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THE CONCEPT OF ALLĀH AS THE HIGHEST GOD

IN PRE-ISLAMIC ARABIA

(A Study of Pre-Islamic Arabic Religious Poetry)

BY

NAJMAH SAYUTI

**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts**

THE INSTITUTE OF ISLAMIC STUDIES

MCGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL

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Dedicated to my parents:

Sajauah-jauah tabangnyo bangau,

pulangnyo ka kubangan juo

ABSTRACT

AUTHOR	Najmah Sayuti
TITLE	The Concept of Allāh as the Highest God in Pre-Islamic Arabia (A study of pre-Islamic Arabic Religious Poetry)
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The ancient Arabs used poetry not only to entertain themselves in the midst of their harsh life in the Arabian desert, but also to proclaim their cultural values, which were the moral-spiritual and material basis of their nomad society. Composing poetry therefore was almost a sacred rite for them. Its recitation in particular, was a main feature of certain ritual customs held annually during the *aswāq* (sg. *sūq*, festival) season. The most common themes touched upon were the attributes of which a tribe may have been particularly proud, such as its victories and generosity to the vanquished, the bravery of its heroes in battle and on hard journeys, the beauty of its women and of nature, the genealogy of the tribe, and prayers to the Almighty.

Through verse the ancient Arabs expressed how they conceived of their deities, whether, idols representing various gods and goddesses, or Allāh. These verses make it clear that Allāh alone was not represented by any idol, allowing us to infer that He was regarded as superior to other deities. This thesis, therefore, attempts to show how the ancient Arabs expressed through poetry their belief in Allāh as the Lord of Gods, which was the true nature of their ancestral belief, the *ḥanīfiyya*, the religion of their forefathers Abraham and Ishmael.

RÉSUMÉ

AUTEUR	Najmah Sayuti
TITRE	Le concept d'Allah à titre de Dieu suprême en Arabie pré-Isamique: Une étude de la poésie religieuse pré-Islamique.
DIPLÔME	Maîtrise ès Arts
DÉPARTEMENT	Institut des Études Islamiques, Université McGill

Les anciens Arabes ont utilisé la poésie non seulement comme divertissement mais aussi afin de proclamer leurs valeurs culturelles, qui étaient le fondement moral, spirituel et matériel de leur société nomade. La composition de poèmes était tout particulièrement une attraction de certaines coutumes rituelles tenues annuellement pendant la saison du *aswāq* (plur. de *sūq*, festival). Les thèmes abordés les plus communs étaient les attributs dont une tribu était particulièrement fière, telles que les victoires de guerre et la générosité à l'égard des vaincus, la bravoure de ses héros au combat, les voyages hasardeux, la beauté des femmes de la tribu, la nature, la généalogie ainsi que les prières au Tout-Puissant.

Grâce à la récitation, les anciens Arabes exprimaient leur conception de leurs déités, c'est-à-dire, les idoles représentant la variété de dieux, déesses, et Allah. Ces vers indiquaient clairement que seul Allah n'était pas représenté par aucune idole, ce qui laisse supposer qu'il était supérieur aux autres déités. Ce mémoire tentera donc de présenter comment les anciens Arabes ont exprimé à travers leur croyance ancestrale, le *ḥanīfiyya*, la religion de leurs pères, Abraham et Ishmael.

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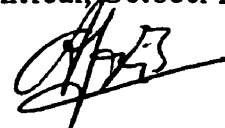
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Montreal, October 25, 1999

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Najmah Sayuti', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Najmah Sayuti

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INTRODUCTION

The Background

Poetry played an important role in the life and literature of the early Arabs, far exceeding other intellectual pursuits such as genealogy and astrology. Arab literary critics regarded it as the crowning achievement of Arabic belles-lettres, while philologists considered ancient Arabic poetry to exceed, in terms of quality, even that of later periods. This is perhaps because it treats the universal subjects of nomadic tribal life: moral and material issues, as well as transcendent and profane themes.

This study focuses on the religious life of the Arabs before Islam—the period known as the *Jāhiliyya* or “age of ignorance”—through a discussion of their poetry. Through poetry the Arabs expressed their emotions and thoughts. Poetry may offer an insight into the very depths of an author’s soul, and given the social importance of poetry among the pre-Islamic Arabs, into that of the people as a whole.

Before Islam the Arabic language sufficed for the simple habitual activities of nomadic merchants, e.g., livestock breeding and trading. The Arabs of this time had little use for the scientific theories of their Persian, Roman, and Egyptian neighbors. This, however, did not prevent them from writing poetry that was both eloquent and original. Every year poetic tournaments would be held, ‘Ukāz being the best known of them, where poets demonstrated their talent for composing. According to legend, the winning verses would be hung up in the Ka’ba of Mecca

written on calf-skin with golden ink, until these were superseded by the poetry of another winner.

In terms of religious life, the Arabs held for the most part pagan beliefs, but not to the extent that many assume, since they also believed in a supreme god named Allāh, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, as suggested by the Qur'ān 29: 61 and 63.

If you asked them who it is that has created the heavens and the earth, and subjected the sun and the moon, they will surely reply: "God." How then can they turn away from Him? If you ask them who it is that sends water from the sky and thus resurrects the earth after its death, they will certainly reply: "God." Say: "Praise, then, be to God!" But most of them are senseless.¹

When they felt the urge to make a vow or invocation, they seldom referred to their various gods or goddesses. Instead, they called more often upon Allāh as their witness. For example, Imru' al-Qays (d. about 500-540 AD)² has a woman swear on several occasions:

فَعَالَتْ: يَمِينُ اللَّهِ مَا لَكَ حِيلَةٌ وَ مَا إِنْ أَرَى عَنْكَ الْغَوَايَةَ تَنْجَلِي³

She (his lover) said: I swear by Allāh that you have no
Way of attaining what you desire,
Even if I see allurement appear from you

¹ The Koran with Parallel Arabic Text, trans. with notes by N. J. Dawood (London: Penguin, 1995) 402.

² He was Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr b. Ḥārith al-Mulk b. 'Umar al-Maḡṣūr b. Ḥujr Akil al-Murār b. 'Umar b. Mu'awiyya b. Thawr or Kinda. He was born in Nejd and died on his way home from a visit to Constantinople. He was the most prominent pre-Islamic poet. Fu'ād Afrām al-Bustānī, Diwān Imri' al-Qays (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kathūfikiyya, 1963); 'Umar Fārūq al-Ṭibā', in the introduction to his edition of Diwān Imri' al-Qays (Beirut: Dār al-Qalam, 1997/8) 7, says that some historians say that Imru' al-Qays died in 560AD; cf. Muḥammad Abū Faḍl Ibrahim, Diwān Imri' al-Qays (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1990). See also Abū Muḥammad 'Abd Allāh Ibn Qutayba, al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā' 1 (Beirut: al-Thaqāfa, 1980) 50-57; C.J. Lyall, Kitāb Sharḥ al-Qasā'id al-Shi'r (Calcutta: Dār al-Imāra, 1892) 1-30; Fuat Sezgin writes that he died after 550, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums 2 (Leiden: Brill, 1967) 122-126.

³ Al-Ṭibā', Diwān Imri' al-Qays, 101; Abū Faḍl, Diwān Imri' al-Qays, 14; Diwān Imri' al-Qays (Beirut: Dār Sāḍir, 1377 AH/1958 AD) 40. See also Zawzānī, Sharḥ al-Mu'allaqāt, 18; Hafiz Ghulam Mustafa, Religious Trends in Pre-Islamic Arabic Poetry (Bombay: Aligarh Muslim University Press, 1971) 42; Lyall, Kitāb, 14. This is one of *mu'allaqāt* lines.

و لو قطعوا رأسي لديك و أوصالي⁴

فقلت يمين الله ابرح قاعدا

I said: I swear by Allāh that I will still be in my place
even if they cut off my head and my limbs in your presence

لناموا فما إن من حديث و لاصل⁵

حلقت لها بانه حلفة فاجر

By Allāh, I swore to her a brazen oath

Similarly, Zuhayr⁶ (d. 530?-627) takes the following oaths in his poems:

لعي حقة أظفارها لم تقلم.⁷

فو الله إنا و الأحاليف هولا

I swear by Allāh that we and our allies are all
In an age whose claws will not be trimmed

ريح الشتاء بيوت الحي بالعنن.⁸

تالله قد علمت قيس إذ قذفت

⁴ Al-Ṭibā' *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 124; Abū Faḍl, *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 32; *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 140. See also Mustafa, *Religious Trends*, 42. It is said that these verses are the same nature and quality as his *mu'allaqa*.

⁵ al-Ṭibā', *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 124; Abū Faḍl, *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 32; *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 140; Muḥammad Farīd Abū Ḥadīd, *al-Mālik al-Daḥīl Imru' al-Qays* (Egypt: Dār al-Ma'ārif). See also Mustafa, *Religious*, 42.

⁶ He was Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā b. Rabī'a b. Qurra b. al-Ḥarīth. See Fu'ād Afram al-Bustānī, *Diwān Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā* (Beirut: al-Maṭba'a al-Kathūlikiyya, 1963); Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r*, 76-78; Lyall, *Sharh al-Qasā'id*, 53-66. Most of his verses are encomia addressed to Harim b. Sinān, his father, and his tribe, al-Ḥarīth b. 'Auf. Only a few were written in condemnation of his enemies. However, both the praise and condemnation are cleverly expressed. According to al-Bustānī, Zuhayr was the third most prominent *mu'allaqāt* poet after Imru' al-Qays and al-Nabīgha al-Dhibyānī. In his preface to *Diwān Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, 1383 AH/ 1963 AD), Karam al-Bustānī says that Zuhayr believed in Allāh, resurrection and the Day of Judgement as shown by the following verses: *falā taktumunn allāha mā fī nufūsikum * liyakhfā wa mahma yuktam allāhu ya'lam; yu'akhkhar fayūda' fī kitābin fayudakhkhar * liyam al-ḥisāb aw yu'ajjal fayunqami* "so do not hide anything from Allāh; so be afraid (of Him) whether or not it is hidden, indeed Allāh knows it; if (the punishment) is postponed, then it will be written in the book and will be counted in the Day of Judgement, and if it is to be done here (in the world), so it must be (i.e. sooner or later, it will happen to you)" (p. 5); Lyall, *Kitāb*, 59. See also Fakhr al-Dīn Qabāwa, *Shi'r Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā* (Halb: Dār al-Qalam al-'Arabī, 1979); al-Suwaydī, *Diwān Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā ma'a Sharhihi li al-A'lā al-Shantamarī* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1306 AH/ 1889 AD); Abū 'Abbās b. Yaḥya b. Zayd Tha'lab al-Shaybānī, *Sharh Diwān Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā* (Cairo: al-Dār al-Qawmiyya, 1384 AH/1964 AD); Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r* 1, 76-88.

