (also from al-Azraqī's work), al-Madīna, Damascus and al-Fuṣṭāṭ.

¹⁴¹ Al-Ḥarbī (1969: 385-95).

¹⁴² Ibn Rusta (1891: 70-4).

¹⁴³ Al-Samhūdī (1981, 2: 523, 536); on p. 540, he comments that early ninth century authors, whom he quotes, often copied in their works the inscription within and out of the Great Mosque of al-Madīna, but he (al-Samhūdī) did not consider it necessary to record them, since they no longer existed, in his days; (1981, 3: 916, 920, 922); see also Elad (1999: 45, n. 46).

shiyārī (d. 331/942), quotes several inscriptions, some quite early.¹⁴⁴ Even the inscription of the Dome of the Rock is mentioned by a source from the early ninth century.¹⁴⁵

II.8.3 The Cyprus Inscription From 29 AH/AD 650

The aforementioned al-Harawī deserves a short discussion. He quotes verbatim more than 12 inscriptions, some which are very early, from 9 different locations in the Islamic world.¹⁴⁶ Of great interest and importance is a tomb inscription from Cyprus, dated '29 of the *hijra*'. Donner mentions this inscription but argues that the contents of the inscription is 'of dubious authenticity, because its date formula is inconsistent with that used in other first-century AH inscriptions (no other known early inscription says "year X of the *hijra*".)' (p. 88, n. 86). Donner mentions this inscription again on p. 237, n. 24 (with another inscription) stating that they 'are probably bogus'. Donner quotes as reference the corpus of the Arabic inscriptions, *Répertoire chronologique d'épigraphie arabe*,¹⁴⁷ not al-Harawī himself; he does not give the full contents of the inscription nor does he discuss and analyze the full contents of al-Harawī's most interesting report:

'I saw on the island of Cyprus, [an inscription] written on a stone, its contents, after the basmala [that is, *bi-ismi Allāh al-Rahmān al-Rahīm*] and *sūrat al-Ikhlās* [*sūra* 112] is as follows: "This is the grave of 'Urwa b. Thābit. He died in the month of Ramādān in the year 29 of the *hijra* [May 650]. This stone is built into the wall of the Eastern Church. In it [that is, in the Church] is the grave of Umm Ḥarām bt. Milḥān, the sister of Umm Sulaym, may God be pleased with both of them, and God knows best.'¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴ Al-Jahshiyārī (1938: 80); *Répertoire*, I, 29, no. 37; Guest (1930: 478): an inscription from the time of Marwān b. Muḥammad in Acre; see Elad (1998: 13).

¹⁴⁵ Elad (1992: 57).

¹⁴⁶ Al-Harawī (1953: 14): Damascus (a grave); (pp. 25–6): Jerusalem (the Dome of the Rock, al-Aqṣā Mosque, and the wall of the Ḥaram); (p. 32): Ashqelon ('Asqalān); (p. 35): Cairo (Mashhad al-Shāfi'i); (p. 55): Cyprus (a tomb, year 29 AH); (pp. 64–5, 68): al-Jazīra: Kafr Tūthā (the *manāra* of the mosque, year 155 AH); Naṣībīn (a mosque); Madīnat Balaṭ (Maqām 'Umar b. al-Ḥusayn, year 103 AH); (p. 93): al-Hijāz: al-Baqī', east of al-Madīna (a tomb inscription, year 179 AH).

¹⁴⁷ *Répertoire*, I, 5–6.

¹⁴⁸ Al-Harawī (1953: 56): '*wa-ra'aytu bi-jazīrat Qubrus maktūban 'alā ḥajar mā hādhibhi sūratuhu ba'da al-basmalah wa-sūrat al-Ikhlās: hādhibā qabr 'Urwa b. Thābit tuwuffiyā fī shahr Ramādān sanat tis' wa-ishrīn li-'l-hijra. Wa-hādhibā 'l-ḥajar mabniyy fī ḥa'it al-Kanisa al-Sharqiyya. Wa-bihā qabr Umm Ḥarām bt. Milḥān ukht Umm Sulaym, radiyā Allāh 'anhumā, wa-Allāh a'lam*'.

Sourdél-Thomine identified the church as the church in Famağusta, 'the port of the island in the Middle Ages'.¹⁴⁹ Scholars who mentioned the inscription could not identify 'Urwa b. Thābit, the man whose epitaph was put (in secondary use?) into the wall of the church.¹⁵⁰ Umm Ḥarām bt. Milḥān, who is also mentioned by al-Harawī, is well known. She was the wife of the famous *Ṣaḥābī*, 'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit, who together with her husband took part in the first large scale naval raid against Cyprus, under the command of the governor of Syria, Mu'āwiya b. Abī Sufyān, in 27 AH, 28 AH or 29 AH. She was killed by a horse (or mule) in Cyprus immediately upon landing on the shore and buried there. Al-Balādhurī records the tradition of a scholar who lived in the end of the seventh century and beginning of the eighth century, that her grave is in Cyprus and is called the grave of the righteous woman (*fa-qabruhā bi-Qubrus yud'ā qabr al-mar'a al-ṣāliḥa*).¹⁵¹ Hishām b. al-Ghāz (d. between 153/770 to 156/772–3) relates that her grave is in Cyprus 'and they say: this is the grave of the righteous woman, may God have mercy on her' (*qabr Umm Ḥarām bt. Milḥān bi-Qubrus wa-hum yaqūlūn hādihā qabr al-mar'a al-ṣāliḥa raḥimahā Allāh*).¹⁵² Her grave was seen by

¹⁴⁹ Al-Harawī (1957: 126, n. 5); though De Groot, locates it near Larnaca (*EP*, 'Ḳubrus').

¹⁵⁰ *Répertoire, loc.cit.*; al-Harawī (1957: n. 4); Miles (1948: 239–40): 'a tomb stone built into the wall of a church in Cyprus, relating to an unknown, dated 29 A.H'.

¹⁵¹ Al-Balādhurī (1866: 154); (1956, 1:181); (1932: 158–9); the *isnād*: Muḥammad b. Sa'd (d. 230/845) < al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823) < 'Abd al-Salām b. Mūsā — his father (Mūsā b. Jubayr, al-Anṣārī, on him, see Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 10: 302); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 29: 42); al-Dhahabī (1992, 2: 303); as a transmitter in *isnāds*, see Ibn Ḥibbān (1975, 5: 26, 447; 6: 45); al-Bayhaqī (1414/1994, 9: 95, 176; 10: 4); al-Haythamī (1407 AH, 5: 68, 304, 314; 10: 240); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 16: 302; 17: 203, 204): *Mawlā* Umm Salama (al-Mizzī [1985–92, 29: 42]: *Mawlā Banī Salama*); Ibn Kathīr (n.d., 1: 37; 4: 205; 6: 54); on his son, 'Abd al-Salām b. Mūsā, see Ibn Sa'd (1958, 8: 199, 201); Ibn Kathīr (n.d., 4: 205) ([in the last three sources he is the transmitter of al-Wāqidī]; al-Mizzī [1985–92, 29: 42]; al-'Uqaylī [1984, 3: 69]; Ibn Ḥajar [1986, 3: 69]; al-Dhahabī [1995, 4: 352]). See also Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 70: 217), quoting Abū Nu'aym (Aḥmad b. 'Abdallāh, al-Iṣfahānī, d. 430/1038 [*qabr al-mar'a al-ṣāliḥa*]); Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 8: 189); al-Shaybānī (1991, 5: 345): *wa-qabruhā bi-Qubrus...wa-Ahl-al-Shām yastasqūna bihā yaqūlūna qabr al-mar'a al-ṣāliḥa* (her grave is in Cyprus...and the people of Syria pray for rain due to her [holiness] saying: 'the grave of the righteous woman.') (= al-Mizzī [1985–92, 35: 340], quoting Abū Nu'aym).

¹⁵² Abū Nu'aym (1351 AH, 2: 62); al-Ṭabarānī (1983, 25: 130); Ibn al-Jawzī (1971, 2: 70); al-Haythamī (1407 AH, 9: 263); Ibn 'Asākir (1996: 218), with an *isnād* concluding with Hishām b. al-Ghāz; Ibn Ḥajar (1379 AH, 11: 76) (quoting Ibn Ḥibbān who records the tradition through al-Layth b. Sa'd [94/713–175/791];

Hishām b. 'Ammār (153/770–245/859).¹⁵³ Al-Dhahabī relates in the fourteenth century that he was informed that her grave was visited by the Franks (*al-Faranj*).¹⁵⁴

She was one of several women who accompanied their husbands in this battle.¹⁵⁵ Most of the *Ṣahābīs* that are mentioned by the sources as those who took part in this raid (including 'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit and his wife Umm Ḥarām) belonged to the Anṣār.¹⁵⁶

It is plausible to assume that 'Urwa b. Thābit was also an Anṣārī who took part in the conquest of Cyprus, although he is not specifically mentioned by the sources as one who took part in this raid.¹⁵⁷

Al-Harawī's description fits well and corresponds with what we know from the sources about the conquest of Cyprus. It seems highly

on Hishām b. al-Ghāz, see Donner (1987: 18–20); al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 7: 60); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 30: 258–60).

¹⁵³ Abū Nu'aym (1351 AH, 2: 62); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 70: 211 [=al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 7: 156)]: according to him, her grave is located on the shore in Qāqīs [?] (*bi-l-sāhil bi-Qāqīs*).

¹⁵⁴ Al-Dhahabī ((1982–5, 2: 317); her biography may be found in almost every biographical work on the *Ṣahāba*; the most important biography is that in Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 70: 209–19); see also, Ibn Qudāma (1971: 40); her year of death varies, according to the dates of the first raid of Mu'āwiya against Cyprus; the most common date is 27 AH, but also the years 25, 26 and 28 are given; see al-Ṭabarī (1964, 2: 2820): years 27 or 28 or 33 (the last date is usually that of the second raid on Cyprus); al-Balādhurī (1866: 153); (1956): years 28 or 29; Ibn 'Asākir (1996: 218): year 27; *ibid.*, (46: 57): years 26 (the last [*al-ākhirā*] (?read: *al-'ulā*, the first?) raid; or 27 (the second [*al-thāniya*] raid); (59: 116) (= 70: 7): year 25 [!]; p. 117: year 28; Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 4: 641): year 26; (8: 189): year 27; Ibn al-Jawzī (1992, 4: 364): years 28 and 29; Ibn al-'Imād (1350–1, AH, 1: 36): year 27.

¹⁵⁵ Among the well-known women in this raid were Mu'āwiya's wife and his sister, Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 20: 6–7; 59: 116); al-Balādhurī (1866); (1932: 158); (1956, 1: 181): Fākhita bt. Qarāza, Mu'āwiya's wife; Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 70: 214): his sister; p. 54: Kanūd bt. Qarāza, Fākhita's sister; Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 8: 189): recording the controversy about the name of Mu'āwiya's wife, whether it was Fākhita or Kanūd.

¹⁵⁶ Al-Balādhurī (1866: 154); (1932: 159); (1956: 182); al-Ṭabarī (1964, 1: 2820); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 66: 228).

¹⁵⁷ The name of 'Urwa b. Thābit, mentioned by al-Balādhurī (1866: 76; 1956, 1: 92), should be changed to 'Azra b. Thābit [b. Abī Zayd, 'Amr b. Akhṭab], a well-known Baṣrī scholar, who lived many decades after the year 28, the year of the raid on Cyprus; on him, see Ibn Abī Ḥātim (1371–3 AH, 3/2: 28); Ibn Ḥibbān (1975, 7: 293); al-Kalbāzī (1407 AH, 2: 597); Ibn Ḥajar 1404/1984, 7: 173; al-Mizzī (1985–92, 20: 49–51). On his grandfather, Abū Zayd, 'Amr b. Akhṭab b. Rifā'a...b. 'Adī b. Tha'laba b. Ḥāritha b. 'Amr b. 'Āmir al-Khazrajī al-Anṣārī, see Ibn Sa'd (1905, 7/1: 17–18); Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 4: 599; 7: 158) (but cf. Ibn al-Kalbī (1988, 1: 436) and Ibn Ḥazm (1962: 373): Abū Zayd, 'Amr b. 'Udhra b. 'Amr b. Akhṭab...b. Rifā'a b. al-Ḍayf, *kāna yahūdīyyan*; Ibn Ḥajar (1404/1984, 8: 4); al-Mizzī, (1985–92, 21: 542); al-Haythamī (n.d., 1, 565); *idem* (1407 AH, 9: 378–9).

unlikely that he invented the whole report. It is possible, though, that he added the word '*li-'l-hijra*' as an explanation, and originally it did not exist in the inscription.¹⁵⁸

Noteworthy is the appearance of *sūrat al-Ikhlās* or *al-Tawhīd*, that is, 'The Purity [of Faith]' [no. 112]. This *sūra* emphasizes the uniqueness of the Islamic faith, stressing the principle that God is eternal. 'He brought not forth, nor has He been brought forth' (v. 3) a clear attestation of polemics against the Christians. The *sūra* is also found among the long inscriptions in the Dome of the Rock and undoubtedly served the same purpose. Al-Harawī himself read this *sūra* in two more inscriptions he saw in different countries.¹⁵⁹

The use of this specific *sūra* in this inscription, as well as the *hijrī* date, is certainly an attestation of the uniquely different historical consciousness of the early Muslims.

II.8.4 The Milestones Inscriptions Of 'Abd al-Malik.

Donner quotes the text of one of of 'Abd al-Malik's milestones, one of four well-known to scholars from the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁶⁰

There is nothing in these four inscriptions that can serve as a proof for Donner's statement that 'the pious content of these inscriptions¹⁶¹ is self-evident' (p. 88) The only phrase in these inscriptions that may have led Donner to regard them as pious is *rahmat allāh 'alayhi* ('May the mercy of God be upon him'), but the meaning and implications of this phrase are completely different; in all probability it denotes that 'Abd al-Malik was deceased by that time, that is to say, that the inscriptions were probably planned during this caliph's reign and completed after his death.

All four inscriptions are broken and incomplete, the religious formula (Profession of Faith) at the beginning of these inscriptions is missing. (One may ask if it existed at all). More than that, none of the four inscriptions is dated.

However, two new milestones of 'Abd al-Malik's, newly discovered in the Golan, are dated to 85/704 and contain the *basmallah* and the profession of faith in the opening lines (*lā ilāh illā Allāh waḥdahu lā sharīka lahu Muḥammad Rasūl Allāh*).¹⁶²

¹⁵⁸ Proposed to me by Professor M. Sharon.

¹⁵⁹ Al-Harawī (1953: 25) (al-Masjid al-Aqṣā in Jerusalem); (1953: 64) (Kafr Tūthā, the *manāra* of the mosque).

¹⁶⁰ For bibliography, see Elad (1999: 37, n. 11).

¹⁶¹ By these he also refers to other early inscriptions quoted by him (1998: 85–7).

¹⁶² Elad (1999: 34–8); the word *waḥdahu* is mistakenly omitted (but not in the translation).

II.8.5 The *Ṭā'if* (Mu'āwiya's) Inscription From The Year 58/677–678.

Donner translates the second line: 'The servant of God ibn Ṣakhr built it..' and identifies Ibn Ṣakhr in note 82: 'Another reference to Mu'āwiya himself; the proper name of Mu'āwiya's father, Abu Su-fyān, was Ṣakhr'.

But the reference here is not to Mu'āwiya but to a different person, and this was already noticed by Miles (quoted by Donner) and Grohmann (not quoted by Donner).¹⁶³

II.9 the Importance Of The *Isnād*

The importance of the *isnād* was emphasized by Donner in several of his studies, especially in his book on the early Islamic conquests, where he stresses the *isnāds* of *futūḥ* accounts.

He rightly devotes quite a large place in his new book to a discussion of the development of the *isnād* and its importance not only in the *Ḥadīth* literature but also in the historical literature (for the *ḥadīth* format in the historical accounts [*al-akhbār*], see for instance, pp. 255–6, but also pp. 19, 120–1, and Index under *isnād*). Many times he records a full *isnād*, going back and ending with a person who lived in the late first century of the *hijra*,¹⁶⁴ but he also quotes full *isnāds* that end with a companion of the Prophet (*Ṣaḥābī*).¹⁶⁵ As to the first group of traditions, whose *isnāds* end with transmitters from the late first century or the beginning of the second, it seems that Donner, somehow hesitantly, argues (on p. 260), that 'the extensive use of *isnāds* — assuming one trusts the names in them as being, in fact, the transmitters of an account — gives the modern analyst some indication of the sources of particular bits of information.' In my view this is a very important observation. As to the second group of traditions, those that end with a Companion of the Prophet (*Ṣaḥābī*), Donner does not explain the methodology behind the quoting of these *isnāds*, or what can we learn from them. Are we to

¹⁶³ Miles (1948: 237–8); Grohmann (1962: 57); neither could make a certain identification of 'Abdallāh b. Ṣakhr; Grohmann prefers to read (l. 6) Ḥabāb (more common: Ḥubāb [M. Lecker]) or Khabbāb instead of Janāb (the name of the man who wrote the inscription), and on l. 6 he reads: *wa-matti' al-Mu'minīn bihi* instead of: ...*Amīr al-Mu'minīn bihi*; see also Hoyland (1997b: 82, n. 26).

¹⁶⁴ See for instance Donner (1998: 129, n. 29; 161, n. 3; 163, n. 7; 164, n. 9; 168, n. 26; 173, n. 47; 208, n. 9; 210, n. 17; 211, n. 20; 245, n. 45).

¹⁶⁵ See for instance Donner (1998: 207, n. 9; 212, n. 21; 233, n. 10): traditions relating some episodes from the reign of Abū Bakr, with an *isnād* ending with his daughter, 'Ā'isha, the Prophet's wife.

assume that Donner believes that the traditions were actually transmitted by these early transmitters? Are we to treat the late first century transmitters and the contents of their traditions on the same level as those ending with a *ṣaḥābī*? An intriguing question is, are we to treat the traditions in the *Ḥadīth* literature on the same level as the traditions in the history books?

The classic approach of the important *ḥadīth* scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was to examine the *ḥadīth* chiefly through the *matn*, i.e., internal and external analysis and examination of the contents of the *ḥadīth*. This type of analysis provides historical, religious, social, economic, etc. data incorporated into the *ḥadīth*. Sometimes it is possible to point precisely to trends of a specific *ḥadīth* (though less possible to give an exact date for its creation) by comparing it with known historic processes or events. With the exception of single instances, just on the criterion of examining the *matn* alone, it is very difficult to establish an exact chronology or to date the creation of the tradition (a *ḥadīth*) before the end of the first/seventh century. During the last twenty years extensive progress has been made in the study of early Muslim historiography, and also in the broad field of *ḥadīth* literature. More and more emphasis is being given to the study of the *isnād*, i.e., to the chain of transmitters. Efforts are being made to develop a method and establish criteria that can contribute not only to determining the time of the *ḥadīth*'s formation and dissemination, but also to a deeper and more thorough understanding of the process by which the *ḥadīth* crystallized, and of the socio-religious environment in which it took place — and of course, a better understanding of the contents. This school, whose main representatives today are Juynboll and Motzki, opposes the discrediting of all *isnāds*. In principle, *isnāds* are reliable, or in Motzki's words: 'the fact that some transmitters were indeed dishonest and forged *isnāds* cannot lead to the conclusion that the *isnād* system in general is unreliable and cannot be used for dating purposes'.¹⁶⁶

I too came to this conclusion when I examined the *isnāds* in the Praise-of-Jerusalem Literature and their value for the purposes of dating traditions and studying the social, political, religious and geographic background of these traditions.¹⁶⁷ It would seem that the

¹⁶⁶ Motzki (1998: 32, n. 44); the essence of the controversy among scholars, regarding the methodological approach towards *Ḥadīth* (from Goldziher and Schacht until the 1970's is recorded by Crone (1980: 14–15, 211, n. 88); for a more recent bibliography about the controversy and the developments in the study of *Ḥadīth*, see Elad (1995: 11, n. 33), and especially, Günther (2002: 6ff).

¹⁶⁷ Elad (1995: 15–22).

isnād is of no little importance in the traditions about the Arab conquests and their raids (in the Syrian context) on Byzantium, which appear in the Arabic books of history. In this type of tradition there is even less room for the forging of *isnāds* and thus there is an opportunity to add important dimensions to our knowledge about the conquests. This kind of study can further our knowledge of the process of transmission and teach us how these traditions were transmitted by members of tribal groups who participated in the conquests, and among tribal groups who lived in a particular settlement or region, for in the earliest stages — that is, the middle and end of the first century — the conquest traditions were transmitted in certain geographic and social regions and only later were they diffused and spread to other parts of the Islamic world.¹⁶⁸

These early *isnāds* are to a large degree authentic and were not invented later. This is true at least with regard to the links from the Successors (*ṭābi'ūn*) onwards. However, in many traditions dealing with the conquests that appear in the known historical literature, the *isnād* ends with a person who died at the beginning or middle of the second/eighth century.¹⁶⁹ This indeed furthers research but still leaves a large chronological gap. Sometimes we are lucky and manage to find *isnāds* with earlier links which brings us to the end of the first century. Even more rarely do we find an original *isnād* which leads us back to the period of the conquests itself.¹⁷⁰

II.10 The Syrian School Of Historiography

In Donner's view, 'Syria, to judge from titles of early written books of which we know, was not the focus of specific local or regional histories until relatively late.' The earliest known writer is Mūsā b. Sahl al-Ramlī (d. 261/874).¹⁷¹

But it seems that Syrian scholars composed books much earlier than the above mentioned Mūsā b. Sahl. Shu'ayb b. Abī Ḥamza (on whom see further below) (d. 162/779 or 163) was the author of

¹⁶⁸ Following Juynboll (1983: 39); Elad (1995: 16), came to this conclusion by analyzing the *isnād* of traditions in the Praise-of-Jerusalem Literature, showing that the first three scholars, from the Successors onwards, lived in Palestine or in the towns of southern Syria. Arguments in this vein are also raised by Donner (1998: 217ff.) (following Noth and Duri).

¹⁶⁹ A good example is the *futūḥ* traditions recorded by Sayf b. 'Umar from Khālid b. Ma'dān (d. 103/721–2 or 104) (on him, see nn. 40–4 above); and 'Ubāda b. Nusayy (d. 118/736–7) (on him, see nn. 28–32 above).

¹⁷⁰ Such an *isnād* is the subject of my study (Forthcoming a).

¹⁷¹ Donner (1998: 226), after Sezgin (1967: 357).

(*Ḥadīth?*) books.¹⁷² Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fazārī (d. 188/804 or 185 Or 186) composed several different works.¹⁷³

Literature in Praise of Jerusalem (*Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*), that was widespread during the beginning of the Umayyad period, was raised to written form most probably in the second half of the second century of the *hijra*, if not earlier.¹⁷⁴ Al-Walīd b. Ḥammād al-Ramlī, a slightly older contemporary of the above mentioned Mūsā b. Sahl al-Ramlī, composed a book about the Merits of Jerusalem (*Faḍā'il Bayt al-Maqdis*).¹⁷⁵

As to the *Futūḥ* literature, written in Syria, Donner mentions two scholars from the end of the first century who conveyed an interest in the history of the region, mainly in the theme of the *Futūḥ*, but there is no record of any written composition by them. It may be worth noting, in this connection, that it seems that a written composition (by Yazīd b. 'Abīda) on the conquests of Syria existed towards the end of the first century of the *hijra*, and it is highly probable that one existed even earlier, during the middle of the first century, by Sharāḥīl b. Marthad.¹⁷⁶

p. 181, n. 24: Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Tanūkhī (d. 167/784).

It seems that Donner is right when he asserts that he was 'an important compiler of earlier Syrian *futūḥ* traditions'; it is very plausible that he may even have been an author of a *Futūḥ* and *Maghāzī* work, as Donner surmised in another place.¹⁷⁷ In his book (on p. 259, this page should be added to his entry in the Index) he more affirma-

¹⁷² 'Aṭwān (1986: 196) (quoting *Tārīkh Abī Zur'a*, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz* and Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb*) a tradition in which Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal relates how he saw the books of Shu'ayb (*ra'aytu kutub Shu'ayb*).

¹⁷³ Al-Fazārī was born in al-Kūfā, but spent most his life in Syria, where he studied and transmitted *ḥadīth*; he died in al-Maṣṣīṣa, the frontier city; on him, see Ibn Ḥibbān (1975, 6: 23); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 7: 119–34); Ibn al-Jawzī (1971, 4: 259–60); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 2: 167–70); 'Aṭwān (1986: 202–6): *Ṣāḥib al-siyar* (according to Ibn Qutayba's, *al-Ma'ārif*); *Kitāb al-siyar* or *Kitāb al-sira fī dār al-ḥarb* (according to Ibn Sa'd); al-Ziriklī (1980, 1: 55); Sezgin (1967, 1: 292): *Kitāb al-siyar fī 'l-akḥbār*.

¹⁷⁴ Kister (1981: 185–6); Livne (1985; 1998: 165–7, 186–8; 1991); Elad (1995: 10–22).

¹⁷⁵ Jawdat (1986: 312); Conrad (1987: 57); Elad (1995: 15–16): all quote al-Dhahabī (1982–5, 14: 78); it seems that this information about al-Walīd being the author of a book on the merits of Jerusalem was first noted by Prof. M. Cook; and see also, Livne (1985: 20–1); Hasson (1987: 298), who came to the same conclusion about al-Walīd b. Ḥammād and the early collections of traditions in-Praise-of-Jerusalem. See Livne (1985), for many examples of scholars who had in their possession collections or, better notes of dozens of 'Traditions in Praise of Jerusalem'.

¹⁷⁶ Elad (Forthcoming a).

¹⁷⁷ Donner (1987: 25–7).

tively connects him to Abū Ismā'īl al-Azdī al-Baṣrī's book, *Futūḥ al-Shām* (following L.I. Conrad).

p. 245: Al-Walīd b. Muslim (d. 195/811 [? see below]). This extremely important compiler and author related 'chronological information mainly on the conquest of Syria...' most of these accounts came, according to Donner, from Yaḥyā b. Sa'īd al-Umawī (d. 194/809), 'author of a lost *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*'.

It is well-known that al-Walīd b. Muslim (d. 194/809–10)¹⁷⁸ was the author of many works of which none survived.¹⁷⁹ His *Maghāzī* book was most probably transmitted by his devout pupil Muḥammad b. 'Ā'idh (b. 150/767 d. between 232/847 and 233 or 234). The book was composed of material on the Arab conquests and on later periods as well.¹⁸⁰

It seems that our 'Sisyphean' work is drawing to an end with the appearance of the new CD of Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh Madīnat Dimashq*. This will add new dimensions to our knowledge of the history of al-Shām during the early Muslim period. Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz appears more than 600 times in this composition. A long and patient work is needed to enable us to reach newer and truer perspectives on the literary activity in greater Syria, and the true evaluation of the social, religious and cultural background for this activity.¹⁸¹

III. Comments and Corrections

p. 3, last line: the definition of *Adab* as 'belles-lettres'; p. 11, note 18: *zindīq* as 'atheist', and on p. 169, l. 4: *dīwān* as 'payroll' (*dīwāns* in the Index as 'military payroll') are in need of additional explanation, possibly in the form of a footnote.¹⁸²

¹⁷⁸ On him, see Sezgin (1967: 298); Elad (1995: 20, no. 3); 'Aṭwān (1986: 206–8); al-Mashhadānī (1986, 2: 516–18) and the bibliography therein; Rotter (1970–1: 100–102); Conrad (1994: 163–7).

¹⁷⁹ Al-Mashhadānī (1986, 2: 516); 'Aṭwān (1986: 206–8); Conrad (1994: 163–6): *Kitāb al-maghāzī, al-Sunan fī 'l-fiqh, Siyar, Ikhtilāf al-fuqahā*.

¹⁸⁰ See Elad (Forthcoming a).

¹⁸¹ On Sa'īd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz, see also 'Aṭwān (1986: 193–4) (not mentioned by Donner in the Bibliography); the importance of Ibn 'Asākir's book was emphasised by Donner many times in his publications.

¹⁸² 'Belles-letters' does not fit the oldest and most original concept and meaning of *Adab* (*EP*, 'Adab', [F. Gabrieli], *s.v.*; Ch. Pellat, "'Adab": In Arabic Literature', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, I, esp. 444b); Bonebakker (1984: 389, 396ff); *zindīqs*, are not merely 'atheists'; *zindīqs* comprizing mainly Manichean dualists but probably also Mazdakites and other remnants of the many once flourishing faiths and sects in Mesopotamia', Bosworth (1989: 11, n. 38), and the exhaustive bibliography, therein.

p. 48: *al-Saffāh* (the regnal title of the first 'Abbāsīd') [caliph].

It is to be regretted that Donner does not elaborate on this definition nor does he comment on it in a footnote, since this is not the accepted view regarding this title. Scholars disagree regarding the meaning of this title.¹⁸³ They do not consider it to be a regnal title,¹⁸⁴ some even doubt whether the first 'Abbāsīd Caliph bore it at all.¹⁸⁵

Donner is probably following the short statement of Madelung (*EP*, vol. V, 'Mahdī', p. 1233a; this article is not mentioned in the Bibliography) about this title who argues that Abū 'l-'Abbās, the first 'Abbāsīd caliph did bear this title, which was borrowed from traditions that were spread prior to the ascendance of the 'Abbāsīds. In these traditions *al-Saffāh* is identical with the caliph or the *Mahdī*, who would appear at the End of Days and spread money lavishly.¹⁸⁶ It is indeed clear, therefore, that this title is a regnal messianic title. The 'Abbāsīds did not spare any effort to establish the legitimacy of their dynasty and strengthen it. These efforts were devoted, for example, to the invention on the one hand, and the development on the other, of traditions about *al-Saffāh*, and especially about *al-Mahdī*, that connected them to the 'Abbāsīd family and its cause.¹⁸⁷

p. 48: The tradition about Ibn Ḥawāla and the Holy Land (*al-Ard al-Muqaddasa*), was already discussed by Goitein and Elad.¹⁸⁸

p. 56, n. 71: instead of *fi kulli majma'in tajma'u minhum Allāh jamā'atan* (the *Risāla* of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Kātib), read: *fi kulli majma'in yajma'u Allāh minhum jamā'atan*; it seems that the meaning of *jamā'a* here is in a general sense.

p. 87, n. 84: 65–86, instead of 66–86.

p. 89, n. 92: 'some early non-Muslim sources seem to confirm this view of the early Believers as consumed with a concern for piety'. As evidence Donner quotes one source.

p. 92, Donner asserts that 'the encouragement of an attitude of pitilessness towards the unbeliever...as one consequence of Quranic discourse is also found in the early prose literature in the Islamic tradition, as for example in some of the accounts of the early Islamic

¹⁸³ See for instance, Muir (1924: 430); but cf. *ibid.*, (437, n. 1); Amedroz, (1907: 660–3); Lewis (1968: 15).

¹⁸⁴ Lewis (1968: 15–16); Crone and Hinds (1986: 81, n. 142).

¹⁸⁵ Duri (1945: 65); Duri (1981: 123–4) arguing that this title belonged to the Caliph's uncle, 'Abdallāh b. 'Alī. This assertion was accepted by scholars, see for instance, Lewis (1968: 16); Crone and Hinds (1986).

¹⁸⁶ Elad (Forthcoming b).

¹⁸⁷ Arazi and Elad (1978: 256–9).

¹⁸⁸ Goitein (1966: 143); Elad (1995: 150); cf. Goldziher (1971, 2: 44, 46).

conquests'. Donner supports this statement by *one* piece of evidence (n.103): 'a dying enemy denied a drink after the battle of al-Yamāma'. One may get the impression that this is the general attitude of the *Ḥadīth* literature towards the non-believers. The picture is of course much more complex. The historical situation existing at the time of the conquests and especially afterwards was different from that existing during the lifetime of the Prophet.

p. 93, n. 108: '*al-tashahhud*, i.e. the statement, "There is no god but God."

But *al-tashahhud* is the reciting of a longer formula, especially during the ritual prayer. It comprises the formula known as *al-tahīyyāt li-llāh* and also the *shahāda* proper, that is, with its two parts (*al-shahādātān*: 'There is no god but God and Muḥammad is the Messenger of God [or His Slave and Messenger]'.¹⁸⁹

pp. 93, 94: 'Abdallāh b. 'Amr [=b. al-'Āṣ?].

p. 96: Khālid b. Ma'dān did ten thousand rosaries [*tasbīḥa*] per day (according to *Hilyat al-awliyā'*, vol. V, p. 210 [add the parallel source, Ibn 'Asākir, *Tārīkh* (Beirut ed.), vol. XVI, p. 201]); if Donner's suggestion as to how to understand the text in the *Hilya*: *ja'ala bi-iṣba'ihī kadhā, yuḥarrīkubā ya'nī bi-'l-tasbīḥ* [the text in Ibn 'Asākir has: *yushīru bi-iṣba'ihī*!] is correct, then this is a very early (the earliest?) attestation for the use of rosary in Arabic literature. Note however that the text has: forty thousand [not ten thousand] *tasbīḥa* [not *tasbīḥ* as Donner renders it]. The word *masbaḥa* [read: *misbaḥa*, not *masbaḥa*, which seems to be the colloquial pronunciation], that is, rosary, mentioned by Donner in note 113, is not mentioned in the text though. This is not a classical Arabic word.¹⁹⁰ The classical [?] Arabic word for rosary is *subḥa*.¹⁹¹ The later term, *masbaḥa*, is most probably derived from *al-musabbīḥa*, that is the index finger, 'so called, because it is like the glorifier when one makes a sign with it [by raising it] when declaring [the unity of] the divine essence'.¹⁹² It is wrong, then, to understand this text as a description of the use in rosary.

p. 106: 'Rivalry was especially intense between tribal groups that had become established in an area at an early date-before Islam, or with the first wave of conquests-and those that had arrived more re-

¹⁸⁹ See *EP*, 'Tashahhud', (A.J. Wensinck-[A. Rippin]), *s.v.*; Lane's *Lexicon*, *h.y.y.*

¹⁹⁰ See Dozy's *Dictionary*, *s.b.ḥ*, *s.v.*

¹⁹¹ Though the term 'does not occur in classical Tradition in the meaning of rosary', Wensinck, (*EP*, 'Subḥa').

¹⁹² Lane's *Lexicon*, *s.b.ḥ*; *ibid.* *s.b.b.*

cently.' This is exactly Hind's main thesis in two of his articles in (1971, 1977) (not quoted by Donner in the Bibliography).

p. 108, n. 38: Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, instead of Ḥammad; this page and note should be added to Nu'aym's name in the Index.

p. 122, n. 71: 'The Dome of the Rock, construction of which began in 72/692.' (see also p. 88, n. 89, statement in this vein, in both places the statement is based on Blair's study (1992)).

Although Donner is relying on Blair's study (he could have added other studies),¹⁹³ it seems that this is not the accepted view regarding the date of the erection of this monument. On the contrary, many (and probably most) scholars regard the date 72/691–2 [correct Donner, (1998): 72/692] as the year in which the building was completed.¹⁹⁴ One source even states that the construction was finished in 73/692–3.¹⁹⁵ The building started most probably in 66/685–6 or 69/688.¹⁹⁶

p. 138, n. 29 (and in the epilogue, pp. 291–6) 'Even Western students of Islamic history have had marked difficulty in breaking the grip of the traditional outlook' [of Islamic history]. As far as I am aware, this point was first raised by Goitein, Morony and then by Bligh-Abramski and Elad.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ See for example, Rotter (1982: 227–30) (this work should be added to Donner's Bibliography).

¹⁹⁴ See for example, Cresswell (1969, 1: 72) (not mentioned in Donner's Bibliography); Rosen-Ayalon (1986: 389); Hawting (1986: 59); Grabar (1959: 34). (the last two items are mentioned in Donner's Bibliography); but cf. Grabar (1996: 64), where he is equivocal regarding the date of the beginning of the construction of the Dome of the Rock (although he asserts, that 'usually such inscriptions which could not have been mounted much before the completions of the building, determine the end of a job'.); on p. 115 he concludes by saying 'adjusting somewhat the arguments developed by Sheila Blair, I prefer to see the date of 692 as the beginning of the implementation of an idea and the fulfillment of needs that were earlier'; Ettinghausen and Grabar (1987: 28); Rabbat (1993: 73); Sharon (1979: 250): 'inscriptions generally commemorate the successful completion of a building and not its beginning'. Irwin (1997: 252): 'Building work on it began in the late 680s and it was probably completed in 692...(though those dates have in the past been challenged)'; Elad (1995: 44–5; 1992: 53) (Arabic text), 33–4 (English translation): the tradition of Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī from the early historians, Muḥammad b. al-Sā'ib al-Kalbi (d. 146/763) and/or his son Hishām (d. 204/819), and al-Wāqidī (d. 207/823) (the last study appears in the same volume where Blair's study was published; Donner mentions another study from this volume, that of van Ess; the two aforementioned studies of Elad are not mentioned in Donner's Bibliography).

¹⁹⁵ Ibn Kathīr (1351–8, 8: 281).

¹⁹⁶ Grabar (1959: 34); Elad (1995: 44).

¹⁹⁷ Goitein (1968); Morony (1981); Bligh-Abramski (1988); Elad (1995) (see Bibliography; not mentioned in Donner's Bibliography).

p. 154: al-Kūfa is mentioned as the 'site of what was probably the largest community of Believers outside Arabia during the first half century AH'. But it seems that al-Baṣra had the largest Muslim community at this period.¹⁹⁸

p. 154, n. 24, van Ess' argument that 'association of the Dome [of the Rock] with Muḥammad's *mi'rāj* or ascension may only have occurred later, after the time of the caliph al-Walīd', was already proposed by Grabar, who argued though, that 'it was under al-Walīd that the identification of the *isrā'* and *mi'rāj* with the Ḥaram area was accepted and translated into architecture'. This idea was also raised and developed by other scholars.¹⁹⁹

p. 159: Donner writes that the reason why Syria and Egypt should not have conveyed a wealth of material on Qur'ān-related narratives, especially 'Biblical' themes is not clear; 'the once famous Jewish academies in Tiberias (Palestine) had by this time been inactive for centuries, and the Jews of the Ḥijāz, at least, may have been removed to Iraq or elsewhere with the Islamic conquest, which may explain the dearth of Syrian Jewish material'.

This assertion is in need of some modification: 1) Tiberias was a very active literary centre during the Byzantine and early Islamic period. 2) The sources record several pieces of evidence that testify to the existence of Jews in the Arab Peninsula during the first quarter of the second, third and fourth centuries of the hijra, that is, the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries A.D.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Djaīt, (*EP*, 'al-Kūfa') 'certainly at the same period the figure for the population of Baṣra (200,000 registered), rather outnumbered that of Kūfa'. This and other figures of population in the early Arabic sources are highly problematic and not to be trusted, see Elad (2001: 307–312).

¹⁹⁹ Grabar (1959: 61) (see also p. 53, this article is mentioned in Donner's Bibliography); Busse (1968: 454, 459) (not mentioned in Donner's Bibliography).

²⁰⁰ (1) Tiberias: Gil (1992: 175–85, nos. 285–97; *ibid.*, 176–7, no. 286): Tiberias as a centre of Jewish spiritual life during the early Muslim period; 178–9, nos. 287–8: Tiberias as the centre of the *massoretes* and vocalisers and 'it was here that the *masorah* and vocalisation were finally formulated'; also the centre for the Palestinian Poets and poems (*piyyūtīm*); the Palestinian Yeshiva was situated in Tiberias. Gil assumes that it was still located in the city during the first two decades of the tenth century (1992: 499, no. 738; see also *Sefer Tveria* (1973: 353–67 ['Masorah and Vocalization' by A. Dotan] and esp. 368–79 ['The Early Poets of Tiberias' by E. Fleischer]) (In Hebrew). It may be no coincidence that al-Muqaddasī mentions Tiberias as the only place in Greater Syria (al-Shām), where the profession of the scribes (*kitāba*) was being taught, see al-Muqaddasī (1866: 183); (2) Jews in Ḥijāz: a) The case of Zur'a b. Ibrāhīm, who lived in al-Madīna during al-Walīd b. 'Abd al-Malik's reign. He was exiled to Syria by the governor of the city, 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz. His origin was Khaybar (*min Ahl Khaybar*), see Ibn

p. 161: Donner argues that the establishment of a *ḥaram* in al-Madīna by the Prophet, was an act that explicitly associated him to Abraham, quoting a tradition that 'every Prophet has a sacred enclave (*ḥaram*), so I have made Medina [my] enclave as Abraham had made Mecca [his]'. This topic including the *ḥadīth* quoted by Donner were already discussed by Rubin.²⁰¹

p. 167, n. 23: A tradition from Ibn 'Asākir's *Tārīkh* [quoting the facsimile ed., see now the Beirut ed. vol. LVIII, p. 25], with the following *isnād*: '... 'Alī ibn Muḥammad [al-Madā'inī] < 'Abd al-Jabbār ibn Mahnī (?) < 'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Ibrāhīm), on Maslama ibn 'Abdallāh al-Rib'ī al-Juhanī's service as Hishām's treasurer and supervisor of the *tābūt al-zakāt* for Damascus'.

The *isnād* should read as follows: 'Alī b. Muḥammad [b. Ṭawq b. 'Abdallāh al-Fākhūrī al-Dārānī al-Ṭabarānī]²⁰² < 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Muhannā²⁰³ ... on Maslama b. 'Abdallāh b. al-Rib'ī²⁰⁴ etc.

p. 170: Donner quotes from the *Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm, a partial list of al-Haytham b. 'Adī's books, relying on the translation of Dodge. This translation has some flaws:

'Asākir (1996, 19: 6) (his biography, *ibid.*, 3–8); quoted and discussed with additional bibliography in Lecker (1992: 567 and n. 24); b) the descendents of al-Samaw'al b. 'Adiyā lived in Taymā in the days of Ibn al-Kalbī (the end of the eighth beginning of the ninth centuries), Ibn al-Kalbī (1988, 1: 435): *al-Samaw'al b. 'Adiyā b. Ḥiyyā... wa-kāna awfā al-'Arab wa-huwa ṣāhib Taymā' wa-wuldūhu bihā ilā 'l-yawm*; cf. Ibn Ḥazm (1962: 372): *wa-'l-Samaw'al b. Ḥiyyā b. 'Adiyā... wa-huwa ṣāhib Taymā wa-waladūhu Shurayḥ b. al-Samaw'al, wa-li-wuldūhi hunāka 'adad; wa-madaḥahu al-A'shā wa-kānū mulūk Taymā*; c) a large Jewish community lived in al-Qurḥ in Wādī al-Qurā in the tenth century: al-Muqaddasī (1866: 84): *wa-'l-ghālib 'alayhā al-yahūd* (quoted and discussed by Lecker, *EP*, 'Wādī al-Qurā', *s.v.*); *ibid.*, quoting another evidence (e.g., Mann [1916–17: 489] for the existence of Jews in Wādī al-Qurā around 1000 CE).

²⁰¹ Rubin (1985: 10–12) (section 2: The *ḥaram* of Medina). The *ḥadīth* about Abraham, *ibid.*, 11. (Rubin's article is mentioned in Donner's Bibliography, and quoted on p. 57, n. 76, but is not quoted for this matter).

²⁰² On him, see Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 36: 24; 36: 220; 43: 179–80).

²⁰³ On 'Abd al-Jabbār b. Muḥammad b. Muhannā al-Khawlānī, see Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 31: 190; 7: 369; 8: 310; 9: 65; 10: 136, 477; 11: 89, 142; 22: 209; 24: 68); there may have been some confusion between him and 'Abd al-Jabbār b. 'Abdallāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Raḥīm (or 'Abd al-Raḥmān) b. Dāwūd, Abū 'Alī al-Khawlānī, al-Dārānī, known as Ibn Muhannā, who is the author of 'The History of Dārayyā' (see Ibn 'Asākir [1996, 1: 331; 34: 23, his biography]; [66: 280; 67: 53; 70: 75]); but cf. *ibid.*, 9: 65: *'Abd al-Jabbār b. Muḥammad b. Muhannā al-Khawlānī fī Tārīkh Dārayyā*.

²⁰⁴ On Maslama b. 'Abdallāh b. Rib'ī al-Juhanī al-Ḥimyarī al-Dimashqī, see Ibn Ḥajar (1984, 10: 131); al-Mizzī (1985–92, 27: 561); in charge of the box [?] *tābūt al-zakāt*: al-Mizzī (1985–92); Ibn 'Asākir (1996, 58: 25, 26–7, 37): *tābūt al-sadaqa*.

- 1) 'Officers and bodyguards of the governors of Iraq' (*Kitāb 'ummāl al-shuraṭ li-umarā' al-'Irāq*), that is, "Those functionaries who were in charge of the office of the *shuraṭ*, of the Governors etc..." Now Dodge's translation of *al-shuraṭ* as bodyguards, followed by Donner, is not accurate (although Dodge is quite persistent in translating this phrase as bodyguards).²⁰⁵

Though our understanding of the *shurṭa* during the (early) Umayyad period has become a little clearer due to recent research,²⁰⁶ it still requires further in-depth study. In general, it can be said that it was a kind of an urban military 'police' force, drawn from the army troops and in fact was part of the army.²⁰⁷ One of its tasks was the administration of justice.²⁰⁸

- 2) Ibid.: 'The Most Noteworthy Scribes or Bureaucrates' (*Ashraf* [read *Ashraf*] *al-kuttāb*).²⁰⁹

p. 172: Abū Yūsuf (d. 182/792), 'author of the first systematic tax treatise in the Islamic tradition.' A bibliographical reference on this important scholar is missing.²¹⁰

p. 196: 'Abīd b. Sharya (d. ca 50/670); but see on p. 224: 'Abīd b. Sharya (d. 60). The exact date of his death is not known. Ibn al-Nadīm relates that he lived until the reign of Caliph 'Abd al-Malik (reigned 65/685–6/705).²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Dodge (1970, 1: 218): translating *Kitāb shuraṭ al-khulafā'* as 'Bodyguards of the Caliphs'; and translating [*Kitāb*] *ḥaras al-khulafā'* as: 'Guards (Guarding) of the Caliphs'. This title is not found in Flügel's (1871–2) ed., but exists in other editions of the *Fihrist*, see the edition of Khalifa and al-'Awza (1995, 1: 176); the edition of Ṭawil (1996: 160), and that of Tajaddud (1971: 112).

²⁰⁶ Crone (1980: 248); Donner (1989) (not included in his Bibliography); Lecker (1991: 276–80); Donner (1989: 257): '...this implies that the *shurṭa* was not essentially the caliph's ordinary bodyguard, but something separate'.

²⁰⁷ Somewhat later evidence, from the time of Hārūn al-Rashīd, bears witness to the continuity of this main trait of the *shurṭa*, see al-Ṭabarī (1964, 3: 769).

²⁰⁸ Crone (1980).

²⁰⁹ Dodge (1970): 'Noblemen who were government secretaries'. This title is missing from Flügel's (1871–2) ed. of the *Fihrist* (quoted by Donner), but is mentioned in the other editions of the *Fihrist*, mentioned in n. 205.

²¹⁰ Calder dedicated a long discussion to this important figure and his treatise. He came to the conclusion that it was not the composition of Abū Yūsuf himself, but most likely of the well-known jurist Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. 'Umar al-Khaṣṣāf (d. 261/875), who composed it most likely between 240/854–855 to 260/873–874 (Calder 1993: 105–60): an exhaustive discussion on the author and the book; (147): composed between 240 to 260; (147, 150, 159–60): a composition of al-Khaṣṣāf. But this supposition was most convincingly refuted by Zamān (1997: 13–19); cf. also Motzki [1998] where he refutes other ideas raised by Calder in his book.

²¹¹ Ibn al-Nadīm (1871–2: 89), (1971: 102); Ibn Ḥajar (1981, 5: 115); Rosenthal (*EP*, 'Ibn Sharya').

p. 246: Abū 'Ubayda Ma'mar b. al-Muthannā. The discussion on this important scholar is in need of a bibliographical reference.²¹²

p. 246: al-Madā'ini's year of death.²¹³

p. 279: instead of Arabic read Arabia.

Conclusion

In his book, Donner raises reasonable, sometimes original, views, ideas and hypotheses, mainly in the realm of the methodology for the study of ancient Islamic history (of particular importance is Donner's conclusion as to the method of relating to early Muslim sources, and its extensive theoretical and practical elaboration).

I found extremely important Donner's attitude towards the 'skeptical approach', that is, his firm opposition to the main and basic idea of this school, which is that the framework and details of early Muslim history are a late and monolithic interpretation, which does not enable us to expose the earlier layers of history. In place of this, Donner proposes what he defines as a 'traditional-critical approach', which seems to him (and, to a large extent, to this reviewer as well) to give the best hope of separating the wheat from the chaff of early Muslim tradition.

The central thesis of his book though is problematic and is not accepted by this reviewer. I have dealt with some of the problems embedded in this thesis throughout this study.

If one accepts the general, schematic description established in research, of confrontation and conflict from the beginning of Islamic history between the values and norms of Arab tribal society, on the one hand, and the primeval basic values of Islam, naturally including pietist principles, on the other, then one must admit that the pietists do not emerge as the victors. The expansion beyond the Arabian peninsula, the conquests and the creation of the Arab-Islamic caliphate are continually accompanied by conflict between these two opposing trends. The first is usually dominant-although one must immediately make reservation and note that today it would be inaccurate to describe the Umayyads, as once they were described, as a 'secular Arab kingdom'. Under the rule of these *khulafā' Allāh*, and with their explicit encouragement, the first buds of Muslim religious literature

²¹² See for instance, Madelung (1992); Lecker (1995), and the comprehensive bibliography on p. 72, n. 1.

²¹³ Between 215/830 and 228/843, see Sezgin (1967: 314); U. Sezgin, (EI², 'al-Madā'ini', s.v).

developed. However, it must be emphasized again, that the accepted view from Goldziher onward, to Obermann, Hinds, Rosenthal, Kister and others, is that pietist forces and trends in this period are marginal and not the prevailing ones.²¹⁴ Contrary to Donner, it seems that the historical consciousness and communal awareness of the first believers is very early. Thus the date of writing of the different genres of Arabic literature is also very early.

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²¹⁴ Goldziher (1971) (Chapter I: *Muruwva* and *Dīn*), 37; 52, 56 (Chapter II: The Arab Tribes and Islam); Obermann (1955: 281–9, 298); Rosenthal (*EL*², 'Nasab'); Hinds (1977: 465); Kister and Plessner (1976: 54).

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