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CONTENTS

RELIGIOUS POETRY IN EARLY ISLAM

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The religious element is almost completely absent from what remains of pagan Arab poetry; many more *Reste arabischen Heidentums* were gathered from the works of philologists and antiquarians than from poetic relics. The old theory that Islam has to a great extent suppressed or modified and islamized the references to idolatrous beliefs and cults by poets of the Jāhiliyya is now reduced to this: there may certainly have been occasional expurgations, but the essential fact is that beliefs and cults actually had a small place in the conventional poetry of the desert.[1] Irrespective of the degree of authenticity we may attribute to the material that has reached us, we know its subject matter very well; the divisions and classifications it has received from the poetic and rhetoric theories of Islamic time leave no place for religious *Stimmung* or for a literary form corresponding to it. Exceptions like the poetry that bears the name of Umayya ibn Abī 's-Ṣalt or is attributed to the various *ḥanīf* are—for this reason alone—extremely suspect. And finally it is clear that when Muhammad had to take a polemic position against pagan poets and state the difference between himself and his action on one hand, and their activities on the other, he did not do so because they were competing with him in the treatment of kindred subjects, setting Allāh's message against the poetic celebration of false idols. His object was to reject an alleged analogy of inspiration (suggestion by the jinn and other supernatural forces) and to set in opposition the deep religious and ethical earnestness of his word to secular poetry of a vapid, boastful, and licentious nature.[2] Yet in spite of this clear polemic distinction by the Prophet himself, the problem of relations between the Koran and poetry has continued to occupy men's spirit in ancient and modern times, within Islam and outside it.

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[1] See R. Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe* (3 vols.; Paris, 1952–1966), I, 12, 180.

[2] The decisive passage of the Koran, 26: 224–227 (on which see Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* [Cairo, 1321/1903ff.], XIX, 78–80) has been analyzed by I. Shahid, in *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton Gibb* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 563–580; his interpretations diverge from the current ones but do not touch the substance of the condemnation of pagan poets.

Leaving aside linguistic and philological aspects, the inimitable Book and the national poetic heritage of Arabia have actually been confronted from the point of view of both form and content—either to restate and illustrate the *i'jāz* of divine revelation, as compared with the most famous products of human art, or to express some point of harmony, or more frequently some deep diversity of inspiration and treatment. A striking instance of the first case is the critical-literary passage of a theologian, al-Bāqillānī, made accessible by von Grunebaum,[3] and in our own times the position (free, at least in part, from the trammels of the Muslim faith) taken up by Bausani. He sharply contrasts the "cold and refined classicism of pre-Islamic poetry" with the "Romanticism of the Sacred Book," namely, the Prophet's effusive individuality, pouring itself out in images of a gleaming novelty, especially in the oldest revelations, his representation of nature *sub specie divinitatis*. This is actually the novelty of Muhammad's religious personality (a *tafsīr* of ours, which we believe to be justified) as he contemplated and expressed God, man, the universe, altogether differently from the threadbare and partial *topoi* of contemporary poetry.[4] Such an appreciation, apart from a few polemic traits, seems to us acceptable at present, and softens our former allergy to the literary value of the Holy Book: we agree that Muhammad's religious message is sometimes expressed in accents of real poetry, a striking contrast to the conventional nature of the Jāhiliyyūn's and the Mukhaḍramūn's poetic output. My present object, however, is not to develop this point.

Having admitted that obviously, with the Koran and with Islam, a deep religious feeling, unknown to the Jāhiliyya, was born and reached gigantic proportions, I wish to trace its reflection in some poetic expressions belonging to the most early Islamic period. While the Sacred Book remains a unique work, only occasionally the object of sacrilegious imitations, the wellspring of religious feeling it opened up penetrated the life of the first Muslim generation, as well as the later ones, and found an expression not exclusively in action and theory, in *ḥadīth*, in the structures of theology, and in *fiqh*: it appeared also in a poetic form, which had outlived its condemnation by the Koran. In other words, an Arabic religious poetry was born with Islam, presupposing it and nurtured by it. With Sufism it reached its deepest and most admirable incarnation. Here I shall dwell on its beginnings, in the first and the early second centuries of the hijra, to identify and individualize its most important manifestations.

The task of collecting the first immediate poetic echoes of Islam in contemporary poetry, from the Prophet's circle to 'Umar's times, has been excellently performed by 'Omar Farrūkh's well-known thesis in German.[5] Some poets—Ḥassān ibn Thābit, Ka'b ibn Mālik, 'Abdallāh ibn Rawāḥa—were the spokes-

[3] *A Tenth-Century Document of Arabic Literary Theory and Criticism* (Chicago, 1950).

[4] *Il Corano*, trans. A. Bausani (Florence, 1955), p. lxv.

[5] O. Farrukh, *Das Bild des Frühislam in der arabischen Dichtung von der Hiǧra bis zum Tode des Kalifen 'Umar* (Leipzig, 1937).

men of Islam; the Koran, in a famous passage, excepts them from its general condemnation of poetry and justifies their spirited answers to pagan attacks. Of course their poetic "press campaign" echoes Koranic ideas and formulas.[6] But they do not stand alone: a whole band of *ṣaḥāba* and *tābi'ūn*, even after Muhammad's death, evoked his life and commented upon it, enjoined his teachings and produced metrical variations, more or less servile, on passages of the Sacred Book. Readers of Farrūkh's documentation are struck by the fact that, apart from the group of Medinese "official poets" surrounding the Prophet, most of these authors were not professional bards; the latter usually steered clear of religious themes and paid them only an occasional, conventional homage. The sacred fire burns in the craftsmen of poetry not so high as in pious men of action, the rank and file of the conquests, or in leaders of the primitive *umma*. Religious poetry is meant for special occasions; it is polemic, inciting, sententious; alongside of it traditional art continues unperturbed. Verses with a religious content are rather an outburst, a commentary on action, handled by amateurs, by uncommitted nonprofessionals of poetry.

When the first *fitna* split up the community of the Faithful, the various resulting politicoreligious positions were mirrored in poetry, with a mutual penetration of the two elements, typical of early Islam. But those who search for a specifically religious accent cannot help noticing, throughout the entire Umayyad period, that the orthodox Sunni position does not usually find expression in poetry. Side by side with the usual traditional theme of *madīḥ*, poets (above all Farazdaq and Jarīr) pay homage to the Caliphs, exalt them as chiefs of the orthodox Islamic *umma*, but it is impossible to find here anything more than a conventional acknowledgment offered by courtiers.[7] Orthodoxy opposes heterodox currents not through poetry but by theological and juridical debates, the transmission of *ḥadīth*, and the maxims and homilies of ascetics like Ḥasan al-Baṣri, while political loyalism finds expression in the famous *khuṭba*s of 'Ubaidallāh ibn Ziyād, al-Ḥajjāj, and Khālid al-Qasri. On the religious battlefield, poetry became the weapon of the opposition, a multitude of oppositions against the reigning dynasty and against a theory of the Caliphate which, by hook or by crook, had accepted and legitimated it. Before asceticism on one hand and mysticism on the other had in a later period given substance to a religious poetry that could be also truly orthodox, the Umayyad age knew religious poetry chiefly as the vehicle of dissidence, essentially of Shi'ites and Khārijites. Histories of literature, proceeding by classification, show the same consideration, in two symmetric sections, to the representatives of these opposite positions. Nevertheless a point of view that is not extrinsic

[6] See Muhammad Rahatullah Khan, *Vom Einfluß des Qur'āns auf die arabische Dichtung* (Leipzig, 1938).

[7] See finally on this point V. Strika, "I *madīḥ* di Ǧarīr per Hishām ibn 'Abd al-Malik," in *Annali Istituto Orientale di Napoli*, n.s. 20, XXX/4 (1970), 483–510.

and aims at appreciation of aesthetic and spiritual values must sharply draw the line between the two groups.

Shi'ite or philo-Alid poetry registers famous names like Kuthayyir 'Azza, as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, al-Kumait.[8] But readers of their politicoreligious verses (which are only a part of their opus) at once perceive their inner poetic weakness. Devotion to the Ahl al-bait is expressed in terms disappointingly general and artistically feeble. We do not mean to cast any doubts on the sincere loyalty to the Alid cause of these authors. Out of Kuthayyir's diwan, which is mainly erotic, the famous lines on the Qurashi and Alid "four imams" are generally quoted as a sample of his religious tenets:[9]

> The Imams of Quraish, the legitimate rulers, are four equals:
> 'Ali and three of his sons, the [Prophet's] grandsons well known to all,
> One grandson [Ḥasan] of faith and piety, another [Ḥusain] who disappeared at Kerbela,
> And still another one [Muhammad ibn al-Ḥanafiyya] who shall not die until he leads an army headed by the banners of redress.
> He is hiding and for some time has not been seen among men; he is on Mount Raḍwà, beside him are water and honey.

Here the famous hypotyposis of the hidden Imam, a valuable heresiological document, certainly does not produce the same effect as a piece of vivid poetry.

As to the relics of as-Sayyid al-Ḥimyarī, preserved mainly in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and studied almost a century ago by Barbier de Meynard, it is difficult to detect a gleam of true poetry under their pious legitimistic unction and bitter anti-Sunni controversy.[10] The same may be said about the most famous and most quoted member of the philo-Alid trio, the author of the *Hāshimiyyāt*, al-Kumait. His famous sylloge, published, translated, and interpreted by Horovitz,[11] is important, according to the editor, not for artistic merit but as a literary document expressing the feelings of anti-Umayyad circles in Iraq. Actually, from a literary point of view, what we notice in most of this collection is the combination of archaic language and *tashayyu'*; the impact and the genuine character of socioreligious feeling are nullified by an artificial vocabulary bristling with *gharīb*, by the laborious imagery, and by the irritatingly involved style. Its plan is simple and monotonous: it starts from the traditional lament of the *nasīb*, transferred to the Ahl al-bait, and it continues with the

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[8] On these Shi'ite poets, C. A. Nallino, *La letteratura araba dagli inizi all'epoca della dinastia umayyade* (Rome, 1948), and his *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti* (Rome, 1948), VI, 120–128.

[9] Kuthayyir 'Azza, *Dīwān*, ed. H. Pérès (Algiers, 1930), II, 186–188.

[10] Abū'l Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghānī* (3d ed.; Cairo, 1952 ff.), VII, 229–278; A. C. Barbier de Meynard, in *Journal Asiatique*, 7 ser., IV (1874), 159–284.

[11] Josef Horovitz, *Die Hāšimijjāt des Kumait* (Leiden, 1904). On Kumait in particular, Blachère, *op. cit.*, pp. 518–521, where, strangely enough, "la simplicité de la langue' is remarked on.

traditional description of the she-camel which the poet rode on his way to the Prophet's family. It ends with praise for the Ṭālibī martyrs and vituperation of the reigning Umayyads. This last is so elaborate it might almost be called cryptic. The martyrology of *an-nafar al-bīḍ*, the snow-white Alid troop whose members fell one after the other, victims of the usurpers, does not single out any personality with a genuine character of its own; it is confined to a record of their virtues, their sufferings, and above all their descent from 'Alī and from the Prophet. A deeper religious emotion may be gleaned only from some brief fragments (7–11), which come after the long and dull qasidas; in these fragments precious language is renounced and the poet's actual feelings are more frankly expressed. For instance, remorse for not having answered Zaid ibn 'Alī's call to insurrection:

> The Apostle's son called me, and I did not answer his call; oh grief for this my faint heart!
> [I did not move] to avoid death, which nevertheless is destined—is there then a way of escaping death?

This early Shi'i poetry is a pale and feeble thing, but it is genuine; notwithstanding Blachère's excessive skepticism, there is no serious motive to doubt it. Nallino, who trusted tradition much more, and was interested in the documentary value of these fragments rather than in their aesthetic merit, also recognized that this Alid press campaign in poetic form had a meekness, indeed an emasculated limpness, contrasting with the savage violence of the Khārijite poets.[12] In fact we must turn to the latter to find at last the deepest and most manly utterances that politicoreligious passion ever inspired in the ancient Arabs.

Special collections of Khārijite poetry were made during the Abbasid epoch,[13] but only a few fragments have reached us, mostly preserved by the earliest historical sources dealing with the Umayyad period.[14] As far as we may judge from such fragments, more than any other religious poetry theirs was composed for particular occasions and born outside any professional routine; it mirrored directly the passions, enthusiasm, doubts, and remorse of those austere and fanatical "puritans of Islam." Most of these poets were active militants of "direct action," real *khawārij* or rebels, according to the most probable etymology of this term; they bore witness to their faith with their lives. A few

[12] Nallino, *Raccolta di scritti*, p. 128.

[13] To 'Umar ibn Shabba is attributed a *Kitāb ash'ār ash-Shurāt* by Muḥammad an-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel (Leipzig, 1871–1872), p. 113.

[14] About 350 lines have been gathered by me in the study "La poesia ḫārigita nel secolo degli Omayyadi," *Rivista degli studi orientali*, XX (1943), 331–372, and the quotations that follow refer to the numbers of the fragments in that collection where sources and variants are also quoted. Later than my collection is the thorough work by Iḥsān 'Abbās, *Shi'r al-Khawāriǧ* (Beirut, [1963]), who does not know my earlier study.

of them, like 'Imrān ibn Ḥiṭṭān, belong, on the contrary, to the "sleepers" or nonmilitants *(qa'ada)*. The passage from this class to the next is the crucial point of the Khārijite's vocation, a crisis out of which poetic expression flows with the greatest vitality. Often we find fellow believers weeping over their fallen martyrs, but among such voices, born of the immediacy of emotion, impassioned or sad, enthusiastic or depressed, it is difficult to discern individual personalities. One might call this poetry collective, pertaining to a group or to a spiritual caste (although the poets were uncompromising enemies of racialism or naturalistic exclusiveness). It might best be approached by analyzing the themes most frequently echoing in it, the fundamental attitudes expressed within its circle, the forms it took on the lines of the great Arab poetic tradition. Some of these collective qualities may remain rather external, but it seems to me that others reach the core of a spiritual attitude belonging precisely and exclusively to those circumstances and to that age.

I have said that Khāriji poetry was born in the furrow of Arab tradition, just as the political and theological movement reflected by the poems arose in purely Arab surroundings. In any case its poetic expression is purely Arab, and it takes the form of *rithā'* and *fakhr*, colored by typical Khārijite piety. My study is concerned precisely with this religious tone, which escapes traditional rhetoric classifications. The main theme, extremely frequent, is mourning over slain comrades: on the first fruits of martyrdom in the *yaum an-nahr*:

(al-'Aizār ibn al-Akhnas as-Sinbisī)

I complain to God that battle should have destroyed, out of each tribe, the best.
May God quench the thirst of Zaid[15] as long as the sun shines in the East and may He establish their dwelling in the gardens of Paradise. [frag. 1]

(Ḥabīb ibn Khudra)

Had I never come back, O Umm Ṣafwān, had I been left lying among the fallen of Ṣiffīn!
By Allāh, Lord of men, a troop on the river was not afraid, in God's cause, of the decisive, the fatal doom.
I remember among them Zaid and Ibn Ḥātim, a valiant man who on the day of terror strode forth, full of eager energy. [frag. 54]

And those of the days of Silla and Sillabra:

(aṣ-Ṣalatān al-'Abdī)

In Silla and Sillabra lie dead brave and generous men, slain, whose cheeks no longer repose on pillows. [frag. 20]

[15] Zaid ibn Ḥiṣn, referred to here and elsewhere, was one of those killed at Nahrawān.

Then the mourning for individual, more or less famous champions of the Khāriji faith, like the pure and fearless Mirdās ibn Udayya:

('Imrān ibn Ḥiṭṭān)

Weep, my eye, for Mirdās and his death in battle. O Lord of Mirdās, grant the selfsame fate to me!
He has left me in dismay to weep over my loss, in a dwelling once frequented, which has now become deserted.
After you expired, I no longer recognize those I knew before; after you, O Mirdās, men are no longer men.
If you have drunk from a cup whose first round was for the chiefs, and they have enjoyed their draught,
Any man who has not drunk of it yet will soon repeatedly drink of it. [frag. 13]

The chief of the Azāriqa, Nāfi' ibn al-Azraq, fallen at Dūlāb:

(Anonymous)

. . . He died without guile, in his faith, he who used to swoon away when he merely heard [eternal] fire mentioned.
Death is an impending doom, inescapable; the man to whom it does not come at morn will find it knocking at his door at eve. [frag. 17]

Hudba al-Yashkurī, who rebelled under Yazīd II:

(Abū Tha'laba Ayyūb ibn Khawalī)

Out of this lowly earth he took, as provisions for his journey, a cuirass and a helmet, a sharp sword whose blade cannot fail,
And a short-haired palfrey whose back is firm, who swoops down on the enemy like a broad-winged hawk with curved claws. [frag. 44]

and so forth, up to a long elegy by 'Amr ibn al-Ḥuṣain al-Kūfī (frag. 59) on two Khārijite chiefs of Arabia: 'Abdallāh ibn Yaḥyà (Ṭālib al-Ḥaqq) and Abū Ḥamza.

But blood calls for blood, wails over the dead are mingled with songs of revenge and warlike vaunts: Ibn Muljam's poisoned sword has avenged on the Caliph 'Ali the slain of Nahrawān and he brings to his bride Qaṭāmi the nuptial gift she had asked for:

(Ibn Abī Mayyās)

I have never seen a marriage gift, brought by a generous man, Arab or barbarian, like the one Qaṭāmi has had:
Three thousand coins, a servant and a slave girl, and the blow aimed at 'Alī with a sharp sword.

No dowry, however precious, is of greater price than 'Alī's blood, no assault but falls short of Ibn Muljam's attack. [frag. 3]

From the partisan warfare waged by the Azāriqa in Khūzistān rings out the *fakhr* poetry of Yazīd ibn Ḥabnā':

Cease to blame me, life is not forever; do not hasten to reproach me, Umm 'Āṣim;
Do not scold me for the gift [I have not brought you], gifts are only given out of the overflow of the booty.
But he whose day is battle and whose night is sleepless [spent in prayer] can bring no gifts.
He seeks during the day a reward from God, dealing with his spear blows opening wounds larger than the lips of 'Anbar ibn Sālim;
I spend my night clothed in a strong cuirass, my helmet and my sword laid on my breast.
I swear by the God of those who stop at 'Arafa at eve, a blameless oath:
The enemy people I have met at Sābūr have prevented me from thinking about the stirrups of the beasts of burden [to be brought to you as a gift]. [frag. 21]

And here is Umm Ḥakīm, the Khārijite virago, who flashes for an instant across history and is gone, hurling three *rajaz* full of the savage spirit of the Jāhiliyya:

I bear the weight of a head I am tired of carrying,
I have had enough of oiling and washing it.
Is there not a brave man who will relieve me of such a burden? [frag. 22]

A few lines have survived of a *nasīb* for this Umm Ḥakīm which speaks of death, no longer of love; they are attributed without much certainty to Qaṭarī ibn al-Fujā'a (frag. 23).[16] The scanty relics of this famous Azraqi chief include the essential themes of this stern and warlike poetry, not unworthy of the ancient pre-Islamic *ayyām*:

You who wish to contend with me in a duel, approach that I may hand you the poisoned beverage of death;
There is no shame in passing one another the cup which slays those who put their lips to it; pour it out for me then, and drink it yourself. [frag. 25]

How many times have I sheltered my colt from the sun in the shade of a banner, while brave men were fighting, plying their swords:

[16] About him see G. Levi Della Vida in *EI*[1], II, 866–867, and see my note in *RSO*, p. 335n.

How many days of recreation for those that lead comfortable lives, while my recreation was the fury of battle's flaming fire!
I stood firm on a well-exposed place, while war rejected her veil, and the waves of death flowed equal, without end!
Through how many torrid noonday hours did I plough the desert at the serried trot of the raiders' horses;
They safely crossed the terrible ravines, like lions guided by other lions!
Even if I must die in my bed, I surely will not die affrighted by thoughts of warfare, a dismay which is the last resort of the weak.
I will not say that I have never poured death into the cup of its drinker, when fatal doom descended, like spears who reach out to slake their thirst in blood. [frag. 24]

But this is not joy in war for war's sake, the mere instinct of coming to blows. Even in the celebrated fragment 27, which does not directly refer to the cause of the fight, contempt for death is colored by a manly *amor fati*, which reveals in the warrior a moral conscience, an ideal:

I say to my soul, which rises in dismay to face the braves: "Ho you! Have no fear,
If you begged to survive for a single day beyond the term which has been fixed for you, it would not be granted you.
Courage then, have courage on the field over which death hovers. Eternity cannot be obtained,
Nor is long life like a robe of honor, which a weak coward can fold up [for safekeeping].
The road to death is the goal of every living being, and its call is uttered for the people of the earth.
He who is not ravished in the flower of his years reaches old age tired and dejected, and fate hands him over to his end.
There is no longer any good in life for a man who is preserved as a useless wreck. [frag. 27]

Qaṭarī's ideal is the militant *shārī* who has sold his life to God and drags in his wake, on the road to war and martyrdom, frightened fainthearted men, clinging to the goods of this world. The pained and disdainful appeal that follows is addressed to two of those *qa'ada* who share the poet's ideas, but continue to waver, before taking an active part in the fight:

To one Abū Khālid al-Qannānī:

Get up, Abū Khālid, you cannot live forever! God has given no excuse to those that draw back from the struggle.
Can you maintain that the Khāriji is on the right path, and then halt among the thieves and unbelievers? [frag. 29]

To Sumaira ibn al-Ja'd:

What a difference between Ibn Ja'd and ourselves! While we stride in our double-textured cuirass
Fighting al-Muhallab's horsemen, each of us facing the blows of sharp swords,
He goes in search of truth to his amīr [al-Ḥajjāj] who does not command piety toward his God.
Abū Ja'd, where is [your] religious science, your reason and your wisdom, where is the heritage of your fathers, men of a generous temper?
Do you not see that death descends inexorable, that those who are in their graves will fatally be raised?
They will come back to life, naked and barefoot, while their Lord is giving rewards; some will gain and some will be the losers.
What you have received is not lasting, the life of this world is brief as the flight of a bird that alights on the ground.
Make amends, Abū Ja'd, do not shut your eyes in a darkness that blinds every eye,
Repent, a repentance that may give you martyrdom: you are a sinner, not an unbeliever;
Come to us: you will get in holy war a booty that will give you a profitable sale and no loss,
This is the supreme goal, the desired reward, while every merchant obtains his riches in this world. [frag. 30]

In contrast with the lukewarm and cowardly men to whom these appeals are addressed, we see thirst for martyrdom burning wildly in most of the Khārijites; from recollection of the fallen they draw an incitement to new deeds of valor. The memory of those who fell at Nahrawān, like 'Abdallāh ibn Wahb ar-Rāsibī and Zaid ibn Ḥiṣn, urged Abū Bilāl Mirdās at-Tamīmī to revolt:

After the death of Ibn Wahb, the pure and pious one, after the men who have faced death in those battles,
Can I desire to survive, can I hope for bodily health, after they have slain Zaid ibn Ḥiṣn and Mālik?
Lord, purify my intent and my counsel and give me piety, that I may meet those martyrs again. [frag. 6]

Abū Bilāl's death, in its turn, wrung from the qā'id 'Imrān ibn Ḥiṭṭān a similar longing:

Abū Bilāl caused me to hate life still more, and open revolt became dearer to me;
After him 'Urwa[17] has done the same—may 'Urwa, the virtuous and brave, be blest!

[17] Abū Bilāl's brother, also fallen in the Khārijite cause.

I am afraid to die in my bed, I hope for a violent death, under the points of spears.

Even if I were certain that my end will resemble Abū Bilāl's, I do not care;

There may be some who take thought of this world, as for me I hate it, by Allāh, Lord of the Ka'ba! [frag. 12]

aṭ-Ṭirimmāḥ's often quoted verses, imbued with the same feelings, remind us of a famous lyric of Petőfi's ("One thought torments me"):

Lord, if the hour of my death has come, may I not die on a stretcher draped with green,

May my grave be in the crop of a vulture dwelling in the air of heaven, among birds of prey ready to pounce;

May I fall a martyr, prostrated amidst a troop of the fallen on a terrible battlefield.

Knights of the Banū Shaibān, bound together by the ties of God's fear, come down into the field when the armies clash;

Leaving the world, they have left all their troubles behind and have gone to the place promised by the Holy Book. [frag. 52]

Even the outcry of obscure little rebels, whose sacrifice the chronicles recall in but a few lines, has reached us (frags. 15–16, by two rebels of the Banū Rāsib):

I will become a Khāriji, I wish for no comrade except God and a sharp sword like a *mikhrāq*.[18] [frag. 15]

. . . I will follow my brethren and drink blood from the same cup, clasping in my fist a two-edged Indian sword, whose blade has been whetted. [frag. 16]

This Khāriji poetry as a whole is centered on the praise and the joyful contemplation of martyrdom, on cursing a wicked world, and on scorning death. It rarely finds repose in a descriptive or narrative tone. When it does so, most of its originality and spiritual inwardness is lost; it falls back on the most commonplace type of current contemporary verse. Such descriptive passages interest us most when they portray the Khārijites themselves, in their harsh life of warfare and prayer:

('Īsà ibn Fātik al-Khaṭṭī)

At nightfall they are submerged [in prayer], and when darkness is dispersed [at dawn] they are still prostrated, praying;

[18] A wooden sword, like a child's plaything; poets, beginning with 'Amr ibn Kulthūm (*Mu'allaqa*, ed. Sir Ch. J. Lyall [Calcutta, 1894], v. 37) often compared to it, in an inverted comparison, a true sword.

Fear of God has put their sleep to flight, their nights are spent in vigils, while those who live a tranquil worldly life lie asleep. [frag. 9]

(at-Tirimmāḥ)

Noble Shurāt! When men's necks bend in slumber, they keep awake,
Now and then repeatedly sobbing, and at times, when their sobs overwhelm them, they break into a passion of weeping;
Their hearts, through the night hours, throb in fear of God; their heaving bosoms seem almost about to break. [frag. 50]

(Sumaira ibn al-Ja'd)

... in the daytime they are battling lions of the woods,
But at nightfall they keep vigil, standing up in prayer, like sobbing mourners. [frag. 31]

('Amr ibn al-Ḥusain al-Kūfī)

... Sighing, as if they carried in their entrails a fire lit by the women who gather firewood.
When you meet them, you see one of them bent, one prostrated in humble prayer, another sobbing,
Reciting verses of the Koran, of awful menace, which cause his tears to flow, which he sheds as a milker makes milk gush out. [frag. 58]

... silent in their pious meetings, composed and grave at the words of their preacher.
You hear only their sobs, out of trembling hearts, at the moment of prayer;
They utter sighs, seized by the fear of God, as if the embers of a burning log were passing over their ribs.
You find them only as people that have returned from the Assembly of Resurrection, such is their contrition.
They seem to waste away, consumed by some malady, or to have been touched by the eye of witchcraft;
Their night is not a night in which the veil of sleep envelops them in unconsciousness,
Except by stealth, at intervals, in fear of divine punishment. [frag. 59]

I do not think these words are rhetorical ornaments; such must actually have been the appearance of a Khārijite *dhikr* in the first and second centuries of the hijra.

To conclude, this poetry seems to me to be the most genuinely religious of early Islam. Differing from the learned *Hāshimiyyāt*, which cannot be understood without the help of lexicons and commentaries, the poems of the Shurāt are almost consistently a crystal-clear, direct expression of an ideology, of a

passion, that rejects all artifice. Ṭirimmāḥ, a difficult and archaistic poet, is a case in point: in the few verses of a Khārijite *Stimmung* we possess of him, he abandons all his *gharīb* and speaks out frankly and simply, like his comrades in the faith. His tone of passionate sincerity has impressed even so tireless a detector of *pastiches* in ancient poetry as Blachère,[19] just as the ancient philologists had been impressed by the heroic pathos breathing out of Qaṭarī's relics.[20] They are but fragments, flashes of a spiritual adventure which, once it had been defeated on the political level, did not gain a lasting place for its lyrical expression among later products of the artificious Arabic literary poetry. Rhetorical and literary treatises of a later age ignore this poetry and consider it alien to their system;[21] only in our day have their meager remains been gathered out of the pages of historians and of *adab* literature. Chronologically most of them belong to the Umayyad period, whose Caliphs the Shurāt hated, taking up arms to undermine their rule. When this task had been successfully carried out, not by them but through others, the days of militant Khārijism were also counted[22] and their poetry died with them.

Under the first Abbasids, Abu 'l-'Atāhiya was destined at last to give a canonical form to an Arab poetry of *zuhd*—pious asceticism and renunciation—which escaped all suspicion of heterodoxy, but at the same time diluted the specifically Muslim message into a general monotheistic gnomic. The features we believe to have noticed during the Umayyad period in the most genuine religious poetry, as the expression of a heterodox minority, appeared again in the succeeding centuries with the poets of *zandaqa* (Ṣāliḥ ibn 'Abd al-Quddūs, Ḥammād 'Ajrad, partly also Bashshār) and later with the embittered blind poet of Ma'arra. But such developments are outside the area of early Islam.

[19] *Op. cit.*, III, 533: "si nous possédions les poèmes composés à l'époque de l'activité militante, aṭ-Ṭirimmāḥ s'offrirait à nous sous un éclairage fort différent, qui ferait de lui un des premiers grands lyriques de la poésie arabe."

[20] Abū 'Ubaida, in Abū 'Alī al-Qālī (Būlāq, 1329/1911), I, 266; Ibn Khallikān, *Wafayāt al-a'yān*, ed. F. W. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1835–43), n. 555.

[21] Cf. W. Heinrichs, *Arabische Dichtung und griechische Poetik* (Beirut, 1969), pp. 15–16.

[22] For the last phase of Khārijite activism, see L. Veccia Vaglieri, "Le vicende del kharigismo in epoca abbaside," in *RSO*, XXIV (1949), 31–44.