⁷ Al-Bustānī, *Sharh Diwān Zuhayr*, 24; this one line of verse he composed in praise of Aus; al-Suwaydī, *Diwān Zuhayr*, 87; al-Shaybānī, *Sharh Diwān*, 24. See also Mustafa, *Religious*, 42.

I swear by Allāh that Qays knew when
The wind of winter blew and wiped out the houses of people with 'unaru⁹

تعلماها لعمر الله ذاقسما فاقصد بذرك وانتظر أين تنسلك.¹⁰

You must know (O man) that an oath belongs to Allāh
So direct your footsteps and watch where you go

Zuhayr reminds the audience here not to take idle oaths or make promises
that one cannot fulfill because such actions are witnessed by Allāh, and one will be
questioned about them in His presence in the Hereafter.

We also find Dhū al-Isba' al-Adwānī¹¹ saying the following:

والله لو كرهت كفى مصاحبتى لقلت إذ كرهت قربي لها بينى.¹²

I swear to Allāh that if she did not like (me),
she should have desisted from accompanying me
So I said if you do not like being near me, then stay away

Moreover, while the names of deities and idols are found alongside the
name of Allāh in many oaths, this is never the case with invocations, as shown by
the following lines of Imru' al-Qays:

فقلت سباك الله إنك فاضحى ألسنت السمار والناس أحوالى.¹³

⁸ Al-Bustānī, *Sharh*, 12; this single line of verse he composed for Hiram b. Sinan b. Abi Harīth. See also Mustafa, *Religious Trends*, 42.

⁹ *Al-'unaru* (plural of *'unna*), large trees planted around a houses to protect it from the wind, and yet dangerous because when the wind blows strongly, they can be uprooted and fall on the house; see al-Bustānī, *Sharh*, 121.

¹⁰ *Ta'allamā* means *i'lāmā*; so *i'lāmā la'amr allāhi dhā qasaman. Hā tanbīh* 'attention!,' or in other words *i'lāman hādha qasaman*, "pay attention to or notice this oath!" Aṣmā'ī says *faqdur bidhar'ika: qaddir khaṭwaka* 'watch your footstep or pace. *Al-dhar'* is the measurement of a footstep, meaning, do not burden or entrust me with what I cannot bear; al-Suwaydī, *Diwān Zuhayr*, 182. Mustafa, *Religious Trends*, 42.

¹¹ There is no specific information about his life except that he lived long before Islam. His name was Hurthān. Lyall, *Mufaddaliyyat* 1 (Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1918) 311-315, 321-327; 2: 107-108. See also Abū Ḥadīd, *al-Malik*.

¹² Mustafa, *Religious Trends*, 42; Lyall, *al-Mufaddaliyyat* 1, 160.

She said: "May Allāh estrange you!
Did you not see companions and people around me?"

و جدع يربوعا وعفر دارما.¹⁴ ألا قبح الله البراجم كلها

Did not Allāh hate the Barājim all,
and cut off the nose of Yarbū' and scatter dust on Dārim?¹⁵

Likewise 'Urwa b. al-Ward¹⁶ (d. 616?) said:

جزى الله خيرا كلما ذكر اسمه¹⁷

Allāh gives recompense whenever His name is mentioned

لحي الله صعلوكا إذا جن ليله¹⁸

Allāh cursed the beggar when His night was dark

Historians of Islam suspect that the occurrence of names such as 'Abd Allāh, 'Abd al-Qādir, 'Ubayd Allāh, etc., among the pre-Islamic Arabs, is indicative of a strong belief in Allāh among them, especially given the fact that they also considered the latter to be the owner of the Ka'ba,¹⁹ the ancient shrine at Mecca to which Arabs came to perform the *ḥājj*, or pilgrimage, every year.

¹³ Abū Faḍl, *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 31; *Diwān Imri' al-Qays*, 141; Abū Ḥadīd, *al-Malik*, 87. See also Mustafa, *Religious*, 43.

¹⁴ Abū Faḍl, *Diwān Imru' al-Qays*, 130; *Diwān Imru' al-Qays*, 165. See also Mustafa, *Religious*, 43;

¹⁵ Al-Barājim, Yarbū', and Dārim are names of tribes who inhabited the southern portion of the Arabian peninsula .

¹⁶ Ibn Qutayba, *Shi'r* 1, 566-567; *Aghānī* 3, 73; Baghdādī, *Khazānat al-Adab* 4, 194; *Diwān 'Urwa ibn al-Ward* (Beirut: Maktabat Ṣādir, 1953).

¹⁷ *Diwān 'Urwa*, 6; Ibrāhīm Shāḥada al-Khawāja, *'Urwa ibn al-Ward: Hayātuhu wa Shi'ruhu* (Libya: al-Mansha'a al-Sha'biyya, 1981) 192. See also Mustafa, *Religious*, 43.

¹⁸ *Diwān 'Urwa*, 12; al-Khawāja, *'Urwa*, 154. See also Mustafa, *Religious*, 43;.

¹⁹ In the Qur'ān 3: 96-97 it is said, "Verily, the first House (of worship) appointed for mankind was that of *Bakka* (i.e., Mecca), full of blessing, and a guidance for the universe (i.e., mankind, jinn, and all that exist). In it are manifest signs (for example) the *maqām* (place) of Abraham; whosoever

Furthermore, Meccan Arabs and their neighbors seem to have acknowledged Allāh as the Greatest Being, and as having divine attributes which exceeded those of all other deities, idols, angels, jinn, and even ghosts. Indeed, they admitted that people are “the slaves of Allāh” as expressed by the following verse of al-A‘sha’:²⁰

فأقسم بالله الذي أنا عبده²¹

I swear by Allāh whose servant I am

According to Peters, the word Allāh in pre-Islamic times was a manifestation of the Arabs’ original religion—that of the *Ḥanifiyya*—which was considered to be the religion of Abraham and Ishmael. Peters argues that for Muslims *Ḥanifiyya* serves as either another name for Islam or designates the monotheistic religious system of Abraham,²² referred to in the Qur’ān 3: 95, and 4: 125:

Say (O Muḥammad) Allāh speaks the truth; follow the religion of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, who was not of *al-mushrikūn* (the associators).
Who can be better than one who submits (*aslama*) himself to Allāh, does good and follows the religion of Abraham the *ḥanīf*, for Allāh took Abraham as a friend.

enters it, he attains security. And *Ḥajj* to the House is a duty that mankind owes to Allāh, those who can afford expenses (for one’s conveyance, provision and residence); and whoever disbelieves (i.e., denies the *Ḥajj*, therefore a disbeliever in Allāh) then Allāh stands not in need of any of the universe.”

²⁰ He was Maymūn b. Qays who was born in a village near by Yamāma among the tribe of Banū Qays b. Tha‘laba. *Dīwān al-A‘shā* (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1966) 5; *Kitāb al-Subh al-Munīr fī Shi‘r Abī Baṣīr Maymūn ibn Qays ibn Jandal al-A‘shā wa al-A‘shāyn al-Ākharayn* (London: Messr Luzac & Co, 1928) ed. Rudolf Geyer, 58. A‘sha, *Diwān al-A‘sha al-Kabīr Maymūn ibn Qays*, ed. Muḥammad and Muḥammad Ḥusayn Hīn (Mecca: Maktabat al-Ādāb, n.d.). See also ‘Abbās Bayyūnī ‘Ajlān, ‘*Anāsīr al-Ablā’ al-Fannī fī Shi‘r al-A‘shā* (Alexandria: Dār al-Ma‘ūrif, 1981), and Abū Ḥadīd, *al-Malik*; al-Bustānī, *Muntakhabāt Shi‘riyya* (Beirut: Maṭba‘at al-Kathūlikiyya, 1963).

²¹ *Dīwān A‘shā*, 178; cf. *al-Subh al-Munīr*, 58; cf. Muṣṭafa, *Religious Trends*, 45.

The Focus of this Study and the its Sources

This work will attempt a study of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry with a view to determining to what extent Allāh was seen as the Supreme Deity prior to the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad. Certainly, historians dealing with the history of the ancient Arabs have attempted to give an account of the religious beliefs of this people; yet their main object, obviously, was to sketch a general history of the faith held by the Arabs before Islam. For this reason, they employ a wide variety of sources of which pre-Islamic poetry is only one. Hence this body of literature has not been fully exploited for the purposes of this topic.

The purpose of this thesis is to trace the thought of the pagan Arabs concerning the idea of God as expressed in their verse. The position of Allāh and the development of religious ideas among the ancient Arabs can be understood only when set against the powerful precedent of the long tradition of pre-Islamic poetry. The results are intended both as a contribution to literary history, and as providing a missing link in the early development of religious ideas and norms in Arabia before Islam in continuation of *Ḥanīfiyya* teachings.

The investigation extends only to the study of pre-Islamic religious poetry, i.e., the pre-Islamic perception of Allāh among other Arab deities in the verse produced during the one hundred and sixty years that preceded the mission of the Prophet Muḥammad. This was the era of the *mu'allaqāt* poets, as well as the

²² F. E. Peters, Muhammad and the Origin of Islam (New York: New York State University Press, 1994) 122.

period in which *Ḥanīfiyya* faith experienced some of its most significant developments.

Our primary sources for this study consist solely therefore of the surviving body of poetry from this period, generally accepted by scholars to be authentic for the following reasons:

1. It is agreed that there is little of pre-Islamic Arabic religious poetry still available. The modern scholar Yahya al-Juburī says that, if had it not been for the fact that philologists began collecting this material only at the beginning of the second century of the Islamic calendar, more of it would have been preserved.²³ This may be true. On the other hand, we have statements of the early philologists that a large amount of Arabic poetry did not survive even into the early Islamic period.²⁴

Though some claim that ancient Arabic poetry suffered from the interpolation of later Islamic ideas, the standard of poetic excellence generally remained the same. According to al-Qurashī the early Arabs of the desert were true master-poets who aspired both to the highest level of Arabic eloquence and to the richest vocabulary. No later poet fails to acknowledge the excellence of their expression.²⁵ The difficulty

²³ Yahyā al-Juburī, *al-Islam wa al-Shi'r* (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Nahḍa, 1383/1964) 35-37; cf. Linda Clarke, "Arabic Elegy between the Jahiliyya and Islam" (M. A. thesis, McGill University, 1988) 7.

²⁴ Ibn Sallām al-Jumahī in his *Biographies of the Poets* writes that when Islam came the Arabs turned their attention from poetry to the new faith. Many of those who engaged in poetry died or were killed in the Islamic conquests. When the first Muslims state was established, they were able to preserve only very little of their precious ancient poetry; see *Tabaqāt Fuhūl Shu'arā'* 1, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Madanī, 1394/1974) 25.

is still, however, to establish the authenticity of sentiments against the claim that all religious poetry was introduced later under influence of Islamic doctrines. Could it be that the early philologists engaged in such pious interpolation?

2. Many writers have noticed a lack of references to Islamic doctrines throughout the poetry of the first century. Yet, in 1937 'Umar Farrūkh claimed that at the beginning of the Prophetic mission, poetry manifested the rapid and overwhelming influence of Islam both on the culture and the way of thinking of the Arabs.²⁶ For example, we find elegies for martyred Muslims and poems that call for morality in line with Islamic teachings.²⁷ Von Grunebaum, however, in reply to Farrūkh's claim, says that these verses contain little in the way of religious expression, but rather reflect the political controversies raised among early Muslim thinkers.²⁸ It was only "by the end of the eighth century AD, however, (that) religious thinking and feeling had pervaded the mind of the average Muslim to such an extent that it found its way

²⁵ Abū Zayd Muḥammad b. Abī al-Khaṭṭāb al-Qurashī, Jamharāt Ash'ār al-'Arab I (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, 1387 AH/1967 AD) 1.

²⁶ Clarke, "Arabic Elegy," 8; cited from Das Bild des Frühislam, 2; Muḥammad Raḥatullah Khan, Vom Einfluss des Qur'ans auf die arabische Dichtung: Eine Untersuchung über die dichterischen Werke von Hassan b. Thābit, Ka'b b. Mālik und 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāha (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1938).

²⁷ 'Umar Farrūkh, Tārīkh al-Adab al-'Arabī I (Beirut: Dār 'Ilm li-al-Malāyīn, 1984) 256.

²⁸ Clarke, "Arabic Elegy," 8-9 citing Von Grunebaum's review of Farrūkh's work in Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 45 (1938): 293-295. Gabrieli, however seems to agree with Farrūkh; see his "Religious Poetry in Early Islam," Arabic Poetry, Theory and Development: Third Giorgio Levi Della Vida Biennial Conference, ed. G. E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1973): 6-7.

into poetry without being considered an innovation.”²⁹ Thus pre-Islamic Arabic religious poetry is logically acceptable as an authentic source.

3. According to Goldziher, Ḥassān b. Thābit and Ka‘b b. Mālīk, among the many who composed Islamic verse, stood outside the general tendencies of their time.³⁰ However Farrūkh succeeded in tracing names from about two hundred years before Islam to whom a verse or verses on religious themes are ascribed,³¹ lending more validity to the claim that there is a spiritual vein in ancient Arabic poetry.
4. The “discontinuity” and “interruption” in the steady line of the poetic tradition at the beginning of the Prophet Muḥammad’s mission, stemming from the decline of the typical values of desert life as upheld in *Jahiliyya poetry*, are likewise factors which strengthen the case for the authenticity of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry in its present written form.

The sources for this study have been carefully chosen from the original texts, and have been compared with recognized English translations. Thus, quotations from Ibn al-Kalbī’s Kitāb al-Asnām, for example, will appear side by side with the translations made by Faris in his The Book of Idols, while Ibn Iṣḥāq’s Sīrat al-Nubuwwa is verified against Guillaume’s English version, The Life of Muḥammad.

²⁹ Gustave E. von Grunebaum, “The Early Development of Islamic religious Poetry,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 60 (1940): 24.

³⁰ Clarke, “Arabic Elegy,” 9; citing from “Der Dīwān des Ġarwal b. Aus al-Ḥute’a,” Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 46 (1892):1.

³¹ Clarke, “Arabic Elegy,” 9; citing Das Bild des Frühislam, 2.

The Method of This Study

This thesis will take a textual approach, examining passages selected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources in Arabic include the Kitāb al-Asnām by Ibn al-Kalbī, and other original works, such as Dīwān Imri' al-Qays, Dīwān Zuhayr, Dīwān Khansā', as well as collection of other pre-Islamic poets. Books and scholarly articles, such as Margoliouth's The Origins of Pre-Islamic Poetry, will be considered among the secondary sources. Also, some background information will be provided by works discussing Qur'anic and Ḥadīth studies in general, including the biography of the Prophet Muḥammad. These sources will provide a lexical frame of reference which will enable me to explore how the word "Allāh" in particular was understood among the Arabs of the *Jāhiliyya*.

This essay will consist of two parts. Chapter I will trace the origins of the *Ḥanīfiyya* faith, and its development (perhaps "deviation" would be a more suitable word), as well as other religious practices of the Arabs prior to Islam. *Ḥanīfiyya* was considered the religion of Abraham, the "Friend of God," and of his son Ishmael, the founder of the Arab people. Like several other revealed religions, the *Ḥanīfiyya* taught monotheism, or worship of the one God, called Allāh. Due to the times and, perhaps, external influences, the Arabs later on invented other gods and practiced idolatry. Despite these practices the Arabs did not totally discard all *Ḥanīfiyya* rituals, for every year they still went to Mecca to perform *Hajj*, which was one of the primary rituals of *Ḥanīfiyya*, to show their reverence for the Ka'ba, the ancient shrine built by Abraham and his son Ishmael.

Chapter II lists the deities worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia, for which references may be found in the compilations of ancient Arabic poetry such as the Mu‘allaqāt and Asmā‘iyyāt, and in historical records of Arabic literature. It is said that every tribe preferred having its own god or goddess to whom members paid special visits and offered magnificent sacrifices and gifts, which could be either in the form of animal victims or valuable objects left before an image of the deity. Every god or goddess was represented by an idol, which could take the shape of a human being; this they called *ṣanm* (pl. *aṣnām*), or also a standing rock or statue, referred to as *nuṣb* (pl. *anṣāb*). Allāh, however, was the only who was not represented by any image or statue, an acknowledgement perhaps that He was the Lord of all gods and goddesses. Allāh was superior to other gods and goddesses while the latter were actually considered to be the intermediaries between Allāh and the human race.

Note on Transliteration

Throughout this study, the Arabic transliteration rules of the Institute of Islamic Studies, McGill University, will be followed.

CHAPTER ONE

ḤANĪFIYYA

Ḥanīfiyya (الحنيفية), a term given to a pre-Islamic monotheism native to Arabia other than Judaism and Christianity, is a derivative of *ḥanīf*, generally acknowledged to be a borrowing from the Syriac 'hanpa' meaning originally "pagan heretic" but then later developing into the sense of "religious dissident." According to Gabrieli, the *Ḥanīfiyya* practitioners or (*ḥanīf*) practiced an ascetic life and sought through meditation explanation of the transcendental phenomena which the majority of ancient Arabs accepted with fatalistic gesture.¹

According to *Ḥanīfiyya* belief, there was only one true God who was Allāh, the creator and sustainer of the universe. Records show that the name of Allāh used extensively among ancient Arabs for serious affairs like taking oaths and in invocations. There is also a suspicion among Islamic historians that the existence of names such as 'Abd Allāh (عبدالله) and 'Abd al-Qadīr (عبدالقدير) among the pagan Arabs was indicative of their belief in Allāh. Furthermore they also considered Allāh to be the owner of the Ka'ba, the ancient shrine at Mecca where Arabs came to perform the *ḥājj* or pilgrimage every year.

Peters supports this idea saying that the occurrence of the word Allāh during pre-Islamic times was a manifestation of the religion native to the Hijaz

¹ Fransesco Gabrieli, *Muhammad and the Conquest of Islam*, trans. Virginia Luling and Rosamund Linell (New York, Toronto: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1968) 43. See also Andrew Rippin, "RHMMN and the Ḥanīfs," in *Islamic Studies presented to Charles J. Adams*, ed. Wael B. Hallaq and Donald P. Little (Leiden, New York, København, Köln: E. J. Brill, 1991) 152-68; Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: the Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964) 112.

region of the Arabian Peninsula, i.e., the *Ḥanīfiyya*, which was considered to be the religion of Abraham and Ishmael. According to him, Muslim scholars consider *Ḥanīfiyya* to be another term for Islam and the original form of Arabian monotheism adopted and practiced by Abraham.²

However, before embarking on any discussion of the existence of Abrahamic practices and ideas in pre-Islamic times, it seems advisable to discuss first the genealogy of the pagan Arabs for purposes of clarity. Generally, the ancient Arabs have been categorized into three chronologically-distinct groups: the *‘āriba* (العاربة, genuine Arabs), also called the *bā’ida* (البائدة, extinct); *muta‘arriba* (المستعربة, naturalized Arabs of an earlier period); and the *musta‘riba* (المستعربة, later, naturalized Arabs).³

‘Āriba Arabs (العاربة)

The *‘āriba* were regarded as genuine Arabs who were the descendants of Iram and Lāwīdh, the grandsons of Noah by his son Sām. According to Fariq, the *‘āriba* were spread throughout the Arabian peninsula, but had already long been extinct by the time of Christ. Among them were the *‘Amāliqa*, the *‘Ād*, the *Thamūd*, the *Ṭasm* and the *Jadīs*, and the *Jurhum*.⁴ Even though their story is mostly legendary, the *‘Amāliqa* were reported to be the inhabitants of Oman,

² Peters, *Muhammad*, 122, translation of Ibn Ishāq, 1985, 100-01.

³ Jirjī Zaydān, *al-‘Arab Qabl al-Islām* (Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 1900z) 11-14; see also Aḥmad Amīn, *Fajr al-Islām* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Nahḍa al-Miṣriyya, 1965) 1-11; cf. K. A. Fariq, *History of Arabic Literature* (Delhi: Vikas Publications, 1972) 11.

Bahrain, the Hijāz, Iraq, Mesopotamia, Syria, and Egypt. They even governed two great early kingdoms: one in Iraq (Babylon), and the other in Egypt.⁵ Historians disagree about the exact whereabouts of the 'Ād. Some give the region around Alexandria, some prefer Damascus, others argue for Yemen. But from the description of the 'Ād's home as a golden city with rivers beneath and decorated with various colors of pearl, it was very likely in the southern Arabian Peninsula, i.e., in the Yemen, Oman, or Ḥaḍramawt⁶ because those regions are known for their rich mines. The Thamūd dwelled in Hijr, known as the city of the prophet Ṣāliḥ, and in the Wādī al-Qurā in the western Hijāz.⁷ The Ṭasm and the Jadīs on the other hand dwelt in Yamāma in the eastern Nejd, the one succeeding the other over time.⁸

Muta'ariba Arabs (المتعربة)

The *muta'ariba* tribes were reported to be the next inhabitants after the 'āriba of Yemen, Ḥaḍramaut and Hijr, i.e., the area forming the Persian Gulf coast of the Arabian mainland. Their genealogy is traditionally linked to Ya'rub b. Qaḥṭān, the first and greatest king of the famous Sabaeen and Himyarid Ṭubba' kings of southern Arabia. But there is no historical record of his background apart

⁴ Fariq, *ibid.*

⁵ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 53-54.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 83-85.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 86-89.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 89. But Fariq adds that this included with the *aḥqāf*, the sandy tracts between Yemen and Oman.

from the story that one day he came to Yemen, settled there, and adopted both the native culture and the language. Ultimately when his people had increased and become dominant, he seized power from the native *'āriba*.⁹ He and his people were nevertheless known as *muta'ariba* because they were not of Arab origin. Among them were the Ḥamdān, the Ṭayyi', the Madhḥij, the Kinda, the Lakhm, and the 'Azd (comprising the 'Aus, the Khazraj and the Ghassān).¹⁰

Musta'riba Arabs (المستعربة)

The *muta'riba* were the alleged descendants of Ishmael who had been domiciled in Mecca about nineteen centuries before Christ.¹¹ Thus they were also called *Ismā'iliyya* or Ishmaelite. Ishmael, the son of Abraham by his concubine Hagar, married a daughter of Muḍaḍ b. Bashir, the last king of the Jurhum of the *'ariba* Arabs. Later on their offspring were to be popularly referred to as the 'Adnānites after one of their famous progeny named 'Adnān.¹² The Adnānites settled in the countries to the north of Yemen: Tihāma, the Hijāz, and Nejd, as far as Syria and Iraq.¹³ They were known as the northerners and were commonly referred to in Arabic literature as Ma'ād, Nizār, and Mudār. Among them the most popular tribes were the Quraysh, dwelling in Mecca and its environs; the Taghlib,

⁹ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 141-142.

¹⁰ Fariq, *History*, 12.

¹¹ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 223.

¹² Ibid. According to Zaydan, historians disagree about the number of generations separating him from Ishmael. Some give the number as forty, some put it at twenty, others put it at fifteen or even less; cf. Fariq *History*, 14.

residing in Mesopotamia; the Thaqīf in eastern Mecca; the Bakr, spread over Yamāma to Hījr; and the *Thamīm* to the south and south-east of Baṣra. The 'Abd al-Manāf and the 'Abd al-Dār¹⁴ were highly respected among the Quraysh because they played an important role in the pre-Islamic pilgrimage every year.

A. THE ORIGIN OF THE ḤANIFĪYYA

As pointed out before, the *Ḥanīfiyya* religion of the pagan Arabs remained relatively uninfluenced by the Judeo-Christian traditions that preceded Muḥammad's prophetic mission. However, this does not necessarily mean that the Arabs were unaware of these traditions. On the contrary, they were quite conscious of the Abrahamic tradition by which Arabs traced their monotheism through Abraham and his son Ishmael, the legendary founder of the Arab nation, which was then continued by Moses and Jesus, and finally reached Muḥammad. Yet this tradition had been overlaid by the pagan developments of later centuries.

It is human nature to respect things or objects surrounding one that seem to offer comfort and protection. As it is natural in the desert for sandstorms to occur, trees and stones sometimes provide the only shelter. Gradually this feeling develops into a kind of belief that those things or objects are agents of the divinities or the divinities themselves. It is very likely for this reason that the ancient Arabs offered their sacred rituals to trees and stones, not as the divinities themselves, but rather as their agents, houses and dwellings. Later on, due to their

¹³ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 219; cf. Fariq, *History*, 14.

¹⁴ Zaydān, *al-'Arab*, 1: 103-251; Nuwayrī, *Nihayāt al-'Arab* 2: 262-303; and Qalqashandī, 1: 315-60;

contacts with foreign countries through trade, abstract characteristics came to be applied to these divinities. The Bedouin, however, did not give up their nomadic tradition of worship, perhaps because the gods of agricultural communities did not suit their nomadic way of life.¹⁵

The Qur'ān makes explicit statements about the beliefs of the pagan Arabs and about certain ideas which were passed down through the Prophet Muḥammad and Muslims.

As cited by Ibn Ishāq, Ibn Hishām mentions four Meccans of the Prophet's generation who abandoned pagan practices. They were:

1. Waraqa b. Naufal b. Asad b. Abd al-'Uzzā b. Quṣayy b. Kilāb b. Murra b. Ka'ab b. Lu'ayy.
2. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Jaḥsh b. Ri'āb b. Ya'mar b. Abra b. Murra b. Kabīr b. Ghanm b. Dūdān b. Asad b. Khuzayma al-Asadī
3. 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith b. Asad b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Quṣayy.
4. Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl b. 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. 'Abd Allāh b. Qurṭ b. Riyāh b. Razāḥ b. 'Adiy b. Ka'b b. Lu'ayy.

Waraqa became a Christian and studied the scriptures until he mastered them, whereas 'Ubayd Allāh went on searching until the rise of Islam. He became a Muslim and took part in the migration to Abyssinia together with his Muslim wife Umm Ḥabība, daughter of Abū Sufyān. Once there, however, he converted to Christianity and died as a Christian. 'Uthmān b. al-Ḥuwayrith went to Byzantium

cf. Fariq, History, 14.

¹⁵ See W. Montgomery Watt, Muhammad at Mecca (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1972) 23.

and adopted Christianity. He was honored with a highly respected position beside the Byzantine emperor. Unlike the others, Zayd b. 'Amr converted to neither Judaism nor Christianity. He instead maintained his belief in the *Ḥanīfiyya*, or Hanafite religion.¹⁶ Ibn Quṭayba mentions six other persons to whom the adjective *ḥanīf* was applied, including Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt and Abū al-Qays b. al-Aṣlat.¹⁷

Abū al-Qays used to say:

And remember the account you must render,
for God is the best reckoner.
Man's Lord has chosen a religion,
So let none guard you but the Lord of heaven,
Raise up for us *ḥanīfī* religion.
You are our object; one is guided in travel by heights,
You are a light and protection to this people,
You lead the way, not lacking in virtues.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibn Ishāq, The Life of Muhammad, trans. A. Guillaume (London: Oxford University Press, 1955) 98-99. See also Watt, Muhammad, 162; Muḥammad Ibn Ḥabīb al-Baghdādī, Kitāb al-Muḥabbar (Maṭba'at Jamī'at Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1361 AH/ 1942 AD) 171; Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Munammaq fi Akhbār Quraysh (Hyderabad: Maṭba'at Majlis Dā'irat al-Ma'ārif al-'Uthmāniyya, 1384 AH/ 1964 AD) 176-77, 531-32.

¹⁷ He was Ṣayfī b. al-Aṣlat b. Jusham b. Wā'il b. Zayd b. Qays b. 'Amir b. Murra b. Mallik b. al-Aus. See Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 128, 201; and Watt, Muhammad. Abū Qays was brother of Banū Wāqif of Yathrib or Medina, who was well acquainted of the sayings of Jewish rabbis about the apostle of God. Fariq in his History, 92-94 says that Umayya, a second cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad on the mother's side, had an inquisitive mind, and was keenly interested in religious inquiries. He was an influential resident of al-Ṭā'if, a hilly town with fine climate about fifty miles eastern of Mecca, which was belonged to Thaḳif tribe. He was said to have been in touch with the monks and priests of Syria during his wandering. He had read some of the revealed books, which resulted in his hatred of idols, and only believed in one and all-powerful true God, shunned wine, and wore coarse dress of camel or goat hair. His ideas about God, life after death and human conduct closely resembled the Qur'ān, as is also shown by his poems. He was very much aware of the last Prophet. Some reporters said that he wanted to be the expected Prophet. See Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī (d. 356 AH/1076 AD), Kitāb al-Aghānī 8 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1986) 187; and some said he acknowledged the Prophet and even sincerely praised him in his lines, upheld his mission and exhorted his readers to follow him. See also Khizānāt al-Adāb, 1: 173).

¹⁸ Ibn Ishāq, The Life of Muhammad, trans. Alfred Guillaume (Lahore, Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1967) 129; Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya 1 (Beirut: Dār Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1408 AH/1987 AD) 315; for Arabic text, see appendix 1. This is part of his ode in which he magnified the sanctity of Mecca, forbade Quraysh to fight there, urged them to stand by one another, mentioned their merits and virtues, urged them to protect the apostle Muḥammad, and reminded them of how Allāh had dealt with them and saved them in the War of the Elephant against the Abrahā's army in the year before the apostle was born. The translations, which are not authorized to any one are

On another occasion Abū al-Qays said:

Lord of mankind, serious things have happened.
The difficult and the simple are involved.
Lord of mankind, if we have erred
Guide us to the good path.
Were it not for our Lord we should be Jews
And the religion of Jews is not convenient.
Were it not our Lord we should be Christians
Along with the monks on Mount Jaḥil.
But when we were created we were created
Ḥanīfs, our religion is from all generations.
We bring the sacrificial camels walking in fetters
Covered with cloths but their shoulders bare.¹⁹

The use of the word *ḥanīf* in the Qur'ān suggests that they were the followers of the original ideal of the Arab religion, i.e., the Abrahamic faith. While these persons did not explicitly refer to themselves as *ḥanīf* (الحنيف) or say they were in search of the *Ḥanīfiyya* way, yet their denial of either Meccan pagan practices or Judeo-Christian traditions clearly implied that they may nevertheless have been searching for the monotheism of the genuine ancestral religion.

In contrast to Watt's suggestion that the presence of monotheistic ideas among the Arabs originally came from the Hellenistic influence of Syro-Arabian religion, some classical sources (e.g., *al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, *Dīwān al-Hakīm*, etc.) suggest that the Arabs were already monotheists long before Islam, but that due to foreign influences they had corrupted the original ideas.²⁰ In addition, the earliest passages of the Qur'ān address the people, in this case the Meccan Arabs, in terms

translated by the writer of this thesis.

¹⁹ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 201, trans. Guillaume; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah* 2: 85-86; for Arabic text, see appendix 2.

²⁰ Watt, *Muhammad*, 162.

which indicate that these latter believed in, although somewhat vaguely, a god whom they called *Allāh*.²¹ Perhaps because of the level of their understanding they could not accept an unseen god. Thus, they took visual objects as the dwellings of this god, which they sometimes treated like the god himself.

Furthermore, Watt says that the Qur'ān explains certain strange words which were apparently not properly understood at the same time or did not exist among the Arabs before, e.g. *saqar* (السقر, Qur'ān 74: 26-30), *al-qārī'ah* (الغارعة, Qur'ān 101: 1-11), *al-ḥutamah* (الحطمة, Qur'ān 104: 4-9). But when it comes to the phrase *rabb hādhā al-bayt* (رب هذا البيت, the Lord of this House, i.e. the Ka'ba) in *sūra al-Quraysh* (Qur'ān 106), the fact that it does not require an explanation to readers means that the expression must have been familiar to them. They called the Lord of the House *Allāh*, commonly understood to be the supreme god or 'God.' It is most likely that before Islam the Meccan pagans used *Allāh* to indicate the principal deity worshipped at Tā'if, known simply as the goddess al-Lāt, and that some Meccans did not see the identification of the goddess with *Allāh* as absolutely incompatible.²²

Among those who held monotheistic beliefs were Labīd b. Abī Rabī'ah²³ (d. 41 AH/661 AD) and Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt (d. 2 AH/624 AD).²⁴ Both were

²¹ Ibid, 26.

²² Ibid, 26-27. Watt even tries to prove that the *ḥanīf* were simply a political movement possibly based on Greek Philosophy, not Judeo-Christian ideas.

²³ Sezgin, *Geschichte*, vol. 2, 122-126.

²⁴ Farrūkh, *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*, 216-19; Fariq, *History*, 92-94.

prominent poets of pre-Islamic times. Abū Aqīl Labīd b. Abī Rabī'ah b. Mālik b. Ja'far b Kilāb was a prominent poet of the Banū 'Amīr, a tribe which settled in Nejd, to the northeast and northwest of Mecca. In his *Dīwān* (a compilation of Arabic poems), which contains hundreds of verses, Labīd expresses his belief in "a decent, orderly and moral life, and his belief in predestination, God the Almighty, resurrection, and the Day of Judgment."²⁵ In a long elegy composed for Nu'mān b. Mundhīr²⁶, Labīd says:

Every thing, but Allāh, is vain
And all happiness, unconditionally, will vanish
When a man is on a night journey, he thinks that he has accomplished some deed
But man spends his life in hopes
Say to him: "If you return back your life, does the time remind you? If not,
You mother is Hābil (who watched his own interest)
If you do not trust your self, approve it
Perhaps the past would unclothe it to you
When you do not find a father other than 'Adnān and Ma'ād,
The judge (God) will punish you
On the day when every body will be informed of his deeds
When the record of his life is opened before Allāh"²⁷

Umayya's poems are also mostly charged with deep religious fervor and an earnest consciousness of the glory, might and wisdom of God. Featuring remarkable lucidity and refinement of expression, these verses exhort readers to give up passion, discipline their lives and develop a sense of accountability to God.²⁸ In one of his verses, Umayya says:

²⁵ Fariq, *History*, 89. See also Ibn Qūṭayba, *al-Shi'r wa al-Shu'arā'* 1, 194-204.

²⁶ He was Abū al-Qābus al-Nu'mān b. Mundhir (580 – 602) King of Hira', in whose service Labīd spent most of his life.

²⁷ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r*, 199; for Arabic text see appendix 3. See also Ihsān 'Abbās, *Sharh Dīwān Labīd ibn Rabī'a al-'Āmirī* (Kuwait: Wizārat al-Irshad wa al-Anbā', 1984) 254-257, with slightly different order. Trans. The author of this thesis.

²⁸ Abū al-Farāj al-Isfahānī (d. 356AH/1076 AD), *Kitāb al-Aghānī* 4, 127 - 140.

Every religion will be declared untruth on the Day of Judgment before Allāh
Except the *ḥanīfiyya* religion.

In another short poem Umayya describes the event when God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Ishmael.³⁰ It has been said that Umayya hoped that he himself was the expected prophet written of in previous holy books. Hence Umayya was very upset when that person appeared to be Muḥammad, the *ummi*, and on that account doubted his prophecy. Umayya expresses his bitter feelings in the following verse:

و انا اعلم ان الحنيفية حق
و لكن الشك يداخلني في محمد³¹

I know that *Ḥanīfiyya* (practice) is true,
And yet doubt concerning Muḥammad has come over me

In another poem concerning death, Umayya says:

كل عيش و إن تطاول دهره
ليتنى كنت قبل ما قد بدا لى
منتهى أمره إلى أن يزولا
فى رؤوس الجبال أرعى الوعولا
أجعل الموت نصب عينيك وأحذر
غولة الدهر إن للدهر غولا³²

Every life however long is fated by time
to its final end when it ceases
If only I, before it appeared to me,
had pastured wild goats on the tops of the mountains

²⁹ Ibid, 130.

³⁰ Fariq, *History*, 92-4. Some historians say that these verses were made up by later Muslims and were connected to pre-Islamic poets to make a link to the Qur'ānic phrases dealing with Meccan pagans.

³¹ Abū al-Farāj, *al-Aghāni*, 4: 138.

³² Ibid, 139. See also Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r*, 371.

Set death before your eyes
And beware of fate for fate has a demon

Elsewhere he wrote:

Praise to Allāh who blesses our afternoons and mornings with goodness
O my Lord, Thou bless our mornings and afternoons
(He is) the Lord of *Ḥanīfiyya*, do not fight for His treasures are abundant
His power is widespread throughout the universe
Is not a prophet sent from among us so he speaks to us
About what is behind our destination presiding over our lives
He explained to us that our fathers who brought us up have died
While we infatuate our children with foolishness
If only we knew that our knowing would benefit us
So that our lives in the Hereafter will affix ours here³³

Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 821), a scholar who made a special study of the pre-Islamic Arabs in his Kitāb al-Aṣnām,³⁴ linked their paganism directly to the degeneracy of the Banī Ismā'il.

The reason which led them to the worship of images and stones was the following: No one left Mecca without carrying away with him a stone from the stones of the Sacred House (al-Ḥaram) as a token of reference to it, and as a sign of deep affection to Mecca. Wherever he settled he would erect that stone and circumambulate it in the same manner he used to circumambulate the Ka'bah [before his departure from Mecca], seeking thereby its blessing and affirming his deep affection for the Sacred House. In fact, the Arabs still venerate the Ka'bah and Mecca and journey to them in order to perform the pilgrimage and visitation, conforming thereby to the time-honored custom which they inherited from Abraham and Ishmael.

In time this led them to the worship of whatever took their fancy, and caused them to forget their former worship. They exchanged the religion of Abraham and Ishmael for another. Consequently they took to the worship of images, becoming like the nations before them.³⁵

Following the Qur'ān 71: 20-24, Ibn al-Kalbī refers in his explanation to the story of how gods were worshipped in pre-Islamic Arabia, practices which can be

³³ Abū al-Faraj, Al-Aghānī 13: 6. For Arabic text, see appendix 4. Trans. The author of this thesis.

³⁴ Translated with introduction and notes by Nabih Amin Faris as The Book of Idols (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952) 4.

³⁵ Ibid, 4-5.

traced back to the time of Noah: "O Lord, they rebel against me, and they follow those whose riches and children only aggravate their ruin. And they plotted a great plot, and they said, 'Forsake not your gods; forsake not Wadd and Suwā', nor Yaghūth and Ya'ūq and Nasr.' And they caused many to err...." He says also: "They sought and determined what the people of Noah had worshipped of these images and adopted the worship of those which were still remembered among them."³⁶

Some of these practices therefore were supposed to have survived from Noah's time, only to be adopted by the people of Abraham's era, and preserved until the coming of the Prophet Muḥammad; this will be discussed later under a separate heading.

One example of those inherited practices was the pre-Islamic *talbiyya* (تلبية, acclamation prayer), which was slightly changed with the coming of Islam to read "Here we are, O Lord! Here we are! Here we are! You have no partner save the one who is Yours; You have dominion over him and whatever he possesses."³⁷ Through the *talbiyya* Meccan pagans indeed acknowledged the unity of God but at the same time associated Him with their other gods, making them subordinate to Him.

Regarding Ibn al-Kalbī, Peters says that stone worship is not quite the same as idol worship. In stone worship the Arabs first expressed their admiration of the Ka'ba in Mecca, while idol worship was introduced into the Meccan cult in the

³⁶ Ibid, 4.

time of the Khuzā'a. According to many authorities, including Peters, the pagan practices in Mecca took a new turn when the Khuzā'a, under their leader 'Amr b. Luḥayy, a son-in-law of the last Jurhum leader 'Amr b. al-Ḥarīth, replaced the Jurhum as the leading tribe in the area.³⁸

(W)hen Amr ibn-Luḥayy came (to Mecca) he disputed his right to its custody, and with the aid of the children of Ishmael he fought the Jurhumites, defeated them, and cleared them out of the Ka'ba; he then drove them out of Mecca and took over the custody of the Sacred House (al-Bayt) after them.

He then became very sick, and was told, "There is a hot spring in al-Balqā', in Syria (Sha'm); if you would go there, you would be cured." So he went to the hot spring, bathed therein, and was cured. During his stay there, he noticed that the inhabitants of the place worshipped idols. He, therefore, queried them saying, "What are these things?" To which they replied, "To them we pray for rain, and from them we seek victory over the enemy." Thereupon he asked them to give him (a few of those idols) and they did. He took them back with him to Mecca and erected them around the Ka'bah.³⁹

Thereafter, Meccan pagans adopted the newly introduced idols and the sacred area in its vicinity as their faith. Almost every family in Mecca kept an idol at home. Whenever a family member would set out on a journey, he would touch the idol before leaving the house, hoping that it would bless his journey; and on his return, the first thing he would do was to touch it again in gratitude.

In addition, Ibn Ishāq lists the names of the Arab idols and the places where they used to be erected. He writes:

Quraysh had an idol by a well in the middle of the Ka'ba called Hubal. And they adopted Asāf (Isāf) and Nā'ila by the place of Zamzam, sacrificing beside them. They were a man and woman of Jurhum—Isāf b. Baghy and

³⁷ Ibid, 5. See also Peters, Muhammad, 13.

³⁸ Peters, Ibid, 14.

³⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, Book of Idols, 7. See also Peters, Muhammad, 14.

Na'ila d. Dik—who were guilty of sexual relations in the Ka'ba and so God transformed them into two stones. 'Abdullah b. Abū Bakr...on the authority of 'Amra b. 'Abd al-Rahman (states) that she said, 'I heard Ā'isha say, "We always heard that Isāf and Nā'ila were a man and a woman of Jurhum who copulated in the Ka'ba so God transformed them into two stones." But God alone knows the truth.'⁴⁰

On the authority of Maḥmūd b. Labīd from 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, 'Asīm b. 'Umar b. Qatāda al-Anṣārī told Ibn Ishāq the story of how Salmān al-Fārisī became a Muslim. Tempted by his curiosity about the praying and singing priests in a Christian church Salmān abandoned his beloved father. He joined a caravan of Christian merchants from Syria and went to study under the most learned person in Christianity. When his master was about to die Salmān asked him to whom he would confide him. The master said, "My dear son, I do not know anyone who is as I am. Men have died and have either altered or abandoned most of their true religion, except a man in Mauṣil; he follows my faith, so join yourself to him."⁴¹ Then Salmān attached himself to the man of Mauṣil, and found him just as he had been described, but it was not long before he died and recommended to him that he go to a man in Naṣībīn (Nisibis). Salmān stayed with the man of Naṣībīn for some time but as the latter saw death approaching he counseled him to go to his friend in 'Ammuriyya. When this master of Salmān was about to die he told him that he knew of no one who followed his way of worship, but that a prophet was about to arise who would be sent with the religion of Abraham. That prophet would come forth in Arabia and would migrate to a country between two lava belts, between

⁴⁰ Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 37-38.

⁴¹ Ibid, 96.

which were planted palms, i.e., Medina. Thus, Salmān headed at last to Medina where he met the Prophet.⁴²

Bravmann⁴³ sees certain connections between what he calls the ideological and psychological background of early Islam and this pre-Islamic period. Reviewing or sometimes objecting to the opinions of other scholars, he proposes four concepts, which he claims make these connections clear: a. المروة و الدين, *muruwwa* and *dīn*, b. إسلام, *Islām*, c. إيمان, *īmān*, and d. الدنيا و البعد, *al-dunyā' wa al-ba'd/al-bu'd* or الدنيا و الآخرة, *al-dunyā' wa al-ākhirā*. We will look at each of these concepts in turn before proceeding with our study.

a. المروة و الدين, *muruwwa* and *dīn*

Lane defines *muruwwa* or *murū'a* as "manliness" or "manly perfection;" in other words it is an attitude "consisting in abstinence from things unlawful, or in abstaining secretly from what one should be ashamed to do openly; or in the habit of doing what is approved; or in quality of the mind by preserving which a man is made to preserve in good manners and habits."⁴⁴ Some moreover call it virtue or rather, manly virtue and moral goodness.

⁴² Ibid, 95-98.

⁴³ He is a historian who has written on the spiritual life of the pre-Islamic Arabs. I should say that, although I do not agree with some of his postulates, I found his book very helpful. I have relied on his interpretation whenever it appears that he understood correctly his sources. See M. M. Bravmann, The Spiritual Background of Early Islam: Studies in ancient Arab concepts (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972).

⁴⁴ E. W. Lane, Arabic-English Lexicon (Edinburgh, London: Williams and Norgate, 1963) Book I, part 7: 2702-2703. See also Ibn Manzūr, Lisān al-'Arab 5 (Beirut: Dār al-Jayl, Dār Lisān al-'Arab, 1988) 358.

According to Goldziher, it is an accepted view that there exists a sharp contrast between the spiritual and ethical foundations of pre-Islamic Arab life, or the traditions derived from ancestral custom, and Islamic values as the revelation of God. Goldziher writes: "The gulf between the moral views of the Arabs and the prophet's teachings is deep and unbridgeable."⁴⁵ He therefore calls the former المروة "*muruwwa*" and the latter الدين "*dīn*".⁴⁶

Despite his agreement with Goldziher's interpretation of *muruwwa* as 'virtues', Bravmann does not see any contrast between *muruwwa* and *dīn*. Hence *muruwwa* played an important role even in the Islamic period because in fact, it is one of the fundamental Islamic values. The statement لا دين لمن لا مروة له *lā dīna li-man lā muruwwata lahu* "there is no religion without *muruwwa*," i.e., manly virtues and virile ethics of the pagan period, was to some degree true even in Islamic times, with the difference, perhaps, that religious character was added to them.⁴⁷ However, Fares⁴⁸ maintains that in the pre-Islamic period, *muruwwa* denoted "the material condition of life," which then slowly evolved into the sense which Goldziher identified.⁴⁹

Muruwwa, according to Bravmann, comprises not just a single meaning but several different kinds, which are occasionally implied in ancient Arabic poetry

⁴⁵ Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* 1 (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1974) 21.

⁴⁶ For more detail, see Ibid, 11-44; cf Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 1.

⁴⁷ Bravmann, Ibid, 1-2.

⁴⁸ Bichr Fares, "Murū'a," *Encyclopaedia of Islam* Suppl. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987) 157-58.

⁴⁹ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 5-6.

without always using the word *muruwwa*. He believes moreover that *al-muruwwa*, which is derived from *al-mar'u*, applies to an emphatic meaning: "one possessed of *muruwwa*." This meaning is implied by its frequent appearance in early Arabic poems before certain names. For example, *al-mar'u* Nūḥ (al-A'shā' Maymun, 28: 79), *al-mar'u* Kisra (al-Ṭabarī, 1, 5: 2434, 15), *al-mar'u* Ṭubba' (Ḥamasāt al-Buḥtūrī, 14: 1059), and *al-mar'u* Aḥmad or Muḥammad (Ibn Hishām, 995, 10), etc.⁵⁰

Bravmann confines himself to a characteristic verse of Ḥassān b. al-Thābit⁵¹ (d. 670 AD/50 AH?), a companion of the Prophet and a poet, who in spite of his conversion to Islam preserved the spiritual heritage of the pagan era:

نسود ذا المال القليل إذا بدت مروته فينا و إن كان معدما

We will choose as our master him who has little property
When his *murūwwa* becomes apparent in our midst- even though he be poor.⁵²

Referring to the same source, Bravmann questions Fares's understanding of the word *muruwwa*. According to Bravmann, Fares seems to misunderstand the story of a poet of the Rāshidūn period who asked the governor of a city to help him to meet his *muruwwa* : "to appease my hunger to prevent me coveting the food of

⁵⁰ Ibid, 1,1.

⁵¹ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit al-Anṣārī (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1980).

⁵² Muḥammad Ṭāhir Darwīsh, Ḥassān ibn Thābit (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif) 249; Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit, 220; ed. Hirschfeld, vol. 29: 4; 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Bartūty, Sharḥ Dīwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1978) 427.

others.”⁵³ This misunderstanding is due to the fact that Fares did not consider the continuation of the passage, i.e., the governor’s reply: ⁵⁴

و ما مروءة من يعصى الرحمن و يقول البهتان و يقطع ما أمر الله به أن يوصل والله لئن
أتيتك لأعنتك على الكفر و العصيان

What can be the *muruwwa* of one who disobeys the Compassionate, speaks lies, and who cuts what Allāh has commanded him to join. By Allāh, if I had come to you, I would have helped you in unbelief and sin

The ending of the passage contains the implication that *muruwwa* in the sense of “a material condition of life,” e.g., hunger, cannot be the antonym for *kufṛ* (infidelity) or *‘iṣyān* (disobedience or sin). But it must have something to do with the state’s obedience to God. *Muruwwa* as virtue in this source has a parallel in the story about the *mu‘allaqāt* poet Labīd b. Abī Rabī‘ah who vowed to feed people whenever the east wind blew, and to do so until it subsided. He kept his vow even in the Islamic period. Knowing of this vow, al-Walīd b. ‘Uqba, the leader of the Kuffa, called upon his people to help him, and sent him one hundred camels. For his help Labīd’s daughter praised al-Walīd saying اعان على مروءته لبيدا: *a‘āna ‘alā muruwwatihi labīdā* “he who helped Labīd to discharge his *muruwwa*,”⁵⁵ which is confirmed in the following verses:

أبا وهب جزاك الله خيرا نحرناها و أطعمنا الشريدا

Abū Wahb, may Allāh reward you with good.
We have slaughtered them and fed the people with bread,⁵⁶

⁵³ *ji’tuka litu ‘inani ‘alā muruwwatī* جئتكم لتعينني على مروءتي

⁵⁴ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 6.

⁵⁵ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi‘r*, 1:149. See also A Huber, *Die Gedichte des Labīd*, ed. Brockelmann (Leiden: Brill, 1891) 52; *Sharh Dīwān Labīd*, 37. The word *alā* in Arabic usually expresses “obligation”; cf. Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 6-7.

⁵⁶ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 7. Compare to Labīd’s utterance in Aḥmad b. al-Amīn al-

و ذو كرم يعين على الندى

And (he is) a noble-hearted man who helps (others) to display generosity⁵⁷

These verses also confirm the *Asma'iyāt* verse:

ليبكك سمع لم يجد من يعينه⁵⁸

There may weep for you a generous one
Who does not find anyone who will help him.

It is fair to say therefore that *muruwwa* was occasionally associated with a concrete condition of material nature, as well as being applied to moral or spiritual circumstances, as evidenced in the above sources and in Bravmann's and Goldziher's respective evaluations.⁵⁹

b. Islam

Nowadays Islamicists mostly take *islām* to mean "surrender, resignation to (the will of) God,"⁶⁰ or as becoming "sincere in religion, or without hypocrisy towards God."⁶¹ On the other hand, Grimme interprets it as "man's salvation as a result of purification," and assumes that it is semantically related to an early expression of *zakāh* or purity. Hence, for Grimme *aslama* is "to effect one's

Sinqī'ī, *Sharh al-Mu'allaqāt wa Khabār Shu'arā'ihā* (Beirut: Dār al-Andalus, 1980) 37.

⁵⁷ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Asmā'iyāt* 11, 20 (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1979), 14.

⁵⁹ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 1-7

⁶⁰ Goldziher, *Mohammed and Islam*, trans. K. C. Seelye, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1917) 2; "Islam", *Encyclopaedia of Islam*; Theodor Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorans* 2 (Hildesheim, New York: G. Olms, 1970) 206; J. Horowitz, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 54; Frants Bühl, *Leben Mohammed*; Tor Andrae, *Mohammed: The Man and his Faith* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1936) 55; cf. Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 7.

⁶¹ Lane, *Arabic-English*, I, 7: 1413; also Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 3: 193.

salvation.”⁶² Similarly, Lidzbarski presumes that *aslama* originally meant “to enter into the state of salvation.”⁶³ Torrey also takes *islām* as meaning “submission, resignation, self-surrender” which, according to him, was inspired in Muḥammad by the biblical stories of messengers from God and the patriarchs, particularly that of Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael at God’s sole command.⁶⁴

In contrast, Bravmann contends that the original sense of *islām*⁶⁵ is “readiness to defy death and self-sacrifice (for the sake of God and his prophet),” which, according to him, is closely related to the term *jihād* (جهاد) or warlike effort (on behalf of God and his Prophet).⁶⁶

Accordingly, Bravmann retains *islām* as the original concept of nomadic virtue held by the primitive Arabs. It reflected the spirit to defy death and to fight anyone challenging one’s pride or threatening one’s ideal norms and principles.

⁶² Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 7-8; citing Hubert Grimme, *Mohammed* 1 (Münster: 1892-95) 16.

⁶³ Mark Lidzbarski, “Islām und Salām,” *Zeitschrift für Semitistik* 1 (Leipzig, 1923) 88.

⁶⁴ “And, when he (his son, Ishmael) was old enough to walk with him, he (Abraham) said: ‘O my son! I have seen in a dream that I am slaughtering you (offering you in sacrifice to Allāh). So look what you think!’ He replied: ‘O my father! Do that which you are commanded, *Inshā Allāh* (if Allāh wills), you shall find me of *As-Sābrūn* (the patient).’ Then, when they had both submitted themselves (to the Will of Allāh, *aslāmā*), and he (Abraham) had laid him prostrate on his forehead (or on the side of his forehead for slaughtering); We (Allāh) called out to him: “‘O Abraham! You have fulfilled the dream!’ Verily thus do We reward the *muhsinūn* (good doers);” the Qur’ān 37: 102-105, trans. Muhammad Taqī-ud-Dī Al-Hilālī and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Medina: King Fahd Publishing, 1417 AH) 603. See also Charles C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York: Jewish Institution of Religious Press, 1972) 101-02; cf. Bravmann *Spiritual Background*, 8.

⁶⁵ For Bravmann *islām* here is not religion but strictly speaking what he calls “Muḥammad’s religion” or “Muḥammadanism.”

⁶⁶ Bravmann takes this meaning as an interpretation of Qur’ān 9:89. For him the religion of Muḥammad, as he refers to Islam, is based on two principles: *jihād* and *imān* or *islām* and *imān*. Thus, *islām* is the very basis of Muḥammad’s religion; *Spiritual Background*, 8-9.

Hence it seems fair to say that in the pagan epoch, a natural death was considered unusual and undesirable, and vice versa.⁶⁷

In this connection, Bravmann focuses on one of the meanings of the word *aslama* (اسلام - يسلم - إسلام) *aslama – yuslimu – islāman* “to give up,” i.e., to give up one’s life for the sake of *muruwwa* or nobility. It could also mean to defend either one’s tribe or one’s cult from an invader, or even to render assistance to one’s allies. Accordingly, *islām* did not mean simply “giving up” the soul without a struggle. Indeed it has a more pregnant meaning in the sense of giving up a life which is valuable only to oneself, for the sake of a more valuable or noble cause. This could include defending one’s dignity before enemies in battle (*jihād*), whatever the cost might be. This sense of *islām* as choosing to live according to higher principles is reminiscent of the Qur’anic verse:

بلى من اسلم وجهه لله و هو محسن فله اجره عند ربه و لا خوف عليهم و لا هم يحزنون

Indeed, those that surrender themselves to God and do good works shall be rewarded by their Lord, they have nothing to fear or to regret.⁶⁸

The word *aslama* and its derivatives, evocative of an attitude deeply rooted in the Arab character, appears everywhere in pre-Islamic literature where they convey the sense of pursuing a goal relentlessly; a man should not give up but fight to the death.⁶⁹ It was not just a secular expression of nomadic life. Yet it also seems to have reflected a religious system established long before Islam and

⁶⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁶⁸ The Qur’ān 2: 112; trans. Dawood.

⁶⁹ Bravmann, Spiritual Background, 9.

closely related to the cult of the Meccans. For instance, in one of his poems, Fars
'Abbas b. al-Mirdās al-Sulamī⁷⁰ declares:

لعمري إني اليوم اجعل جاهدا ذمادا لرب العالمين مشاركا

Upon my life, I am beginning today to combat (the god)
Dhamād by joining the Lord (*Rabb*) of the Universe.⁷¹

Later in the poem, 'Abbās praises the Prophet Muḥammad for restoring the
cult of the sanctuary in Mecca, and for assigning it the importance it deserved. He
says:

تلاف عرى إسلام بعد افسانها فأحكمها حتى أقام المناسك

He (the Prophet) repaired the handles of Islam after they had broken,
And strengthened them until he had established the sacrificial rites.⁷²

c. *Īmān*

āmana (*yu'minu/imānan*) is the fourth form of the basic
stem *amina*, and means to believe in and trust someone or something, or to
render secure and safe, and free from fear.⁷³ In pre-Islamic times, this word was
used to express one's trustworthiness in both the usual and the religious senses.
For example, Jarīr, echoing the pre-Islamic spirit, says in one verse where he uses a
derivative of *āmana* in the common sense:

إذا كان أمن كان قلبك مؤمنا وإن كنت خوف كنت احكم ذائد⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah* 1: 4; *al-Aghānī* 13: 62, 16: 34; *Khazānat al-Adāb* 1: 17; *Mu'jam al-Marzabānī*, 262; *al-Samt*, 32; *al-Tabarī*, 3: 127.

⁷¹ Transmitted in *Aghānī* 14: 297; cf. Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 26.

⁷² Bravmann, *Ibid.*

⁷³ Lane, *Arabic-English* 1: 100; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab*, 1: 107.

⁷⁴ Jarīr and Farazdaq, *Naqā'id Jarīr wa-al-Farazdaq* 2, ed. Anthony Ashley Bevan (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1907) 988.

When a man trusted somebody, your heart felt safe (under his protection);
But when you were scared, you were highly defensive.

In a religious sense, *amana* was usually related to the concept of المانية *al-māniyya* or fate, which was of great concern to the pre-Islamic Arabs, and was said to be lurking everywhere. In these situations, the ideal man was the one who scorned the danger posed by fate and sought assurance and safety in God alone, thereby demonstrating *īmān*.⁷⁵

It is frequently the case that in early Arabic texts the appearance of *amana* coincides with إطمئن قلوبهم *iṭma'inna qulūbuhum*, i.e., to feel secure and at ease.

This can be seen, for instance, in the following verse by Abū Khirās al-Huzhālī:

فقد أمنوني و اطمئنت قلوبهم و لم يعلموا كل الذي كان داخلي

They felt secure about (believed in) me,
and their minds were at ease (trusting, assured),
for they did not know all that within me,
(i.e., they are not afraid of any danger).⁷⁶

Accordingly, the Qur'ān says:

الذين آمنوا و تطمئن قلوبهم بذكر الله، ألا بذكر الله تطمئن قلوبهم

Whose hearts find comfort in the remembrance of God. Surely, in the remembrance of God all hearts are comforted.⁷⁷

In addition, pre-Islamic Arabs recognized the existence of two worlds: the temporal world and the world to come, i.e., *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirā* (الدنيا و الآخرة).

⁷⁵ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 25-31. For a detailed explanation of *māniyya* see Helmer Ringgren, *Studies in Arabian Fatalism* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells, 1955).

⁷⁶ Hell, *Neue Hudailiten-Diwane*, 2. 5; *Kitāb Sharh Ash'ar al-Hudhaylitin* (Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1983); cf. Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 27.

⁷⁷ The Qur'ān 13: 28, trans. Dawood.

Such an idea is suggested by one of the verses of the pagan poet Ṭarafah b. al-
'Abd:

نبلاء من السعي من جرثومة تترك الدنيا وتنمى للبعد

(They are) men of noble striving (sprung) from a stem
That forsakes the nearby and reaches for the far away.⁷⁸

The above verse alludes to the ideal nobility which early Arab noblemen were supposed to attain during their lives. Although the words *al-dunyā* or *al-adnā* (الأدنى or الدنيا), according to Bravmann, essentially mean "what is near" in a geographical sense (in contrast to *al-bu'd* or *al-ba'd* (البعـد), which refers to what is at a distance), yet in a poetic context they "reflect the life-aim and longing of the pre-Islamic Arabs"⁷⁹ to achieve noble ambitions wherever they may be. This sentiment is expressed in the following line of Nābigha:

إن له فضلا في الأدنى و في البعد

He who possesses nobility is both in the nearby and in the far away.⁸⁰

Thus *al-adnā* or *al-dunyā* express the religious sense, i.e., the present life as the antonym of *al-ākhirā* and the one after it as well.⁸¹ Fariq supports this view, saying that we cannot ignore the historical and literary evidence that many pre-

⁷⁸ *Diwān Ṭarafah ibn al- 'Abd* (Beirut: Dār Sādir, 1980) 42; ed. Ahlwardt, no. 3, vol. 6; 54: cf. Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 32.

⁷⁹ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 32.

⁸⁰ *Diwān Nābigha al-Dhibyānī*, ed. Ahlwardt, no. 5: 7.

⁸¹ Bravmann, *Spiritual Background*, 32.

Islamic Arabs, particularly among the township communities, "also believed in resurrection and the Day of Judgement."⁸²

Izutsu respectively treats *al-dunyā* and *al-ākhirā* as "correlation words," which means that the occurrence of one word semantically refers to the other, that is to say, neither word has any meaning without the other. Other examples of this concept are the terms husband and wife, brother and brother/sister, etc. One can only be a brother when one has a sibling and one can only be a husband when one has a wife. Similarly, the concept of *al-dunyā*, i.e., this world or the lower world, implies *al-ākhirā* (the other world or the world to come), because "to look on the present world as something 'lower' is possible only where there is firmly established the idea of the Other World being far more valuable and important than the present world."⁸³

B. ḤANĪFIYYA PRACTICES AMONG THE ARABS

We saw earlier how, despite their pagan nature, pre-Islamic Arabs were aware of, and often practiced, some of the Abrahamic rituals. For example, the Meccan pagans performed ritual circumcision in front of the idol Hubal.⁸⁴ According to Josephus, a Jewish historian of the 1st century A.D., the Arabs circumcised boys on reaching their thirteenth birthday because the founder of their

⁸² Fariq, *History*, 20.

⁸³ Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran*, 85-86.

⁸⁴ It was one of the statues worshipped by the Meccan pagans, which was regarded as the dwelling of and one level below God; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*.

nation, Ishmael, had been circumcised at that age.⁸⁵ Later, however, they lapsed from their original faith, the religion of Abraham or *ḥanīfiyya*, into forms of idolatry.

Supporting this view, Ibn al-Kalbī describes the attitudes of the pagan Arabs toward their idols, which they were very fond of worshipping. Some built temples around their centre of worship, while others offered adoration to their adopted idol. Those who could not afford a temple or adopt an idol would put a stone in front of the Ka'ba or in front of any other temple they might choose, and then venerate it in the same way they would venerate the Ka'ba itself. The pagan Arabs named these stones *anṣāb* (الأنصاب, baetyls); however, if they resembled a human being or a living creature they called them *aṣnām* (الأصنام, idols) or *awthān* (الأوثان, images). They termed the act of venerating these stones *dawār* (الدوار, circumrotation), instead of *ṭawwāf* (الطواف, circumambulation). Whenever the pagan Arabs camped for a rest during a journey, they would choose four fine stones, select the best one as a god, and use the rest to support their cooking pot. On their departure they would leave them behind, and would perform the same ritual at subsequent stops.⁸⁶

Despite their tendency to worship idols and offer sacrifices before them, pagan Arabs were still aware of the superiority of the ancient shrine of Mecca,

⁸⁵ Flavius Josephus, *The Works of Flavius Josephus* (Philadelphia: Porter & Coates, 1875?) 45; Wellhausen *Reste Arabischen Heidentums* (Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1897) 174-6; also Peters, *Muhammad*, 120.

⁸⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 28-9. See also Peters, *Muhammad*, 14-5.

which they visited each year in the course of a *Hajj*. The connection between their veneration of stones in the desert and this tradition was obvious to Ibn al-Kalbī, who writes: "What they did on their travels was merely a perpetuation of what they did at the Ka'ba, because of their devotion to it."⁸⁷

However, not all of the early Arabs practiced idolatry. It is said that a small group proclaimed that they were seeking the true religion of their father Abraham, i.e., the *Ḥanīfiyya*. One of them was the well-known *mu'allaqāt* (المعلقات) poet Zayd b. Amr b. Nufayl⁸⁸ (d. 605-610?). He is considered an important religious figure in pre-Islamic times because of his devotion to the *Ḥanīfiyya*, and because of his rejection of both Judaism and Christianity. He distanced himself from the religion of his people and refrained from worshipping idols or eating animals that had been sacrificed to them. He forbade the killing of infant daughters saying that he worshipped the God of Abraham. In one of his poems Zayd publicly rebukes the Quraysh for their idolatrous practices, saying:

To God I give my praise and my thanksgiving,
A sure word that will not fail as long as time lasts.
To the heavenly King, there is no God beyond Him.
And no lord can draw near to Him.
Beware, O men, of what follows death!
You can hide nothing from God.

⁸⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Books of Idols*, 28-29.

⁸⁸ There is a prophetic tradition on the authority of Muḥammad b. Abī Bakr from Fudayl b. Sulayman from Mūsa from Sālim b. 'Abd Allāh from 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar who said that one day the Prophet Muḥammad met Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl in the bottom of the valley-stream Baldaḥ—between Fakh and Hudaybiyya—before the prophetic mission. Zayd offered the Prophet his food, and the Prophet offered his too. But Zayd refused it saying 'I do not eat what is killed in the name of your (i.e., Quraysh) baetyl, and I do not eat but what is killed by the name of Allāh.' Hence Zayd reproved Quraysh sacrifices saying that it is 'Allāh who creates the *shāt*. He sends down the rain so that the herbage grows from the ground, Then they do sacrifices for other than Allāh? What a pity and a big mistake.' (*Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 4: 233; *Musnad Ahmad* 1:189; *Nasb Quraysh* 374; *Tahdhīb Tārīkh Dimashq* 6: 30, 34; cf. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah*, 85-86, 253). See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 171-72; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 176-77.

Beware of putting another beside God,
 For the upright way has become clear.
 Mercy I implore, others trust in the jinn,
 But thou, my God, art our Lord and our hope.
 I am satisfied with thee, O God, as a Lord,
 And will not worship another God beside Thee.
 Thou of Thy goodness and mercy
 Didst send a messenger to Moses as a herald.
 Thou saidst to Moses, Go thou and Aaron
 And summon Pharaoh the tyrant to turn to God
 And say to him, 'Did you spread out this (earth) without a support?
 Say to him, 'Did you set the moon in thereof
 As a light to guide when night covered it?'
 Say to him, 'Who sent forth the sun by day
 So that the earth it touched reflected its splendour?'
 Until it stood fast as it does?"
 Say to him, 'Did you raise this (heaven) without support?
 What a fine builder you were then!'
 Say to him, 'Who planted seeds in the dust
 That herbage might grow and wax great,
 And brought forth its seed in the head of the plant?'
 Therein are signs for the understanding.
 Thou in Thy kindness did deliver Jonah
 Who spent nights in the belly of the fish
 Though I glorify Thy name, I often repeat:
 'O Lord, forgive my sins.
 O, Lord of creatures, bestow thy gifts and mercy upon me
 And bless my sons and property.'⁸⁹

When he left the faith of his fellows Zayd said:

Am I to worship one lord or a thousand?
 If there are as many as you claim,
 I renounce al-Lāt and al-'Uzza both of them
 As any strong minded person would.
 I will not worship al-'Uzzā and her two daughters,
 Nor will I visit the two images of the Banū 'Amr.
 I will not worship Hubal though he was our lord
 In the days when I had little sense.
 I wondered (for in the night much is strange
 Which in daylight is plain to discerning),
 That God had annihilated many men
 Whose deeds were thoroughly evil
 And spared others through the piety of a people
 So that a little child could grow to manhood.

⁸⁹ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah* 1: 256-58; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, trans. Guillaume, 100-01;
 Guillaume translates the word *Allāh* in the original text as God; for the Arabic text, see Appendix 5.
 Cf. Peters, *Muhammad*, 123-25.

A man may languish for a time and then recover
As the branch of a tree revives after rain.
I serve my Lord the compassionate
That the forgiving Lord may pardon my sin,
So keep to the fear of God your Lord;
While you hold that you will not perish.
You will see the pious living in gardens,
While for the infidels hell fire is burning.
Shamed in life, when they die
Their breasts will contract in anguish.⁹⁰

On another occasion Zayd is supposed to have said: "This [that is, the Ka'ba] is the *qibla* (القبلة) of Abraham and Ishmael. I do not worship stones and do not pray toward them and do not sacrifice to them, and do not eat what is sacrificed to them, and do not draw lots with arrows. I will not pray toward anything but this House till I die."⁹¹

Hishām b. 'Urwa reported that his mother Asmā', daughter of Abū Bakr, once saw Zayd, who was a very old man, lean his back on the Ka'ba, and address the Quraysh thus: "O Quraysh, By him whose hand is the soul of Zayd, not one of you follows the religion of Abraham but I." Then he cried "O God, if I knew how You wished to be worshipped I would so worship You: but I do not know," prostrating himself on his own hands.⁹²

On the authority of one of Zayd's family, Ibn Ishāq writes that when Zayd faced the Ka'ba inside the Mosque, he used to say, "Here I am in truth, in worship and in service. I take refuge in that in which Abraham took refuge." He also said:

⁹⁰ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, trans. Guillaume, 100; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah* 1: 255-56. For Arabic text, see Appendix 6.

⁹¹ Peters, *Muhammad*, 126; this is a tradition reported by Ibn Sa'd of Zayd's manner of worshipping.

⁹² Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 99-100.

البر أبغى لا الخال، ليس مهجر كمن قال

A humble prisoner, O God, my face in the dust,
Whatever Thy commandment do I must,
Pride I seek not, but piety's boon.
The traveler at midday is not as he who sleeps at noon.⁹³

Then he also says:

I submit myself to Him to Whom
The earth which bears mighty rocks is subject.
He spread it out and when He saw it was settled
Upon the waters, He fixed the mountains on it.
I submit myself to Him to Whom clouds which bear
Sweet water are subject.
When they are borne along to a land
They obediently pour copious rain upon it.⁹⁴

Still hungering after the truth, Zayd is said to have set out on a journey to Syria, and came to Balq, where he found a knowledgeable Christian monk, and questioned him about the religion of Abraham. The monk told him that no one would be able to instruct him in it but a prophet who would emerge from among his own people, i.e., the Quraysh. He advised Zayd to go back to Mecca because it was about the time that the prophet was to be sent.⁹⁵ Zayd immediately headed back to Mecca. Unfortunately, however, he was ambushed and killed in the country of Lakhm. Waraqa b. Naufal b. Asad (d. 610?) composed an elegy for him:

You were altogether on the right path Ibn 'