South Arabian Messiahs:

A Motif in Legends, History, and Eschatology in the Early Islamic Period (from ca. 650 to ca. 850)

By

János Galamb

Submitted to
Central European University
Department of History

In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Supervisor: Professor Aziz Al-Azmeh

Second Reader: Professor Matthias Riedl

Budapest, Hungary

2019

Copyright Notice

CEU eTD Collection

Abstract

This thesis aims to contribute to the study of early Islamic eschatology through the analysis of the figure of a future ruler of Yemenite origin. The study of Islamic eschatology gained momentum in the last three decades of the 20th century that was brought about by a shift of scholars' attention to non-canonical sources. During this upsurge of scholarly works about Islamic eschatology, a particular figure, an expected ruler of Yemenite lineage, received less attention than some other eschatological figures, such as the ubiquitous *Mahdī* and *Sufyānī*. However, this is one of the few eschatological figures who appears in some of most central texts of Sunni Islam. The vision of a future Yemenite ruler also appears in wide array of literary, historical, encyclopaedic, and religious works. However, scholars may have not exploited this plurality to its fullest potential and have rarely compared the multiplicity of forms in which predictions about this figure were represented—in roughly the same period. This characteristic of the earlier scholarship necessitated a synthetic approach to the subject; hence I combine the examination of various original sources with the findings of secondary literature on them.

Through this synthetic approach, I aim to present a coherent picture about the variations and modalities by which expectations about this figure were formulated. I examine three types of sources in this work. I discuss historico-legendary books on Ancient South Arabia, historical and encyclopaedic texts mentioning Umayyad age rebels, and the historico-mantic segments of collections containing Islamic eschatological lore. My general aim is to uncover the variety readings of this figure and the notions associated with him. These readings and associated notions do not always warrant the understanding of this figure as messianic. Instead, two chief tasks were expected to be executed by this figure. First, he was expected to return the hegemony the pre-Islamic South Arabians over the world—a widespread notion among Muslims and Arabs in the first Islamic centuries. Second, he was also a token of the eventual end of the rule of the Qurayš—the tribe of the Prophet Muḥammmad.

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

This thesis is an attempt to unfurl the profusion of an idea informing expectations of the future between the 7th and 9th centuries in the central territories of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. According to this idea, a person of Yemeni ancestry—fulfilling earlier mantic statements—would rule Arabs and Muslims and, potentially, the entire world. This expectation came to be expressed in various forms and modalities of early Arabic literary, historical, and religious traditions, but ultimately gained the greatest currency as part of the eschatological lore of Islam. This expectation reflected the political and cultural circumstances of the Umayyad and early Abbasid ages, as a period when the Yemenite genealogy of a future ruler was an interesting as well as contentious issue for the political and cultural elites of the Caliphate.

The single most important historical occurrence that made possible the formulation of this idea was the emergence of the Caliphate and the development of its inner politics. The Caliphate took over in the 7th century the vast realms of the Nile-to-Oxus region and was poised to spread even further beyond. These unparalleled conquests were the achievements of a heterogenous amalgam of tribes who not long before had settled various parts of the Arabian Peninsula and the regions bordering it. By the period under examination, most of these tribes came to speak dialects of *Muḍarī* Arabic and came to adopt Islam as their religion. However, deep political and social divisions emerged amongst them. In the course of the seventh century two important macro-confederacies—that is to say, genealogically conceived alliances of smaller, geographically desperate tribal segments—formed. These two groups were the North Arabs and the South Arabs.

On the surface, the formation of these two groups primarily hinged upon the adoption of fictious genealogical forefathers.[1] However, these tribal groups were also solidified by certain signifiers that evoked visions of glorious forefathers and relatives of elevated symbolic positions. North Arabs boasted, among many other exploits, that they were related to the prophet of Islam and his tribe, the Qurayš. The *Yamāniyya,* on the other hand, took the geographical region of Yemen as a shibboleth for expressing their alliance and claimed that they all descended from that area. They did so because they identified with the region where most of the great pre-Islamic civilizations of the Arabian Peninsula flourished.

In this regard, the Late Antique Yemenni Kingdom of Ḥimyar was of special importance. The idea of being related to this kingdom was a source of pride for those who claimed to be members of the South Arab group or the *Yamāniyya*. This polity emerged in the Yemeni Highlands in the late third century and was an important player in regional politics. At the peak of its power, it exerted influence on the inner regions of the Arabian Peninsula through a proxy state administered by the Kinda tribe. The Kingdom's glorious days, however, ended during 6th century. First, the Ethiopian Aksumite Kingdom conquered Yemen in 525 at put an end to the Ḥimyarite Kingdom. Although a local nobleman managed to oust the Ethiopians, with the help of the Persian Sasanian Empire, no significant polity emerged in the region until the Medinese Muslim polity conquered it with relative ease in the 630s.[2] At any rate, the memory of the Ḥimyarite Kingdom endured, and despite its eventual demise it was remembered as the greatest Arabic polity before the emergence of Islam.

This division between the Yemenites and the North Arabs, as well as the *Yamāniyya's* identification with the cherished memory of the old South Arabian Kingdoms were the two

---

[1] Zoltán Szombathy, *The Roots of Arab Genealogy* (Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003), 12ff.
[2] Robert G. Hoyland, *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 49-57.

fundamental steps toward the creation of the *Yamāniyya* in its first meaning: a quasi-ethnic descent-ideology. This descent-ideology created a vocabulary of legitimizing participation in imperial politics for those who adopted it. This was the motivation of the *anṣār*, the Medinese Muslims who were among the first to reach out for this ideological device, as they felt marginalized by the Qurašite aristocracy who came to dominate imperial politics during the early decades of the empire.[3] In Syria, this descent ideology came to be adopted by the various tribes that served as the power basis of the caliph Muʿāwiya, most importantly, the Kalb subsection of the Quḍāʿa confederacy.[4] The influx of tribes from South Arabia to Syria and Iraq further fostered this development. Although in Syria these newcomers were a minority compared to the tribes that already had lived in the region before Islam, their cultural activity was vital for developing this descent ideology, especially in the form where their quasi-ethnic legendary history foregrounded the Kingdom of Ḥimyar.[5]

The *Yamāniyya* in its secondary form became a marker of provincial political groupings from the Second Civil War onwards. The watershed moment was in this regard the Battle of Marǧ Rāhiṭ in 684 where the Kalb supported the Umayyad ʿAbd al-Malik (65/685-86/705) and the North Arabs supported the Medinese caliph, Abd Allah ibn Zubayr (64/683-73/692). The Kalb's victory secured the domination of Syria for the Umayyads, who eventually managed to bring the empire under their rule. In the following decades, the divide between North Arabs and Yemenites became increasingly important in the politics of the Umayyad Empire. Factionalism along such lines was contained in the Syrian metropole but became a staple feature of provincial politics. In the early Marwānid period, this meant that the governors relied on their camp—the local *Yamāniyya* or the North Arabs—for support to uphold their rule. The governors used part

---

[3] Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies,* vol. 1, ed. S. M. Stern, trans. C. R. Barber & S. M. Stern (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1966), 90-95.

[4] Werner Caskel, *Ǧamharat an-nasab: Das genealogische Werk des Hišām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī,* vol. 1. (Leiden: Brill, 1966), 34.

[5] Mikhail Piotrovskii, *Predaniye o khimyorotskom tsare As'ade al-Kamile* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1977), 21. ff.

of the extracted tax revenues to build their own networks of clienthood.[6] These dynamics of clienthood, were reinforced by the descent ideology mentioned above, and created the *Yamāniyyas* in many of the provinces where Arabs settled in larger numbers. It must be stressed, the composition and relations of each provincial, political Yamaniyya showed modular varieties.

Towards the end of the Umayyad era, the discontent of the *Yamāniyya* with the ruling dynasty gradually increased. Furthermore, the *Yamāniyya* also began to develop inclinations towards certain policies that entailed the integration of non-Arabs into imperial politics,[7] as well as of religious groups such as the *Qadariyya*.[8] The growing intensity of factionalism eventually resulted in the Third Civil War and contributed to the fall of the Umayyads. Under Abbasid rule, the rivalry between the North Arabs and the *Yamāniyya* was no longer a factor in imperial politics concerning the allocation of gubernatorial positions and state revenues. In certain regions, such as Egypt and Syria the *Yamāniyya* and the North Arabs continued to be parties of local importance; however, it is only the in Marwānid period where we can speak of *Yamāniyya* as a political entity, that was held together by networks of clienthood, and—eventually—a common set of political goals. In all, we may speak of two tiers of the *Yamāniyya*: an ethnic-cultural grouping, and—only in the Umayyad Age—a marker of political allegiance and orientation. The formation and the memory of these two aspects of the *Yamāniyya* are what gave rise to the various representations of the idea of a future Yemenite ruler that I aim to discuss in this thesis.

---

[6] Patricia Crone, *Slaves on Horses* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). 37-60; idem, "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad period political parties?" *Der Islam* 71., no. 1 (1994): 1-57.

[7] Muhammad A. Shaban, *Islamic History: A New Interpretation,* vol.1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), 124.

[8] G. R. Hawting, *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750* (London and New York: Routledge, 1986), 92-93.

Outline of the thesis

The *Yamāniyya* figured very prominently in the cultural and political life of the early Caliphate and claimed a relationship to the old South Arabian kings. In the light of this constellation, it is not surprising that there emerged a vision according to which in the future, potentially, a Yemenite someday might rule all Muslims. This was formulated with the very tools that were used to create the *Yamāniyya* in the cultural sense: the collection and circulation of legends about Ancient South Arabia. In the first chapter, therefore, I will show how this expectation was formulated within this the collection of these legends. Some of the legends and the poetry in these books predict the coming of a future Yemenite ruler, and I am primarily interested in this chapter is how these predictions about a future are introduced in these texts. With a comparative aim, I will also briefly discuss works written in later periods, in order to show other possibilities in the formulation of this idea, in connection with the legendary material about Ancient South Arabia.

In the second chapter I will discuss the connection of the motif to the activity of the political *Yamāniyya*. In the first half of the 8th century, multiple prominent Yemenite figures found themselves in opposition to the Umayyads and rose up in rebellion. According to multiple para-historical sources, these rebel leaders competed to seize the caliphate for themselves and claimed to be quasi-messianic figures who were coming to fulfil earlier prophecies about a future Yemenite ruler. Considering the contextual problems that these statements implicate, I will not take what they say as granted, and I juxtapose them with other historical sources about these rebellions. In this chapter, I will rely on secondary and primary historical sources, as well as segments from contemporary political poetry in order to reconstruct the goals and motivations of these rebels, as well as their perceptions among some of their contemporaries. In this chapter, I will analyse the political and historical circumstances that made the possible the association of these rulers with the expectations of a future Yemenite ruler.

The third line of investigation is the appearance of the motif of the Yemenite ruler in Islamic eschatological lore. This lore developed through the amalgamation of various eschatological visions, as well as models of future histories, and the future Yemenite ruler was only one of the many expected figures in this corpus. The motif of a future Yemenite ruler made frequent appearances in the collections, in which this historico-mantic and eschatological material is found. It is especially true for the single most important book on the subject, the *Book of Tribulations* by Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād.[9] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād primarily relied on Syrian narrators who also happened to be extraordinarily interested in the figure under discussion, providing a wide variety of oracles and chresmological comments about him. In the third chapter, I aim to discuss the ways the predictions about this figure were formulated as well as the titles and names that referred to him. Finally, I will also discuss what role this figure played in the various historico-mantic narratives and histories of the future.

In all three chapters, my discussion primarily concerns the question of how this figure fit into the forms of literature discussed. For every chapter I will approach this question form a different angle. In the first and third chapter I generally aim to discuss that how this motif is related to the other parts of the text and what this individual element adds to the overall content to the texts. In the second chapter, however, I will attempt to reconstruct the motivations, goals and perceptions related to historical events and inquire about their potential associations and correspondences with the emergence of a future Yemenite ruler. Finally, in the third chapter, I will also tabulate the material according to its variations, as well as construct a taxonomy of the oracles within which this expectation is present.

---

[9] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *Kitāb al-Fitan,* ed. Suhayl Zakkār (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2003). I will refer to the individual predictions according to their numbers in this edition.

Literature Review

The figure of a future Yemenite ruler appears in various segments of Arabic literature, all of which have a different history of scholarship. This figure is only an episodic element in sources, therefore— with a few exception—it has been dealt with only tangentially. Many of these studies frame these predictions as expressions of "messianism." However, if we connect the three spheres under discussion—legendary literature, history, and mantic histories—it becomes clear that messianic characteristics—divine ordainment, redemption, liberating or saving a group of people—are always conditional and in most cases are even absent from the descriptions of this figure. At many points in this thesis, I will show that this figure was not always conceived as positive figure, nor does he have the salvific qualities of a redeemer or deliverer. In contrast, I propose that this figure, in different context, was a shorthand for the expectation and potential legitimization of Yemenite political power.

Although many modern authors have written on sources of ancient Yemeni lore, most scholars have not paid a great deal attention to the predictions about a future Yemenite ruler within these sources. Elise Crosby's recent—and otherwise very well written—treatment of ʿAbīd Ibn Šarya's *History* only discusses these predictions as potential proof of anachronisms and editorial interpolations.[10] Partially relying on books about pre-Islamic Yemen, as well as other encyclopaedic works, C. L. Geddes treats the figure of the Yemenite ruler in a separate study; however, his interpretation is hampered by many unfounded assumptions, such as the assertion that the Yemenites were more prone to adopting messianic beliefs—already a contentious claim—because of the long past of monotheism in Yemen.[11]As I have discussed

---

[10] Elise W. Crosby, *The History, Poetry and Genealogy of the Yemen – The Akbar of Abid b. Sharya al-Jurhumi* (New Jersey: Gorgias, 2007), 53-54.
[11] Charles L. Geddes, "The Messiah in South Arabia," *The Muslim World* 57, no. 4 (1967): 311-320.

above, the majority of the *Yamāniyya* did not descend from Yemen, where, in fact, pre-Islamic monotheistic tendencies seemed to have been confined only to the elites.[12]

The expectations about a future Yemenite ruler in connection to rebellions and political formation has also received a rather meagre treatment. Maribel Fierro established a connection between the colour yellow and certain motifemic elements exclusive to the *Yamāniyya* that were brought into connection in certain primary sources to several rebels of the Umayyad age. Among these is the idea that these rebels acted in order to fulfil earlier expectations and predictions about a future Yemenite ruler who had his own title.[13] Besides Fierro's work the fate of these rebels are usually treated in the general histories of the Umayyad Caliphate. Moreover, on one of these rebels, ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-Ašʿaṯ, a significant contribution was made by Redwan Sayid, who also discusses briefly some of the quasi-messianic perceptions surrounding Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's public persona.[14]

Finally, multiple scholars have noticed the predictions about a future Yemenite ruler in the Islamic historico-mantic literature. The analysis of this type of texts began to proliferate after the discovery of the manuscript of Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād's *Book of Tribulation*. Jordi Aguadé, as part of his analysis of this book, dedicated a few pages to these predictions, where he tabulates the variations on this figure. Madelung, in his study of the oracles from the city of Hims in the *Book of Tribulations*, also touches upon the predictions about his figure.[15] In this study, Madelung described the socio-cultural context of these texts in Hims with great detail. Studies with a broader scope also mention these predictions, such as those of Sayed Arjomand

---

[12] Aziz Al-Azmeh, *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 255.

[13] Maribel Fierro, "al-Aṣfar again," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 22* (1998): 196-209.

[14] Redwan Sayid, *Die Revolte des Ibn Ašʿaṯ und die Koranleser* (Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1977).

[15] Jordi Aguadé, "Messianismus zur Zeit der frühen Abbasiden: Das Kitab al-Fitan des Nuʿaim ibn Hammad," PhD diss., (Universität Tübingen, 1979), 185-206.

or David Cook, but they do not go beyond the tabulation of some of the most important motifs connected to this figure.[16]

Notes on terminology

From the above point follows that I will only use the expressions "messianic" or "messianism" where I see that the presence some of the above-mentioned criterions qualifies a text to be described with these terms. Instead, I refer to this figure as a "future Yemenite ruler" which may at some occasions may lead to clumsy wordings. Another solution would be to employ the referents that are used in the sources themselves. However, I will also try to avoid the usage of appellative terms in connection with texts that do not feature them. Generally, I will use the expression "appellation" or "appellative term" for the referents and conventional periphrases of these figures. I will only use the term "title" where significant amount of parallel texts indicate that an appellation refers to a single figure, or a set of typologically conceived figures with corresponding characteristics and functions.

In the third chapter, I experiment with some further terminological considerations that so far have been unconventional in the relevant scholarship. I avoid the terms "prophecy" and "prophetic" as they point to a social activity that can be expressed through a variety of forms and genres.[17]Furthermore, prophetic speech generally involves some form of communication between three parties: a prophet, a collective and a deity and mostly operates through the patterns of accusation and punishment.[18] These features are by and large absent from the texts analysed here. Instead, I will generally refer to these texts as predictions, or oracles, in case the

---

[16] Said Amir Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classic Period," in *Encyclopaedia of Apocalypticism*, vol. 2, ed. Bernard McGinn (New York: Continuum 2000), 252-253.; David Cook, *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002), 139-140.

[17] Matthew Neujahr, *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East: Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World* (Providence: Brown University, 2012), 104, 105-107.

[18] Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, tr. Hugh Clayton White (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991), 90-92.

knowledge of the future is implied to be of transcendent provenance. I will only use the term "prophetic" when referring something related to the prophets of Islam.

As for the further terminological considerations with regards to the third chapter, I came to refer, certain sections of Islamic eschatological or apocalyptic literature as mantic histories. Mantic history is not a separate genre, but rather a discourse within which the future is elaborated with assumptions and conventions borrowed from historical documents. A key feature of these discourses that they operate via *vaticinia ex eventu*, whereby past events are narrated in the future tense, and predictions are expressed through borrowing certain conventions of history writing.[19] Large sections of Islamic eschatological lore share more affinity with this type of literature than conventional eschatology or apocalypse. In adjective form, I will use the term historico-mantic. Furthermore, I will also use the word "chresmologues" for those who circulated mantic and eschatological material. This term in Ancient Greece referred to a class of persons who themselves did not pronounce oracles, but collected, interpreted, and disseminated them.[20] In the context of our texts, these figures were not a separate class, but their activities seemed to have been strikingly similar. Although I do not aim to propose the chresmologue as an ideal type in the sociology of religion, I hope that this choice of terminology can be developed into a useful heuristic device.

---

[19] Neujahr, *Predicting,* 243-245.
[20] Michael Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 58–65.

1
Ancient South Arabian lore: Visions of a "national" history and the future

1.1. The legends of the *Yamāniyya*

The members of the *Yamāniyya* articulated their togetherness through a variety of cultural means. The fabrication of prophetic sayings about the eminence of the region of Yemen[21] and the creation of genealogies—eventually augmented with an infusion from biblical lore—were among these tools. However, these two outlets of cultural activity were secondary to the elaboration of the legendary and quasi-historical accounts about pre-Islamic South Arabia. The articulation of this lore began in the 7th century and continued to be a point of interest among poets, historians and litterateurs well into the Middle Ages, although later its importance waned and became confined to Yemen itself. The articulation of this subject in literary, historical and encyclopaedic forms varied and developed correspondingly with the wider trends of Arabic literature.

The original accumulation of the extant lore, however, began with the writing of the first monographs on the subject. The creation of these texts was motivated by the formation of the *Yamāniyya*, as discussed in the introduction. However, one other significant factor must be taken into account. The fascination with this subject in Arabic literate culture in the age of the early Caliphate was fuelled by the formation courtly and urban societies. In this context the courtly culture was of elevated importance, and the age of the Umayyad caliphs was one of fervent antiquarianism. The elites of the new empire aimed to lay down the fundamentals of a political and social order that they posited in part as the continuation of the earlier empires of Rome, the Sasanians and—most importantly for our subject—Ḥimyarites, but it marked a new

---

[21] Suliman Bashear, "Yemen in early Islam: An examination of non-tribal traditions," *Arabica 36,* no. 3 (1989), 343-351.

era in human history.[22] The Ḥimyarites were specifically important for the Arab elites of the new empire as they provided a vision of the past, where Arabs already had their share of imperial dominion. Furthermore, artistic representations of history, the content and form of which were without immediate analogues in non-Arab literary traditions of the time, were effective means for the Arab elites of the caliphate to mark their differentiation form non-Arab segments of society. This form of historical literature was cultivated in the courts of multiple Omayyad caliphs, many of whom posteriority recorded as amateurish connoisseurs of historical literature.[23]

It was in this context that this lore came to be represented in various forms. Poets from the late 7th century, for example Ibn al-Mufarriġ or ʿAlqama ibn Ḏī Ǧadan relied on this lore in their odes extolling the majestic history of ancient South Arabia.[24] More importantly, however, the lore was preserved in books that combined prosimetric collections of self-contained stories and reports that in Arabic were called *aḫbār*.[25]The collection of these disparate stories signified the gradual intensification of lettered modes of knowledge production that gradually substituted oral modes of transmission in Arabo-Islamic history writing. The appearance of this earliest extant collection of ancient Yemenite lore, *History, Poetry and Genealogy of Yemen,* attests to this development. This text is attributed to ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, a story-teller and transmitter of poems of miraculously old age. He was a member of the Ǧurhum tribe—another miraculous detail, as this tribe had gone extinct and ʿAbīd ibn Šarya claimed that he was its last representative.[26] He was by profession a story teller and transmitter of stories and poetry, and was invited to the court of Muʿāwiya ibn Abī Sufyān in order to entertain the caliph with history

---

[22] Al-Azmeh, *Emergence,* 510.
[23] Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri,* vol. 1, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 17-18.
[24] Piotrovskii, *Predaniye*, 21-22.
[25] Chase F. Robinson, *Islamic Historiography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 16-17; Frantz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 19, 67-69.
[26] ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *"*Kitāb Aḫbār al-Yaman wa-Ašʿārihā wa-Ansābihā," in *Kitāb at-Tīǧān,* (Hayderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif, 1928), 313.

and poetry about the Yemeni kingdoms of old. On account of the legendary details of his genealogy and life, as well as some anachronisms in the text, his historical existence has been doubted by certain scholars, but ultimately it is likely that he was an historical figure who took part in the elaboration of the text attributed to him.[27] Scribes in the caliph's court wrote down their conversations and the text itself preserves the marks of oral dictation.[28] Similarly, the text titled *Sīrat Daġfal aš-Šaybānī* also contains plenty of South Arabian legendary materials and were said to have been put into writing as dictated to the caliph Hārūn ar-Rašīd.[29] Although conversation with the caliph was a literary convention, these details reflect how pliable oral traditions came to be incorporated in urban and courtly lettered cultures.

The next moment in the historical representation of the ancient South Arabian lore is connected not as much to story-tellers and traditionists but to scholars. They wrote their works with a critical distance, and they also moulded them into a thought-out structure. For example, Wahb ibn Munabbih (d. 114/738), a scholar and historian of Umayyad-age Yemen, wrote a book titled *Book of the Crowned Kings of Ḥimyar (Kitāb al-Mulūk al-Mutawwaġa min Ḥimyar)* which unfortunately has not survived.[30] Some of his writings, however, made their way to another important book written on the same subject by the editor of the famous biography of Muḥammad, 'Abd al-Malik ibn Hišām (d. 218/833). One of his books bears title *The Book of Crowns (Kitāb at-Tīǧān),* which relies largely on Wahb ibn Munabbih's earlier material—especially, but not exclusively, on subjects concerning the creation of the world and the stories

---

[27] Fritz Krenkow was the first who raised suspicions about the existence of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya and claimed that the book's authorship goes to Ibn Ishāq. Fritz Krenkow, "The Two Oldest Books of Arabic Folklore," *Islamic Culture 2* (1928), 235-7. Rosenthal also adopted this position; Frantz Rosenthal, "'ʿUbayd ibn Sharya," *EI².* Nabia Abbott convincingly rebutted Krenkow's claims; Abbott, *Studies,* vol. 1, *10-14.* However, the current text of the *History* has several unmarked editorial interpolations masked as parts of the original text, as well as some anachronisms. The most glaring of these is that at a point ʿAbīd and Muʿāwiya talk about Qutayba ibn Muslim and his conquest of Samarqand that only happened some fifty years later; ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār,* 430. In addition, Crosby pointed out a number of suspicious anachronisms, although she seems to be firm believer in 'Abīd's authorship; Crosby, *History,* 51-61.
[28] Abott, *Studies,* vol. 1, 13-14.
[29] Piotrovskii, *Predaniye*, 29.
[30] Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums,* vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 305-306.

of prophets. However, as the book progresses, Ibn Hišām more and more relies on his own unspecified sources.[31]Despite these authors having greater critical distance to the subject of their works, and operating in a lettered culture, their works continued to draw on similar material.

