Archaeological Survey in the Raya/al-Tur Area, South Sinai

by Mutsuo Kawatoko

The North Red Sea and the Sinai Peninsula are important areas where the worlds of the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, and the Eurasian and African continents converge. Above all, the Gulf of Suez is strategically located as the direct connection with the Mediterranean world. Starting in 1985, the "Study of the History of East-West Maritime Relations" project has conducted 24 archaeological surveys in the south part of the Sinai Peninsula.

The south part of the Sinai Peninsula contains many archaeological sites dating from the early Bronze Age, and later periods. In particular, when Mt. Sinai, Pharan (Wādī Fīrān), and Raithou became centers of early Christian monasticism, they were widely known around the Mediterranean world.

According to geographical books, such as Ibn Ḥawqal's *Kitāb Ṣūrat al-Arḍ* and work of various map-makers, the Sinai Peninsula was not recognized as a distinct entity until modern times. Rather, the Sinai Peninsula was divided into three parts: the Ayla ('Aqaba) area, or the east coast; the Ṭūr wa Fīrān (Mt. Sinai and Wādī Fīrān) area, or the central highland; and the Rāya wa Qulzum (Rāya and Suez) area, or the west coast.

In 1995 the legislation called "Twenty-year General Development Project of the Sinai Peninsula" was passed in the Egyptian Majlis. Development of the Sinai Peninsula for tourism was part of it and the Rāya site (about the 6th-12th centuries) was destined to be destroyed by the construction of hotels. So, in 1997 we started an emergency excavation of the Rāya site.[1] We conducted this excavation in connection with the archaeological survey of the Monastery of Wādī al-Ṭūr site which began in 1994. This ran simultaneously with the excavation of the al-Kīlānī site in al-Ṭūr[2] (about 10 km north of the Rāya site, datable from the 13th century to the present) which had been started in 1985.

The Rāya site is a port city which

RAYA/TUR, FROM PAGE 25.

was built around the 6th century and Islamized in the 9th to 10th centuries. It was constructed as an outpost of Mt. Sinai Monastery (St. Catherine's Monastery), Raithou Monastery (Wādī al-Ṭūr Monastery), and Pharan Monastery and became the main port in the north part of the Red Sea. In eight excavations at Rāya, we divided the site into three parts: the fort; the official building blocks including a storehouse; and the residential quarter (fig 2). We excavated in the fort eight times and in the residential quarter twice.

The fort is a square plan with each side about 84.5 m in length (fig 3). Square towers were built at the four corners and at the center of each side. The main gate stands in the center of the southwestern outer wall, facing the sea, and has two towers with double doors. The fort is considered to have been built around the 6th century, and was used until the 9th to 10th centuries, when a building constructed for some other purpose was rebuilt as a mosque. It is presumed that the fort was changed into a residential quarter.

The interior of the fort was separated into five blocks by the central street which led straight from the main gate, and several other streets. Artifacts of the 9th to 10th centuries from the eastern Islamic world were concentrated there. There are good examples of luster-painted pottery [3] and a glass beaker [4] (fig 4).

In the residential quarter we excavated an area of only 1000 square meters, but it was enough to show quite different features. The excavation revealed blocks which included more than six houses and shops lined up on the opposite side of the street were excavated. The building materials are large square sun-dried bricks. The technique and style seem to belong to the Byzantine tradition. Earthenware and glass fragments from the Umayyad and the early Abbasid periods of greater Syria, or Bilād al-Shām, were unearthed in large quantities. The excavated coins and dated glass weights all belong to the 8th century.[5]

The residential quarter comprised a wide area fanned out in a triangular shape: 1 km on the east and south sides and 300 m on the west side. All of the residential quarter was not occupied by buildings

at the same time. In other words, since some buildings were in different places at different times, changing excavation areas in the future will reveal the residential groups of both earlier and later times.

This port city was suddenly deserted around the 12th century.[6] Its function as a port seems to have moved to al-Kīlānī in al-Ṭūr. As a result of 17 excavations at this al-Kīlānī site, fragments of luster-glazed ceramics of about the 12th century and Chinese ware of about the 13th century have been recovered, although building features of the 12th to 13th centuries have yet to be found.

The al-Kīlānī site came to be important after the main route of maritime relations between the East and the West consistently used the Red Sea. In particular, it became the most important port in the north Red Sea from the late 14th to the mid-16th century. The city prospered greatly. Among the traded commodities were large quantities of Chinese ware, incense and spices [7] from the Indian Ocean region and commodities from the Mediterranean region, such as sgraffito ceramics of Cyprus, deep-blue on white glazed pottery of Faenza in Italy, and luster-glazed pottery of Spain.

The Rāya site was not completely deserted but it was used only when winds and tides permitted. No. 353 manuscript of St. Catherine's Monastery, written in 1521, shows that the name of the Rāya coast was well known in those days.

We made a survey of the distribution of 2000 rock cells near Abū Ṣuwayra at the south end of Mt. Nāqūs in connection with the survey of the Monastery of Wādī al-Ṭūr site. More than 100 cells were registered.[8] At this time we discovered a rock inscription group [9] at the north end of the mountain. During the 6th expedition in September, 2004, the registration of all the inscriptions was finished. As a result, a group of 1712 inscriptions was registered. They consist of 968 in Arabic; 399 in Greek; 70 in Latin; and 275 of rock art and marks. Some inscriptions in Nabatean, Persian, and modern Hebrew are included in the last group. These inscriptions on the rocks provide new historical material. Through interviews with fishermen we found that the inlets of Abū Qafṣ and Abū

Ra's al-Ghūb

J.Nāqūs

Ra's Abū Ṣuwayra
Bi'r Abū Ṣuwayra

J.Hammām
Sayydnā Mūsā

● Dayr Wādī al-Ṭūr

Warm Spring

al-Kīlānī Site

✳ Well

✳ Well

al-Ṭūr City

— Wādī

═ Paved Road

▬ Feeder Road

------------ Camel Road

● Jubayl

Rāya Site

0   5km

Ra's Rāya

©iia
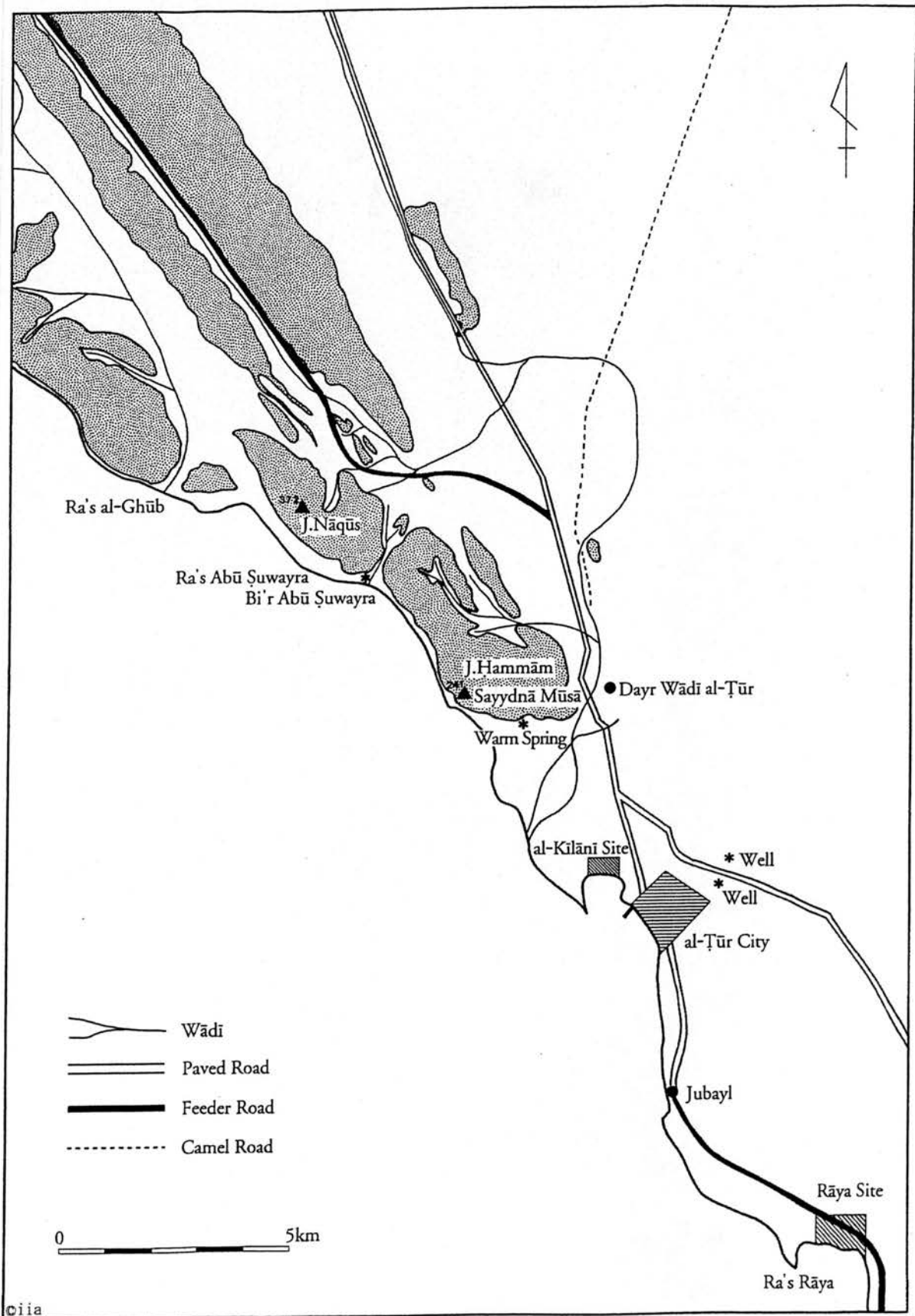
Figure 1. Map of area.
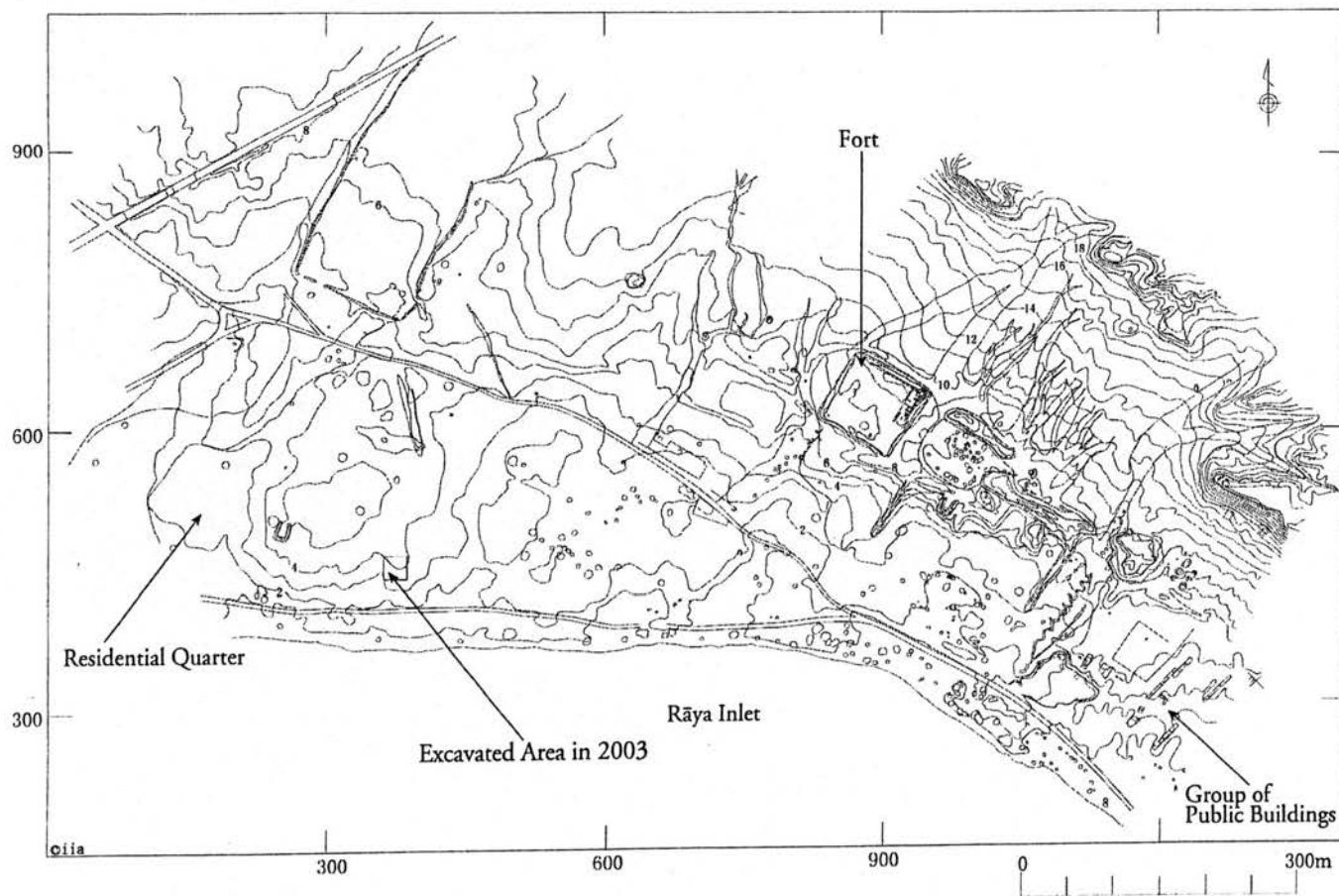
Contour Map of the Rāya Site

Figure 2. Contour map of the Raya site.

Plan of the Rāya Fort
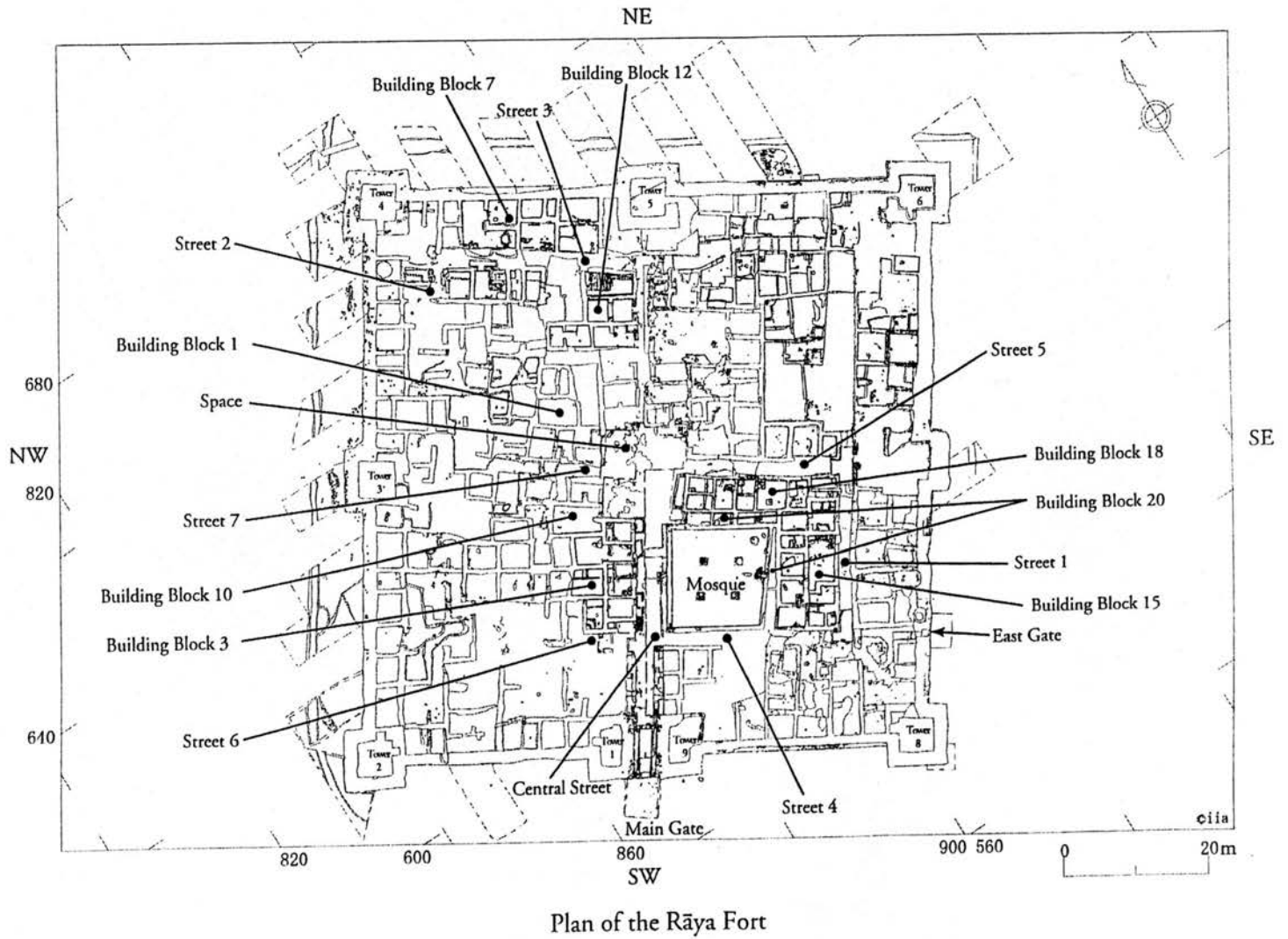
Figure 3. Plan of the Raya fort.

Ṣuwayra, situated near the inscription group, had functioned as anchorage ports for sailing ships before 1967.

The archaeological material, ancient documents, rock inscriptions and information from interviews reveal that the port cities of Rāya or al-Kilānī did not exist as hubs of sea and the land traffic, rather the Rāya/al-Ṭūr area performed this function, connecting "the sea network" with "the land network". The length of this area is about 30 km from Rāya in the south and Abū Qafṣ in the north.
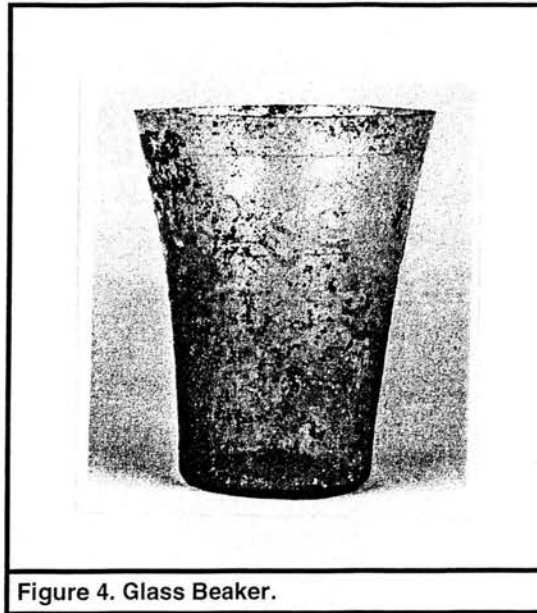
Figure 4. Glass Beaker.

Notes:

1 I realized the importance of this site by ground observations in the general survey in 1985, but at that time it was under the control of the Egyptian army and it was impossible to conduct an excavation. This archaeological survey was made by the Japanese-Egyptian joint mission. It is noteworthy that the site was designated as a district for the preservation of cultural properties (Prime Minister's order no. 3340, dated November 2, 1999).

2 The site was also designated as a district for the preservation of cultural properties (Prime Minister's order no. 1150, dated April 27, 1996).

3 Kawatoko, M., "Archaeological Survey of the Rāya/al-Ṭūr Area in 2002," ed. by M. Kawatoko, *Archaeological Survey of the Rāya/al-Ṭūr Area on the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, 2002*, (Tokyo, 2003), p. 3, pl. 28.

4 Shindo, Y., "The Islamic Glass Beaker with Wheel-cut Decoration from Rāya," *Orient* 39 (2004): 18-38; idem., "Islamic Glass Finds from Rāya, Southern Sinai," *Annales du 15e Congrès de l'Association Internationale pour l'Histoire du Verre*, (New York, 2001), pp. 180-184.

5 Kawatoko, M., "Archaeological Survey of the Rāya/al-Ṭūr Area in 2003," ed. by M. Kawatoko, *Archaeological Survey of the Rāya/al-Ṭūr Area on the Sinai Peninsula, Egypt, 2002*, (Tokyo, 2003), pp. 5-8, pls. 35 & 36; Shindo, Y., "Glassware from the Rāya Site," ibid., pp. 51-53, pl. 36.

6 The direct cause is probably the growth of coral reefs and the arrival of large-sized ships. Afterwards there was a merger and abolition of the ports of the north Red Sea occurred after the Crusades.

7 According to several thousand ancient documents discovered in the site, a large quantity of pepper, frankincense, cloves, cinnamon and the like were carried in the cargo. Kawatoko, M., "Some Documents of the Early Othman Period Found at the al-Ṭūr Site," *Journal of East-West Maritime Relations* 1 (1989): 199-220; idem, "On the Use of Coptic Numerals in Egypt in the 16th Century," *Orient* 28 (1992): 58-74; idem, "On the Use of Coptic Numerals in Egypt in the 16th Century: Addenda et Corrigenda," *Orient* 29 (1993): 147-157.

8 According to the report by U. Dahari, following the surveys in the 1970s by Y. Tasfrir and A. Goren, 13 units were recognized in four complexes. Dahari, U., *Monastic Settlements in South Sinai in the Byzantine Period: The Archaeological Remains*, (Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 141-145.

9 In 1896 Stickel and Verworn of Germany registered only two inscriptions, afterwards their existence was forgotten. Stickel and Verworn, "Arabische Forseninscriften bei Tôr," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 50 (1896).

Medieval Islamic and Jewish Traditions on Abraham

by Shari Lowin

The unique stories a people tells about its ancestors often hold the key to understanding how that people conceives of itself. Through the stories of their forefathers, groups transmit not only their history but also their value systems. Interestingly, despite their desire to identify themselves as separate religious traditions and value systems, Islam and Judaism tell many of the same stories about the very same ancestors. In studies on these Islamic and Jewish forefather narratives, scholars have all too often seen these as vehicles through which one could determine the primacy of one tradition over another. Such a practice ignores the dynamism and creativity of Islam, disregards the complex and often symbiotic relationship between the two religious traditions, and fails to read the messages embedded in each regarding what it means to be a Muslim or a Jew. Nowhere is this more evident than in the stories the two traditions share about their shared forefather, Abraham, for Islam the model of predestined prophet and for Judaism the paradigm of humanity's free-will.

Despite the silence of both the Bible and the Qur'ān on Abraham's birth, the Muslim and the Jewish extra-Scriptural tradition relate surprisingly similar tales: In the days of old, the land of Chaldea was ruled by an idolatrous and haughty king by the name of Nimrod. Life proceeded along relatively peacefully until the day a prediction reached the ruler that a child born in his kingdom would vanquish him religiously and overthrow him politically. Alarmed, Nimrod scrambled to prevent the prophecy's fulfillment and set elaborate plans to obliterate his competition. But, all his designs and attempts came to nothing. The child, known in English as Abraham, grew up in safety, away from the menacing eye of the king. Any Muslim or Jewish schoolchild would recognize this outline as the beginning of the patriarch's biography. In fact, one is hard pressed to say whether this synopsis comes from an Islamic or midrashic text.

Among the many Islamic texts to relate this narrative, one of the most complete appears in the Ta'rīkh (I/257-8) of the well-known historian and exegete al-Ṭabarī (d. 923 CE). Quoting numerous sources, al-Ṭabarī tells of a star that rose over Namrūd that was so bright, it blotted out both the sun and the moon. Frightened, Namrūd called his magicians and soothsayers. They explained that a boy would be born in Namrūd's domain whose destiny it would be to destroy both the king and his rule. In hopes of averting the prophecy's fulfillment, Namrūd gathered the men together and with them moved from the city, forcing the women to remain behind; if no women lived under his control, he reasoned, no rebellious children could be born under his control. Just to be sure, however, he ordered any boys born to the town-bound women slain. His plan to avert destiny might have worked, for the child had not been conceived yet, al-Ṭabarī (or his source) informs us. However, a task arose in the old town and Namrūd swore his trusted servant Azar to celibacy and sent him to attend to the matter. When Azar laid eyes on his wife, he found he could not control himself. Ibrāhīm's mother conceived him that very night.

Given the prevalence with which this prophecy narrative appears in the various Islamic sources, one would expect to find similar themes in the pre-Islamic corpus of midrash (biblical narrative expansions). After all, as has been well documented, many of the Islamic narratives regarding biblical figures reflect the influence of the older Jewish (midrashic) literature. And, there could hardly be another figure more venerated and admired by *both* traditions than Abraham.

Yet, precisely where we expect to find at the very least a reference to the matter at hand, we find the pre-Islamic midrash shrouded in almost complete silence. Unlike the Islamic texts, the pre-Islamic accounts make no mention at all of a prophecy concerning Abraham's birth. Indeed, the fact of Abraham's birth and the circumstances surrounding it scarcely interest the early midrash at all. For the most part, the pre-Islamic midrash encounters Abraham for the first time as an adult, just as the Bible does.

In contrast to the early midrashic silence, the post-Qur'ānic Jewish texts -- those that date to after the birth of Islam-- do address the issue. For these texts and their authors, the silence of the Bible and the earlier Jewish narrative expansions left a gap in Abraham's biography that required filling-in. And in rising to the occasion, these later texts resemble the Islamic texts to a surprising degree.

The parallels between the Islamic and Jewish versions manifest themselves

most obviously in the very detailed 11th-12th century *Sefer ha-Yashar*. On the night that Abraham was born to him, Yashar relates, all of Terah's servants and Nimrod's astrologers and sages gathered at Terah's house for a celebratory feast. Upon departing, the astrologers looked up into the sky and watched in shock as a star streaked across the sky from the east and swallowed four stars from four different directions. The astrologers understood immediately: the child who had been born to Terah would grow to father a nation that would overthrow kingdoms and inherit their lands. The following morning, they informed the king of the news and advised him to buy the child from Terah and kill him immediately. Nimrod summoned Terah and offered to fill his house with gold and silver in return for the newborn son. But Terah rebuffed his offer and requested a three-day period in which to consider the king's proposal. He returned home, grabbed Abraham and a wet nurse and hid them in a cave. At the end of the three days, Terah brought to Nimrod a child born to one of his servants. The king did not detect the ruse and was pacified.

As in the Islamic accounts which depict Azar as a high-level court attendant, *Yashar*'s Terah commands a high position in Nimrod's government. In both traditions, astrologers learn of Abraham's arrival by reading abnormal movements in the skies. Even the forms of the sign resemble one another; in the midrash, a star flashes across the sky consuming the light of four other stars, while the Islamic narratives tell of a star so bright it blotted out the light of the sun and the moon. Additionally, Nimrod, like his Islamic counterpart, plans to subvert the prediction by murdering the child on the advice of his astrologers.

Whereas many have asserted that the Islamic accounts of the annunciation of Ibrāhīm resulted from the influence of Judaism on Islam, a closer analysis reveals the opposite to be true. Islam, and not Judaism, played the active role in the motif's cross-tradition adventure. As noted, the sibyllic theme and its components appear on the scene first in the *Islamic* configuration of the patriarch's life. It is here that we

first read of the warning to the king of his impending fall at the hands of an as yet unborn child. Here we learn, for the first time, of the king's vicious yet futile attempts to derail the prediction and annihilate his competition. And, it is in the Islamic texts that we first read of the forefather's rescue from Namrūd/Nimrod's murderous intentions and of his parents' attempts to save him.

Importantly, despite all this the texts reveal themselves to differ in one vital area the timing of the prophecy. Where the Islamic texts tell unfailingly of prophecy *before* conception, the later midrashic narratives consistently maintain the opposite; Abraham's mother gives birth to him and only afterward, when the child is already a living, breathing reality, do Nimrod and his astrologers receive notification. This fact does not change from midrash to midrash.

But, what was it about the timeline that so offended Jewish sensibilities? Before conception, after delivery... what really is the difference? Either way, word of Abraham reaches the king well before the child himself realizes his iconoclastic potential. Moreover, regardless of when the prophecy occurs, the same results ensue: Nimrod panics and tries to have the boy eliminated but the baby is whisked away to safety where he remains until the danger passes. Is the scheduling variant not merely the result of differences in storytelling technique or of the vagaries of oral transmission?

If the variation in the timing resulted simply from divergent narrative techniques, one would expect at least *some* crossover between the two traditions. After all, the later Jewish authors who included the prophecy motif were living amongst Muslims, in the Muslim Empire; like them, they spoke Arabic as their mother tongue, and read and wrote the same style of poetry and folk-literature, both secular and religious. One would expect to find, then, a Jewish text with a pre-natal oracle or, alternatively, an Islamic text in which the prophecy follows conception. And yet, the Islamic texts cling to the notion of prophecy first and the Jewish texts to conception first.

One thus understands that the timing of the prophecy constitutes a significant indicator of the understanding each tradition has of the character of Abraham. The Islamic sources conceive of Ibrāhīm as a man *chosen by Allah* to do His work on earth, to turn his people away from idolatry and back to the true faith (Islam). Ibrāhīm does not initiate his relationship with Allah. Instead, as the pre-natal prophecy indicates, Allah creates Ibrāhīm expressly for this purpose.

On the off chance that readers would not pick up on this intimation, al-Ṭabarī records the point outright. Quoting Ibn Isḥāq, he relates that the stargazers approached Namrūd with their message, when Allah desired to send Ibrāhīm as a proof to his people, and as a messenger to his servants, for there had been no messengers between Nūḥ and Ibrāhīm except for Hūd and Ṣāliḥ, and when the time of Ibrāhīm, of whom Allah wanted what He wanted, drew near [*Jāmi' al-bayān*, 7:248-9; *Ta'rīkh* (I/254)]. Allah, and not Ibrāhīm's parents, determined that they would have a child and when the child would be born. Allah also dictated that that child would end idolatry and reinstate monotheism. Moreover, Allah purposely sent word of Ibrāhīm ahead.

Whereas the Islamic configuration of the motif suggests a patriarch as a predestined personality, the Jewish narrative expansions delay the timing of the prophecy in order to present him as individual with free-will and control over his destiny. God here has no specific role in Abraham's creation or arrival. For the midrashic narratives, Abraham's existence was a product of his parents' will, not God's plans. The prophecy's placement *after* Abraham's birth indicates the child's uniqueness, a recognition of his own character rather than a regulator of it. With the child already alive, the stars only *signify* that he will grow to do great things. They do not ordain it.

The case of the prophecy of Abraham's birth in the medieval Islamic and Jewish sources constitute but one example of a broader pattern of interdependence between the two traditions. Analysis

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of additional episodes in the Abraham/ Ibrāhīm narratives reveals that this mutual influence and interdependence results in opposing characterizations of the forefather throughout the patriarch's early life. Further research on additional shared sacred characters, even evil personalities such as Nimrod and Titus, will undoubtedly help us define more clearly the richness and depth of this long interaction between the two traditions.

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Call for papers

Medieval Arabic story-telling: transmission and receptivity

University of Liège, Belgium, 15-17 September 2005

A conference jointly sponsored by the University of Liège, l'Università Ca' Foscari, Venice, and l'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO), Paris

Committee: Professor Claude Brémond (École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris); Julia Bray (Université de Paris 8 Saint Denis) and Anne-Marie Polo (EHESS, Paris)

Organising Committee: Frédéric Bauden (Université de Liège, Belgium), Aboubakr Chraïbi (INALCO, Paris), Antonella Ghersetti (Università Ca' Foscari, Venice)

The University of Liège in Belgium was the home of the Arabist and Hebraist Victor Chauvin (1844-1913), whose Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 a 1885 (1897-1905) traced the influence of Arabic proverbs, tales and wisdom literature on European literatures and the role of Arabic as a mediator of ancient and classical story-telling. Kalila and Dimna, The Story of Ahikar, Barlaam and Josaphat and the Thousand and One Nights are among the sources discussed in the first eight volumes. Of particular interest is the treatment in volume 9 of the Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alfonsi, a Spanish Jew who converted to Christianity at the beginning of the 12th century. Much of the Latin Disciplina was inspired by Arabic models, which themselves drew on a variety of older sources, and it had a wide and complex influence on the European literatures of the Middle Ages and beyond.

As well as identifying Middle Eastern motifs in European literatures, their influence on tales of chivalry and romances and their sources in myth, legend and folklore, Chauvin's work was valuable in showing how stories and motifs recur in Middle Eastern literatures across languages and registers, in animal fables, hagiography, faraj ba'd al-shidda collections and maqamat.

The aim of the conference is to explore this aspect of narrative genres and motifs: their openness to transmission across registers and across languages and cultures, with a focus on Arabic as a nexus of transmission and transformation.

The organisers invite papers on both the internal and external transmission and adaptation of medieval Arabic story telling and narrative motifs. Abstracts of not more than 300 words should be sent to f.bauden@ulg.ac.be by 30 November. For further details, please contact f.bauden@ulg.ac.be

Fee : 25 euro

Did Islam Introduce a New Perception of Time?

by Ilai Alon

The concept of time, along with that of place[1] and matter, constitutes "reality", in which social life takes place, and power is contested. Dictating their parameters, therefore, is closely associated with revolutions, such as the Christian, the Soviet, the French, or even the Libyan. Such a change of a world-view affects every individual's daily life, even if, and perhaps especially if, this individual is not of a contemplative nature.

The repercussions which are involved cover virtually all walks of life, the sum of which makes for a total, and hard-to-escape-from change, while offering new criteria for the definition of the group. Such a change is not restricted to large-scale calendars only. It can apply to all temporal units, starting with the year, down to the minute, in some cases even smaller ones.

In this paper I should like to offer an examination of the degree to which the perception of time, introduced by Islam, was different from that of the Jāhilīyah.[2] Given the centrality of this concept in any culture, any change in the perception of time could be a potent means to lend perpetuity to a new institution, if not to gain power for it in the first place. We may, therefore, attain a deeper understanding of the transition from the Jāhilīyah to Islam by showing the changes, or lack thereof, in the perception of time between the two cultures.

Two caveats are in order here: first, this essay is less interested in the historical "facts" than in their perceptions, i.e., how Islam has viewed itself and its predecessors. Secondly, it is, obviously, but an initial inquiry, in which the questions raised outstrip our ability to answer them.

Time Perception in the Jāhilīyah and Islam

The issue of time seems to have been of great importance in Jāhilī Arabia. A good indicator for it is its richness of temporal vocabulary, which almost competes with that of the camel: Arabic has a number of terms to signify time's various aspects the cyclical and fateful (*dahr*); the static (*waqt*), especially as it is used in the Qurān (Rosenthal, 1995, 7; Rosen, 1984, 174); its momentary (*zaman*) (Rosenthal, 1995, 7) or extended nature (*Zamān*) (Rosen, 1984, 174). Another indicator is manifested the fact that it appears in every qaṣīdah (Arazi, 1989, 50).

Not only has "time" itself many names (with slight variations in denotation, to be sure, such as *dahr*, *ḥīn*, *waqt*, *zaman*, *zamān*, *'ahd*, *ajal*, etc.)[3], its units do too, such as *muddah*, or *aṣr* (indicating a period of twenty past years) (For this issue see Iṣfahānī, 1332, I,237,3). In order to try to draw more accurate conclusions, work will have to be done to try and locate the users and locations of given temporal terms.

Cultural, religious, and political institutions were strongly temporal: the solar-lunar calendar, the sacred months, pilgrimage, the winter and summer commerce-voyages, the yearly market at 'Ukāẓ, the importance of genealogy, the perception of fate as a temporal institution etc.

For the Jāhilī Arabs, Time was often symbolized by the night, its basic unit (Arazi, 1989, 50), associated with sadness, worry, suffering, fear, and misfortune (Arazi, 1989, 67 ff.). For these reasons, and because it brought horrendous affects of change and annihilation on humans (Arazi, 1989, 49-50; 93), it was basically viewed negatively (Ḥusām al-Dīn,

1410/1991, 18).

Aware of its importance, Islam adopted the night for prayer (Arazi, 1989, 98). In post-Jāhilī poetry it ceased to be interminable (Arazi, 1989, 99), and started to be viewed in an optimistic way (Arazi, 1989, 100).

In some areas, however, the attitude seems to have been ambivalent and. to a great extent. forgiving: time units used to have more than one name each: the month of Ramaḍān, e.g., was also called "Nātik" (Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, II, 401,1 ff.), and even week-days had a double naming system (Ḥusām al-Dīn, 1410/1991, 148).

This attitude was to be changed by Islam.

In what follows, several domains will be surveyed briefly, in which the previous perception came under assault.

Control over time is a fundamental and efficient means for ruling the society that obeys it, not the least because of its tacitness. So it looks as though tending to the concept of time was one of the most effective means used by the prophet Muḥammad, or later Islamic authorities, in hammering the new group out of the infidels of Mecca. This may have been done in the following way: The believer had to be delivered from Time's claws which rendered humans totally impotent (Arazi, 1989, 92), and Time had to become independent of humans' whims.

Jāhilī Arabs had taken liberties with time, as, e.g., the institution of *Nasī*. According to this custom, the sacredness of certain months was postponed by a year, whenever the taboos associated with it did not conform to the people's immediate combative interests. Exercising this option may have meant that Time was considered, to a certain extent, a human domain. But even on the personal level, Time could be

overcome in three ways, as was offered by different poets: through the collective (Arazi, 1989, 86), through one's offspring (Arazi, 1989, 94), and by means of a kind of instantaneous hedonism (Arazi, 1989, 88).

One of Muḥammad's necessary early measures, along with changing the calendar from the previous solar-lunar into a fully lunar one, was to abolish *Nasī*. He thus entrusted Time exclusively to God. No longer are time's very terms considered fixed and unchanging, or subject to human will. They are now at God's discretion according to their context (Iṣfahānī, 1332, I,141,17), e.g., the Qurān's (32:4-5), statement that [in the divine time] a day is equal to one thousand, or to fifty thousand years of human experience (Qurān, 70:4). But the shift was not only made in terminology. The Jāhilī concept of an evil, all-powerful, and inaccessible *dahr* (time/fate/duration), the ever-changing (Arazi, 1989, 49) had to be changed, so as to render people more responsible and responsive to the new Islamic message. Yet, viewed from the individual's point of view, people's destiny did not actually change. As *dahr* was made subservient to God, the Jāhilī custom of cursing it was prohibited (e.g., Ibn Ḥanbal, V, 299, no. 311; See Goodman, 1992, 3; Ḥudairī, 1997: 59). This change was so important that some Muslim thinkers followed on the tradition that identified Allah with *dahr* (e.g., Bukhārī, IV, 78) into making it one of His names. (E.g., Ibn Ḥazm, see Ibn Kathīr, Abū al-Fidā Ismā'īl (1371/1952), *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'Aẓīm*, Cairo: n.d., iv, 151, as quoted by Arazi, 1989, 93, n. 277). However, the prohibition does not seem to have been strictly kept to date.

The changes introduced by Islam may also be observed in the temporal units of the entire spectrum. Let us move from the shorter to the longer. By the fourteenth century, when Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311/711) wrote his *Lisān al-'Arab*, the meaning of *sā'ah* (hour) in Arabic, prior to the introduction of the clock to the Middle East, was "the present time", "a short period of time during the day or night", or "one twenty fourth of the day and night", the precise measure of which was impossible to establish.[4] With Islam the word has acquired the meaning of "the hour of judg-

ment" (e.g., Qurān, 22:1).

On the level of the day, the regular five prayers establish the smallest unit of time to very roughly one fifth of twenty-four hours (Qurān, 4:103). As a religious institution, they serve a task of bringing the most abstract of ideas, that of [eternal] God and of the extra-temporal day of judgment closer to home by a repetitive vocal and physical, hence "real", mentioning of Him by each believer. They also serve another purpose, that of fastening the grip on the individual's schedule.

Judging by the development of the idea of prayer in the Qurān, it seems reasonable to assume that the parallel Jāhilī institution had not been very elaborate: in the words of the Qurān itself (8:35), "Their prayer at the House (of Allah) is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands." It would stand to reason, that the temporal aspect of Jāhilī prayer was not much more advanced, and therefore that the intricate system of prayer that was introduced by the Prophet Muḥammad was, at least from our point of view, a novelty.

But the day as an institution, too, came under fire from young Islam. First of all, the names of the week-days were changed (Suyūṭī, *Muzhir*, 219,8). Secondly, in the Jāhilīyah, they were believed to have different qualities, and hence, taboos, which Islam tried to change, e.g., the ones on marriage and travel on Sundays and Wednesdays (Ḥusām al-Dīn, 1410/1991, 17). Thirdly, every week-day assumes new significance in Islam because of a new historical context: e.g., Saturday became a day of tricks and betrayal because Quraish (the defeated culture!) tricked on that day (Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ*, II, 392,21, ff.).

But the most significant introduction in this context is Friday, "*Sayyid al-ayyām*". It is more important than the feasts, it has a universal significance, as it played an important role during the creation of the world, as well as of humanity, as well as in its final hour (Bayhaqī, 1997, 127).

Special days were observed by Jews and Christians in the Arabian peninsula during the time of the Jāhilīyah, although the pagans themselves did not adopt the institution (Ṭabari, *Annales*, I, 1256,20). Although the name "*yawm al-Jum'ah*" was indeed used, its meaning was of gathering for the market, rather than for religious

purposes (Goitein, 1966, 124). It was for this reason that Islam, while retaining it, needed it to be distinct, and the solution was in temporal terms (Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Jum'ah, 33; Goitein, *Studies*, 112, quoting Qasṭallānī).

The Friday prayer provided the institution of the week with another new meaning: a weekly schedule is established, thus adding, by compulsory gathering, a potent means of control.

The month system, which for the Jāhilī Arabs regulated the whole network of life (Goitein, *Studies*, 92) was maintained by the Prophet Muḥammad to a large extent, albeit with some important changes: first of which was their religious context, the most salient example being, of course, the month of Ramaḍān which became associated with the Qurān, or Rajab, a sacred month for the Jāhilī Arabs, which assumed additional significance in historical context: it is associated with Noah (Bayhaqī, 1997, 22), but more importantly, it is the month when the Prophet was sent (Bayhaqī, 1997, 23). The month became the basic building block of the year: it is now exclusively lunar, with no compensatory arrangements, and much has been made of pronouncing its beginning by witnessing the new moon.[5]

The annual calendar too, underwent some shift from the earlier system: the two holidays are now fully religious, whereas in the Jāhilīyah, annual events, although to a certain extent religious, were no less on the commercial side.

The longest period of human time is one's entire life. Islam reformed the pilgrimage into a duty that marks a believer's lifetime, in that it must be carried out at least once in it. But besides this aspect, another is the overcoming and defying, of sort, of time's restrictions. The believers commemorate and re-enact remote past events, but not less important - they skip the more recent non-believer period.

Regarding the calendar, the change which appears to be the most significant is the shift to a full lunar one. There is more than one indication that the moon was preferable to early Islam to the sun, because Jāhilī religion was perceived by the early Muslims, as more associated with sun-worshipping than with that of the moon

(Bukhārī, Ḥajj, 100 etc.). The sensitivity of the moment of sunrise to Islam is often expressed in Ḥadīth, according to which prayer was prohibited at the precise moment of sunrise and sunset (E.g., Ibn Ḥanbal, V, 261). No less significant was the introduction of the new Islamic era in the year 16 A.H. by 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb (Donner, 1998, 237). Using it means the acceptance of the historical event of the Hijra, the role of the Prophet Muḥammad, the new religion, and all the authority of its legal and political institutions.

Eternity, the Herefater, History and the Future

According to the Qurān, for Jāhilī Arabs "time" only referred to the period between the birth and death of individuals (Qurān 45:23/24).[6] A decisive change of principle occurred by creating, or borrowing, the anti-time, i.e., eternity/timelessness and allocating it to God (Ṣamad - Qurān 112), as well, in some way, as to individuals.[7]

However, Jāhilī pagans must have had at least a notion of eternity, be it in virtue of their remnants of Abrahamic monotheism, through contact with monotheists, or merely by the periodical repetition of temporal events, day and night, winter and summer. Even if such a notion did exist, Islam confiscated its repetitive manifestation from them in God's favour: It is He who makes the changes (Qurān, 35:13), rendering time just another *natural* phenomenon (Arazi, 1989, 96, Italics - mine. I.A.). By doing so, and with the supposition that Jāhilī culture did not have the concept of eternity, or at least not as decisively as Islam does, Islam introduced a double nature to Time: one belonging to this world, which has a beginning and end (*ḥīn*), and the other - to the world-to-come, which does not (*dahr*). Although both belong to God, they are mutually influent: from the eternal to the mundane by revelation, divine intervention in events, reward, and retribution, and the reverse by faith, duties, and rituals. The boundaries of "time" were thus extended from the birth and the death of the individual to those of the world, *al-sā'ah*, rendering the former an organic part of the latter. This the Prophet Muḥammad did by several means, the most

important of which was, perhaps, the introduction of the idea of after-life for the individual. It is phrased in legal terms, such as "judgment", "reward" and "punishment", all in reaction to oneís conduct in this world, in Islamic terms. Such conception exerts a most powerful control over the deeds, indeed, thoughts and sentiments of the individual.

The Qurān itself has more than one temporal point of view. Its history is temporal, starting with the first sūrah in 610 A.D., and ending with the last one.[8] As a written text it outlives any individual or memorized poetry. Reciting or reading it is a temporal activity with a beginning and an end, and is available for the present-time believer. But as a representation of eternity in the institution of the preserved tablet, *al-lawḥ al-maḥfūz*, it provides something unprecedented to pagan Arabs: it is both inaccessibly eternal and at the same time, within reach of everyone.

Finally, looking at the Prophet Muḥammad from our particular angle reveals again the double nature of time: on the one hand - a mortal being. On the other hand - a contact to God, and a super natural, thus super-temporal personality, very much unlike his contemporary poets (Arazi, 1989, 96).

Time consists of past, present, and future. The past plays an important role in Islam, its written record being history. Although some historical thinking must have been exercised by Jāhilī Arabs, no systematic historical writing is known to have survived. Donner argues that "earliest Islam ... was decidedly a-historical in its outlook" because for them piety was more important (Donner, 1998, 115, 231). In this it may have continued the previous custom. Still, the introduction of the discipline (in the Qurān and elsewhere) constitutes a revolutionary change to pre-Islamic culture, in the way the past, and hence Time, was perceived. If, on the other hand, pre-Islamic Arabs *did* have written history, its failure to survive Islam is even more telling.

History, or at least its written form, among the Arabs, was introduced by Islam, falling back to biblical events and personalities, particularly Abraham. Ceremonies and rites changed their historical context so as to forge identification with

these personalities, such as the stoning of Satan for his role in the Abrahamic sacrifice of Ishma'el. This new status of history offered later Islam the institution of emulating the Prophet's deeds and sayings in the form of Hadith, in a much more demanding manner than the mere previous holding of given people as symbols for given values, e,g,. Samaw'al for loyalty.

Islam not only introduced historical writings to the Arab world, it charged it with its very salient religious-didactic significance (Lewis, 1975, 32). Although the Augustinian concept of "sacred history" is practically out of context in Islam, human, and particularly Islamic history, plays a decisive religious role in connecting human time to the divine one (Lewis, 1975, 24-5). It is the day of judgment, towards which it aims, its principle being to show the place and intentions of God.[9]

The Islamic attitude towards the future is most characterized by the *istithnā'*: humans are prohibited in the Qurān (18:23-24) to make any statement, perhaps with the exception of a threat, about the future without adding the expression "If God wills" (*in shā' Allāh*). This is so important that even the Prophet (Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* for the above sūrah) and King Solomon were punished for neglecting to express it (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* to the above sūrah). This attitude bears some resemblance to the celebrated Jāhilī fatalism, except that although the future remains in both cultures decreed, in Islam it is the realm of God, rather than of Fate.

Taking risks, very common in Jāhilī games of hazard, is a statement about the future. At the basis of this kind of games is the hope (*Ṭūl al-amal*) for winning, another important, blameworthy attitude towards the future, because it might be perceived as intervention in God's decisions or testing Him. The Qurān strictly forbade this procedure (Quān 2: 219), sending a message to people that they cannot challenge God to act for them.

However, the passage from the Jāhilīyah could not have been an "all or nothing" cut. It rarely is. Some positive institutions were retained by Islam. The very fundamental view of time, as an institution that is influenced by the events that occur in it, has been retained from the Jāhilīyah, albeit with some variations. Time

is not an objective matrix, indifferent to events: Months (sometimes other than the Jāhilī ones) are "sacred", days assume character because of events that took place in them, and special hours hold a specific importance. Much later there will come definitions of time in the more objective fashion (Iṣfahānī, 1332, I, 143, 1). The same also applies to ethics, e.g., the attitude towards old age, as exemplified in the Ḥadīth (Bukhārī, Bāb Ikrām al-Kabīr), or the importance of genealogy. In some cases the efforts to change the perception did not succeed, and the ancient one persisted into Islam, as was the case of the basic negative attitude towards time expressed by Muslims (cf. Goodman, 1992: 3): It is still considered evil, unfair, and dangerous (e.g. Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, 'Iqd, ii, 1871, 13), a mistrusted enemy (Taimūr, 1996, 112) to be fought and overpowered by good deeds and ṣabr (Hasnaoui, 1977, 53).

In conclusion, perception, and institutions of time are among the most basic elements of culture. Therefore, any substantive change, be it political, religious, or otherwise ideological, must tend to it as a means to power. Judging by the *traditional* Islamic sources, Islam from its very beginning, was aware of the importance of the concept of Time, and acted to control it. This it did by both revolutionary steps (e.g., introduction of the concept of eternity), as well as evolutionary ones (e.g., maintaining the institution of the sacred months, but giving it a different contents).

Notes:

1 The proximity between space and time is apparent in Arabic, where these two meanings are sometimes expressed by one and the same word, e.g., bu'd = sā'ah: *Lisān al-'Arab*, 8, 169.

2 The problematics with the sources is well-known. As my interest lies not with the historical facts, but with their perceptions, I will not go into the question.

3 For a fuller list, see Iṣfahānī, 1332, I, 136, 12.

4 The hour as 1/24 of the day and night is believed to have originated already in ancient Egypt. "Hour" in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

5 The political aspect of time is manifested, even today, in this issue of pronouncing the beginning of the month. See Hjärpe, 1997, 120. No parallel name was used about the moon.

6 "They [the unbelievers] say 'there is nothing in our life but this world. We die and we live and only time destroys us.' Of this they have no knowledge; they only guess."

7 By contrast, see Hawting, 1999, 54 for the possibility that Muḥammad's Jāhilī opponents had "some concepts of monotheism (God as a creator ... perhaps the last judgment ...)."

8 According to some sources - sūrat al-Barā'ah.

9 Falaturi, 1979, 66. ibid., 67: "The Koran's way of viewing past event is independent of time and history, but fully accords with Mohammad's central convictions."

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NEWS OF MEM

MEMBER News

Fernando Branco Correia (University of Evora) recently published a translation of parts I and II of Albert Hourani's *A History of the Arab Peoples*, 1st portuguese edition (Lisbon, 2004) and "Passsado e Presente das relaies entre Portugal e o Mundo arabe," *Latitudes - Cahiers Lusophones*, (Paris, 2003).

Nadia el-Cheikh (American University in Beirut) published *Byzantium Viewed by the Arabs* (Cambridge, 2004); "Mourning and the Role of the Na'iha," in *Identidades Marginales*, ed. Cristina de la Puente (Madrid, 2003): 395-412 and "In Search of the Ideal Spouse," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45 (2002): 179-196.

Ellen Kenney recently published her doctoral dissertation *Power and Patronage in Mamluk Syria: The Architecture and Urban Works of Tankiz al-Nasiri, 1312-1340* (New York University, 2004).

Hatim Mahamid (Tel Aviv University) published *Developments in Administration and Rule in Fatimid Egypt*, in Arabic (al-Ram/al-Quds, 2001).

Julie Scott Meisami retired from her post as University Lecturer in Persian at Oxford University in 2002. She was an Agha Khan Fellow in Islamic Art and Architecture at the Sackler Museum, Harvard University, from October 2002-June 2003 and will be an Affiliate through June 2005. She published *Structure and Meaning in Medieval Arabic and Persian Poetry: Orient Pearls* (London: Routledge Curzon, 2003) and "Eleventh-Century Women: Evidence from Bayhaqi's History," in *Women in Iran from the Rise of Islam to 1800*, ed. Guity Nashat and Lois Beck (Chicago, 2003).

Josef W. Meri (Institute of Ismaili Studies, London) published *A Lonely Wayfarer's Guide to Pilgrimage: 'Alī ibn Abī Bakr al-Harawī's Kitāb al-ishārāt ilā ma'rifat al-ziyārāt* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2004). He is authoring a book on "Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in Islam" for Edinburgh University Press's New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys series and is continuing work on a monograph on sacred spaces and landscapes in medieval Islam. He has just published an article on "Ritual and the Qur'ān" for the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān* (vol. 4).

Alastair Northridge (Université Paris) recently completed *The Historical Topography of Samarra, British Academy Monographs in Archaeology* (Oxford University Press) which will be published in summer 2004. The *Archaeological Atlas of Samarra, British Academy Monographs in Archaeology* (Oxford University Press) that he co-edited with Derek Kennet, will be published in 2005.

Evangelos Venetis (University of Edinburgh) published "The Zoroastrian Priests and the Foreign Affairs of Sasanian Iran and the Later Roman Empire," *Nāme-ye Irān-e Bāstān / International Journal of Ancient Iranian Studies* 3 (2003): 47-78.

ANNUAL MEETINGS

Organization	When and Where	Information	Telephone/Fax/Email/Web
Middle East Studies Association (2005 Meeting)	Nov. 19-22, 2005 Washington, DC [Abstract Deadline: Feb. 15, 2005]	MESA Secretariat University of Arizona 1232 N. Cherry Ave. Tucson, AZ 85721	(520)-621-5850 mesa@ccit.arizona.edu www.mesa.arizona.edu
Middle East Studies Association (2006 Meeting)	Nov. 17-20, 2006 Boston, MA [Abstract Deadline: Feb.15, 2005]	see preceding	see preceding
American Oriental Society (2005 Meeting)	Mar. 18-21, 2005 Philadelphia, PA	American Oriental Society Hatcher Graduate Library University of Michigan Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1205	(734)-764-7555 www.umich.edu/~aos
American Oriental Society (2006 Meeting)	Mar. 17-20, 2006 Seattle, WA	see preceding	see preceding
American Historical Association (2005 Meeting)	Jan. 6-9, 2005 Seattle, WA [Paper Deadline: Past]	American Historical Assn. 400 A Street, S. E. Washington, DC 20003	(202)-544-2422 www.historians.org
American Historical Association (2006 Meeting)	Jan. 5-8, 2006 Philadelphia, PA [Paper Deadline: Feb. 15, 2005]	see preceding	see preceding
The Medieval Institute (2005 Meeting)	May 5-8, 2005 Kalamazoo, MI [Abstract Deadline: Past]	The Medieval Institute Western Michigan Univ. 1903 W. Michigan Avenue Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5432	Tel.: (269)-387-8745 Fax: (269)-387-8750 mdvl_congres@wmich.edu www.wmich.edu/medieval
Seminar for Arabian Studies (2005 Meeting)	July 21-23, 2005 London, UK	Seminar for Arabian Studies c/o Venetia Porter Dept. of Oriental Antiquities The British Museum Gt. Russell Street London WC1B 3DG, UK	Tel.: 44-207-323-8843 Fax: 44-207-323-8561 seminararab@hotmail.com www.arabianseminar.org.uk

ANNUAL MEETINGS

Organization	When and Where	Information	Telephone/Fax/Email/Web
College Art Association (2005 Meeting)	Feb. 16-19, 2005 Atlanta, GA [Proposal Deadline: Past]	Suzanne Schanzer 275 Seventh Ave. New York, NY 10001	(212)-691-1051 ext13 www.collegeart.org
International Medieval Congress (2005 Meeting) "Youth and Age"	July 11-14, 2005 Leeds, UK [Abstract Deadline: Past]	M. O'Doherty/J. Opmeer IMC, Parkinson 1.03 University of Leeds Leeds LS2 9JT, UK	Tel.: +44 (113) 343-3614 Fax: +44 (113) 343-3616 imc@leeds.ac.uk www.leeds.ac.uk/imi/imc/imc.htm
Dumbarton Oaks Conference (2005 Meeting) "Urban and Rural Settlement in Anatolia and the Levant, 500-1000 AD: New Evidence from Archaeology"	April 22-24, 2005 Washington, DC [Paper: Invitation only]	Dumbarton Oaks 1703 32nd St., N. W. Washington, DC 20007	(202)-339-6940 www.doaks.org
ARAM International Conference (2005 Meeting) "Apamaea"	July 5-7, 2005 Oxford, UK	ARAM The Oriental Institute Oxford University Pusey Lane Oxford OX1 2LE, UK	Tel.: 44-1865-514041 Fax: 44-1865-516824 aram@ermine.ox.ac.uk users.ox.ac.uk/~aram
ARAM International Conference (2006 Meeting) "The Mandaeans"	July 3-5, 2006 Oxford, UK	see preceding	see preceding
American Academy of Religion (2005 Meeting)	Nov. 19-22, 2005 Philadelphia, PA [Abstract Deadline: Mar. 2005]	American Academy of Religion 1703 Clifton Rd., Suite G-5 Atlanta, GA 30329-4019	(404)-727-7920 aar@emory.edu www.aarweb.org/annualmeet
American Academy of Religion (2006 Meeting)	Nov. 18-21, 2006 Washington, DC [Abstract Deadline: Mar. 2006]	see preceding	see preceding

REVIEWS • OF • BOOKS
FROM • THE • MIDDLE • EAST

REVIEW POLICY

Members of MEM are invited to submit reviews of recent books in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, or other Middle Eastern languages that they have read and that deal with subjects of interest to MEM's membership. In exceptional cases, reviews of books in English or other European languages will be printed, but the main focus will be books in Middle Eastern languages, because generally these are not reviewed in Western journals. *Al-'Usur al-Wusta* relies on the voluntary submission of reviews because review copies of books in Middle Eastern languages are not usually made available.

Reviews should be brief, 250 words or, if possible, fewer. A short note is sufficient in many cases, as it serves the main purpose of bringing a worthwhile work of scholarship to the attention of MEM members who may be interested in the subject it treats. Be sure to include full bibliographical information: full name of author, full title, place and date of publication, publisher, and number of pages. Send reviews directly to the editor.

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al-Zar'ī, 'Abd al-Raḥmān 'Abd Allāh, *Rijāl al-shī'ah fī al-mīzān* [Shi'ite Transmitters in the Balance], 2nd ed. (London: Mu'assasat Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Khayriyyah/Saladin Society, 1998), 172p.

This book is an elaborate, dense and highly polemical attack on Shi'ism, where sloppy and confusing referencing and frequent use of faulty logic further aggravate the author's obtuse style.

al-Zar'ī does not (as far as it is possible to tell) invent accounts. Many of the accounts that he picks from the Shī'ī sources and uses to reject the claims of the Shī'ī scholars are indeed there, but it is the use that he sometimes makes of these accounts that is troubling as they are often made through the use of faulty logic to have more of an evidentiary value than they actually do. Despite few convincing points that he makes (e.g., proving the existence of many reliable Shī'ī accounts that recognize the sunna of feet washing instead of wiping as part of the ablution, against later Shī'ī claims to the contrary), the bulk of his book is highly unconvincing.

The book is made out of several parts, but the largest section of it deals with the Shī'ī [science of] "impugning and confirming"(pp. 17-146). This section is also the most problematic part since the arguments used in refuting the transmitters' reliability are often poor and the logic applied in the process of refutation is sometimes gravely unsound.

Moreover, al-Zar'ī demonstrates other weaknesses in his treatment: he himself accepts as reliable many accounts that seem highly unreliable because they conveniently support his case, or interprets such dubious accounts in a way that seems to support his cause. In doing so, he is guilty of many of the defects he himself criticizes in some of the Shī'ī sources. This selectiveness and skewed logic is epitomized (on p. 126) in the entry on one of the Shī'ī transmitters, Ḥamza b. 'Ammār al-Zubayrī. al-Zar'ī uses as evidence to discredit this transmitter an account related by al-Khashshī, whom he had already maligned and rejected and the content of the account which states that Quraysh had altered the Qur'ān and erased the name of Ḥamza b. 'Ammār al-Zubayrī from the list of those who were damned in it alongside Abū Jahl. Thus, al-Zar'ī used a source that he had claimed to be unreliable referring to an act (the *taḥrīf* of the Qur'ān) the occurrence of which he himself had repeatedly denied as evidence for his rejection of this transmitter.

This book is interesting only in as far as it gives us a glimpse at modern polemics and its use in the Islamic context. Throughout the book al-Zar'ī is clearly responding to other Shī'ī scholars, mainly to two modern scholars whom he often mentions specifically by name and against whom he makes many of his arguments ('Abd al-Ḥusayn Sharaf al-Mūsawī and Hāshim Ma'rūf al-Ḥusaynī). The nature of this defensive tract is therefore interesting by itself, but this book remains a thorough exercise in flawed reasoning fuelled by a vehement and intolerant religious zeal.

- Maya Yazigi

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Pages 27-30, Figs. 1-4: Map, diagrams and photograph by the author.

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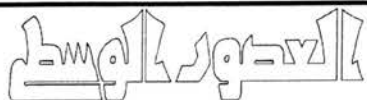
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