In this literature, the vision of a future Yemenite ruler emerged along with a specific historical consciousness and a model of history to match. This concept on history has been preserved in several texts composed in the first Islamic centuries that dealt with the history and legends of pre-Islamic South Arabia. As for the content of the historical model, the *History* and the *Book of Crowns* deal with different subjects, but both maintain a similar understanding of the history of the Ḥimyarite kings. The key concept of this understanding of history is dominion (*mulk).* In these texts, this word and its verbal form does not only express the projection of power to a realm or to subjects, but also denotes a primacy among all rulers and peoples and a universal ecumenical dominion. In this sense the *mulk* can be present only at one place at a given time; it cannot be shared, only taken away, and the place and person in which this dominion resides is the primary organizing and periodizing principle for history.[32] It goes without saying that the identification of certain periods in history with the duration of polities that constitute a sequence was an idea of great antiquity in Near Eastern cultures, as testified by the Book of Daniel. Even more importantly, the concept of ecumenical dominion, constant, yet transmigrating in a genealogical fashion, was a staple element in Late Antique conceptions of monarchy that were also applied to the early Caliphate.[33]

In concrete terms, the view on Yemeni history in these books is based on the notion that for a period in the history of the world South Arabians, specifically the kings of Ḥimyar, had not only a glorious and magnificent realm on their own in Arabia, but also led campaigns to the

---

[31] Frantz Rosenthal, "Wahb ibn Munabbih," *EI².*
[32] ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār,* 466, 478.
[33] Al-Azmeh, *Emergence,* 512.

far corners of the world from Africa to China. On their way, they wreaked havoc, defeated countless enemies, as well as looted and enslaved the populace of the conquered lands. In the end, however, these glorious days passed, and the Yemenis turned on each other and became exposed to foreign domination.[34] This poignant nostalgic outlook on history invited the possibility of a national revival. This turn of historical fate was, however, conceived as contingent upon the emergence of a Yemenite military and political leader, as the foundation of this outlook on history was distinctly monarchical and martial.

In most cases, the predictions about the future that entailed this figure come in the form poems. In texts about the ancient Yemeni kings, many poems are put into the mouths of the protagonists. These poems are not intrinsic to the narrative of the stories and they most likely formed separate poetic cycles that were paired with narratives. This practice is parallel with some of the poetic content in the biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad,[35] as well as the entire *aḫbār* literature.[36] The poems in the books of the Ancient South Arabian lore are written in a heroic mode, as the protagonist chiefly extolls his own exploits. Some of these heroic kings, however, continue the enumeration of their deeds with predictions of what happens to their descendants. Despite this formal uniformity, the scenarios of the future, as well as the contexts of the poems are varying in the two books that I will discuss in this chapter. The *History* of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya and the *Book of Crowns* of Ibn Hišām reflect different contexts, within which the Yemenite legendary lore—with its eschatological *coda*—was rendered. For this reason, I

---

[34] This view of history is present not only in the verses, as it will be shown before long, but also in the composition of the *History* and the *Book of Crowns.* In the case of the latter, the book closes with the following sequence of events: the downfall of the Himyarite kingdom, the death of the last king, Ḏū Nuwās, the Ethiopian invasion and the chaos after the revolution of Sayf Ḏū Yazan; Ibn Hišām, *Kitāb at-Tīǧān fī Mulūk Ḥimyar (*Sanʿa: Markaz ad-Dirāsāt wa-l-Abḥāṯ al-Yamaniyya, 1979*)* 317-322. The *History* is more episodic, but it also ends on a sad note as the last cycle is about the infighting and annihilation of two South Arabian tribes, Ṭasm and Ǧadīs; ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār,* 483-488.

[35] James Monroe, "The Poetry of the Sīrah Literature," in: *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, ed. A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and R. G. Smith (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983), 371-372.

[36] Stefan Leder, "The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form in Historical Writing" in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. I: Problems in the Literary Source Material,* ed. Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992), 310.

will treat them separately and discuss them according to the chronological order of their composition.

1.2. The History of ‘Abīd ibn Šarya

The *History* ʿAbīd ibn Šarya gives an account of the legendary history of pre-Islamic Yemen. As mentioned above, the material is organised according to genealogical considerations, as it collects the most important historical events connected to each segment descending from the legendary forefather of the Yemenites, Qaḥṭān. However, as certain descendants of Qaḥṭān were considered more remarkable than others, their activities developed into separate cycles with their own narrative scopes and closures. The book begins with a description of the origin of the Arabs, the Yemenites, and other genealogical units. This is followed by an account of the destruction of the city of ʿĀd and the events preceding the catastrophe. Next is the story of Luqmān and his futile quest for immortality. After discussing several other lineage groups, Abid ibn Šarya turns his attention to the Ḥimyaris whose history takes up the lion's share of the book. Within this section, ʿAbīd ibn Šarya included multiple stories, such as the encounter of Bilqīs and the prophet Sulaymān. The *History* ends with the description of a conflict between the tribes of Ṭasm and Ǧadīs in the region of Yamāma. The original manuscript ends abruptly,[37] which makes it likely that the *History* originally continued to cover the entire history of the Ḥimyarite Kingdom.

In the *History* of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya there are multiple instances of characters finishing a poetic sequence by predicting the future of world history. One of these is a poem by the king al-Ḥāriṯ ar-Rāʾiš. He was the second notable Ḥimyarite king according to ʿAbīd ibn Šarya and he was the first who extended the military operations of the Ḥimyarites beyond Yemen. He is described to have plundered India and Babylon and also left behind an inscription on some

---

[37] Crosby, *History,* 42.

20

rocks in Āḏarbayǧān. ʿAbīd presents many of the poems of this figure including one in which he enumerates his glorious deeds and advises his subjects to perform the Meccan pilgrimage.[38] From this point on, the poem becomes a prediction about future history. al-Ḥāriṯ ar-Rāʾiš claims that after his death kings from his dynasty will continue to rule and they will be glorious. Then, however, "black people" will run over the country and rule there for ten years and this will be a punishment from God for their sins. This refers to the collapse of the Ḥimyarite Kingdom at the beginning of the 6th century. Next, he foretells the emergence of a great man who will be called Aḥmad, who will be a prophet. al-Ḥāriṯ ar-Rāʾiš expresses his wish to meet this future prophet. He then interjects that weak people will rule from his people—probably referring to the Yemeni rulers preceding Islam. He then goes on to predict that his dynasty will end, and that Muḥammad will then emerge, who will be followed by caliphs. The king also predicts that the North Arabs and the Ethiopians will also rule, but then a person called *Manṣūr* will appear, whose standard will fly over others. He will extend the borders of his realm and "revive the rights that have died out." The genealogy of the *Manṣūr* is not mentioned, but it very well may be the case that this name stood for a ruler of Yemenite origin, as in the last line al-Ḥāriṯ predicts that after the *Manṣūr* a weak man will come, upon whose ancestry he invokes blessings.[39]

The second poem to our interest sketches out a similar course of history but the events predicted are slightly different. The poet, perhaps the greatest of the kings of Ḥimyar, Asʿad al-Kāmil recites this poem on a campaign he led to the east, Persia and India.[40] The lengthy poem boasts about the military achievements of the South Arabians and speaks disparagingly about the North Arabs, the descendants of Maʿadd. In the last section of the poem, however, Asʿad

---

[38] ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār,* 403-404.

[39] This is how a later, 12-13th commentator understood the part of the poem; *Ḫulāṣat as-Sīra al-Ǧāmiʿa li-ʿAǧāʾib Aḫbār al-Mulūk at-Tabābiʿa* ed. ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl al-Muʾayyad and Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad al-Ǧarāfī (Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwda 1978), 68. In the pages of the *History* expectation of a messianic figure who is a descendant of Fāṭima; ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār,* 323. This is rather strange as members of the Fatimid line were not objects of messianic expectations during the 7th century, and seems to be an addition from a later, arguably editor of Shiite proclivities from the Abbasid age.

[40] ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār,* 473-478.

al-Kāmil also relays a premonition about the downfall of the Ḥimyarite kingdom and the subsequent rule of the Bedouin. However, As'ad al-Kāmil predicts the emergence of the prophet Muḥammad, who will rightly guide the Bedouins, but caliphs coming after Muḥammad are not described in exclusively favourable terms. As'ad al-Kāmil mentions that these Bedouins will conquer the lands and will shed blood; he also makes an obscure reference to "a terrible thing" that will befall his people. He mentions a pious man and his followers, but eventually matters will continue to worsen, which he expresses with a variation on the widespread formula "there will come time when the living will wish that they were dead." It is only after this the coming of this distinctly eschatological sign when a noble chief will emerge from his descendants. This figure is not named in the poem, only his deeds are predicted. These include conquests, and that he will reinstate the rule of the South Arabians, who will rule for themselves and do with their wealth what they wish.

At this point, Mu'āwiya stops 'Abīd ibn Šarya and enquires about the identity of this figure. The story-teller answers the caliph, saying that this figure is called the *Qaḥṭānī,* whose name will contain three letters. He claimed that he will conquer the entire world, and that will take away the dominion from the Qurayš tribe. Mu'āwiya then expresses disbelief and makes reference to the belief that the *Qurayš* tribe will rule until the coming of the Hour. 'Abīd ibn Šarya countered this by saying that, shortly before the coming of the Hour, infighting will erupt in the midst of the Qurayš, which in turn will bring about the end of their rule, and only the return of Jesus will occur after this. 'Abīd ibn Šarya implies that the appearance of the *Qaḥṭānī* will happen simultaneously with the second coming of Jesus.

In assessing these two scenarios of the future in 'Abīd ibn Šarya's *History*, it is clear that they do not represent a unitary vision of the future. The first poem does not emphasize the tribulations of the eschatological times; instead, it focuses on the three figures to whom messianic qualities and functions are attributed: the prophet Muḥammad, the *Manṣūr* and a

22

third, unspecified character. The second poem, however, leads up a more convoluted eschatological scenario wherein an expectation about the continuous worsening of the world is expressed, with one unnamed figure, who is described as pious, between Muḥammad and the *Qaḥṭānī.* According to 'Abīd' ibn Šarya's explanation, the emergence of the *Qaḥṭānī* would be the last event in the history world along the coming of Jesus; in a sense it would fulfil its *telos* by returning to the order of Yemeni domination that 'Abīd ibn Šarya and his heroes glorified on the pages of the *History.* The differences between the two poems' eschatological models may be accounted for by the different sources from which 'Abīd ibn Šarya gathered his material, as well as by later editions and modifications. It is nonetheless the case that there are several basic elements that are shared in the two poems. The eschatology is messianic, maybe even pre-millenarian, in the sense that it expects an amelioration of worldly states.

As for the function of the figures, the betterment of the world will be fulfilled by the realization of two expectations: the return of Yemeni hegemony and the abolition of unjust governance. The former expectation was in the context a reiteration of the conduct of the most glorious pre-Islamic Yemeni kings, and the expected Yemenite ruler a would be a figure of the monarchic type articulated throughout the pages of the *History*. This aspect of expectations about future history emerged from the historical experience of the loss of power and decay which engendered a nostalgic longing for a glorious past with a corresponding hope of national revival—both expressed in exaggerated terms of world conquest and dominion. The second expectation, however, emerged from a slightly different context, when imperial rule had already been established over the Yemenite tribes, but the tribes felt to have been treated in an unjust manner. The references to lost rights and the hope for political and financial autonomy reflect an experience that fermented to become an element of eschatology during the Umayyad time.

Although the *History* is the earliest work that contains reference to the figure future Yemenite ruler, it already uses two forms of appellations. The first poem uses the title

"*Manṣūr,"* whereas ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, when discussing the second one, claims that he will be called "*Qaḥṭānī,"* and that his name will consist of three letters. We can safely assume that the two referents are connected to the same figure, as the differences between the functions are minimal, and the historical and eschatological scenarios they figured in are similar. I see no reason to accept Geddes' argument that the accretion of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya was an attempt to change the name of this messianic figure, who was originally called "*Qaḥṭānī,"* to the title "*Manṣūr."*[41] On the contrary, the two titles were in this context interchangeable, and it is impossible to single out which preceded the other. It seems to be the case that we should understand the name (*ism*) in the strictest sense as the personal name of the figure, and not as a *nisba* (*Qaḥṭānī*) or a title (*Manṣūr*), as it was understood in other contexts. However, this is not to say that the two appellations were entirely synonymous. The title "*Qaḥṭānī"* was more firmly attached the concept of a future Yemenite ruler, as it expressed genealogical affiliation whereas the title *Manṣūr* primarily implied royal and martial qualities. However, the title was not applied to Yemenite rulers exclusively. For example, in a poem attributed to Asʿad al-Kāmil, the king uses the "*Manṣūr"* to refer to a figure called the *Manṣūr,* whose coming was predicted in the Psalms, and most likely it was a reference to Muḥammad.[42]Even more importantly, however, the crucial difference between the two appellations is that the "*Manṣūr"* is used as an appellative evocative of glory as part of poetic expression. Conversely, ʿAbīd ibn Šarya uses the title "*Qaḥṭānī"* in a discursive context where the genealogical reference of the title feeds into the expectation that Yemenite rule will overcome the Qurayš. In all, the two titles in the range of the early historico-legendary literature covered the same figure but pronounced different aspects of its potential coming to power.

---

[41] Geddes, *Messiah,* 316-317.
[42] ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, *Aḫbār, 466.*

Finally, the second poem gave rise to, or at least resonated with, a third title associated with the vision of a future Yemenite ruler. As'ad al-Kāmil describes the Qaḥṭānid ruler of the future as someone who will "disperse the masses and gather the bands." This imagery fits to both functions of the South Arabian messianic figure. Before the poem, the king As'ad al-Kāmil is described to have dispersed the masses of Persian soldiers with the very same expression.[43] The wording of this messianic expectation suggests that the eschatological Qaḥṭānid monarch, similarly to his ancestors, will raid foreign lands and defeat their armies, despite the numerical disadvantage implied by the juxtaposition of the words "band" and "crowd." The band-crowd motif, however, is also connected to another dimension of this figure, that is the overturning of the Qurašite political order by violent means. The "bands" expression implies that his armies will be disorganized, tribal, and less numerous than that of his enemies; due to their superior valour, however, they will manage to defeat their enemies as underdogs, and their victory will usher in a radically new political order. It is this latter aspect in connection to which the motif of the bands later migrated to the category of *ḥadīṯic* eschatology and gave rise to a new messianic acceptation that does not turn up in the historico-legendary eschatology under discussion: the Commander or Master of the Bands (*Amīr al-'Uṣab*). This variety of appellations and the motifemic richness that surrounded the figure all suggest that the formation of the figure was already well advanced in already in the 7th century.

1.3. The *Book of Crowns* of Ibn Hišām

As discussed above, the *Book of Crowns*, similarly to the *History of* Abīd ibn Šarya focuses on the history of the Ḥimyarite Kingdom. The arrangement of the reigns of kings and the ordering of events largely correspond with that of the *History*. The book, however, begins with the creation of the world, Adam and Eve, and their immediate descendants. A genealogically based history of the world enfolds in the following pages, which, after reaching

---

[43] ibid., 473.

25

the Patriarchs, the Yemenites, Hūd, Qaḥṭān and Yaʿrub, exclusively concerns their descendants. The various legendary stories about ʿĀd, Luqmān and Bilqīs are all almost seamlessly integrated into the general history of the Kings of Ḥimyar. Unlike the *History* of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, the narrative in the *Book of Crowns* covers the entire history of the Ḥimyarite Kingdom until its eventual fall.

In this work, the prophecies are also uttered by ancient Yemeni legendary figures in poetic form and reflect similar visions of history, with slightly altered emphases. A case in point is a poem in the *Book of Crowns* which is a variant of the second poem discussed in the History of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, as the meter and the rhyme is the same and there are several shared lines.[44] The context is however different, as in this case it is another Yemeni king, Šammar Yarʿaš[45] who recites it and contrary to its counterpart in the *History*, the poem figures not in the context of a victorious raid to the east, but after the betrayal of the king by his allies during a campaign he was leading to Persia and China. After listing his earlier military glories, he laments his betrayal by his supposed allies, which provides a smooth transition to his prophecy predicting that, after his death, Ḥimyar and the South Arabs will lose their primacy over other people. As in the other historical poems we discussed so far, the coming of Muḥammad and Islam is mentioned, and then Šammar immediately begins to describe several events understood as signs of the deterioration of Islamic rule—in political and religious senses alike. These signs all seem to have their counterparts in the *ḥadīṯic* historico-mantic and eschatological literature and reflect Islamic eschatological lore in a rather developed form. The poet alludes to signs from the *Mahdī* cycle: a voice from the sky, the death of a pure soul[46] and the sinking of an army to the ground at Baydāʾ.[47] The coming of the Yemenite ruler will occur when the Ethiopians will march on

---

[44] Ibn Hišām, *at-Tīǧān,* 242-5.

[45] This corresponds with the name of the 4th century, Himyarite King, Šamir Yuharʿiš; Crosby, *History,* 28.

[46] The parallel prophecy in *ḥadīṯic* eschatology is Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 925, 940, 981.

[47] On the origin of this eschatological motif that originated from the Second Civil War, see: Wilferd Madelung, "ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and the Mahdī, *Journal of Near Eastern Studies 40,* no. 4 (1981): 299-300.

the Ka'ba and succeed in destroying it. A man from Ḥimyar will rise to the challenge and will gather an 80,000 strong army from Iraq, Ḥaḍramawt, and Aleppo, and decimate the Ethiopians on the banks of the Nile. His appearance will signify the return of a Ḥimyarite dominion that will last till the end of time.

Another trace of South Arabian messianism can be found not in poetic form, but as part of the narration in the *Book of Crowns*. In this case, the one who utters the prophecy is the brother of 'Amr, a king of the Saba'ite king in Ma'rib. This man, 'Imrān, had a reputation for being knowledgeable and having mantic capabilities.[48] On his deathbed, 'Imrān uttered a prophecy in which he claimed that the Saba'ites experience two bad and two good things in the course of history. The first good thing is the opulence in which they lived in his time and before, and the second will be the coming of Muḥammad. As for the bad events, the first will be the ruination of the dam of Ma'rib—which will lead to the destruction of agriculture and the dispersion of the Saba'ites in the land—and the other will be invasion of the Ethiopians. Independently from this scheme, 'Imrān concludes his prophecy by foretelling that the pagans will conquer Mecca and expel the followers of [monotheistic] religions from there, but a man from Ḥimyar named Šu'ayb ibn Ṣāliḥ will reconquer destroy them and retake the Meccan sanctuary.

In general, the historical and eschatological vision of the *Book of Crowns* does not differ significantly from the History of 'Abīd ibn Šarya. In both cases the decay of the ancient Yemeni kingdoms will be countered by two eschatologically conceived events: the emergence of the prophet Muḥammmad, and, at the very end of times, the restoration of South Arabian hegemony at the hands of a future ruler of Ḥimyarite descent. Between these two eruptions of kairotic time, the state of the world is seen to be in a process of constant decay reflected not only in

---

[48] Ibn Hišām, *at-Tīğān,* 274-5.

moral and religious degradation but also the loss of the political importance of Yemen. This decay is more drawn out and emphasized in the *Book of Crowns,* which reflects the fact that this work is considerably younger than the *History* of 'Abīd ibn Šarya. This decay is illustrated with the motifs borrowed from the *ḥadīṯic* Islamic eschatology.[49] At any rate, although the emphasis of negative apocalyptic signs is greater in Ibn Hišām's book, the general sequence of eschatology remains unchanged.

The functions and expected deeds of this messianic figure, however, went through considerable change. As we saw, the two most important aspects of the South Arabian messianic figure in the Omayyad age *History* was the restoration of South Arabian rule of the world and the end of Qurašite dominance, which was implicitly deemed to be unjust and partial. The former characteristic remained in place, but the latter was replaced with the role of fighting against the Ethiopians. The Ethiopian threat was conceived not just in terms of ethnic rivalry but also in religious terms, as they were expected to conquer Mecca and destroy its sanctuary. This imagery most probably reflects the legend of the Year of the Elephant, when the Ethiopian ruler of Yemen, Abraha, initiated military operations against in the Hijaz. His armies were remembered to have besieged Mecca, with the purported intent of destroying the Sanctuary, but he was ultimately repelled.[50] In Ibn Hišām's visions of the future, as shown in the poem of Šammar Yar'aš and the predictions of the Saba'ite 'Imrān, the Ethiopians will successfully execute the same plan in the future. The motif of the Ethiopian destruction of the Ka'ba has its counterpart the *ḥadīṯic* eschatology, but in that case it is detached from the motif of a future Yemenite ruler.[51] As for the reason why the Ethiopian threat is much more tangible in the *Book of Crowns* than in the *History* we can only guess. One potential reason may be that Wahb ibn

---

[49] See chapter 3.
[50] Muḥammad Aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Ǧāmi' al-Bayān 'an Ta'wīl Āyā al-Qur'ān*, vol. 24, ed. 'Abd Allah ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin at-Turkī (Cairo: Markaz al-Buḥūṯ wa-d-Dirāsāt al-'Arabiyya wa-lslāmiyya, 2001), 636-8.
[51] Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* 668-675.

28

Munabbih, the partial source of Ibn Hišām, lived in Yemen[52] and Ibn Hišām himself spent most of his life in Egypt.[53] From the perspective of both locations, Ethiopia may have taken much more important position in historical scenarios of the future than Syria, where ʿAbīd flourished.

Even more importantly, however, the connection of the South Arabian messianic figure to the Ethiopians was not newfound and had its parallels in other type of texts. Germane to this point is the biography of the prophet Muḥammad edited by Ibn Hišām, in which Ibn Isḥāq tells the story of the pre-Islamic Yemeni fortune-teller, Saṭīḥ, who interprets the dreams of a Yemeni king. Saṭīḥ describes a historical sequence not dissimilar from what we find in the *Book of Crowns* and the *History*. After the downfall of the Ḥimyarite Kingdom, the vision of the Ethiopians but they will be expelled by Ḏū Yazan. Not long after that a prophet will appear, whose tribe will rule until the end of times.[54] As we can see, the Yemeni figure bringing about national revival is pre-Muḥammadan in this case, and his emergence was conceived as part of an eschatology that already enfolded by the time that Ibn Isḥāq and Ibn Hišām penned this story. It, however. did not require much imagination to transpose the conflict between the Ethiopians and a South Arabian messianic figure to the eschatological time that had not yet commenced. Ḏū Yazan and the Saṭīḥ legend therefore were sources of inspiration for the future Yemenite ruler as foretold in the *Book of Crowns.*

At any rate, the South Arabian messiah in the *Book of Crowns* is not only a successful conqueror and a just ruler, but he also takes up the vestiges of Islamic rulership by being the defender of the Meccan Sanctuary, the holiest and ritually most significant site in Islam. This interesting development shows that certain expectations associated with this figure gained precedence over others. Military domination remained an important motif, but the military

---

[52] Sezgin, *GAS,* vol. 1, 297
[53] ibid., 305.
[54] Ibn Hišām, *as-Sīra an-Nabawiyya*, vol. 1, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd as-Salām Tadmurī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990), 31-35. There is a poem in the *Book of Crowns,* attributed to Nuʿmān ibn Munḏir, that contains several of the formulae to give a similar historical account; Ibn Hišām, *at-Tīǧān,* 181-2.

operation conducted by this figure would target non-Muslims. Although ʿAbīd ibn Šarya claimed that the *Qaḥṭāni* would call for the worship of Allah, in his case, the regnal and religious aspects of this figure are divided. In Ibn Hišām, however, the future Yemenite ruler is a defender of faith primarily and only secondly a conqueror. This difference between the two books is not partially due to the interests of their authors. 'Abīd, despite living in the prophet's age, did not narrate anything about him that was not sufficiently engaged with the historical persona of Muḥammad,[55] unlike Ibn Hišām, who was the much later editor of the earliest extant biography of Muḥammad. However, the difference between their historical surroundings must also be accounted for. Ibn Hišam lived during and participated in the formation of Islamic pietistic culture—he witnessed the establishment of the first legal schools, the proliferation of the *ḥadīṯ* literature and he was inclined to bring a body of ancient Arabic lore closer to an Islamic framework in formation.

Finally, the usage of titles also shows significant differences as compared to the *History*. Neither the title "*Manṣūr*" nor the "*Qaḥṭānī*" are used. Instead, the predictions refer to the figure by collocutions referring to his ancestry. The prophecy of 'Imrān ibn 'Āmir, is rather interesting as it states the name of the future Yemenite ruler is Šu'ayb ibn Ṣāliḥ. In all outlets of Arabic literature this is the only name that is used to specify the identity of the future Yemenite ruler. This name—a combination of the two most important Arabian prophets—also turns up in the *ḥadīṯhic* eschatology, but with rather different attributes. There, Šu'ayb is a helper of the *Mahdī*, whose armies he will lead from the east against the armies of the anti-messiah, the *Sufyānī*. In those prophecies, Šu'ayb is not a South Arabian figure, but a member of the Northern Arab Tamīm tribe.[56]The above cases of the usage of motifs and names borrowed

---

[55] Abbott, *Studies* vol. 1, 12.
[56] Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan, no.* 802, 894, 897.

from eschatological literature proper point to the fact that Ibn Hišām reworked the legendary

lore about the Ancient Yemeni kings—including the references to their future figuration.

1.4. Further developments

From the 9th and 10th centuries, this lore came to be presented not in historical but other

forms, For example, compendiums of the poems and sayings of the Yemenite kings were

assembled by way of *Fürstenspiegeln*.[57] The greatest achievement with regard to the

preservation of this lore was that of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan al-Hamdāni (d. 334/945), who

penned a monumental series of books titled *Wreath from the History of Yemen and the*

Geneaogy of Ḥimyar (al-Iklīl min Tārīḫ al-Yaman wa-Ansāb Ḥimyar). This work dealt with

various subjects related to Yemen, but unfortunately the volumes on the history of the region

were lost.[58] The Yemeni scholar and part-time warlord Našwān al-Ḥimyarī (d. 574/1178)

composed a lengthy poem on the history of ancient Yemen, on which an unknown author wrote

a commentary, extensively relying on the *History* of Ibn Šarya.[59] Furthermore, Našwān also

wrote an encyclopaedic worked, *Sun of Sciences,* which also features quotations and

information from the same book. Ibn Saʿīd, the Andalusian historian, also quoted several poems

found in the *Book of Crowns and the History* in his book of pre-Islamic Arabia.[60]Although, the

works of Našwān and Ibn Saʿīd introduced little new material to the basis that was established

by ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, Ibn Hišām and al-Hamdānī, their activity shows that this theme continued

fascinate scholars in the Middle Ages.[61] The foundational books, the *History* and the *Book of*

Crowns, were frequently cited in encyclopaedic and exegetical works. These later authors quote

from early works passages that are not found in their extant versions or present them in different

[57] Diʿbil al-Ḫuzāʿī, *Waṣāyā Mulūk wa Abnā' al-Mulūk min Walad Qaḥṭān ibn Hūd,* ed. Nizār Abāẓah (Damascus: Dār al-Bašā'ir, 1997).

[58] Oscar Löfgren, "al-Hamdānī," *EI².*

[59] *Ḫulāṣat as-Sīra,* passim.

[60] Among others, Ibn Saʿīd al-Maġribī, *Našwat aṭ-Ṭarab fī Tārīḫ Ğāhiliyyat al-ʿArab,* vol. 1, ed. Nuṣrat ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (Amman: Dār al-Aqṣā, 1982), 69-70 ff.

[61] Piotrovskii, *Predaniye*, 33.

forms in ways that affect only minor details but retain the overall message of the poems. This point corroborates the assumption mentioned in the beginning of this thesis, that the poems were circulated orally and were frequently recomposed.

With the loss of most of the volumes of al-Hamdānī's *Wreath,* our knowledge on further developments is limited. Nevertheless, Al-Hamdānī shows us glimpses of the motif of the future Yemenite ruler as an expected folk hero. Reporting that the *Manṣūr* will come out from a mountain called Dāmiġ or Markabān between San'a and Dhamar.[62] al-Hamdānī also guesses that this place is the same as the legendary Grey Mountain (al-Ǧabal al-Ašhab) which, according to popular belief, is a place of great evil after ceasing to be populated, but which under the *Manṣūr* will flourish once again. From this mountain he will have a humble servant who will be a faithful executor of his will.[63] al-Hamdānī refers to the established literature of South Arabian history in order to subtend his claims about popular beliefs in the *Manṣūr*. He does so by quoting couple of rhymes he claims to have taken from *History* of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, which I could not find in the modern edition. However, it is not the ancient kings of South Arabia to whom al-Hamdānī refers as authorities, but the legendary Yemeni fortune-teller, Satīḥ. However, they do not seem to conform with the Satīḥ-legend that made its way into the biographies of the prophet Muḥammad. In that context, Satīḥ's vision was distinctly historical and subtended a Muḥammad-centric vision of world history. Al-Hamdani's rendering of the motif shows that the idea of the future Yemenite ruler could be divorced from the historical model it conformed to in the early literature.

The *Sun of Sciences (Šams al-ʿUlūm)*, Našwān al-Ḥimyarī shows a different pattern in later elaboration. He does not associate the motif of the Yemenite pedigree of a future ruler with a distinct figure. On the contrary, he claims that the *Mahdī*, the Muslim messiah, will be

---

[62] al-Hamdānī, *Iklīl,* vol. 2, 58-60.
[63] ibid., 117-118.

of Yemenite origin, and that "*Manṣūr*" will be among his titles. Moreover, he identifies this messianic figure with all those who are expected to come in other religions. To subtend this claim, Našwān goes on to quote lines from multiple poems. Many of these poems suggest that the messianic functions attributed to him in the early Yemenite literature were overshadowed by others. Although Našwān illustrates with one poem that the Messiah will bring back Yemeni dominance over the South Arabs, another poem speaks about the *Manṣūr* in a quasi-Shiite manner by describing him the *imām* whose "appearance was expected from the beginning of time."[64] In my view, these comments point to a particular tendency in connection to the Yemeni messianic figure within South Arabian lore. Having started out as more of a national messianic figure in ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, it attained a markedly Islamic character with Ibn Hišām. As a continuation of this process, appellative terms and functions associated with him were merged into a singular, all-encompassing messianic figure, the *Mahdī*, and the pieces of literature associated with him became part of the *Mahdī*-myth.

1.5. Conclusion

The idea of a future Yemenite ruler was first formulated in a group of texts about ancient Yemeni lore. Already in its earliest outlets this corpus of lore was organized in a fashion that betrayed a historical consciousness, inasmuch as it comprehended the various stages of the past, present and future fundamentally differently. These differences were ultimately tied to the shifting hierarchical positions of genealogically conceived collectives of people. The Yemenites were not only descendants of Qaḥṭān, but they were the group that for most of history dominated the idea. As Arabs, the elites of the early caliphate fancied this historical model as it presented a precursor for their domination of the known world. This was, however, a double-edged sword, as this history depicted not only the domination of the Arabs over non-Arabs but

---

[64] Našwān al-Ḥimyarī, *Muntaḫabāt fī Aḫbār al-Yaman min Kitāb Šams al-ʿUlūm,* ed. ʿAẓīm ad-Dīn Aḥmad, E. J. Gibb Memorial Series 24 (Leiden: Brill: 1916), 103.

also that of the Ḥimyarites and the allies of all other Arabs. The dissonance between the subordinated social and political position of the Yemenites—at least compared to the Qurayš—called forward a narrative closure of this model of history that was projected to the future. After the fall of the Qurayš, the time of the Yemenites would follow once again. This history of the future was expressed in a typological way where the conditions for the emergence of this Yemenite rule, as well as the vocabulary with which this change was expressed, took past examples as prefigurations. The future resurgence of the Yemenites would therefore depend on a monarch just like in the past.

Within the earliest segments of the Yemenite literature, as presented in the History of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, appellations to this figure merely expressed two aspects of Yemenite resurgence prefigured by earlier kings: he would be a martial-royal character as implied by the appellative *"Mansūr,"* and his military success would metonymically express Yemenite hegemony. For this reason, he was referred to as the *"Qaḥṭānī."* The figure, being embedded in a historical model like this became a coherent character and was subjected to subsequent elaborations. In Ibn Hišām's reworking of the legendary material the historical model was tuned to a frequency closer to a pietistic Islamic worldview in its formation in the 9th century. The future Yemenite ruler therefore is analogous in one prediction not only with earlier Yemenite kings but with Muḥammad as well. Correspondingly, the motif emerged that he would protect the Meccan Sanctuary from infidels. In subsequent centuries, motifs, poems and conceptions accumulated in this type of literature were channelled into encyclopaedic works, where the figure lost it connection with the historical model it was attached to.

2
Political and historical readings of the future Yemenite ruler

As discussed in the previous chapter, expectations about a future Yemenite ruler emerged from a historical model that pervaded multiple strata of the intellectual life of the early Caliphal period. This historical model had an eschatological *coda* that foretold the emergence of a Yemenite figure. This figure originally lacked notable salvific qualities; it had them insomuch as he was expected to be Muslim ruler and call for the worship God. However, the salvific characteristics of this figure were foregrounded from the beginning of the Abbasid period, as the "*Qaḥṭānī*" title expressed expectations not of religious kind but a notion of a historico-political resurgence of the Yemenites. This characteristic made way for the political utilisations of this figure. Not surprisingly, these political utilisations emerged when the Qaḥṭānid descent ideology was channelled into the creation of political factions in the Marwānid period. However, due to its martial and rebellious connotations, the utilization of the expectations about this figure were fitting when a person of Yemenite origin took up arms against the central government.

The cases of such rebellion handful in the span of Umayyad history. A segment in the *Book of Lepers and Cripples* (*Kitāb al-Burṣān wa-l-ʿUrğān)* from the immortal litterateur al-Ğāḥiẓ (d. 163/869) provides the blueprint for our discussion. Al-Ğāḥiẓ mentions that there were three people who claimed to fulfil what had been transmitted about the *al-Aṣfar al-Qaḥṭānī* (the Yellow Qaḥṭānid). Al-Ğāḥiẓ himself discussed this topic in relation to this colour and its relation to the Yemenites. He gives preference to an explanation that the Yemenites were fond of painting their bodies and dying their hair with a yellow hue extracted from a plant called *wars* that was cultivated exclusively in Yemen.[65] The three rebels al-Ğāḥiẓ mentions were ʿAbd ar-

---

[65] Al-Ğāḥiẓ, *Kitāb al-Burṣān wa-l-ʿUrğān wa-l-ʿUmyān wa-l-Ḥūlān,* ed. ʿAbd as-Salām Muḥammad Fārūq (Beirut: Dār al-Ğīl, 1990), 155-6. Maribel Fierro accepted this argument substantiated with ethnographic and historical evidence and highlighted the existence of a Yemeni messianic propagandistic activity that erupted during the three

Raḥmān ibn Muḥammad ibn al-Ašʿaṯ,[66] Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab and Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym. All three were influential governors and generals of their time who in shifting contexts found themselves in opposition with the Umayyad state and led unsuccessful rebellions against them during the first half of the 8th century. These three figures seem to have been the only ones who were associated with the predictions about the *Qaḥṭānī* by later writers. This assertion, however may only partially represent historical reality; therefore, all three cases deserve closer inspection.

In the following pages, I will attempt to capture the appearance of this motif in connection to historical rebellions in the Omayyad age by discussing these three rebellions through three different lenses. First, I would like to discuss the events of the rebellions and their immediate contributing factors be they personal, social or political. Secondly, I will analyse the extent of South Arabian group solidarity within each context, as this solidarity had varying importance in these rebellions and its fluctuation sheds light on the potential prevalence of expectations concerning a Yemenite Arabian deliverer. Finally, I will discuss the presence of messianic pretensions and claims in the three rebellions. To this latter discussion pertain not only the political enunciations of the leaders and their subordinates, but also the propaganda issued on their behalf—although independently from their direction—as well as the perceptions of contemporary eyewitnesses.

2.1. The first Yemenite rebel: Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ

The associations of political actors with the figure of the *"Qaḥṭānī"* began with the emergence of first rebel leader against the Umayyads, who was of Yemenite descent. Ibn al-

---

aforementioned rebellions; Maribel Fierro, "Al-Asfar Again," 204-209. I would like to add that Barbara Roggema recently presented another, rather dubious, theory for the yellowness of the South Arabian messiah. She proposed that it may have been the mistranslation of the Syriac *ṣeprāyā d-ʿezzē* meaning "yearling goat," an animal which in the Legend of Baḥīra represents the South Arabians; Barbara Roggema, *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīra*: Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 80-81.

[66] A later work, which discusses the motif of the South Arabian messiah as part of the eschatology, also mentioned Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ as the historical figure who tried to realize the prophecies about the *Qaḥṭānī*; Ṭāhir ibn Muṭahhar al-Maqdisi, *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-t-Tārīḫ*, ed. and trans. Clément Huart (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901), 184. trans., 164-165.

Aš'aṯ's rebellion was one of the major events of Abd al-Malik's reign. Ibn al-Aš'aṯ was a scion of a Kindite noble family, which belonged to the class of tribal aristocrats, the *ašrāf*, in the Iraqi city of Kufa.[67] Although Ibn al-Aš'aṯ fought on the side of the Zubayrids during the second civil war, he reconciled with the Umayyads, whom his family traditionally supported.[68] However, everything changed when a new governor, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ ibn Yūsuf aṯ-Ṯaqafī, was delegated to Iraq. Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ brought about significant changes in Iraq, championing policies which threatened the position of the tribal ruling elite of the garrison cities of Kufa and Basra. Furthermore, there developed a bitter personal rivalry between Ibn al-Aš'aṯ and , al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ.[69] The personal enmity between them contributed to the decision of the governor to send Ibn al-Aš'aṯ on a campaign to pacify the region of Sīstān,[70] where the recalcitrant ruler of Zābulistān, the Zunbīl, had recently annihilated the entire army of the governor ʿUbayd Allāh ibn Abī Bakra.

Ibn al-Aš'aṯ led his proverbial "Peacock Army," named after the luxurious equipment of the noblemen conscripted to its ranks, to Sīstān in the year 79/701. Ibn al-Aš'aṯ began his advance carefully in order to avoid the fate of the previous governor. Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, however, ordered him to hurry up and declared that he and his army should not return to Iraq as long as they have not captured the capital of the enemy, Kabul. The altercation between al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ and Ibn al-Aš'aṯ drove the latter and his army to rise up in mutiny, returning to Iraq to challenge the rule of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ.[71] Initially, the rebellion was directed against al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ and the practice of stationing troops in faraway provinces for long terms. Gradually, the rebellion became

---

[67] Laura Veccia Vaglieri, "Ibn al-Aš'aṯ," *EI²*; Sayid, *Die Revolte*, 74-81.
[68] Sayid, *Die Revolte,* 98-9.
[69] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ,* 2/1043,
[70] A region that corresponds with the relatively fertile lowlands around the River Helmand and the Lake Hamun, in today's South Afghanistan and parts of East Iran.
[71] Redwan Sayid proposes several other potential reasons for this move by al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. Most definitely it was convenient way to get rid of the dangerous *ašrāf*, most importantly, Ibn al-Aš'aṯ. He may have also hoped to counterbalance the growing power of the Muhallabites in Ḫurasān, by creating a provincial base for a rival South Arab family. Perhaps most importantly, however, Sīstān was indeed a hard nut to crack and it required the best of what Iraq could offer in order to tackle three military challenges that manifested the province: subduing Zābulistān, cleansing the land from the Ḫāriǧites and opening the gate to India; Sayid, *Die Revolte,* 179-180.

significantly anti-Umayyad and acquired a religious colouring. On the road back to Iraq, the stakes of the rebellion began to increase, as some supporters of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ withdrew their allegiance not only from al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, but also from the caliph ʿAbd al- Malik.[72] This incident was a point of no return for the rebellion and, with its symbolic importance, gave rise to the perceptions that resulted in Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ being identified with a foretold Yemenite ruler.

Militarily, the rebellion had some successes, which included the routing of a loyalist army at Tustar in 81/701 and the conquest of Basra and Kufa. In Basra, Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ lost many of his supporters, who followed his rebellion only in order to avoid further service on the front. This loss was compensated for by the support *qurrāʾ* ("Qurʾān-reciters" or "villagers")—a class of lower socio-economic status in Iraqi cities, who were active in religious life—of his cause. The *mawālī* (non-Arab Muslims) of the garrison cities also flocked to his army in droves upon his arrival to Iraq. The final confrontation between the rebels and the Umayyad forces took place at Dayr al-Ǧamāǧim in Šaʿbān of 82/ September 702.[73] The Umayyads, at the behest of the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik, presented a generous peace offer to Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ. At first, he inclined to accept this offer, but the *montagnards* of his revolution, which consisted of the *qurrāʾ* and certain *ašrāf,* advanced in contravention to his moderation, declaring that they would continue their fight and renewing their withdrawal of obedience to the caliph.[74] Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ had to comply, but to his and his partisans' disappointment, they suffered a crippling defeat soon afterwards, and most of their army was dispersed. Smaller groups continued to fight under his banner, but they were driven out of Iraq in the following months. Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ lost control of his army when he returned to Sīstān and fled to his former enemy, the *Zunbīl* of Zabūlistān. Meanwhile, his army had its last stand in the province of Khurasan, led by ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān ibn al-ʿAbbās.[75] It is not clear how his life ended. According to certain reports, he committed

---

[72] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ,* 2/1058
[73] Vaglieri, "Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ."
[74] ibid., 215.
[75] ibid., 230.

suicide, whereas others claim that he was betrayed by the *Zunbīl,* who sent his head to the caliph ʿAbd al-Malik.[76]Despite its eventual failure, Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's rebellion was a dangerous challenge for the newfound Marwānid dynasty, due to its wide support among the Arab and Arabized populations in the eastern half of the empire. This wide and heterogenous base was reflected in the perceptions and expectation attached to Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ.

In discussing Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's rebellion from the standpoint of Yemenite expectations about a future ruler, it is necessary to discuss the composition of his movement. The uprising of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ was a colourful amalgam that included various strata of Iraqi society, including tribal elites, the soldiery, non-Arab clients repressed by al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, and the movement of *qurrā."* Although most of his supporters hailed from South Arab tribes due to the tribal composition of Iraq, the lowest common denominator among them was not Qaḥṭānid supremacy, but the just treatment of Iraq as a province.[77] The alliance behind Ibn al- Ašʿaṯ came to engulf all tribal segments of Iraq, and this sentiment was expressed at the very beginning of the rebellion in a poem from Aʿšā al-Hamdān.[78] In all, although Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ was a South Arab nobleman, in context of the rebellion, he was more of an Iraqi and not a South Arabian leader.

As for the messianic orientations within camp of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ, although the goals and the outlets of propaganda for the rebellion were just as colourful as the movement itself, the situation created by his rebellion resonated with eschatological notions. Pledging allegiance to Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ and declaring to uproot the Umayyads were mainly political acts. However, as they

---

[76] Vaglieri, "Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ."

[77] Still, Kufa became the base of the rebellion, the tribal composition of the Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's followers shifted toward the South Arabian element, due to their predominance in that city; Sayed, *Die Revolte, 207.* However, it was never translated to expressions of South Arabian exclusivity.

[78] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ* 2/1056. Laura Veccia Vaglieri misunderstood the poem of Aʾšā al-Hamdan claim that it demonized the Northern Arabs and glorified the South Arabs; Vaglieri, "Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ." On the contrary, the Northern Arab descendants of Maʿadd are also included among the righteous supporters of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ. The only tribal group that is lambasted in this poem are al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's tribe, the Banū Ṯaqīfa, who according to the poet gave two liars to the world, the second being al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. This wording corresponds with a prophetic tradition, according to which from this tribe there will be one corruptor and one liar. Some later commentaries of the *ḥadīṯ* claimed that by the liar the Prophet meant the proto-Shiite rebel, al-Muḫtār (d. 686) and by corruptor he referred to al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ; Ibn Kaṯīr ad-Dimašqī, *al-Bidāya wa-n-Nihāya*, vol. 6 (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1988), 236.

had been done simultaneously, these acts also corresponded with eschatological concepts about the end of Qurašite rule and the re-emergence of South Arabian dominance. These sorts of beliefs seem to have been strong among the *qurrāʾ* movement, who circulated prophecies about the downfall of the Umayyads.[79] However, in poetry, the main vehicle of political propaganda of the age, he is only very sporadically described in a messianic manner, and his panegyrists usually celebrate him as a glorious tribal chieftain who united the Iraqis in their struggle against injustice while avoiding reference to his caliphal claim. The most prominent example is the poem to the honour Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ written Aʿšā al-Hamdān that I mentioned above. Another poem by the daughter of Šams ibn Ġālib operates through similar imagery, as it asserts the unity of the Northern and Southern Arabs and celebrates Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ as a tribal chieftain. However it also refers to Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ as *Manṣūr* ("victorious," "aided to victory"), that was used in certain contexts as a messianic title, often referring figures having a South Arabian ancestry.[80]Many supporters of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ saw him as a figure who, with modern terms, had the qualities of a charismatic ruler brining sweeping and historical changes, but not necessarily a messianic figure whose activities would fulfil prophecies.

As for his personal pretensions, Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ showed the characteristics of an astute politician. When it came to negotiations, he remained cool-headed and did not show any signs of a Messiah-complex. This is illustrated by his willingness to compromise with the Umayyads before the Battle of Dayr al-Ǧamāǧim, even when it appeared that his rebellion had the upper hand. In public, however, he was not afraid to make claims to the caliphate. Shortly before the decisive battle against the Umayyads, he lampooned the Umayyads and made an implicit claim to the caliphate by saying: "If this thing [the caliphate] is for Qurayš, then I am one of them; if it is for all the Arabs, then I am the scion of al-Ašʿaṯ ibn Qays!"[81]This exclamation points to

---

[79] Sayed, *Die Revolte,* 345-347.
[80] *Anonyme Arabische Chronik,* ed. Wilhelm Ahlwardt (Greifswald: self-published, 1883), 345.
[81] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ,* 2/1075.

Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's maternal descent, as his maternal grandmother was daughter of the first caliph, Abū Bakr. He implied here two potential legitimations for himself. First, he claimed relationship to the kinsmen of the Prophet and the first caliphs. Secondly, he appealed to his relationship to the Kindites, who produced pre-Islamic kings in Arabia. This claim of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ therefore tapped into the legendary vision of the past that was formulated in the ranks of the cultural *Yamāniyya*.

The duality of his pragmatism and his penchant for magnifying his public persona also appear in a story directly connected to the prophecy about the *Qaḥṭānī*. In his book titled the *at-Tanbīh wa-l-Išrāf* , ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Masʿūdī mentions that Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ adopted the title *Helper of Believers* (Nāṣir al-*Muʾminīn*) after the rebels in Persia had withdrawn their allegiance to ʿAbd al-Malik. al-Masʿūdī also claims that after the beginning of his mutiny, it was mentioned to Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ that he is the *Qaḥṭānī* who would return the dominion of the South Arabs. Afterwards, al-Masʿūdī claims that someone tells him that the *Qaḥṭānī's* name will be of letters—a detail that also turns up in the *History* of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya. Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ cheekily replies that from his name, ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān, only the "ʿAbd" ("servant") is truly his name—ar-Raḥmān ("merciful") being a name of God.[82] At first glance, the story does not seem to be anachronistic—as we have seen, the belief in *Qaḥṭānī* and the three letters motif was already present in the Umayyad Era, though the extent of its circulation is difficult to gauge. However, al-Masʿūdī is the only one who mentions this event, and the social and propagandistic context suggest that the restoration of Yemeni hegemony was not part of the rebellion's motivations. Nonetheless, some individuals surrounding Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ may have taken him as an expected Yemenite ruler, though al-Masʿūdī never direly making these references himself. He is merely depicted to have manipulated these sentiments, not by asserting that he would be a

---

[82] al-Masʿūdī, *At-Tanbīh wa-l-Išrāf*, ed. ʿAbd Allah Ismāʿīl Ṣāfī (Cairo: Maktabat aš-Šarq al-Islāmiyya, 1938), 272.

foretold Yemenite ruler, but by upholding its possibility—and implicitly affirming the prediction's veracity. This story may not be true to the letter. Nonetheless, in light of the sources discussed above, it is not far-fetched to think that Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's persona to some degree connected with predictions about a future Yemenite ruler.

2.2. Yazīd ibn Muhallab: Towards the formulation of the political *Yamāniyya*

The second rebel leader who came to be associated with the *Qaḥṭāni* led a less important uprising. However, this rebellion, betokened the process that eventually led to the alienation of many of the provincial *Yamāniyyas* from the Umayyad rule. It was led by Yazīd ibn Muhallab, who was the last of the political heavyweights of the Umayyad period who hailed from Iraqi notables. His rebellion was the last event in his topsy-turvy career that signified the end of his family and the power of the class of notables he belonged to. He succeeded his father in the governorship of Ḫurasān in the years 82/3 – 701/2, when Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ rebellion was rampant. Yazīd refused to back the revolt and helped to stamp out the mutineers in Persia and captured many of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's partisans. Shortly afterwards, he and his family fell out of the favour of the Iraqi governor, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, who imprisoned and tortured many of his relatives. Yazīd himself managed to escape imprisonment and sought refuge at the Umayyad prince, Sulaymān ibn ʿAbd al-Malik, and when said prince ascended to the caliphal throne in 96/714, he raised his protege, Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab to the governorship of Iraq. However, the caliph after Sulaymān, ʿUmar II once again divested Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab from his position and imprisoned him, but he escaped shortly before the death of the pious ruler.[83] He flew to Basra, where he and his family made attempts to secure their safety from the governor, ʿAdī Ibn Arṭaʾa.[84] After the negotiations broke down, Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab rose against the governor and the Umayyads.

---

[83] Patricia Crone, "Muahallabids," *EI²*.
[84] Julius Wellhausen, *The Arabic Kingdom and its Fall,* tr. Margaret Graham Weir (Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927), 312.

He attracted followers from the Iraqi soldiers, especially among South Arabians, while the Northern Arabs of Basra—mainly belonging to the Tamīm and the Qays confederations—remained loyal to the governor. They were, however, no match for the forces of Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab, who scattered them and seized the city and imprisoned the governor. Similarly to the case of Ibn al-Ašʻat, the Umayyads attempted to make rapprochements with the rebels, but Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab went too far and redirected his movement against Umayyad dominion.[85] Yazīd II dispatched the famous general Maslama ibn ʻAbd al-Malik with a contingent of Syrian forces, mostly conscripted form South Arabian tribes against Ibn al-Muhallab. In August 720, the Syrian army handily defeated the forces of Ibn al-Muhallab, who was slain on the battlefield. Leaderless, the rebellion ended almost immediately, and the Muhallabid family, once one of most powerful in the Umayyad caliphate, was hunted down almost to its last member.

The base of Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab was overwhelmingly composed of the South Arabian tribes of Basra and their allies from the Bakr confederation. Although the rebellion, not unlike the uprising of Ibn al-Ašʻat, was one of provincial Iraq against the Syrian metropole, the Northern Arab tribesmen by and large opposed Ibn al-Muhallab's movement initially and joined him reluctantly, being the first to waver during the decisive battle.[86] Furthermore, Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab was a man for whom tribal group solidarity was important. This is attested by the fact that he cursed the caliph Yazīd II for sending the South Arab Syrian troops, whom he viewed as his own cousins, to quell his rebellion.[87] This uprising was one of the first important milestones in the process of the formation of the Yamāniyya as marker of political orientation. More than twenty years later, the Yemenite rebels in Kirmān called for the vengeance of the Muhallabids during the Third Civil War.[88]Furthermore, Ibn al-Muhallab's enemies

---

[85] ibid., 314.
[86] ibid., 315-316.
[87] Abū Mundir al-ʻAwtabī, *al-Ansāb,* ed. Muḥammad Iṣḥsān an-Naṣṣ (Muscat: Maṭbaʻat al-Alwān al-Ḥadīṯa, 2006), 653; One of his supporters, Ṯābit Quṭna also lamented over this incident in a poem; aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ,* 2/1414
[88] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ,* 2/1858

delegitimised his political aspirations of through connecting them to the Yemenites—seen unworthy to rule. One court poet of the Umayyads, al-Farazdaq, made this clear in a poem in which he lampooned the already defeated rebels.

The Yemenites with the freedmen and slaves of Qaḥṭān among them lied
For a long time, they clearly, strongly wished for a right for the Caliphate and its columns and foundations[89]

These lines from al-Farazdaq lead us to the next question: what was the extent of messianic pretensions and perceptions about Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab? Although al-Farazdaq claimed that Yazīd aimed to become a caliph, we have contradictory information on this matter. It is certain that he opposed the entirety of the Umayyad rule, articulating his opposition by way of an appeal to the example of the prophet and the first caliphs.[90] However, we do not know what he wanted to achieve by the uprooting of the Umayyads. According to the historian al-Balāḏūrī, al-Farazdaq declared his support for the Hašimids, the clan of the Prophet, though he and his family had not shown any particular sympathy for the Hāšimid cause.[91] Conversely, Mārī Sulaymān in *Chronicle of Patriarchs* asserts that Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab claimed the caliphate for himself.[92] It is also likely that Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab had a larger-than-life charisma that may have given rise to messianic notions, as attested by a poem written by one of his supporters, Ṯābit Qutna, who mentions that the "crowned ones will prostate before them."[93]Similarly, to the case of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ, Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab, by threatening to claim the caliphate for himself as a Yemenite, triggered various reactions, and his identification with the *Qaḥṭānī* may have been among them. However, compared to Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ, we have even less evidence suggesting that he was perceived as a figure fulfilling earlier expectations.

---

[89] al-Farazdaq, *Dīwān,* ed. ʿAlī Fāʿūr (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987), 143-144.
[90] Aḥmad al-Balāḏūrī, *Ansāb al-Ašrāf*, eds. Suhayl Zakkār & Riyāḍ Zarkāy (Dār al-Fikr: Beirut, 1996), 3495.
[91] ibid., 3497.
[92] Mārī ibn Sulaymān, *Aḫbār Fatārikat Kursī al-Mašriq*, ed. Henri Gismondi (Rome: C. De Luigi 1899), 65.
[93] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ*, 2/1414

Regardless, as he aimed to uproot the Umayyad house, and as he was a prominent Yemenite nobleman, some believed that he wanted to usurp the caliphate for himself. Among these, perhaps most importantly, was the court poet al-Farazdaq. Such perceptions, similarly to the case of Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ, corresponded with the prophecies and stories about a return to South Arabian dominance that was metonymically expressed by the figure of the *Qaḥṭāni*. The lack of direct assertions from historical sources suggest that association between the *Qaḥṭāni* and Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab was not especially widespread among his contemporaries, but appeared plausible in the eyes of later beholders, such as al-Ǧāḥiẓ.

2.3. Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym: A leader of the political *Yamāniyya*

The last person under discussion was somewhat less remarkable than the previous two. He, however, led his uprising among historical circumstances, where the Yamāniyya became one of the chief markers of political division. This context was Third Civil War in Syria in the midst of which Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym led two short-lived mutinies. Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym was a leader of the South Arabian Ǧuḏām tribe, which was the dominant tribal formation in the Governorate (*ǧund*) of Palestine. His prospective career in the Umayyad army was derailed when he was imprisoned by the caliph Hišām (105/724 – 125/744) on charges of corruption.[94] Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym was freed at the behest of the prince Marwān ibn Muḥammad. A rarity among the South Arabian chieftains, Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym supported his benefactor, Marwān, against Yazīd III in 744, and Marwān entrusted him with the Yemeni section of his army in Armenia when he left for Damascus to make claim for the caliphal title. Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym, however, rose up in mutiny, but the new caliph, now Marwān II, imprisoned him. Curiously, Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym was free again in 128/744-745 and instigated the city of Hims to rebel against the new caliph. Other communities of South Arabs in Syria revolted, especially in areas where they constituted the plurality of the local Arabs—for instance, in Ghuta and Palmyra. Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym himself

---

[94] Maribel Fierro, "al-Asfar," 170-1.

gathered his forces in Palestine and laid siege to the city of Tiberias. Marwān sent an army to relieve the city, but the defenders routed the besiegers after wreaking havoc to their camp during a successful sortie. Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym withdrew his forces to Palestine, where Marwān's general Abū al-Ward followed him; Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym went underground. The new governor of Palestine convinced him to return, but Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym and his family, as well as his entourage, were immediately apprehended and executed in 128/745-746.[95]

The rebellion of Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym unfolded at a time when regional conflict between Iraq and Syria were supplanted by the pronounced rivalry between groups classifying themselves as the *Yamāniyya* and the North Arabs. However, even at a personal level, Yemenite factionalism played a defining role in the eruption of Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym's rebellion. He, after all, supported Marwan II's political ambitions, and was indebted to him personally, as Marwan had helped him to get out of prison. Ṯābit Nuʿaym's sudden betrayal of his former ally and protector can only be explained through the tribal group solidarity by which he was bound to the South Arabs, which was in turn could have been easily translated to an allegiance to the political faction of the *Yamāniyya*. This explanation is substantiated by the claim, if true, that he decided to rebel against Marwan immediately after having heard a line of poetry that reprimanded him for being disloyal to his Yemeni tribesmen in his support of the pro-North Arab Marwān II.[96] From the account, it is not clear when this incident was supposed to take place, but it is most likely that this was the impetus that pushed Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym to rebel for the first time in Armenia.

The brevity of the rebellion did not allow much time for Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym and his supporters to articulate their political goals. Nonetheless, Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym, after having emerged as one of the leaders of the *Yamāniyya* in Palestine, assumed leadership in a messianic

---

[95] aṭ-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ*, 2/1892-1895,
[96] Yazīd ibn Muḥammad al-Azdī, *Tārīḫ al-Mawṣil,* ed. ʿAlī Ḥabība (Cairo, 1967), 66.

fashion. Several sources state that that Ṯābit ibn Nu'aym himself claimed that he was the *al-Aṣfar* al-*Qaḥṭānī ("The Yellow Qaḥṭānid)*.[97] Contrary to the case of Ibn al-Aš'aṯ, who according to al-Mas'ūdī merely accepted his identification with the *Qaḥṭānī*, two chroniclers, Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyaṭ (d. 240/854) and Yazīd ibn Muḥammad al-Azdī (d. 334/946) claim that Ṯābit directly propagated his own messianic pretensions. Although al-Azdī does not quote Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyaṭ at this occasion, he drew upon the same material as Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyaṭ, and extensively relied on him.[98] It is likely, that the title *al-Aṣfar* al-*Qaḥṭānī* and its entanglement with particular historical accounts had a common source in early 9th century Basra where al-Ǧāḥiẓ and Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyaṭ both flourished. However, in the light of these reports, it seems likely that among the three cases analysed here, Ṯābit ibn Nu'aym's is the only one where we deal with a deliberate instrumentalization of the prophecies and stories about the South Arabian messianic figure. Once again, however, some of the eyewitnesses of his rebellion as well as the subsequent historiographical tradition amplified the associations of Ṯābit Nu'aym's rebellion with the motif of the promised *Qaḥṭānī*.

2.4. Conclusion

The expectations about the *Qaḥṭānī* could have been merely one ideological vehicle among others, and in the case of Ibn al-Aš'aṯ and Yazīd ibn al-Muhallab the *Yamāniyya,* as a political grouping, seems to have been a marginal component. These two rebellions were those of the provincial Iraq against the Syrian metropole and their leaders were led by the last breed of local Iraqi aristocracy, whom the governors gradually divested of their power. Beyond personal motivations, they attracted followers through their remarkable personal charisma, as well as by appealing to vague concepts of justice and religious values and—even more

---

[97] Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyaṭ, *Tārīḫ*, ed. Akran Diyā' al-'Umarī (Riyadh: Dār aṭ-Ṭayyiba,1975), 345; al-Azdī, *Tārīḫ al-Mawṣil,* 66. Ibn ʿAsākir names Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyaṭ as his source but he adds the detail that Ṯābit Nu'aym made this exclamation during the siege of Tiberias; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīḫ Dimašq*, ed. Muḥibb ad-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Ġarāma al-ʿAmrawī (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995), no. 1033.

[98] Tobias Andersson, *Early Sunnī Historiography*: *A Study of Ḫalīfa b. Ḫayyaṭ* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 37.

importantly—the idea of a shared group solidarity. The most important benchmark of this group solidarity was, however, being of Iraqi, and not of Yemenite, ancestry.

In Ibn al-Ašʿaṯ's case, many viewed him as a leader of the Yemenites and began to refer to him with titles associated with the future Yemenite ruler, such as the "*Manṣūr*." The predictions about the future Yemenite ruler circulated in the lore about ancient South Arabia were also potentially associated with him, although this should not be overstated. Ibn Muhallab, was also seen as a leader of the Qaḥṭānids, but in historical sources he is almost never brought into connection with the titles associated with the future Yemenite ruler. His enemies, however saw him as a usurper in the name of the Yemenites. The affirmation of his Yemenite connection in this case was derogatory, as the supporters of the Umayyads did not see the Yemenites as worthy of bearing the caliphal title. Therefore, in both cases the main vehicle of their identifications with the *Qaḥṭānī* were not the fervent expectations about the future Yemenite ruler, but the fact that they happened to be Qaḥṭānids and that they were contending for the caliphate. These associations with their rebellions were secondary and came to be amplified by later writers and historians.

The rivalry between *Yamāniyya* and the *Qaysiyya* reached an intensity in the 740s and spread from the provinces to Syria. The tumultuous years following the death of Hišām were determined by this conflict, and multiple South Arabian groups rebelled when Marwān II— whose main support base was the mainly North Arab Syro-Ǧazīran frontier force—ascended as caliph. As one of the chief instigators, Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym claimed that he was the promised *Qaḥṭānī*. He was a proud chieftain of a noble line, which made him predisposed to see himself as someone about whom predictions had been uttered. However, he was also a disgraced and incompetent soldier and his rebellion was quelled swiftly. After Ṯābit ibn Nuʿaym we hear about Qaḥṭānid pretenders no more, whereas other eschatological names and characters, such as the *Mahdī* and the *Sufyānī*, became widespread during the Abbasid Age.

48

In all, the political utilization of the notion of the *Qaḥṭānī* was hampered by a lack of a political basis or ideology that could reproduce it. Other messianic acceptations became more prevalent as titles used by rebels, as the political factions associated with them lasted longer. For example, the *Mahdī* was kept alive by Shiite or Shiite-adjacent movements, as well as by the figure of the *Sufyānī*, which became a token of Syrian revanchism in the Abbasid age. The emergence *Yamāniyya* was a result of policies of the Umayyads, and after the fall of that dynasty the *Yamāniyya* ceased to exist as an empire-wide movement. Therefore, the political instrumentalization of the eschatological segment of the Yemenite lore was sporadic and did not have an emphatic role before the peak of the *Yamāniyya* movement in 740s. In that decade, the *Yamāniyya* were defeated in Syria but the emergence of Marwān irrevocably turned them against the Umayyad dynasty, and they flocked to various contenders, among whom the Abbasids emerged victorious. This brought about the eclipse of the *Yamāniyya*, as in the Abbasid period the conflict between the Northern and South Arabs was confined to local politics, and they ceased to be big players in the cosmopolitan political field.

3
Histories of the future: The Yemenite ruler Islamic historico-mantic literature

With the end of the Umayyad period, the immediate political motivations for expressing the idea of a future ruler of a Yemenite ancestry ceased to exist. Nonetheless, the notion struck roots as a motif in historical and literary writing. Ancient Yemeni kings were said to have foretold the coming of a Yemenite leader in the future and certain rebels were depicted as the claimants of messianic titles. In most cases, the figure had two *sine qua non* characteristics: having Yemenite lineage and destined to restore Yemeni hegemony after an intermezzo of North Arab dominance. This figure was conceived as part of a distinct word-historical model. Likely, these notions were all facets of a Yemenite descent-group-ideology the strength and coherence of which culminated in the first half of the 8th century. Although this descent-group-ideology continued to influence the views of certain individuals and collectives, it remained a marker of political orientation at a local level. However, many attempts were made to harmonize some of the notions of this group ideology with conceptions of history, a form of which I discussed in the previous chapters. The other interface for the continued circulation of these beliefs was the incorporation of this motif into the realm of mantic history writing.

Mantic history-writing was a distinct discourse that proliferated in the centres of Islamic learning in the first few centuries AH. It had several distinct features among which I will first discuss the purported sources of these predictions. In the historico-legendary writings —with their roots in the paleo-Islamic age—predictions about a future Yemenite ruler based on the authority of certain reports and poems of ancient Yemeni kings and sages. With the passing of time, however, old Arabian aetiological tropes were replaced by Muḥammadan or Islamic ones. In concrete terms, this meant that prophecies became more credible and effective when they were told on the authorities of the prophets of Islam or the companions and followers of

Muḥammad. This was a foundational development that led to the emergence Islamic historico-mantic literature.

Another condition of possibility for the formation of this literature was the lack of reference to the history of the future in paleo-Islamic religious texts. Qur'ān was not an apocalyptic text in the sense that it does not give account of a sacred world history.[99] Nonetheless, on at least one occasion the Qur'ān refers to historically meaningful prediction, where it is predicted that Rome, after a series of defeats, will overcome its Persian opponent (Qur'ān 30:3). The announcement of this *vaticinum ex eventu* does not entail reference to any matter of salvific significance or to sacred world-history, but it contributes to the contention that in paleo-Islamic discourses the conflicts of empires and rulers were seen as legitimate subjects of predictions that could be told on prophetic authority.

Pre-Islamic scriptures and holy figures were also seen as reliable sources of historico-mantic content. The mission of Muḥammad and the message of Islam was a conscious challenge to other monotheistic scriptural religions. This challenge, however, did not abrogate the mantic capacities of the followers of the earlier religions. The prediction of the emergence of Muḥammad by Jewish or Christian scriptures and sages became a generally accepted trope in the formative period of Islamic literature.[100] This convention contributed to the legitimization of Christian and Jewish scriptures and experts as authorities on future history—the latter, in particular, on the condition that they eventually accepted Islam. Two such experts of pre-Islamic religious scriptures were Kaʿb al-Aḥbār (d. 32-5/652-6), a rabbi-turned-Muslim from Yemen[101] and ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAmr (d. 65/683), a Qurašite aristocrat who knew Syriac.[102] Their

[99] Al-Azmeh, *Emergence*, 307-310.
[100] According to Ibn Hišām, as well as Ibn Saʿd the Christian monk, Baḥīra knew about the coming of Muḥammad from his uncorrupted version of the Bible; A. Abel, "Bahira," *EI²*. Ibn Hišām also claimed that the Jews of Medina also perceived the birth of Muhammad as fulfilment of messianic prophecies; Ibn Hišām, *Sīra*, 184.
[101] M. Schmitz, "Kaʿb al-Aḥbār," *EI²*.
[102] Ibn Saʿd, *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*, vol. 5, ed. ʿAlī Maḥmūd ʿUmar (Cairo: al-Ḫāngī, 2001), 87.

names can be found in most of the oracles that make up the Syrian corpus of historico-mantic material. Also, these authorities, as well as later circulators of mantic and statements and narratives were not sages or prophets. It is never implied that they received oracles through communication with the divine or special wisdom. The initial fountainheads of predictions received their credibility from acquaintance with the scriptures of other religions, but they did not command mantic powers on their own and were described as interpreters of ancient knowledge. They, as well as those who circulated and edited these oracles, operated as chresmologues, who, unlike their ancient Greek counterparts, collected and distributed mantic material and also had a hand in their interpretation.[103]

The mantic material of the Muslim chresmologues circulated was heterogenous. It contained materials related to eschatology (*ʿalāmāt as-sāʿa*)[104] as well as historico-mantic oracles largely upon *vaticina ex eventu*. In the case of the latter, we may also split those texts into two categories with malleable boundaries. Mantic texts inspired by struggles against foreign, non-Muslim powers in the Umayyad age gave rise to descriptions of future battles called "great wars" or "battles" (*malāḥim)*. These conflicts were expected to ensue between various parties, but the struggle between an Arabo-Islamic ingroup and a Byzantine outgroup was the most popular theme of these predictions. These battles were temporally and thematiclla close to the *eschaton* and were viewed as beacons of a separate historical age that was close to the end of times.[105] The other main category of the historico-mantic literature was founded upon the experience of civil strife and wars within the Muslim community called *fitan* in Arabic.[106] Predictions about signs of moral degradation and the loss of right guidance spread were also part of the category of the *fitan,*. suggesting that these phenomena were seen concomitant with

---

[103] Michael Attyah Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 58–65.
[104] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, 634. ff.
[105] ibid., no. 1280., 1254;
[106] The word that could mean that could equally mean temptation, tribulation and anarchy was first clearly used in connection with the civil war between Ibn Zubayr and the Umayyads as a word for civil war or revolt; G. H. A. Juynboll, "The Date of the Great Fitna" *Arabica* 20, no. 2 (1973): 152.

the loss of unity and consensus. The *fitan* and the *malāḥim* were distinct yet overlapping categories, but their exact relationship is still to be mapped out. Cook claimed that that the *malāḥim* were a subgenre of the *fitan*,[107] but I would propose that these two themes—rather than genres—were two different orientations within historico-mantic discourses. These three classes of mantic and eschatological texts—the *'alāmāt as-sā'a,* the *fitan*, and the *malāḥim* influenced each other and were brought together centripetally to form one category.

The development of these three categories adjacent to eschatology was gradual. A quick glance at the representation of this material in the earliest compendia reveals gradual formation of the categories. 'Abd ar-Razzāq aṣ-San'ānī, ordered historico-mantic and eschatological predictions in thematic chapters that followed each other according to a loosely temporal sequence. He, however, does not give a general title for the segments that contain eschatological and historico-mantic material.[108] Ibn Abī Šayba, on the other hand, already has an entire book on what he calls *Fitan*, however, he seems to have only included predictions that are strictly connected to this theme.[109] Besides Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād—to whom I will return in due course—al-Buḫārī was the first who had a book titled *al-Fitan* where he discussed eschatological events besides historico-mantic predictions.[110] This development signified that under the title "*Fitan*" material was passed in the 9th century that originally had not strictly belonged to it. However, some other authors continued to maintain the difference between these categories in formation. Muslim ibn Ḥaǧǧaǧ, for example, entitled the relevant part of his compilation the *Book of Tribulations and the Signs of the Hour.*[111] Finally, this centripetal movement of categories became total in the later periods. For example, word *malāḥim*, came to refer in the High Middle es a genre of political divination, a concept not associated with word

---

[107] Cook, *Studies*, 23.

[108] Abd ar-Razzāq aṣ-San'ānī, *Muṣannaf,* vol. 21 (Cairo: Dār at-Ta'ṣīl, 2015), 188-233.

[109] Ibn Abī Šayba, *Muṣannaf*, vol. 22, Abū Muḥammad Usāma ibn Ibrāhīm (Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīṯiyya, 2008), 229 ff.

[110] al-Buḫārī, *Saḥīḥ* (Cairo: Dar Ibn Kaṯīr), 2002., 1747 ff.

[111] Muslim, *Saḥīḥ*, vol. 2, ed. Muḥammad al-Faryābī (Riyadh: ad-Dār aṭ-Ṭayyiba, 2006), no. 1316;

in the early literature[112]Most of the books containing eschatological material continued to have in their names either the words *fitan*, *malāhim* or the *ašrāṭ* or *'alāmāt as-sā'a.*[113]In the end, therefore, this centripetal movement made these originally disparate orientations vis-á-vis the future essentially synonymous with each other.

The historico-mantic material, it had two important characteristics. First, the subject was the collective: a city or the entire Muslim community[114] and that they were mostly—but not exclusively—connected to natural, but historical omens. In contrast to political divination,[115] in mantic histories political events are portents of what comes after them. Natural signs and omens appear rarely in these predictions, although there are some exceptions where the occurrence of future political events is linked to celestial formations.[116] The chresmologues moulded their predictions into several forms, such as woe oracles[117] and declarative oracles. Declarative oracles can be realized multiple times in the future, whereas historical oracles are singular, non-iterating events.[118] Many of the short prophecies in the Islamic historico-mantic corpus are not embedded in narrative or historical sequences and therefore they allow for multiple realizations. Still, a historical understanding of the future pervaded most of their predictions. This historical

---

[112] T. Fahd, "Malhama," *EI.²*

[113] Cook, *Studies*, 24-29.

[114] There are many predictions that only concern Hims, for example: Nu'aym ibn Hammad *al-Fitan*, no. 411 ff.

[115] Said Amir Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism," 265-6. The tradition of what Arjomand calls "political astrology" acquired considerable significance in the late Medieval period especially in the Turco-Persian sphere, also at times combined with apocalyptic and messianic prophecies of the Islamic literary tradition. Azfar Moin, *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 210-211. Also: Cook, David. "Messianism and Astronomical Events during the First Four Centuries of Islam," *Revue Des Mondes Musulmans et de La Méditerranée*, no. 91–94 (2000): 29–52.,

[116] Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 224.

[117] I borrowed this term from Biblical Studies, where it was isolated from prophetic speech by the followers of the form critical school; Gene M. Tucker, "Prophetic Speech" *Union Seminary Review* 32, no. 1 (January 1978): 31. this class of predictions I mean emotive predictions of impending doom, the most famous of which is "Woe to the Arabs from the Evil that has approached!"; Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 344, 355. 467. In the *Book of Tribulations,* I found no example of prophetic speech in the strictest sense, that would operate through accusation and judgement; Claus Westermann, *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech*, tr. Hugh Clayton White (Cambdridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991), 90-92.

[118]András Kraft, "The Apocalyptic Horizon in Byzantium, Philosophy, Prophecy, and Politics During the Eleventh through Thirteenth centuries," (PhD. Diss., Central European University, 2018), 119; Jean-Noël Guinot "La typologie comme technique herméneutique," in *Figures de l'Ancien Testament chez les Pères* (Strasbourg: Centre d'analyse et documentation patristique, 1989), 10-11.

outlook is quite different from what we see in the case of historico-legendary literature of the *Yamāniyya* in one important respect. In the case of the historico-legendary literature, the fundamental concept of history is monarchy, which is singular and ecumenical and is ordained to realms and peoples in a successive order.[119] Although there are a few analogous elements in the Islamic mantic histories, the main recurring motif in these scenarios is civil strife and the absence of a stable monarchy.

The composition and circulation of mantic material was politically motivated. Certain oracles were circulated already in the Umayyad period with the intent of garnering support for rulers and rebels alike.[120] Although it is difficult to gauge the dating of some of these prophecies, there are a few the compositions took place in the Umayyad age. For instance, this were the prophecies about the righteous character of the Umayyad caliph Yazīd I (60/680 – 64/683) who, by virtue of leading a naval campaign against the Byzantines, would have his sins forgiven.[121] It is hardly imaginable that anyone in the Abbasid period would have found the motivation to compose such a prediction and attribute it to the Prophet Muḥammad. Nonetheless, these Umayyad age prophecies remained in circulation, though detached from their original purpose. In the Abbasid period, imperial politics and the production of historico-mantic material continued to be intertwined, especially in the age of the caliph al-Ma'mūn (198/813 – 218/833).[122]

Many of the chresmologues, who composed, transmitted, and edited historico-mantic material, also circulated texts with the purpose of moral edification, textual exegesis, legal exempla, and historical narrations. From all these types of texts there coalesced the class in

---

[119] For the analysis of the historical outlook of Medieval Muslim eschatology see: Aziz, Al-Azmeh. „God's Chronography and the Dissipative Time," in *The Apocalyptic Complex*, David Marno, Nadia al-Bagdadi, and Matthias Riedl. Budapest: CEU Press, 2018.

[120] ʿAbd al-Ǧawād Yāsīn, *as-Sulṭa fī l-Islām*, vol. 1, (Beirut: at-Tanwir, 2012), 266-270.

[121] al-Buḫārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 2924.

[122] Hayrettin Yücesoy, *Messianic Beliefs and Imperial Politics in Medievel Islam* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009). 138-198.

Islamic religious literature generally referred to as *ḥadīṯ*. These texts came to be viewed as living links to the Prophet Muḥammad, and the belonging of a text to this category came to determine its applicability in religious sciences. The crucial criterion in the *ḥadīṯic* literature was not the theme of reports; eschatological oracles made their way into the most meticulous *ḥadīṯ* collections. What mattered was their purported source, and their chains of transmission. These were the central parameters in the methods of critical elaboration the development of which it took its course from the 8th to the 11th century. Of primary importance was the division between non-prophetic and prophetic reports which was the perquisite of critical *ḥadīṯ* sciences. This division had already been emphatically formulated by aš-Šāfiʿī. (d. 204/820).[123] There developed methodologies for the evaluation of the prophetic reports in the 9th century that primarily concentrated on the reliability of their transmitters.[124] With the further development of *ḥadīṯ* sciences, further considerations emerged and scholars forged *ḥadīṯic* material with the help of shifting paradigms of critical reflection.[125]The eschatological and historico-mantic texts, along with other types of texts, were subjected to critical evaluation, which served to determine their authenticity. Through these shifting paradigms of criticism, historico-mantic and eschatological entered the category of the *ḥadīṯ*.

In parallel with development of the *ḥadīṯ* literature, there began the independent collection of mantic and chresmological material that overlapped with the category of prophetic reports. This effort is best represented by *The Book of Tribulations* from Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād. Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād hailed from the Central Asian city of Merv and was active as a scholar

---

[123] Joseph Schacht, Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1979), 80.
[124] Jonathan Brown, *The Canonization of al-Bukhari and Muslim* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 51-54. In this earlier methodology, eschatological reports were treated in a more lenient fashion than their legal counterparts; ibid., 52.
[125] This development was gradual and lasted for centuries Scholars in the 9th century began to collect reports that they deemed authentic; Brown, *Canonization*, 60. In the next century the first treatise on the authentication of the *ḥadīṯ* was produced by Rāmāhormūzī; Asma Hilali, "Étude sur la tradition prophétique: La question de l'athenticité du I/VII[éme] au VI/XII[éme] siècle," (PhD. Diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2004), 46-49. The classical *ḥadīṯ* studies reached their mature form in the 11th century due to the activity of Naysābūrī and al-Ḫāṭib al-Baġdādī; ibid., 283.

of prophetic reports and religious law in the late 8th and early 9th centuries.[126] He was an important figure belonging the *Jamāʿī-Sunnī* tendency and an ardent opponent of rationalist, non-text-based tendencies in religious law and theology.[127] With regard to the latter, he was an opponent of Muʿtazilism, although his stance on the matter on the createdness of the Qurʾān was not as radical as most of his anti-Muʿtazilite comrades.[128] Regardless, he faced persecution during the *miḥna*[129] but he did not recant his views and died in prison.

His main work, the *Book of Tribulations* primarily represents material collected from Syrian and Egyptian chresmologues, in addition to smaller infusions of content circulated in Basra, Kufa, Medina, and Yemen from around. Although he collected predictions seemingly for most of his life, he composed this work between 216/831 and 228/844.[130] The book includes a wide variety of material, ranging from prophetic oracles, to short chresmological commentaries, as well as a few instances of coherent eschatological narratives that can bear resemblance to "Daniel-type apocalypses" written with a world-historical perspective.[131] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād was the first collector who ordered the collected historico-mantic material according to a clear-cut scenario. He ordered predictions with the same theme in separate chapters that follow each other according to a chronological sequence. The chronological relations between the various sets of events are underpinned by certain predictions that express temporal connection between them. Moreover, within a single chapter certain thematic patterns also bear the watermark of Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād 's edition. He, at times, grouped together predictions having the same narrator or same theme within one chapter. With these considerations in mind, it becomes clear that the *Book of Tribulations*—far from being a

---

[126] Ch. Pellat, "Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād," *EI²*.
[127] Jordi Agüadé, "Messianismus zur Zeit der frühen Abbasiden: Das Kitab al-Fitan des Nu'aim ibn Hammad," (PhD. diss., Universität Tübingen, 1979), 13-17.
[128] ibid., 39-47.
[129] Martin Hinds, „Miḥna," *EI²*.
[130] Aguadé, „Messianismus," 43.
[131] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, al-*Fitan*, no. 1975, 1991.

haphazard collection of discrete texts—reflected a perspective on eschatology that can be duly considered apocalyptic.

The general outline of this eschatological scenario as discernible from Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād is the following: after the Abbasids, chaos will ensue and a malevolent Umayyad pretender, the *Sufyānī*, will gain dominance over Muslims. He will be defeated by the *Mahdī*. From here the sequence of events is the following: for a while, a Yemenite will rule; under him or a second messianic figure, a Byzantine invasion will be repelled and Constantinople and eventually Rome will be conquered. From this point onwards, a series of supranatural events shall occur: the appearance of the Antichrist, Jesus, Gog and Magog, and, finally, the gradual disruption of time and space, which will be consummated in the final Hour. The general ordering of future events by Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād—according to which mantic historical events precede supranatural eschatological events—was widespread among other chresmologues, as far as it can be discerned from the chains of transmissions. However, individual opinions on details and the exact unfolding of events varied greatly among Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād's sources, and they often contradict the eschatological model of Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād himself.

As for our subject, Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād concentrated most of the historico-mantic material about a future Yemenite ruler in a single chapter titled "What is after the *Mahdi*."[132] Conceiving the emergence of a Yemenite leader after the appearance of a messianic figure bearing the title *"Mahdī"* was by no means universal in the contemporary chresmological tradition. Nu'aym ibn Hammad himself was in this respect under the influence of Syrian and Egyptian narrators upon whom he mostly relied. The chapter itself contains a wide array of disparate, fragmentary material. I will attempt discuss as much as I can from it by classifying the oracles and chresmological commentaries based on a number of parameters: the location of

---

[132] ibid., no. 379.

circulation, the timing of the emergence of the figure in the eschatological sequence of events, the appellations used to refer to him, and genealogical background of the figure.

Based on these parameters, I will sort the material into three minor clusters and one major one. By cluster, I mean a set of prophecies that show corresponding patterns with regards to their above-mentioned parameters. A cluster may include variants of a single prediction or oracles genealogically related to each other, but in all they are mere *taxa* reflecting etic considerations. Within the analysis of a cluster of prediction, I also took into consideration predictions that are not about a Yemenite ruler but do share some textual similarities, as well as *ḥadīṯic* historico-mantic texts from works other than the *Book of Tribulations*, produced approximately in the same period. Nonetheless, due to practical reasons, I will mostly discuss material found in the *Book of Tribulations.*

As for the minor clusters, they contain little by way variants and the Yemenite eschatological figure is either isolated from other eschatological events or not elaborated in detail. The investigation of further information on the texts would require the comparative analysis of the texts and their chains of transmission—a task that I cannot undertake here. Therefore, I will confine the discussion to brief examinations. Within these examinations, I aim to discuss in connection with each cluster their circulation, textual characteristics, the historical model they imply, the titles and names used in connection to them, and their potential influence on later Islamic religious corpora. The major cluster, however, is a suitable subject for a deeper analysis, as the figure under discussion takes the role of the protagonist in—compared to other texts in the *Book of Tribulations*—moderately long narrative sequences. This latter material highlights some of the patterns that governed the composition and edition of historical mantic texts of the *ḥadīṯic* form. In connection with this major cluster, I also aim to discuss the discursive elaborations about this figure. By these discursive elaborations, I mean statements

and predictions relevant to certain characteristics of the figure that, on the other hand, have no bearing on the narratives linked to this figure.

3.1. Minor clusters

3.1.1. The Medinese, "a man from Qaḥṭān" cluster[133]

The first cluster is unified by several unique characteristics. Among these is its circulation, since this cluster of predictions, in comparison to many other predictions about a future Yemenite ruler, was preserved in number of collections of prophetic reports, through different chains of transmission. The prediction was attributed to the Prophet and was told on the authority of companions of high standing among the specialists of ḥadīṯ, such as Abū Hurayra (d. 59/678) and ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿUmar (d. 73/693). This factor contributed to the remarkable popularity of the prediction first in Medina then from the mid-8th century several other centres of Islamic learning. The prediction made its way to Yemen through Maʿmar ibn Rāšid (d. 153/770)[134] and to Iraq through Muḥammad ibn Ishāq (d. 150-159/767-776).[135] A few decades later, it even appeared in the Persian city of Rayy[136] and in the beginning of the 9th century the prediction must have been known in Egypt from where it spread to Andalusia within a few generations.[137] This remarkable spread was a result of the fact that even the most selective

---

[133] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, al-*Fitan,* no. 1140; Muslim, *Saḥīḥ,* no. 2910; al-Buḫāri, *Saḥīḥ,* no. 3329; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad,* ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Šākir (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīṯ, 1995), no. 9405; aṭ-Ṭabarānī, al-Muʿǧam al-Awsaṭ, ed. Ṭāriq ibn ʾIwaḍ Allāh and ʿAbd al-Muḥsin ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥusaynī (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1995), no. 3833; ʿUṯmān ad-Dāni, *as-Sunan al-wārida fī al-fitan,* ed. Riḍāʾ ad-Dīn al-Mubārakfūrī (Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1995), no. 531, 532.

[134] ʿAbd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf,* no. 32. The chains of transmission of these versions suggest that the vagabond scholar Maʿmar ibn Rāšid (d. 153/770) encountered this tradition in Medina and later transmitted it in Yemen; *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb,* vol 10, no. 439.

[135] Ibn Ḥaǧar: *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb*, vol. 9 (Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1999), no. 51.

[136] This chain of transmission is preserved in aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿǧam al-Awsaṭ*, no. 3833. The transmitter following Ibn Isḥāq immediately, was Salama ibn al-Faḍl, who served as qāḍī in Rayy and the ultimate transmitter, ʿAlī ibn Saʿīd al-ʿAskarī lived the end of his life in the same city; Ibn Ḥaǧar: *Tahḏīb,* vol. 4, no. 256.; Ibn ad-Dumyāṭī, *al-Mustafād min Ḏayl Tārīḫ Baǧdād,* ed. Muḥammad Mawlūd Ḫalaf (Beirut: Muʾassasat ar-Risāla, 1982) no 144.

[137] ʿad-Dāni, *as-Sunan*, no. 531, 532. The chain of transmission goes back to Medina but in the 9th century it was known by the Egyptian transmitters Saʿīd ibn Kaṯīr (d. 226/841) and Rūḥ ibn al-Faraǧ (d. 282/895); *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb* vol. 4, no. 129. and vol. 3, no. 554. The immediate transmitter for ad-Dānī was Abū ʿAbdallah Muḥammad al-Ġassānī, who lived in Cordoba, and was said to be one of the šuyūḫ of the Yemenese in Andalusia; ibn

of *ḥadīṯ* scholars deemed its chain of transmission acceptable, which gave this prediction heightened credibility.

In this cluster, the form of the prediction is the short declarative oracle, which was a rather popular way to foretell future events in historico-mantic and eschatological literature. These predictions often begin with the general formulae: "the Hour will not come until" or "the days and night shall not pass until."[138] This is also the case with the prediction under discussion, as the two formulae appear in different variations. These wordings indicate that the content of the prophecy is linked not to other future events or omens but to the eschaton itself. The emergence of this figure will not be a world-historically significant event, and it is only important as a portent of the End of the World. The phrasing itself distils the motif of the future Yemenite ruler from the world historical model and political ideology that it figured in. The prediction transposes the figure to a specific configuration of mantic history, the centre of which is the End of Time.

This direct removal of the figure from its historico-legendary and political context divests the figure of the functions or the tasks he was expected to accomplish. However, the oracles predict that he will lead the people with his rod. Though this rather vague and ambiguous prediction allows for the attachment of negative and positive traits, it clearly expresses that this figure will be a ruler who will dominate the people with force. This concept is not alien from the expected Yemenite figure in the historico-legendary literature discussed in the first chapter, especially its version in the *History* of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya where the royal qualities expected Yemenite monarch of this figure are emphasized.

Baškuwāl, *aṣ-Ṣila fī Tārīḫ Aʾimmat al-Andalus,* ed. Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī, 1989), no. 1094.
[138] Only in the *Book of Tribulations* we find plenty of predictions with these formulations; Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 1723, 40, 1667, 1488 etc., The days do not pass wording is found in ʿAbd ar-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, no. 32.

Most variations of the prediction do not refer to the foretold eschatological figure by any established appellation or title but employs the periphrasis "a man from *Qaḥṭān*." The periphrases used in this prediction confer a certain degree obscurity to the text—a conventional tool in the composition of oracles of all kinds. However, the absence of any title or name may reflect a context where the figure was not firmly established. In a later version of this prediction, however, the genealogical affiliation became expressed through a *nisba* with the definite article *("al-Qaḥṭānī")*.[139] This name was already present in the historico-legendary literature and also in some other segments of the Islamic mantic history and gained considerable currency. At any rate, the entire cluster enjoyed such popularity that it was incorporated in the two most revered collections in what became, in time, Sunni Islam and has remained the most well-known prediction with a reference to a Yemenite ruler.[140]

3.1.2. The Basran "king list" cluster[141]

The common characteristics of the predictions in this cluster concern their circulation, form and a specific appellation used to refer to the future Yemenite ruler. Most of these prophecies were circulated in the city of Basra on the authority of ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ who told this prediction on the authority of unnamed scriptures found during the Battle of Yarmūk.[142] The "latest common link" in the chain of transmission is the famous Basran interpreter of dreams, Muḥammad Ibn Sīrīn (d. 110/729).[143] Through him, the prediction

---

[139] aṭ-Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿǧam Awsaṭ*, no. 3833

[140] Exegetes had a difficult time to make sense of these prophecies and reached various conclusions. Some saw this prophecy merely an eschatological sign of the overturning of the world order, as a Yemenite would usurp the caliphate; Ibn Baṭṭāl, *Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī*, vol. 10, ed. Abū Tamīm Yāsir ibn Ibrāhīm (Riyadh: Maktabat ar-Rušd, 2008), 59. In the Late Middle Ages, more encyclopaedic exegetes connected this figure to the predictions found in Ibn Hišām's *Book of Crowns* and Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād's *Book of Tribulation*; Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī, *Fatḥ al-Bārī fī Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī*, vol. 13, ed. Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī (Riyadh: al-Maktaba as-Salafiyya, 2019), 78; Šihāb ad-Dīn al-Qastallānī: *Iršād as-Sārī fī Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī*, vol. 15, ed. Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḫālidī (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996), 63. In light of these extra-*ḥadīṯic* sources these exegetes formed a more positive view on the future Yemenite ruler.

[141] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 263, 264, 265, 266, 1204, 1205, 270, 1144, 1211; ad-Dānī, *as-Sunan*, no. 503, 512, 515.

[142] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 264.

[143] Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Tahḏīb*, vol. 9, no. 338.

continued to be circulated in Basra but it also made its way to Yemen.[144] Although unrelated to these chains of transmission, predictions with several textual similarities also emerged in Egypt and Syria.

I propose to coin these segments "king list" predictions as they list a number—either three or seven—titles that refer to eschatological rulers. The fullest version of the prediction begins with the enumeration of the historical rulers of the Islamic Empire form Abū Bakr (11/632 – 13/634) to Yazīd I by their enigmatic titles. These sequences leave ʿAlī (35/656 – 40/661)—the fourth "rightly guided caliph" out.[145] After each of the historical rulers the formula is used: "you guessed his name right." Then comes a shift to the history of the future where further titles are mentioned. These include more famous ones, such as the *Mahdī* and the *Manṣūr,* as well as the *Saffāh*—echoing the first decades of Abbasid rule—as well as certain more obscure referents like *Sīn* (the letter S) and *Salām* (Peace). After their enumeration, the rulers are described in the prophecies as being benevolent and it is also mentioned that after them no good shall come. In certain predictions, between the enumeration and the elaboration, it is stated that the six of these six of the seven rulers will be the descendants of the North Arab Kaʿb ibn Lu'ayy and one will be a scion of Qaḥṭān.[146]

These predictions are related to the twelve-rulers type prophecies and have clear parallels with them.[147] One of the most important commonalities is the numerical limitation of the rulers of the Muslim community. Another significant characteristic, which points to the common inspiration of these two types of prophecy, is the importance of the genealogy of the rulers

---

[144] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 263, 264, 265.
[145] The set of listed historical rulers are different from prediction to prediction. The Umayyads are only included in ibid., no. 263.
[146] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 263, 264, 1204, 1205.
[147] Uri Rubin, "Apocalypse and Authority in Islamic Tradition: The Emergence of the Twelve Leaders," *Al-Qantara* 18, no. 1 (1997), 12; Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no, 230, 232.

predicted, as they are introduced as the descendants of one of their distant forefathers.[148] These two characteristics render these two types of predictions *sui generis* in the corpus of Islamic historico-mantic tradition. Furthermore, the future is not conceived as constantly deteriorating, as an amelioration in the situation of the world shall occur, brought about, not by a single messianic figure but by the sequence of righteous eschatological rulers.[149] However, there is one significant difference between the two types of oracles. According to some of the "twelve ruler" predictions the uprightness of religion will persist as long as the rule these twelve caliphs from Qurayš is not consummated. These predictions corresponded to the notions about the limitation of the caliphal title to the Qurayš—an idea that in this age was primarily expressed in the historico-mantic discourse but later became a salient element in the Islamic political thought of the Middle Ages. However, in the King List oracles being from the right tribal group does not have the a quasi-*katechonic* function or world-historical importance. The fact that one of the rulers is a Yemenite seemingly does not make him any different from his North Arab peers in other regards.

Certain chresmologues understood that the Yemenite among these predicted figures will be the bearer of the title the Commander of the Bands (*Amīr al-ʿUṣab*).[150] The word "bands" in relation to a future Yemenite ruler also appear in the historico-legendary literature where ʿAbīd ibn Šarya told a poem according to which this future leader will disperse the masses and unify the bands. The connection between this title in the mantic historical literature and the poem by ʿAbīd ibn Šarya is declared by a chresmological commentary of the Damascene scholar, al-Walīd ibn Muslim (d. 195/810), who explains the origin of this title with a variation of the poem

---

[148] According to Rubin the genealogical and numerical orientation of this types of text emerged from an ur-prediction that played with reference to Genesis 17:20 mentioning twelve princes begotten by Ismāʿīl (Genesis 17:20) Uri Rubin, "Apocalypse," 12. This prediction is preserved by Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād: Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 230.

[149] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 220.

[150] ibid., no. 1207. In certain predictions we encounter not the word commander (*amīr*), but master (*ḏū*); ibid. no.. 273, 1212.

in the *History* by ʿAbīd ibn Šarya .[151] Other chresmologues directly announce that the bearer of the title will be Yemenite. The motif, and by extension the title, however, did not appear only in connection with a Yemenite figure. In a particular prediction, the motif represents an anti-Umayyad impulse rather than a specifically Yemenite sentiment. This prediction attributed to ʿAlī ibn Abī Ṭālib foretells the downfall of the Umayyads and connects this to the portent according to which bands will assemble. ʿAlī likened the assembly of these bands to the autumn clouds. Based on the placement of this prediction in the *Book of Tribulations,* it seems that Nuʿaym ibn Hammad, and perhaps earlier chresmologues, associated it with the figure of the *Mahdī.* [152] Regardless, due to the well-established connections between the notion of a Yemenite ruler in the future and this motif, the title Commander of the Bands was added to the palette of chresmological elaboration of a Yemenite hue.

3.1.3. The Kufan historical oracles[153]

The common parameters of this cluster are the form of predictions and the titles that are used to refer to Yemenite leader in the future. With regards to their chains of transmission, most of the recognizable narrators are Kufan.[154] The Iraqi city of Kufa was home to many pro-Hāšimid political and religious movements. Correspondingly, the sources of predictions are who all have a high standing among pro-Hāšimid and more specifically pro-ʿAlīd circles: ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir (d. 31/657)[155] and Muḥammad al-Bāqir (d. 114/733).[156] The common element in these predictions is that they belong to the class of historical oracles. The sequences provided by these historical oracles make up an eschatological history that culminates in the

---

[151] ibid., no. 1172.
[152] ibid., no. 909.
[153] ibid., no. 621, 849, 882, 884,
[154] Ibn Ḥağar, *Tahḏīb*, vol. 4, 61.
[155] H. Reckendorf, "ʿAmmār ibn Yāsir," *EI²*.
[156] E. Kohlberg, "Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī," *EI²*.

appearance of the *al-Mahdī*. The Yemenite ruling figure can only come before him and is relegated to having a rather episodic role.

These historical oracles were most likely transmitted together as narratives sequences of events, but Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād presents them in a fragmented fashion.[157] However, they can be reassembled based on their chains of transmission and they add up to coherent narrative cycles. The form of these segments is typical in Islamic mantic history writing. The actors in this history are nations, tribes and dynasties, often personalized by their leaders, who engage in various military operations. Although the sequence of events is sometimes confused, they generally conform to particular linear models. Techniques of narrative telescoping are only employed in the most emphatic moments, usually when an emergence of a leader is described.[158] These are also the points when supernatural elements are introduced, but in general they are toned down and neither divine nor satanic forces intervene in worldly events directly on a regular basis.

This history of the future concentrates on the figures of the *Mahdī* and *Sufyānī*. The former a Hāšimid hero and deliverer, whereas the *Sufyānī* is an Umayyad ruler, who is usually portrayed in a rather negative light.[159] In the time of the *Sufyānī* plenty other figures will emerge who will either not threaten his dominance or will suffer defeat at his hands. Among these figures is a Yemenite leader who, according to one prediction, will, hail from Yemeni territory.

---

[157] The reports with the same chains of transmissions can be stitched together to form a coherent narrative sequence. A case in point are the predictions with the chain of transmission Abū Ǧaʾfar → Ǧābir (al-Ǧuʿfī) → Abū ʿUṯmān can be stitched together in a mantic chronicle about the fall of the Umayyads the emergence of the Abbasids and their collapse and then confrontation of the *Sufyānī* and the *Mahdī; Nuʾaym ibn Ḥammād*, al-Fitan, no. 566, 621, 623, 804, 836, 849, 884, 901., 909, 913, 921, 945, 974, 999.

[158] The two most remarkable examples are the predictions about the dream that inspires the *Sufyānī* and the various descriptions of the election of the *Mahdī*; ibid., no. 823, 973-978, 1000.

[159] The dissonance between the negative image of the *Sufyāni* in the historico-mantic literature and the fact that many political uprisings made use of this figure has invited many scholars to discuss this figure. Recently, Mehdy Shaddel put out several convincing arguments to prove that the figure had originally been messianic before its image was tarnished by pro-Abbasid propagandists; Mehdy Shaddel, "The Sufyānī in Early Islamic Kerygma: An Enquiry into His Origins and Early Development." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 3 (2017): 403–34.

The *Sufyānī*, however, will easily defeat him and go on to destroy the city of Kufa.[160] In another prediction, a figure called al-Yamani will defeat the Qays tribe who are, in this scenario, the followers of the *Sufyānī* at Jericho. The Yemenite leader, however, is not mentioned anymore, and the *Sufyānī* in this prediction also goes on to besiege Kufa after their encounter.[161]

Two appellations of the figure of Yemenite ruler used in this cluster. First the *"Yamānī"* (the Yemenite), in the context of these predictions, is a title of an eschatological figure that merely pins down the figure's genealogical affiliation. As the *Yamānī* will not be a ruler of Muslims in these scenarios, the additional connotation of the title that he will return the dominion of the world to the South Arabian is also absent. It is similar to several other figures who appear in the *Sufyānī-Mahdī* cycle in the sense that he is referred to by his tribal affiliation. In these texts, we find names such as "the *Kindī,"* and "the *Ǧurhumī"* who also only have a minor role, subordinated to the importance of the *Sufyānī* and the *Mahdī*. as these figures do little besides participating in the power struggles as leaders. The proliferation of these types of titles in the mantic oracles suggests that these appellations stood metonymically to represent collectives of people.

The other appellative term that is used to refer to this figure is the appellative *Manṣūr* (literally: "victorious" or aided to victory"). This title appeared in connection with other formulations of the idea of a future Yemenite ruler. This appellation, in the scope of historico-legendary literature—close to its literal meaning—conveyed not as much messianic or salvific, but regnal qualities. In the historico-mantic literature, however, the *Manṣūr* was not a stable referent to a single figure in the historical scenarios of the future. This appellative retained a degree of linguistic and semantic flexibility that allowed it to be paired with figures with either

---

[160] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 849.
[161] ibid., no. 882.

Qurašite or Yemenite ancestry.[162] The linguistic aspect of this flexibility was that this appellative term could be paired in a genitive construction (*Manṣūr al-Yamān*) with certain collectives and may appear at times without the definite article.[163] In a genitive construction, the title *al-Manṣūr*, similarly to the genealogical appellations, was a tool the personalize a collective of people in the history of the future by and affirming their participation in it. At any rate, both the indefinite and the genitive form of the appellation suggests that it was generally held that multiple persons may take up this title. However, as to be discussed later, certain chresmologues made attempts to pin this title to a single messianic figure, thereby transforming it to an eschatological title.

As for the relevance of these predictions, this cluster displays interesting correspondences with various Shi'ite eschatological concepts and vocabularies. It is not only that these historical oracles are attributed to persons respected by Shiites and that they present a history of the future which culminates in the coming to power of a Hāšimid messiah bearing the title *"Mahdī,"* but the titles of the future Yemeni rulers are also interesting in this regard. For example, Ibn al-Ḥawšab, (d. 302/914) an Ismāʿīlī Shiite preacher who conquered parts of Yemen, received the title *Manṣūr al-Yaman*.[164] In later Twelver Shi'ite elaborations of eschatology, there emerged a messianic figure called *"Yamānī"* who will be a helper of the *Mahdī* returning from his occultation.[165] The formation of Shiite corpora of mantic history and its development to a pre-millenarian eschatology is beyond the scope of this study. Regardless, these predictions show that chresmologues of Shi'ite inclination already had their preference

---

[162] Certain predictions were composed in order to affirm the genealogical pedigree of the figure; ibid. no. 279, 280, 1145, 1207, 1210. The prophecies that argue for his Qurašite descent form part of the discursive pattern of Qurašisation that I discuss at the end of the chapter.
[163] ibid., 278, 893.
[164] W. Madelung "Manṣūr al-Yaman," *EI²*.
[165] Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭūsī, *Amālī*, ed. Bahrad al-Ǧaʿfarī, ʿAlī Akbar al-Ġaffārī (Teheran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1380 AH) 66; Muḥammad an-Nuʿmānī, *Kitāb al-Ġayba*, ed. Fāris Hassūn Karīm (Qom: Anwār al-Hudā, 2011), 264.

for certain appellations for a figure of Yemenite ancestry, within the wider field of Islamic mantic history.

3.2. The Syro-(Egyptian) cluster: Discursive and narrative elaborations

The predictions from Syrian narrators show the richest variety with regards to the figure of the future Yemenite ruler. This is not only because Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād mostly relied on chresmologues from this region but also because Syria's great cities were hotbeds for Yemenite descent ideology in the Umayyad Age and this sentiment—with lesser intensity—persisted in the Abbasid period. Most of the Arabdom of South Syria—today's Palestine and Jordan—wholly considered itself Qaḥṭānid. Damascus and its surroundings, especially Ghuta, was a stronghold of the Yemenites.[166] Although less powerful than most other tribes militarily, the various Ḥimyarite sections who lived in the city of Hims were crucial to the unity of the confederacy.[167] They were relatively recent migrants to the region—having arrived only with the Islamic conquests—but they played an indispensable role in cementing the Yemenite descent ideology in Syria.[168] Therefore, most of the narrators of this cluster hailed from the cities of Hims and Damascus, although Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād preserved predictions with Egyptian chains of transmissions using the same vocabulary and operating on similar assumptions.[169]

Beyond the geographical location of elaboration and original circulation, this cluster is bound together by several other characteristics. First and foremost, these traditions already seem to conceive of the idea of a future Yemenite ruler in the mantic-historical model—with its developed characters and motifemic vocabulary that Nu'aym ibn Ḥammād also embraced.

---

[166] Paul M. Cobb, White Banners, Contention in Abbasid Syria, (Albany: State University New York Press, 2001), 13.
[167] Werner Caskel, Ğamhara, vol. 1, 33.
[168] Wilferd Madelung, "Apocalyptic prophecies in Hims in the Umayyad age." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31, no. 2 (1986): 149.
[169] Nu'aym ibn Hammad, no. 1146.

According to the prophecies of this cluster, the future Yemenite ruler was part of an already mapped history of the future. In this historical outlook of the future, unlike the Kufan cluster, the Yemenite ruler will invariably follow the *Mahdī*. What or who comes after him, however, was not a matter of consensus among chresmologues. A widespread, but not exclusive notion was that he will pass on rulership to a second person bearing the *"Mahdī"* title.[170] At any rate, this was a very special position for the Yemenite ruler, as he would thereby be the temporal link between the period of internal strife (*fitan*) and the apocalyptic battles, primarily against the Byzantines (*malāḥim*). According to many chresmologues, he would participate in both types of conflicts.[171] This position within the eschatological sequence of events was the lowest common denominator for all Syrian and Egyptian chresmologues.

As for the naming of the figure, this cluster of predictions contain a variety of appellations to the future Yemenite ruler. Certain predictions seemed to have been in circulation detached from a wider mantic discourse about a future Yemenite ruler, and do not make use of established titles and names. For example, the figure is described with the help of a periphrasis "a man from Qaḥṭān"—not unlike in the Medinese cluster.[172] In addition, the adjective *"Yamāni,"* was at times used alongside with the title "caliph," creating the recurring appellative collocation "Yemeni caliph."[173] The Yemeni caliph, however, was not an established title, and this collocation was always paired with a demonstrative pronoun, implying that this appellative form was not strictly connected to functions and activities expected from a future Yemenite ruler. In this case, the word *"Yamāni,"* was merely an epithet attached to the general title caliph.

Conversely, other predictions figured in a discourse where the possibility of the emergence of a Yemenite ruler was already established. This pattern was betokened by the

---

[170] ibid., no. 1230, 1181.
[171] ibid., no. 1137, 1234.
[172] ibid., no. 1234.
[173] ibid., no. 1142, 1147, 1201, 1238.

70

definite article accompanying the genealogical-toponymic adjectives (*Qaḥṭānī, Yamānī*), which, in turn, came to be used as proper nouns.[174] The usage of titles, such as *Manṣūr* and *Amīr al-ʿUṣab* also shows that the chresmologues of this clusters aimed to establish a single figure who would bear them. The appellative term *Manṣūr* was pinned down to a single character and debates emerged about his genealogical affiliation. Some chresmologues also made comments that affirmed the Yemenite genealogical pedigree of the *Amīr al-ʿUṣab*.[175] Through these changes, these appellatives were on their way to become defined titles referring to a single character. All this shows that the various appellations, concepts and motifs coalesced into a single figure in the totality of the history of the future.

What accompanied the specification and singularisation of this figure was the proliferation of predictions and statements about him that was in turn fostered by multiple factors. For one, the motif of a Yemenite ruler was incorporated in narrative sequences and—unlike in other clusters—the ruler even becomes the central figure. These narrative sequences are composite in nature, and their narrative structure bear close resemblance to cycles of other figures in the historico-mantic corpus. Furthermore, the figure of a Yemenite deliverer implied a challenge to Qurašite dominance, just as in its manifestations in the historico-legendary literature and in its attachment to historical persons. This remained a rather contentious issue and conflicting views were expressed in various forms, in critical-chresmological commentaries or even by the invention of new oracles and predictions. I will first discuss the former, narrative type of elaboration; then, I will turn to the latter reflections, which were more discursive in nature.

---

[174] ibid., no. 1138, 1146, 1240, 1143, 1153.
[175] ibid., no. 1206.

3.2.1. The narratives about the Yemenite deliverer

The motif of a future Yemenite ruler underwent more detailed elaborations within the framework of multiple narrative sequences. These narrative sequences in the *Book of Tribulations* are parts of histories of the future. I have already discussed the characteristics of the historical oracles and the histories of the future that they constitute in connection to the Kufan cluster of predictions. To reiterate, the narrative sequences are composed of subsets of declarative, argumentative and most importantly historical, narrative oracles. The various oracles, when told on the authority of the same chain of narration—in most cases—reflect a coherent version of the narrative sequence with regards to the events described and the vocabulary, tropes and themes used.

The motif expected Yemenite ruler was brought into connection to a narrative sequence about the future battles between the Muslims and the Byzantines in Syria, as well as the conquest of various domains beyond the contemporary lands of Islam, such as India and Constantinople. [176] In these predictions, the future Yemenite ruler is not portrayed in a heroic or epic mode, he marks the Yemenite participation in these battles and conquest without much effect on the narrative itself. In this case, the incorporation of the future Yemenite ruler in the narrative was achieved through the attachment of adjectives and paraphrases—expressing Yemenite pedigree—to the title "caliph." Furthermore, there are a few chresmological comments that establish a connection between the Yemenite ruler and the leader of the Muslims against their foreign foes.[177] In other instances, this latter function in the histories of future was attributed to a figure of non-Arab, as well as Qurašite descent.[178] This serves to show that being a Yemenite was not considered necessary to the fulfilment of this function.

---

[176] ibid., no. 1247, 1290, 1300.
[177] ibid., no. 1147, 1201, 1238.
[178] ibid., no. 1300.

More importantly, the main narrative sequence about a future Yemenite ruler was an aetiological tale set in the future. Its main purpose was reinforcing solidarity between various Yemenite segments residing in Syria. In order to make a narrative and motifemic examination of this narrative sequence, one has to take into account the fragmentary character of Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād's *Book of Tribulation*. These fragmentary predictions and chresmological comments seem to constitute four different variations of this narrative sequence. Three of the variations have a common link in their chains of transmission, all of whom flourished in Syria during the middle of the 8th century. The first group of prophecies most likely go back to Abū Bakr ibn Abī Maryam (d. 156/773).[179] They consist of one longer, historical oracle, and several shorter declarative oracles. The second version goes back to Yazīd ibn ʿAṭāʾ (d. 177/793).[180] The two most important elements in this second set of texts are two twin-predictions that Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammad, because of his thematically based editorial practices, divided up into two parts are presented separately and the second one ends abruptly, without a narrative closure. The third version was most actively circulated by Arṭaʾa ibn al-Munḏir (d. 163/780).[181] There are plenty of rump predictions preserved from him through well-known chresmologues, but only one full account was transmitted to Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād through the obscure Abū Ayyūb. Finally, the fourth variant is a single prediction that was of relatively late composition. It seems that Damascene ʿAbd Allah ibn Marwān.[182] welded together multiple versions and attached to it an obviously fictitious chain of transmission. These four versions show interesting patterns with regard to their composition and motifemic vocabulary.

	Version A.	Version B.	Version C.	Version D.
Common link, possible source	Abū Bakr ibn Abī Maryam	Arṭā Arṭaʾa ibn al-Munḏir	Yazīd ibn ʿAṭāʾ	ʿAbd Allah ibn Marwān–combines B. and C.

---

[179] Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Tahḏīb,* vol. 11, no. 129.
[180] ibid., vol. 11, no. 571.
[181] ibid., vol. 1, no. 373.
[182] Ibn ʿAsākir, *Tārīḫ*, no. 4569.

Predictions	**1178.**, 1156, 1162., 1173., 1185.	**1218.**, 1164. 1166., 1171. 1174. 1147.(?)	**1161-1170**, 1143. 1153.	**1136.**

Table 1. Sources of the variants.

3.2.2. Narrative elaborations I: Plots of the variant narratives

These variations differ in their emplotments, motifemic elaborations and the titles used for the protagonist of the story. The underlying narrative however, is shared among all versions; even if certain elements of some variations were not preserved for posteriority. In all variants of this narrative sequence, the starting point of the plot is the rule of a Qurašite ruler who settles in Jerusalem. He decides to expel the Yemenites from Syria who takes refuge in the wilderness. There, however, the expelled Yemenites give aid to each other and unite at a particular location. Together, the Yemenites pledge allegiance to a leader from their ranks. Under his leadership, the Yemenites first try to negotiate with the Qurašite ruler of Jerusalem. After these attempts break down, the Yemenites march on Jerusalem and face the Qurašite ruler. They defeat him in battle and—in some variations—exact their vengeance upon the Qurašites.

The fundamental skeleton of the narrative is most clear in version A.[183] Due to the variations in the chains of transmission and the antiquity of its common link, it is safe to assume version A reflects an earlier stratum in the formation of this narrative sequence. Furthermore, the plot is centred not around the Yemenite ruler, but the conflict between the North Arabs and Yemenites. In this version, the Qurašite—more specifically, Hašimid—ruler is not described as impious or immoral; he is the antagonist by the virtue of oppressing the Yemenite sections of Syria. The encounter of the expelled groups with their South-Syrian Yemenite cousins is what emphasized, and it serves as the turning point of the narrative. The South Syrian tribes are the ones who help them in their needs and ask the expelled where they are going. At this point, the expelled tribes realize their connection to their land and their Yemenite brothers and decide to

---

[183] See Appendix I.

confront the ruler. Electing a ruler among themselves—without divine help—is almost an afterthought that does not receive any more attention in the rest of the story. At the end of the story, the unified Yemenites have their vengeance. The solidarity of the Yemenites with each other and their antagonism towards the Northern Arabs is the key theme in this story.

Compared to this version, further elements were added, and different plot points were emphasized. In these versions we do not encounter the same thematic coherence as in variant A. For example, in variant B[184], it is mentioned that the Northern Arab Mudarites are the ones who convince the ruler that he should expel the Yemenites, as well as the non-Arab Muslims. Also, in this variation it is not the other, South Syrian Yemenites—who do not even appear— but a mysterious divine voice who calls out for them, and this is what makes them ask each other about the reason of their decision to comply with their expatriation. There is only a very brief reference to the appointment of a leader, although the divine voice from above mentions regnal-messianic title "*Manṣūr.*" The last plot points, too, are entirely omitted and can only be guessed with the help of the other variants. In variant B, compared to the previous one, Yemenite group solidarity is expressed not between the Middle Syrian and the South Syrian tribes, but only among those expelled. It seems—although it is difficult to determine due to the absence of the ending—that the focus of the plot is not the Yemenite collective but the *Manṣūr*.

The narrative of variant C[185] elaborates the circumstances of the expulsion with much more detail. The evil Qurašite, who is named the "worst on the face of the earth" is clearly the one who sets the events in motion, without the outside instigation of the Northern Arab tribes. In this version, the ruler is not merely the opponent of the Yemenites but also a quasi-Antichrist figure, before expelling the Yemenites, commits heinous crimes that are afront to the religion of Islam and public morals. In this version a detail is added, that the separate tribal sections are

---

[184] See Appendix II.
[185] See Appendix III.

kept divided by the military forces of the evil ruler. Regardless, the expelled Yemenites maintain correspondence and manage to gather at Bosra. There, by divine intervention, they pledge allegiance to one among them. Right before the battle, the non-expelled South Syrian Yemenite tribes are also mentioned but this digression does not bear any consequence to the story. The variant ends with the victory of the Yemenites, but they exact no vengeance upon the North Arabs. The most empathic point in this variant are the immoral deeds of the evil ruler. It also combines variants A and B with regard to the subject of the gathering. Not unlike in version B, the division and the subsequent gathering of the expelled tribes is an important element in the narrative. However, similarly to variant A, the South Syrian Yemenite tribes of Laḫm, Ǧuḏām and ʿĀmila, who are not part of the expatriated Yemenites also play a role.

The last variant of this narrative sequence D[186] begins similarly to the variant C, as the ruler is described to commit immoral deeds—though in his case, he is said to be from the Banū Maḫzūm clan of the Qurayš tribe. After their expulsion, the Yemenites end up in the valleys of Palestine where, due to the mountainous terrain of the region, they disperse. First, they are helped by their Palestinian cousins, then they reassemble after finding their way out from the valleys. Once again, a *deus ex machina* that prompts the Yemenites to turn back and elect a leader by calling out "Oh *Manṣūr*". The sending of envoys to the evil ruler are also detailed. The Yemenites send multiple envoys, but the *Maḫzūmī* puts to death all but one emissary. The survivor lives to tell the Yemenites about the tyrannical ways of the *Maḫzūmī*. This angers the Yemenites, who defeat the ruler at his capital. In this variant, however, similarly to variant A, the Yemenites have their vengeance on their Qurašite oppressors. This variant is a composite one, as it a harmonizes elements from versions A (vengeance upon the Qurayš), B (emphasis on the title *Manṣūr*), and C (the dispersion of the expelled tribes).

---

[186] See Appendix IV.

In all, the oldest variant, A, was essentially an aetiological story that aimed to express solidarity between the Ḥimyarite sections of Middle Syria and the related tribes of Laḫm, Ǧuḏām and ʿAmila of Southern Syria. In the 680s, when the Yemenite genealogy of the Ǧuḏām was not yet definite, conflicts erupted between pro-Qays and pro-Qaḥṭān segments of the tribe.[187] Although the Yemenite party won eventually, the genealogical affiliation of the Ǧuḏām remained dubious in the eyes of their North Arabs neighbours.[188] It is this historical context— when the Yemenite allegiance of these tribes was still insecure—that this story was composed in. The other important sentiment that is expressed most emphatically in the early variant A is an emotive adherence to the land that reflects the experience of those who recently migrated into Syria. This little, yet influential minority were the Ḥimyarite segments—among others the Maʿāfir, the Sakāsik and the Ḏū Kalāʿa who settled in Hims in the wake of the Islamic conquests. In all likelihood, the story in its fundamental form reflects their perspectives.

It is also clear that the figure of the elected leader is entirely dispensable in variant A and originally may not have been part of the story. Only in later renderings of the story the election of the leader was given greater emphasis and divine validation. As the Ǧuḏām also became an inseparable part of the Yemenite confederacy after the 680s, there was little reason to have this detail as the crux of the narrative. The gathering after the expulsion happens among the expatriated Yemenites and the Ǧuḏām and the Laḫm are not given a special role. In parallel, the figure of the divinely ordained leader came to be emphasized to the degree that this set of predictions entered the category of predictions about the future Yemenite ruler. The antagonistic ruler also becomes more immoral in character and chresmologues recast the story in a fashion that came to imply a confrontation between a non-Islamic ruler and pious rebels and their divinely ordained leader. These retellings conformed to a tendency of making the story

---

[187] Crone, *Slaves on Horses*, 34.
[188] C. E. Bosworth, "Djuḏḫām." *EI²*.

more focused on one individual, as well as pronouncing its potential moral and religious messages.

	Variant A	Variant B	Variant C	Varaiant D
Exposition	A Hāšimid expels the Yemenites. (no reason is given).	A Qurašite expels the Yemenites and the *mawālī*. (At the instigation of the North Arabs)	The evil deeds of the Qurašite culminate in the expulsion of the Yemenites.	Identical to Variant C. The ruler is referred to as the *Maḫzūmī*.
Rising Action	Meeting with the Laḫm and the Ǧuḏām.	The expelled unite in the wastelands.	The tribes divided separately now unite.	Meeting with the Laḫm and the Ǧuḏām and the expelled tribes unite (they were divided by geographical obstacles).
Climax	The tribes ask them to stay.	The voice calls out, they ask each other to stay, then elect a leader.	The voice from the sky calls out, it appoints a leader.	Identical to C.
Falling action	Emissaries are sent, all are killed. They elect a leader	N/A.	Meeting with the Laḫm and the Ǧuḏām..	Emissaries are sent, all but one killed.
Resolution	The Qurayš is defeated and exterminated.	N/A.	The Qurayš is defeated.	Identical to Variant A.

Table 2. Variations in the Plots[189]

---

[189] *Faut de mieux*, I juxtapose the variants against the background of this rather schematic structure. Tentatively, these five plot points may be described as functions in Proppian terms as functions that are identical in these specific narratives: transgressive injustice (function I.) → , *ingathering* of a community (function II.) → a leader is elected, or unity is reaffirmed (function III.) → preparations for the confrontation (function IV.) → final confrontation (function V.). However, I did not see necessary to apply this terminology, especially because I do not have the amount of material that is necessary to establish these narrative functions on their own right; Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale,* trans. Laurence Scott (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 19-24.

3.2.3. Narrative elaborations II: The traffic of motifs

The editors of this historical oracle created their own variants by altering the story not only through rearranging the sequence of events but also by introducing new motifs. In this regard I would like to differentiate between two types of motifemic borrowing and transposing in the literature under discussion. The first is what I prefer to call exegetical borrowing—in this case, the motifs come from predictions that do not figure in a narrative context and are mere mantic premonitions. Inserted in a narrative sequence, these oracles may have lost some of their details, which helps us to isolate the original form of the predictions. As for the rationale of this type of practices, the utilization of these tropes served to increase the narrative prophecies' acceptability and appeal by tying them to more widespread prophecies. Furthermore, and perhaps of equal importance, these prophecies were rarely tied to a broader eschatological context, but rather they were inserted into a narrative prediction, such as the one under discussion. The narrative itself fulfilled exegetic functions and connected the shorter prophecies to an eschatological context or scenario.

Among these contextualizing motifemic borrowings there are quotations of already-established mantic statements put into the mouth of actors in the story. One example is found in variant B where the North Arabs convince the ruler from Qurayš to their bidding by referring to a moderately widespread tradition, according to which the prophet Muḥammad said: *"The Qurayš was given what was not given to others..."*[190]In this way, the potential application and interpretation of a statement is showcased. In this example, however, we may also encounter a subtle way of discrediting this already established prophetic saying, as the story—although its ending is eluded—concludes with the defeat of the Qurayš and the coming to power of a Yemenite ruler.

---

[190] This tradition can be found not only in the *Book of Tribulations* where it is used in order to represent views supporting the hegemony of Qurayš; Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 1188, but also in later works, also through Himsi isnāds; cf. Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣfahānī, *Maʿrifat aṣ-Ṣahaba,* ed. ʿĀdil ibn Yūsuf al-ʿAzāzī (Riyadh: Dār al-Watan li-n-Našr, 1998), no. 2326.

More importantly, the purpose of these exegetical and aetiological borrowings is used in descriptions and illustrations. It is variant C where this pastiche technique of elaboration is most ostensible. This is because in this variant a specific descriptive technique is employed to give an account of the immorality of the Qurayšite ruler. This technique is widespread in mantic-historical and eschatological oracles on the moral degradation expected to take place in the eschatological future. In this variation, the enumeration of the signs of moral degradation is at certain points arrested by recurring hypotyposes and similes, which are introduced by the connective word "*ḥattā*" meaning "until," which implies that the these eschatologically significant signs exert their effect with gradually increasing force, culminating in an especially horrifying state. The hypotyposes and other illustrative techniques used to describe these horrifying situations, however, do not imply the tipping point in the process of degradation, they rather serve to engage the audience.[191] This type of enumeration seems to be organized on a specific basis: it runs its course from the more material aspects to the moral and religious ones.

This technique allowed for the inclusion of locally relevant mantic statements into narrative sequences. The local relevance of these predictions is signified by the fact that the audience of the oracle is addressed in the second person and there is no reference to any mantic of prophetic authority. These locally relevant predictions seem to have been detached from any developed eschatological mantic-historical scenario. An example of such a prediction gave rise to the motif of the "fattened calves." This trope is present in a Himsi tradition preserved through a different chains of transmission and it claims that a "*group of youngsters from Qurayš will govern you, they will be like fattened calves at mangers, if they are left alone they gore anyone*

---

[191] The employment vulgar and absurd descriptions, an example of which I will discuss before long, recurs in the genre of eschatological prophecies. Another example also serves to illustrate the foretold moral degradation of the world: *„The Hour will not come until the buttocks of the women of Daws will not jingle around Dhū l-Ḫalṣa [a pagan idol];"* Muslim, Ṣaḥīḥ, no. 2906.

everyone."[192] The contextual similarity—immoral people from Qurayš will govern—of this prediction to the cycle of the future Yemenite leader made it easy to incorporate the prophecy into the narrative discussed here.

By the same token, the motif of reprimanding extravagantly dressed women that would be punished by death draws on an earlier oracle. This prediction goes back to an early 8th century Damascene figure, al-Qāsim ibn ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān (d. 128/746)[193] who is said to have exclaimed at one point: "In this mosque of yours a slave girl will be walked around. Her pubic hair will be visible under her dress, and the man will say: 'By God, this is not the right guidance!'. And he will be stomped, and he will die. Could I be that man!"[194] The motif was inserted to these eschatological narratives paired with the notion that she will wear golden shoes or slippers, adding insult to injury, as some Islamic jurists prohibited golden shoes for women.[195] The unnamed woman in the original oracle also changes to become either the slave-girl or daughter of the tyrant in order to attach the motif more smoothly to the narrative.

Furthermore, two widespread tropes came to be utilized to describe the state of the Islamic faith during the reign of this ruler. These are general statements that had considerable coinage in Islamic literature. On the one hand the narrator of variant C and D alludes to the prophecy "the Islam began as something strange and will revert to being strange once again" which can be found in several other compilations.[196] On the other, we see in variant C the motif

---

[192] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 1182.

[193] Ibn Ḥaǧar *Tahḏīb,* vol. 8, no. 583.

[194] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 1165.

[195] In order to contextualize the abhorrence entailed in this statement I must make a brief excursion. Although the general principle embraced in Sunni Islamic law permits wearing gold for women, in this question we find views that specifically condemn this practice, always with the reasoning that it falls into the category of extravagance (*isrāf*) and not because of ritual impurity. The condemnation of extravagance and moral panic are prominent themes in this prediction, as well. For the supporting views from various schools of law see: Šāfiʿī; Abū l-Ḥasan al-Māwardī, *al-Ḥāwī al-Kabīr* vol. 3, ed. ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawǧūd (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994), 275; Ḥanbalī; Ibn Mufliḥ al-Maqdisi, *al-Mubdiʿ* vol 1, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Ismāʿīl (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997), 366; and Mālikī schools; Aḥmad ad-Dardīr, *aš-Šarḥ aṣ-Ṣaġīr ʿalā Aqrab al-Masālik ilā Maḏhab al-Imām Mālik* (Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1976), 62.

[196] Ibn Abī Šayba, *Muṣannaf* no. 620. Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, no. 3784; Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī, *Musnad*, ed. Ḥusayn Salīm Asad (Beirut: Dār al-Ma'mūn li-t-Turāṯ, 1985) no. 6190; al-Bazzār, al-*Baḥr az-Zaḫḫār*, Maḥfūẓ ar-Raḥmān Zayn Allāh et al. (Beirut: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1988), no. 2069; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 146; Ibn Māǧa, *Sunan*, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ et al. (Beirut: Dār ar-Risāla al-ʿĀlamiyya, 2009), no. 1319, 1320-1322; at-

"the man who will hold on to his religion will be like a one who grabs embers," which was similarly a ubiquitous commonplace that served to symbolize the expected decay of religious morals and authority that accompanies the coming of the End Times.[197] The utilization of these tropes serve a descriptive purpose but not as hypotyposes, as the ones mentioned above, but a general illustrations of the state of the word. Being general statements, their inclusion into this historical oracle lends a narrative roadmap to the audience that assists them in concretely imagining these predictions of moral and religious decay.

Among these borrowings the most important to our discussion is the appearance of the motif of the Bands. As discussed in connection with the Basran cluster and the Stories of ʿAbīd ibn Šarya this motif was in most contexts associated with the vision of a future Yemenite ruler and it gave rise to an appellative associated with him. The bands-motif expressed the subversive, rebel aspect of this figure as the bands stood for the rebel underdogs who are ought to be unified by a charismatic leader. The chresmologues who composed and circulated variant C provided for this motif a narrative context. In this story, the necessity of the unification of the smaller bands is a result of the dispersion caused by the expulsion at the hands of their evil Qurašite rulers. In variant D, a similar necessity emerges because of the rough terrain, where the Yemenites dissolve into smaller segments living in different valleys. The historical oracles ornamented with this motif contextualized and aetiologically explained not only other mantic statements, but a title attached to the future Yemenite ruler as well.

The second form of motifemic elaboration appeared due to the analogous composition of narrative sequences about different figures in the historico-mantic literature. The case in point is a motif in variants B, C D, where mysterious divine voice plays a crucial role in prompting the Yemenites to pledge allegiance to a person and spurring them to further action.

Tirmiḏī, *Ǧāmiʿ aṣ-Saḥīḥ,* ed. Baššār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf *(*Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1996*),* no. 3572, 3986; al-Bayhaqi, *az-Zuhd al-Kabī*r, ed. Aḥmad ʿĀmir Ḥaydar (Beirut: Dār al-Ǧanān, 1987), no. 201, 202, 203. etc.
[197] Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* no. 8711, 8713; at-Tirmiḏī, *Ǧāmiʿ,* no. *2260.*

The voice and its action are referred to with a *figura etimologica* that contains the imperfect and the active participle forms of the same word. This expression "a caller calls" (*munādi yunādi*) evokes associations with mysterious voices ubiquitous in Arabic folklore and religious life where these have commonly been attributed to jinn. This sort of word play is also used in the Qur'ān, frequently in connection to the Day of Resurrection.[198] This motif appears numerous times in predictions showcased in the Book of Tribulation in forms such as woe oracles and visions of moral decline where the voice may warn the inhabitants of a region before the impending tribulations.[199] It also can serve as a vehicle of moral admonition where it calls upon Muslims to share their wealth.[200] However, in most traditions it serves to appoint a leader—the *Mahdī*—and adjures Muslims to obey them.[201]

It was from this latter set of predictions where the trope of the "caller" was borrowed. What allowed for the shared application of this trope was the analogous compositions of the narratives about *Mahdi* and the Yemenite leader. In the chapters on the *Mahdī* in Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād's book, the messianic leader is invariably expected to make an appearance in the Hijaz. At the outset of the story, the Hāšimids face persecution at the hands of an evil ruler, whose identity varies between the *Sufyānī* and caliph in Medina (plot point 1).[202] Afterwards, the Hāšimids—or in some other cases—unidentified religious scholars go to Mecca (plot point 2). In Mecca, they elect a leader.[203] In certain variations, however, the Hāšimid takes up residence in Mecca, the Muslims come to their yearly pilgrimage where a mysterious voice from the sky orders them to pledge allegiance to a certain man who will become the *Mahdī*

---

[198] Qur'ān, 3:193, 28: 62, 65, 74, 41:47, 50:41. In some of the verses, the one who cries must be God himself, who in 41:47 and 28:62 sarcastically calls to the disbelievers saying: "Where are my partners [other gods] which you used to claim?" However, 3:139 and 50:41 are to our interest where the participle is used in the company of the verb and in these contexts the one who cries must be an agent of God who in 3:193 is said to call people to faith.
[199] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 869.
[200] ibid., no. 606.
[201] ibid., 973, 975, 987. In no. 974. there appears an evil caller who tries to mislead those present at the election of the *Mahdī*.
[202] ibid., no. 926, 931.
[203] ibid., no. 1000.

(plot point 3).[204] After his victory, the *Mahdī* reinstitutes just government,[205] but he may also enact retribution on his opponent (plot point 5).[206] With these acts, the narrative comes to a close, where the horrors brought about by the previous eschatological ruler are reversed, and for a while, at least, an actualization of optimistic visions is attained.

In assessing the composition of these two narrative sequences, we may sketch a general model that holds true vis-á-vis both stories. First, some form of persecution must be visited upon the community of the Muslims that culminates in an especially transgressive injustice (plot point 1). The next element is a change of location, which may be forced or deliberate but, in any case, results in the *ingathering* of a community (plot point 2). The following step, when the gathering happened a leader is elected either by the will of the community or through divine intervention (plot point 3). Finally, a confrontation occurs that leads to the victory of the community and its leader (plot point 4), who reigns in such a way that he overturns the order of the world (plot point 5). The motif mentioned above is used at plot point three of the *Mahdī's* and the future Yemenite ruler's story. As the composition of the two narratives is analogous, the above-mentioned motif lends itself to be utilized in both narratives.

In all, the narrative elaboration of this concept of a future in the historico-mantic literature operated through the combination of narrative elements, tropes, motifs and figures across texts with malleable boundaries. As we have seen, the domain of certain figures can be expanded by substitution and incorporation in narrative sequences. Chresmologues could ornament certain predictions by reference to already-established motifs and tropes. Finally, motifs and tropes could wander between narrative sequences themselves. However, all these motifemic transfers had to abide by certain rules. Between narrative sequences, a traffic of motifs could only be operated if their narrative compositions were analogous. The incorporation

---

[204] ibid., no. 973-978.
[205] ibid., no. 1039-41.
[206] ibid., no. 1021.

of tropes from contextless predictions necessitated the employment of certain stylistic conventions. However, most importantly for our discussion, titles could only be included with narrative sequences if they conformed to the expectations attached to those titles. The various titles that referred to a future Yemenite ruler were associated with two world-historical events: the passing of the dominion of Qurayš among Arabs and a Yemenite domination not only of the Islamic realms but also of the entire world. Therefore, these titles, namely the "Yemenite caliph" and the "*Mansūr*," were attached to stories that culminated in these two turns of events, where the Yemenites unseat a Qurašite ruler and conquer foreign lands.

	Variant A	Variant B	Variant C	Variant D
Exposition		"The Qurayš has been given…"	Young men from Qurayš, Woman in golden shoes. The Islam becomes alien.	
Rising Action	They will help them, like Joseph helped his brothers		The gathering of the Bands	Variant A + Variant C
Climax		The caller from the sky	The caller from the sky	The caller from the sky.
Falling Action			They will help them, like Joseph helped his brothers	
Resolution	The sandal motif			The simile to the Ğurhum tribe

Table 3. The most important motifs and tropes in each variant

3.2.4. Discourses of historical hegemony and genealogy

The abundance of the material discussed above attests to the fact that the notion of a future Yemenite ruler continued to flourish well into the Abbasid age. This figure however, remained a challenge to the hegemonic political order where the Qurayš enjoyed primacy over

all other Arabs and Muslims. Even the possibility of a non-Qurašite eschatological figure who would rise to power at an unspecified point in the future threatened this hegemony and could generate indignation. According to a story preserved in the *Saḥīḥ* by al-Buḫārī, the caliph Muʿāwiya I (40/661-60/680) came to know that the son of the caliph ʿUmar, ʿAbd Allāh had told others that there would arise a Yemenite ruler in the future. The caliph responded that he himself heard from the Prophet Muḥammad saying that it is only Qurayš who will rule until the end of Time.[207] Whatever the veracity of this report, the intent behind it is clear: it legitimized Qurašite primacy with a statement of the prophet, implicitly denying the emergence of a Qaḥṭānid or Yemenite eschatological figure altogether.

The theme of this story is similar to the concept of history that I discussed in the first chapter with regard to the historico-legendary literature. The basic concept of history implied is also almost identical: history is centred around peoples with whom the dominion resides. The dominion is singular and cannot be at two places at the same time. Another shared point between the two historical outlooks is the notion that Islam brought about the rulership of North Arabs, more specifically the Qurayš tribe. What follows, however, was a point of contention that divided Muslims. This problem was elaborated with contradictory statements pertaining to the discourse of mantic history writing. According to some reports, the prophet claimed that the Qurayš would be the first to disappear among the Arab tribes,[208] while others claimed that it would rule for as long as there were two people on the face of the earth.[209] Between the two positions were some other prophetic statements were circulated that linked the dominion of Qurayš to the uprightness of Islam.[210] These latter statements could be understood ambiguously depending on one's beliefs about the eschatological future of Islam. In the corpus of mantic

---

[207] al-Buḫārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 3239, 6606.
[208] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 1198; cf. Ibn Hanbal, *Musnad*, no. 11847.
[209] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 1148, 1232.
[210] ibid., no. 1149, 1224, 225.

history, elements of the Yemenite historico-legendary literature also appear that convey a Yemenite-centric vision of the future.[211]

Another theatre of this conflict was the discourse around a future Yemenite ruler. Despite all efforts to establish a Qurayš-centric vision of the future, expectations concerning this figure were resilient enough to further proliferate in the first two centuries from the Hegira. As mentioned above, certain chesmologues reinforced the connection of this figure to contingently related acceptations, while others grafted the figure to equally contingently related narrative contents. As a result, there emerged a character, with a set of associated features, in the Syrian and Egyptian milieus. This character could hardly be ignored anymore even by those chresmologues who intended to narrate a Qurayš-centric history of the future. Therefore, those chresmologues, who were not at peace with this concept had to resort to a compromise. Two distinct techniques were used to this end: a "harmonizing" approach and one that one may call Qurašisation.

The first approach was employed in a set of traditions that have in their chain of transmission Ṣafwān ibn ʿAmr (d. 155/772), a Himsi narrator.[212] His predictions were primarily transmitted through the Himsi chresmologues, Baqiya ibn Muslim (d. 197/)[213] and Abū al-Muġīra (d. 212/827).[214] As for their tribal affiliations, they were all Yemenites, although Baqiya belonged to the Bahrāʾ tribe not by birth but by being a client of theirs. They talk about only one positive eschatological figure, for whom they did not use those messianic titles which would delimit his genealogical origin. In this respect, they agreed with those chresmologues

---

[211] ibid. 1125, 1155. The latter prediction is said to be found on a stone in Ẓafār written in Ḥimyaritic with Ancient South Arabian script. The supposed inscription is transliterated in the *Book of Tribulation,* but it is only partially translated to *Muḍarī* Arabic. This supposed epigraphic finding foretells that after the collapse the Ḥimyarite kingdom, then first the Ethiopians then the Persians and eventually the Qurayš will rule. However, the reign will return to the Ḥimyarites after them.

[212] Šams ad-Dīn aḏ-Ḏahabī, *Siyar Aʿlām an-Nubalāʾ*, vol. 6, ed. Šuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ et al. (Beirut: Muʾassasat ar-Risāla, 1981), 180; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Tahḏīb,* vol. 4, no. 751.

[213] Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Tahḏīb,* vol. 1, no. 878.

[214] ibid., vol. 6, no. 705.

who believed that the *Mahdī* would be of Qurayš and denied the coming of a Yemenite ruler. However, in the Ṣafwān bundle we see that this messianic figure will participate in the struggle against the Byzantines—a messianic function not associated with this acceptation the *Book of Tribulations*.[215] What's more, these chresmologues also emphasized that this figure would have a dual genealogy.[216] In a prediction, Ṣafwān ibn ʿAmr also foretold that this figure would conquer Constantinople and would be a descendant not only of Kedar, a forefather of the North Arabs but also Sabaʾ a patriarch of a Yemenite section.[217] In this approach the—at least partial—Yemenite genealogical affiliation reappears, but the titles associated with him are omitted. This was one of the ways to reconcile the motif of the idea of the future Yemenite ruler with the notion of the primacy of the Qarayš.

A different approach is present in another set of oracles and chresmological statements that were primarily narrated by al-Walīd ibn Muslim. His inclination of mitigating South Arabian presence in eschatological scenarios may have very well stemmed from the fact that he was a client of the Qurašite Umayyad clan in Damascus. His approach was the opposite of that of Ṣafwān ibn ʿAmr and his narrators. He vocally espoused the notion that the *Manṣūr*—whom he considered a specific messianic figure—will be of the Qurayš.[218] al- Walīd ibn Muslim, also argued with chresmological statements—at times attributed to Kaʿb al-Aḥbār without any in-between narrator—that the appellations associated with a future Yemenite leader will in truth refer to a person of mixed Qurašite and Yemeni.[219] This figure, however, despite his name, will be in fact a Qurašite, and he is referred to by these messianic titles because of

---

[215] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 1022. To my knowledge, this is the only prediction in the book that mentions the appellative Mahdi in connection with this—arguably messianic—function in the mantic histories presented by Nuʾaym ibn Hammad.

[216] ibid. no. 1187, 1115.

[217] ibid. no. 1315. 1291. In this prediction the name of Kedar, the son of Ismaʾil is spelt as Qāḏar, which is divergent from its conventional transliteration to Arabic, Qīdār.

[218] ibid., no. 1145, 280.

[219] ibid., no. 1137, 1172, 1208.

his place of origin or it maternal pedigree.[220] Although this latter contention is similar to the set of prophecies previously discussed The oracles and statements told by al-Walīd to Nuʾaym are formulated in a way that they express the primacy of his paternal, Qurašite affiliation whereas the set of Ṣafwān implies equal importance to the two. Al-Walīd therefore did the opposite of what his Himsi colleges aimed: he retained the appellations that imply Yemenite origin but claimed that the one who will have them as titles will be in fact Northern Arab.

This construal was convincing enough for Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād who accepted it and included it in his compilation as an objective statement that he supports.[221] Other chresmologues —one generation removed from al-Walīd—also transmitted to Nuʾaym historical oracles that present the very same idea.[222] The appearance of this idea betokened a stage in the development of Islamic mantic history where the various messianic appellations and titles assembled into specific figures. The *Yamānī* and the *Qaḥṭānī* for al-Walīd were not only denotations of genealogy or place of origin but titles belonging to a specific character with his own biography and background. This development was not specific to the concept of a future Yemenite ruler figure is perceivable also in the development of the *Mahdī* and potentially other messianic figures.

On a final note, I would like to propose a theory with regards to the motivations for these Qurašizing tendencies. Multiple scholars have noticed this pattern.[223] However, this tendency of Qurašization begs the question, why did those who wanted to propose a Qurayš-centric eschatology denied the existence of a Yemenite ruler in the future and validity of the names and titles attached to him. After all, this was the argument that purportedly Muʿāwiya used in order to defang these Yemenite claims. One half of the answer is the point I have arrived

---

[220] ibid., no. 1137.
[221] ibid., no. 1137.
[222] ibid., no. 1290, 1300.
[223] Arjomand, "Islamic Apocalypticism," 253; cf. Aguadé, „Messianismus," 199.

to above: the toponymic messianic titles became proper names on their own rights by the late 8th and early 9th centuries and plenty of al-Walīd's immediate colleagues circulated them. However, we also must take into consideration the various possible connections between Umayyad revanchism and the Yemenites. As al-Walīd, an Umayyad client, may have been interested in creating a Qurašite-centric vision of the future under a Yemenite disguise.[224]

3.3. Conclusion: Assessment of the clusters

The elaboration of the figure of an expected Yemenite ruler in the framework of the chresmological tradition of the 8th and 9th centuries was a multifaceted process that resulted in heterogenous literary formulations. In Medina, short, obscure predictions gained popularity and the figure prognosticated was rather conservative. The figure was not referred to by a title and the domination of the Yemeni kings of old was implied by the formulation of the prediction. In Kufa, as well as in Shiite-adjacent milieus elsewhere any future Yemenite figure was side-lined by the *al-Mahdī*, although it retained the title that it was referred to in the historico-legendary literature. In Basra, a distinct form of oracle emerged that included a Yemenite ruler, although its function and task was not made clear in these predictions. Finally, Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād delivered to us a snapshot from the early 9th century Syrian elaborations in considerable detail. In Hims and Damascus, and Egypt, the concept of the future Yemenite was a topic of rather great interest among chresmologues that led to the incorporation of this by-then-specific figure in full-fledged mantic historical models.

In the regions where a greater variety of predictions were in circulation about this figure, certain acceptation became more solidly associated with him. The creation of recurrent, in time, messianic or anti-messianic names and titles were called to life by the intensification of the circulation of predictions and a growing historico-mantic discourse that developed in parallel.

---

[224] Aguadé, „Messianismus," 29; Ibn Ḥaǧar, *Tahḏīb*, vol. 11, no. 151.

The various titles, genealogical affiliations, motifs actions and associated narrative sequences coalesced into a character at the hands of the late 8th century chresmologues, most importantly, Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād. The concept of this figure, however, was still ill-defined and allowed for a multiplicity of elaborations and interpretations in later times. The chief associations with this figure, however, remained the same as in other outlets of Arabic literature: a rebel against the Qurayš and a conqueror of the world.

Conclusion

In the foregoing discussion I aimed to circumscribe an emergence of the concept of a future Yemenite ruler in the context of the first Islamic centuries. In the pursuit of this concept, I attempted to uncover the presentation of this idea in three of the most important types of literature within which it figured. There is no genealogical relationship between these three spheres of literature—only a simultaneous development induced by certain historical and cultural trends of the early Caliphate. These three configurations of expression, however, employed different cognitive and discursive formations related to this figure. These formations expressed various aspects of the figure and were all important factors for the profusion of this idea.

The idea emerged closely entangled with the legendary lore about the Himyarite Kings. This material is best observable with ʿAbīd ibn Šarya, and later Ibn Hišām, both of whom wrote histories about ancient Yemen, each according to the standards of his historical background. With both authors, poignant historical sentiment, aroused by the nostalgic retrospective gaze to the Himyarite kingdom, materialized in a specific model of history. The past, as a general rule, represented not only the glory days of the South Arabians, but also an age when the South Arabians attained world domination. The return to Yemenite rule was personified in one character whose emergence would signify this world historical event. It is this literature, and the historical-typological outlook encased in it, that grounded this figure, in addition to the concept it represented in the vocabulary of historical, political, and religious discourses. Furthermore, the political struggles of certain Yemenite leaders during the Umayyad period came to be seen corresponding with expectations about a Yemenite ruler. These leaders could exploit the expectations emerging from the historically conceived sentiment among the

Yemenite tribesmen. The emergence of the motif of the "Qaḥṭānid claimant" in Arabic history writing was also based on these perceptions. In this way, the emergence of Yemenite ruler fulfilling earlier predictions transformed from a notion belonging to the distant future to a contingency that can potentially take shape in historical reality. The historico-legendary and the historical treatment of this figure embed him in a specific historical model and reinforced his political significance.

The figure was, however, treated with even greater fecundity in the historic-mantic literature that became part of the Islamic eschatological lore—circulated under a *ḥadīṯic* epistemic canopy. Making historico-mantic predictions was especially popular among scholars and chresmologues with an affiliation to the *Yamāniyya*. As their expectations about the history of the future differed, so did the elaborations on the future Yemenite ruler. However, in most cases, the themes attached to his figure remained constant. He was expected to be an agent of Yemenite resurgence against the Qurayš, as well a monarch and military leader who engaged in fighting with foreign enemies and who would bring foreign lands under his rule. In the eyes of certain—especially Himsi—chresmologues, he was therefore a quasi-messianic figure, despite fulfilling only the martial and political aspects of a Messiah. This quasi-messianic status among Syrian chresmologues resulted in two different types of reaction. Some chresmologues engaged in the construction of narratives about his coming to power. They grafted this figure upon narratives that served to underpin certain genealogical and political alliances. Other chresmologues, however, sensing the subversive potential of this figure attempted to alter the configuration of appellations and genealogies attached to this figure, in order to stretch out a vision of Qurašite hegemony to the future.

It is the study of the latter, early Islamic eschatological corpus where most of my findings may prove useful. Highlighting these shifting connotations of the figure may be useful for the study of other figures in the Islamic eschatological lore. To my mind, historico-mantic

literature is tangentially related to messianism and the relation of each figure to messianic and chiliastic expectation needs careful examination. As I hoped to show, not all the prophecies were signs of messianic expectations, but many of them were in fact aetiological tales or arguments for political legitimation. It is also necessary to step beyond the boundaries of the eschatological genre. Earlier scholars of early Islamic eschatology confined themselves to the study of canonical writings. Having overcome this limitation, it seems necessary to look to texts from other genres not as mere curiosities but as potential subjects of comparative analysis. The exact boundaries and categories early Islamic eschatological corpus can only be pinned down through this approach.

Later developments should be another interesting subject for continued research, as illustrated by the following historical episode. In 399/1008, the chamberlain of the Umayyad Caliphate in Andalusia, al-Muẓaffar, died after a short illness in Cordoba. Many suspected that his 25-year-old brother, ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Sanchuelo, had poisoned him. Indeed, ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān swiftly took over the position of his deceased brother, in effect becoming the true master of the caliphate. The Umayyad caliph, Hišām II was at this point a mere puppet under ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān's direction, but his ambitions grew higher: ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān forced the caliph to declare him as his successor. In his speech, the caliph substantiated this decision with the predictions of the prophet and some of his companions, saying that "the hour will not come until a man from Qaḥṭān comes out and leads the people with his stick."[225] However, Sanchuelo's aspirations were quickly thwarted. With the help of the citizens of the capital, an energetic Umayyad, Muḥammad II, rose to power, arresting Sanchuelo and having him assassinated a year after the chamberlain's ascension to power.

---

[225] Ibn Ḫaldūn, *Tārīḫ [Kitāb al-ʿIbar]*, ed. Abū Ṣuhayb al-Karamī (Riyadh – Amman, Bayt al-Afkār ad-Duwaliyya, 2009), 995.

The Yemenite Sanchuelo substantiated his claim to caliphate with this prophecy, as in Andalusia the archaic division between the *Yamāniyya* and the North Arabs still endured. Moreover, the caliphal position was still considered to be reserved for the Qurayš tribe, and these circumstances most likely contributed to the demise of ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān Sanchuelo. This thesis only discusses the initial development of this idea from the 7th to 9th centuries. However, examples, such as the incident of Sanchuelo, indicate to us that among certain historical conditions the predictions about a future Yemenite ruler could still be relevant for certain individuals in the *longue durée* of the Islamic Middle Ages. I believe that the modalities and genealogies of these later elaborations, interpretations, and instrumentalizations can provide the investigative basis for further studies on this eschatological figure.

Appendices

I. Variant A

Kaʿb → a group of sheikhs → Abū Bakr ibn Abī Maryam → Baqiya ibn al-Walīd, ʿAbd al-Quddūs and ʿAbd Allāh ibn Marwān

The one executing the expatriation of the Yemenites [*ahl al-yaman*] will be a man from *Banū Hāšim*. His residence will be in Jerusalem and his guard will be of twelve thousand men. He will expel the Yemenites until they reach the beginning of the land and settle with Laḫm and Ǧuḏām, and they will live together until they share their livelihood and they will become each other's equals. And they will ask: "Where are you going?" "Where are you returning?" And they will delegate a man and he will say: "I am your emissary with your message to your ruler." And he will set out until he takes their message and letter to Jerusalem asking him to absolve them and allow thwm to return to their homes. He [the ruler], then, however, will order him beheaded. Then they will wait and send another man who is also beheaded and then yet another man who is ordered to be beheaded, too. However, God will save him so that he may go to them and tell them what happened to his companions and how he [the ruler] wanted to kill him. Then they will gather and elect a leader, march on him [the ruler] and fight him. God will make them victorious over him and they will kill him and attack Qurayš and no one will remain from Qurayš so that if someone finds one of their sandals and he will say: 'This is a sandal of a Qurašite!'"[226]

II. Variant B

*"*Kaʿb → Yazīd ibn ʿAṭāʾ → Yazīd ibn Saʿīd → al-Walīd

The days will not end until a caliph from Qurayš settles in Jerusalem. He will gather all his people from the Qurayš there. Then they will exceed in their dominion and be extravagant in

---

[226] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 1178.

their reign, so that they will make their roofs of gold and and silver. The lands will increase for them and the people will obey them, and the tax will yield for them and the war will put down its burdens."[227]

"Ka'b → Yazīd ibn 'Aṭā' → Yazīd ibn Sa'īd → al-Walīd

When the war will put down its burdens, the Muḍar will say to the Qurašite who resides in Jerusalem: "God has given you what have not given to others, so confine it to your brothers." And he will say: "Who, he is from the Yemenites should go to his Yemen, and who is non-Arab should go to Antioch. And we give you three days, and who does not do this [leave], he will be free to be killed." And will say: "The Yemen should head to Zayrā'[228] and the non-Arabs to Antioch."

"Ka'b → Yazīd ibn 'Aṭā' → Yazīd ibn Sa'īd → al-Walīd

And when the Yemenites [yamāniyyūn] will be in Zayrā', they will hear a caller (munādī) call from the night [sky]: "Oh Manṣūr, O Manṣūr!" And the people will out to the voice, and they will not find anyone. And he will call out in the next and the third night. And they will gather and will say: "O people, will you return to the Bedouin way after the emigration (hiǧra) you have made?" "Will you turn back and leave your fighters, your battle lines, the abode of your emigration and the graves of your dead?"

And they will appoint a man.[229]

III. Variant C

"Ka'b → unknown → Arṭa'a → Abū Ayyūb

A man from Qurayš, the worst of creation, will become caliph and he will settle in Jerusalem. The treasuries and the noblemen will be taken to him. He will become tyrannical and his

---

[227] ibid., no. 1161.
[228] It was a location in today's Jordan, not far from the Jordan valley, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī, *Muʿǧam al-Buldān,* vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977), 163.
[229] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan,* no. 1170.

entourage will grow strong and their wealth will increase so that one among them will eat for a month and another for two and three, and the meagre among them will be like the fat among the rest of the people. They will grow like fattened calves at the mangers. He will extinguish the customs (*sunan)* that were known before and he will innovate what was not known before. And the evil will appear in his time and fornication and drinking will be public. And he will make the scholars afraid until when a man rides with his mount and visits all the cities, he will not find even one who would speak of scholarly *ḥadīṯ* because of the terror. And in his time, there will be the transformation [*masḫ*] and the swallowing [*ḫasf*]. Islam will be strange just as it began strange. The one who will hold onto his religion will like the one who grabs a burning charcoal or the one who pulls out thorns in the dark night. So that his power will increase to the extent that he will send his daughter to walk on the streets and there will be guards with her and on her golden shoes and clothes that does not cover her front neither her back. And if anyone from the people will say something disparaging about this, even a word, he will be beheaded.

He will begin his rule, and he will deny the people their stipend [*ʿaṭāʾ*] and salary [*rizq*]. Then he will order the expulsion of the Yemenite from Syria and his guards will expel them divided. They will not let one district [*ǧund*] to reach out for another so that they will expel them from the entire countryside, and they will end up in Bosra. This will happen late in his age. The Yemenites will correspond with each other in order to gather like the small clouds of autumn Then they will return where they were before, band by band.

Then they will say: "Where are you going?" "Are you leaving your land and your land and your place of migration?" They will agree to pledge allegiance to a man among them. Then they will say: "We will pledge allegiance to this and that." Then at once they will hear a voice from the sky—not from jinni nor from man—saying: 'Pledge allegiance to this and that!' He will name him for them. He will not be of *Ḏī* or *Ḏū*.[230]

---

[230] Perhaps this means to claim that the person will be a Kalbite and not a Himyari.

98

Then they will send a group of people to the tyrant of Qurayš. He will kill them and send one back and will present them the choice just like before. Then the people of Yemen will march on him and the tyrant of Qurayš will have twelve thousand guards. They will meet with Laḫm, Ǧuḏām, ʿĀmila, Ḥadas, and will give them food and drink and the few and the many and they will be a help for Yemen just like Joseph was a help for his brothers. And if they come to look for genealogical relation (*nasab*) among you, reach out for them as they are from you. Then all of them will march together and will look on Jerusalem and then tyrant of Qurayš and his massive army will meet them, but the Yemenites will defeat them. They will not flight from Yemen with the trust of a man in his armour.[231]

IV. Variant D

az-Zuhrī → Saʿīd ibn Yazīd at-Tannūḫī → ʿAbd Allāh ibn Marwān

The *Mahdī* will die and the people will face dissension/tribulation after him. A man will come to them from the Banū Maḫzūm and they will pledge allegiance to him. He will stay for a while and then he will deny the salaries and then he will deny the stipends. No one will be found to challenge him. He will settle in Jerusalem and he and his companions will be like fattened calves and their women will walk in golden shoes and clothes that do not cover them. No one will be found to challenge him. He will order the expulsion of the people of Yemen: Quḍāʿa, Maḏḥiǧ, Hamdān, Ḥimyar, Azd, Ġassān, and all of those who are said to be of the people of Yemen.

As the people will disperse into bands in the mountains, Ḥadas, Laḫm and Ǧuḏām will return to them with food and drink, so that they will aid their brothers, as Joseph aided his brothers. And then caller calls from the sky—it is not man nor jinni: "Pledge allegiance to this and that! Do not turn back after your emigration!" They will search but will not find the man. Then it will call three times. Then they will pledge allegiance to the *Manṣūr*. He will send ten emissaries

---

[231] Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād, *al-Fitan*, no. 1218.

to the *Maḫzūmī*. He, however, will kill nine of them and let one live. Then he [the *Manṣūr*] will send five [emissaries] but he [the *Maḫzūmī*] will kill four and let one go free. Then he will send three, but he will kill two and spare one. And then he [the *Manṣūr*] will march on him and God will make him victorious. God will kill him [the *Maḫzūmī*] and those with him. Only the homeless will escape. He will not spare even a single Qurašite. And they will look for a Qurašite but will find none. Just as today someone looks for a Ǧurhumite and finds none. This way the Qurayš will be killed and none will be found anymore.[232]

V. Samples from the minor clusters

a, Medinese cluster

The Prophet → Abū Hurayra → Abū al-Ġayṯ → Ṯūr ibn Zayd ad-Daylī →ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz ad-Dārawardī

The Hour will not come until a man from Qaḥṭān comes and lead the people with his rod.[233]

b, Basran cluster

ʿAbd Allāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ → ʿUqba ibn Aws → Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn Ayyūb → Maʿmar → ʿAbd ar-Razzāq → Muḥammad ibn Ṯūr

I found in a book on the day we fought during the Battle of Yarmūk: Abū Bakr*, aṣ-Ṣiddīq*. You encountered his name. ʿUmar, *al-Fārūq,* the Iron Horn. You encountered his name. ʿUṯmān *Ḏū n-Nūrayn* [master of the two lights], because he was given two parts of mercy, as he was killed unjustly. You encountered his name. Then *Saffāḥ* will come. Then *Manṣūr* will come. Then *Mahdī* will come. Then *al-Amīn* will come. Then *Sīn* and *Salām* will come: that is to say: righteousness and health. Then the *Amīr al-ʿUṣab* [Commander of the Bands] will come. Six

---

[232] ibid., no. 1135.
[233] ibid., no. 1140.

of them will be the descendants of Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy and one from Qaḥṭān. All of them will be righteous like none other.[234]

c, Kufan cluster

Abū Ğaʿfar → Abū ʿUṯmān Saʿīd

When the Spotted One [*al-Abqaʿ*] will appear with his people of large stature, there will be a great battle between them. Then the cursed Sufyāni Squint-Eyed One will appear and will fight with both of them. Then the *Manṣūr al-Yamānī* [sic][235] will go with his armies and great force and will kill the people, as in they were killed in the *Ğāhiliyya*. He and the Squinted-Eyed One will meet. Their flags are yellow, and their dress is coloured. And between the two there will be a great fight and Sufyāni Squint-Eyed One will be victorious.[236]

---

[234] ibid., no. 264.

[235] This is a corruption in the text as in a variant we read *al-Manṣūr al-Yamānī*; ibid., no. 884. There is no reason to assume that in this scenario the *Manṣūr* and the *al-Yamānī* would refer to two separate figure, one subordinated to the other.

[236] ibid., no. 849.

Bibliography

Primary sources

ʿAbd ar-Razzāq aṣ-Sanʿānī, *Muṣannaf.* 9 vols. Edited by Markaz al-Buḥūṯ wa-l-Maʿlūmāt—Dār at-Taʾṣīl. Cairo: Dār at-Taʾṣīl, 2015.

Ibn Abī Šayba, *Muṣannaf.* 15 vols. Edited by Abū Muḥammad Usāma ibn Ibrāhīm. Cairo: al-Fārūq al-Ḥadīṯiyya, 2008.

ʿAbīd ibn Šarya. *Kitāb Aḫbār al-Yaman wa-Ašʿārihā wa-Ansābihā.* In *Kitāb at-Tīǧān fī Mulūk Ḥimyar.* Hayderabad: Dāʾirat al-Maʿārif, 1928.

Abū Yaʿlā al-Mawṣilī. *Musnad.* 16 vols. Edited by Ḥusayn Salīm Asad. Beirut: Dār al-Maʾmūn li-t-Turāṯ, 1985.

Anonyme Arabische Chronik. Edited by Wilhelm Ahlwardt. Greifswald: self-published, 1883.

al-ʿAwtabī, Abū Munḏir. *Kitāb al-Ansāb.* Edited by Muḥammad Iṣḥsān an-Naṣṣ. Muscat: Maṭbaʿat al-Alwān al-Ḥadīṯa, 2006.

Ibn ʿAsākir, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥasan. *Tārīḫ Dimašq.* 80 vols. Edited by Muḥibb ad-Dīn ʿUmar ibn Ġarāma al-ʿAmrawī. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995.

al-Azdī, Yazīd ibn Muḥammad. *Tārīḫ al-Mawṣil.* Edited by ʿAlī Ḥabība. Cairo: Maǧlis aš-Šuʿūn al-Islāmiyya, 1967.

al-Balāḏūrī, Aḥmad. *Ansāb al-Ašrāf.* 13 vols. Edited by Suhayl Zakkār and Riyāḍ Zarkāy. Dār al-Fikr: Beirut, 1996.

Ibn Baškuwāl, Ḫalaf. *aṣ-Ṣila fī Tārīḫ Aʾimmat al-Andalus,* Edited by Ibrāhīm al-Abyārī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-Lubnānī,1989.

Ibn Baṭṭāl al-Mālikī. ʿAlī ibn Ḫalaf. *Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī.* 10 vols. Edited by Abū Tamīm Yāsir ibn Ibrāhīm. Riyadh: Maktabat ar-Rušd, 2008.

al-Bayhaqi, Abū Bakr Aḥmad. *az-Zuhd al-Kabīr.* Edited by Aḥmad ʿĀmir Ḥaydar. Beirut: Dār al-Ǧinān, 1987.

al-Bazzār, Abū Bakr Aḥmad. al-*Baḥr az-Zaḫḫār.* 20 vols. Edited by Maḥfūẓ ar-Raḥmān Zayn Allāh et al. Beirut: Maktabat al-ʿUlūm wa-l-Ḥikam, 1988.

al- Buḫārī, Muḥammad. *Saḥīḥ.* Cairo: Dār Ibn Kaṯīr 2002.

ad-Ḏahabī, Šams ad-Dīn. *Siyar Aʿlām an-Nubalāʾ*. 25 vols. Edited by Šuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ et al. Beirut: Muʾassasat ar-Risala, 1981.

ad-Dāni, ʿUṯmān *as-Sunan al-Wārida fī al-Fitan.* Edited by Riḍāʾ ad-Dīn al-Mubārakfūrī. Riyadh: Dār al-ʿĀṣima, 1995.

ad-Dardīr, Aḥmad. *aš-Šarḥ aṣ-Ṣaġīr ʿalā Aqrab al-Masālik ilā Maḏhab al-Imām Mālik.* Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1976.

Diʾbil al-Ḫuzāʿī. *Waṣāyā Mulūk wa Abnāʾ al-Mulūk min Walad Qaḥṭān ibn Hūd.* Edited by Nizār Abāẓah. Damascus: Dār al-Bašāʾir, 1997.

Ibn ad-Dumyāṭī, Aḥmad *al-Mustafād min Ḏayl Tārīḫ al-Baġdād.* Edited by Muḥammad Mawlūd Ḫalaf. Beirut: Muʾassasat ar-Risāla, 1982.

al-Farazdaq. *Dīwān.* Edited by ʿAlī Fāʿūr. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1987.

Al-Ǧāḥiẓ, Abū ʿUṯmān. *Kitāb al-Burṣān wa-l-ʿUrǧān wa-l-ʿUmyān wa-l-Ḥūlān.* Edited by ʿAbd as-Salām Muḥammad Fārūq. Beirut: Dār al-Ǧīl, 1990.

Ibn Ḥaǧar al-ʿAsqalānī. *Fatḥ al-Bārī fī Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī.* 13 vols. Edited by Muḥammad Fuʾād ʿAbd al-Bāqī. Riyadh: al-Maktaba as-Salafiyya, 2019.

———. *Tahḏīb at-Tahḏīb.* 14 vols. Cairo: Dār al-Kitāb al-Islāmī, 1994.

Ibn Ḫaldūn. *Tārīḫ [Kitāb al-ʿIbar].* Edited by Abū Ṣuhayb al-Karamī. Riyadh—Amman, Bayt al-Afkār ad-Duwaliyya, 2009.

Ḫalīfa ibn Ḫayyat, *Tārīḫ*, Edited by Akram Diyāʾ al-ʿUmarī. Riyadh: Dār aṭ-Ṭayyiba,1975.

Ibn Hišām, Muḥammad. *Kitāb at-Tīǧān fī Mulūk Ḥimyar.* Sanʾa: Markaz ad-Dirāsāt wa-l-Abḥāṯ al-Yamaniyya, 1979.

———. *As-Sīra an-Nabawiyya.* 4 vols. Edited by ʿUmar ʿAbd as-Salām Tadmurī. Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1990.

Ibn Ḥanbal, Aḥmad. *Musnad.* vols. 45. Edited by Aḥmad Muḥammad Šākir. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīṯ, 1995.

Ḫulāṣat as-Sīra al-Ǧamiʿa li-ʿAǧāʾib Aḫbār al-Mulūk at-Tabābiʿa. Edited by ʿAlī ibn Ismāʿīl al-Muʾayyad and Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad al-Ǧarāfī. Beirut: Dār al-ʿAwda, 1978.

al-Iṣfahānī, Abū Nuʿaym. *Maʿrifat aṣ-Ṣahaba wa Faḍāʾilihim.* Edited by ʿĀdil ibn Yūsuf al-ʿAzazī. Riyadh: Dār al-Watan li-n-Našr, 1998.

Ibn Kaṯīr ad-Dimašqī, *al-Bidāya wa-n-Nihāya*, 15 vols. (Beirut: Maktabat al-Maʿārif, 1988)

Ibn Māǧa, Muḥammad. *Sunan.* 5 vols. Edited by Šuʿayb al-Arnaʾūṭ et al. Beirut: Dār ar-Risāla al-ʿĀlamiyya, 2009.

al-Maqdisī, Ṭāhir ibn Muṭahhar. *Kitāb al-Badʾ wa-t-Tārīḫ.* Edited and translated by Clément Huart. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1901.

Mārī ibn Sulaymān, *Aḫbār Fatārikat Kursī al-Mašriq*. Edited by Henri Gismondi. Rome: C. De Luigi 1899.

al-Masʿūdī, Abū l-Ḥasan ʿAlī *At-Tanbīh wa-l-Išrāf*. Edited by ʿAbd Allah Ismāʿīl Ṣāfī. Cairo: Maktabat aš-Šarq al-Islāmiyya, 1938.

al-Māwardī, Abū l-Ḥasan. *al-Ḥāwī al-Kabīr*. 18 vols. Edited by ʿAlī Muḥammad Muʿawwaḍ and ʿĀdil Aḥmad ʿAbd al-Mawǧūd. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1994.

Ibn Mufliḥ al-Maqdisi: *al-Mubdiʿ fī Šarḥ al-Muqniʿ*. 10 vols. Edited by Ḥasan Ismāʿīl. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1997.

Muslim ibn al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. *Saḥīḥ*. 2 Vols. Edited by Muḥammad al-Faryābī. Riyadh: ad-Dār aṭ-Ṭayyiba, 2006.

Našwān al-Ḥimyarī. *Muntaḫabāt fī Aḫbār al-Yaman min Kitāb Šams al-ʿUlūm*. Edited by ʿAẓīm ad-Dīn Aḥmad. E. J. Gibb Memorial Series 24. Leiden: Brill: 1916.

Nuʿaym ibn Ḥammād. *Kitāb al-Fitan*. Edited by Suhayl Zakkār. Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2003.

an-Nuʿmānī, Muḥammad. *Kitāb al-Ġayba*, Edited by Fāris Hassūn Karīm. Qom: Anwār al-Hudā, 2011.

al-Qastallānī, Šihāb ad-Dīn. *Iršād as-Sārī fī Šarḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Buḫārī*. 15 vols. Edited by Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz al-Ḫālidī, Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-ʿIlmiyya, 1996.

Ibn Saʿd, Muḥammad. *Kitāb aṭ-Ṭabaqāt al-Kabīr*. 11 vols. Edited by ʿAlī Maḥmūd ʿUmar. Cairo: al-Ḫāngī, 2001.

Ibn Saʿīd al-Maġribī. *Našwat aṭ-Ṭarab fī Tārīḫ Ǧāhiliyyat al-ʿArab*. 2 vols. Edited by Nuṣrat ʿAbd ar-Raḥmān. Amman: Dār al-Aqṣā, 1982.

aṭ-Ṭabarānī, Sulaymān in Aḥmad. *al-Muʿǧam al-Awsaṭ*. 10 vols. Edited by Ṭāriq ibn ʾIwad Allāh and ʿAbd al-Muḥsin ibn Ibrāhīm al-Ḥusaynī. Cairo: Dār al-Ḥaramayn, 1995.

Aṭ-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad. *Ǧāmiʿ al-Bayān ʿan Taʾwīl Āy al-Qurʿān*. 25 vols. Edited by ʿAbd Allah ibn ʿAbd al-Muḥsin at-Turkī. Cairo: Markaz al-Buḥūṯ wa-d-Dirāsāt al-ʿArabiyya wa-l-Islāmiyya, 2001.

———. *Tārīḫ ar-Rusul wa-l-Mulūk*. Edited by Muḥammad Abū l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm. Cairo: Dār al-Maʿārif, 1964.

at-Tirmiḏī, Muḥammad ibn ʿĪsā. *Ǧāmiʿ aṣ-Saḥīḥ*. 6 vols. Edited by Baššār ʿAwwād Maʿrūf. Beirut: Dār al-Ġarb al-Islāmī, 1996.

aṭ-Ṭūsī, Muḥammad. *Amālī*. Edited by Bahrad al-Ǧaʿfarī and ʿAlī Akbar al-Ġaffārī. Teheran: Dār al-Kutub al-Islāmiyya, 1380 A.H.

Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī. *Muʿǧam al-Buldān*. 5 vols. Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1977.

Secondary sources

Abbott, Nabia. *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*, vol. 1. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957.

Aguadé, Jordi. "Messianismus zur Zeit der frühen Abbasiden: Das Kitab al-Fitan des Nu'aim ibn Hammad." PhD diss., Universität Tübingen, 1979.

Al-Azmeh, Aziz. *The Emergence of Islam in Late Antiquity: Allah and His People*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017.

———. „God's Chronography and the Dissipative Time." In *The Apocalyptic Complex,* edited by David Marno, Nadia al-Bagdadi, and Matthias Riedl, 115-142. Budapest: CEU Press, 2018.

Andersson, Tobias. *Early Sunnī Historiography*: *A Study of Ḫalīfa b. Ḫayyaṭ.* Leiden: Brill, 2019.

Arjomand, Saïd Amir. "Islamic Apocalypticism in the Classical Period." In *Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism.* Vol. 2, edited by Bernard McGinn, 238-283. New York: Continuum, 2000.

Bashear, Suliman. "Yemen in early Islam: An examination of non-tribal traditions," *Arabica 36,* no. 3 (1989): 327-361.

Brown, Jonathan. *The Canonization of al-Bukhari and Muslim.* Leiden: Brill, 2007.

Caskel, Werner. *Ǧamharat an-nasab: Das genealogische Werk des Hišām ibn Muḥammad al-Kalbī.* Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill, 1966.

Cook, David. *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic*. Princeton: Darwin Press, 2002.

———. "Messianism and Astronomical Events during the First Four Centuries of Islam." *Revue Des Mondes Musulmans et de La Méditerranée*, no. 91–94 (2000): 29–52.

Crone, Patricia. *Slaves on Horses*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

———. "Were the Qays and Yemen of the Umayyad period political parties?" *Der Islam* 71, no. 1 (1994): 1-57.

Crosby, Elise W. *The History, Poetry and Genealogy of the Yemen – The Akbar of Abid b. Sharya al-Jurhumi.* New Jersey: Gorgias, 2007.

Fierro, Maribel. "al-Aṣfar again." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam 22* (1998): 196-209.

———. "al-Aṣfar." *Studia Islamica.* No. 77. (1993): 169-181.

Flower, Michael. *The Seer in Ancient Greece*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008.

Geddes, Charles L. "The Messiah In South Arabia." *The Muslim World* 57, no. 4 (1967): 311-320.

Goldziher, Ignaz. *Muslim Studies.* Vol. 1. Edited by S. M. Stern. Translated by C. R. Barber & S. M. Stern. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1966.

Guinot, Jean-Noël. "La typologie comme technique herméneutique." In *Figures de l'Ancien Testament chez les Pères*, 1-34. Strasbourg: Centre d'analyse et documentation patristique, 1989.

Hawting, G. R. *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661-750.* London and New York: Routledge, 1986.

Hilali, Asma. "Étude sur la tradition prophétique: La question de l'authenticité du I/VII^éme au VI/XII^éme siècle." PhD. Diss., École Pratique des Hautes Études, 2004.

Hoyland, Robert G. *Arabia and the Arabs: From the Bronze Age to the Coming of Islam.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

Kraft, András. "The Apocalyptic Horizon in Byzantium, Philosophy, Prophecy, and Politics During the Eleventh through Thirteenth centuries." PhD. Diss., Central European University, 2018.

Krenkow, Fritz. "The Two Oldest Books of Arabic Folklore." *Islamic Culture 2* (1928): 55-89, 204-236.

Juynboll, G. H. A. "The Date of the Great Fitna," *Arabica* 20, no. 2 (1973): 142-159.

Leder, Stefan. "The Literary Use of the Khabar: A Basic Form in Historical Writing." In *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East. I: Problems in the Literary Source Material,* edited by Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, 277-315. Princeton: Darwin Press, 1992.

Madelung, Wilferd. "ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Zubayr and the Mahdī." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies 40,* no. 4 (1981): 291-305.

———. "Apocalyptic prophecies in Hims in the Umayyad age." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 31, no. 2 (1986): 141-185.

Moin, Azfar. *The Millennial Sovereign: Sacred Kingship and Sainthood in Islam.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2012.

Monroe, James. "The Poetry of the Sırah Literature." In: *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period,* edited by A. F. L. Beeston, T. M. Johnstone, R. B. Serjeant and R. G. Smith. Cambridge, 368-373. Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Neujahr, Matthew. *Predicting the Past in the Ancient Near East: Mantic Historiography in Ancient Mesopotamia, Judah, and the Mediterranean World.* Providence: Brown University, 2012.

Piotrovskii, Mikhail. *Predaniye o khimyorotskom tsare Asʾade al-Kamile.* Moscow: Izdatelstvo Nauka, 1977.

Propp, Vladimir, *Morphology of the Folktale.* Translated by Laurence Scott. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009.

Robinson, Chase F. *Islamic Historiography.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

Roggema, Barbara. *The Legend of Sergius Baḥīra*: *Eastern Christian Apologetics and Apocalyptic in Response to Islam*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.

Rosenthal, Frantz. *A History of Muslim Historiography.* Leiden: Brill, 1968.

Rubin, Uri. "Apocalypse and Authority in Islamic Tradition: The Emergence of the Twelve Leaders" *Al-Qantara 18*, no. 1 (1997): 11-42.

Sayid, Redwan. *Die Revolte des Ibn Ašʿaṯ und die Koranleser.* Freiburg: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1977.

Schacht, Joseph. *Origins of Muḥammadan Jurisprudence.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums.* Vol. 1. Leiden: Brill, 1967.

Shaban, Muḥammad A. *Islamic History: A New Interpretation.* Vol 1. *600-750 (A.H. 132).* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Shaddel, Mehdy. "The Sufyānī in Early Islamic Kerygma: An Enquiry into His Origins and Early Development." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 27, no. 3 (2017): 403-434

Szombathy, Zoltán. *The Roots of Arab Genealogy*. Piliscsaba: Avicenna Institute of Middle Eastern Studies, 2003.

Tucker, Gene M. "Prophetic Speech." *Union Seminary Review* 32, no. 1 (1978): 31-45.

Wellhausen, Julius. *The Arabic Kingdom and its Fall.* Translated by Margaret Graham Weir. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1927.

Westermann, Claus. *Basic Forms of Prophetic Speech.* Translated by Hugh Clayton White. Cambdridge: Lutterworth Press, 1991.

Yāsīn, ʿAbd al-Ǧawad. *as-Sulṭa fī l-Islām* Vol. 1, *al-ʿAql al-Fiqhī as-Salafī bayn an-Naṣṣ wa-t-Tārīḫ.* Beirut: at-Tanwir, 2012.

Yücesoy, Hayrettin. *Messianic Beliefs and Imperial Politics in Medieval Islam.* Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2009.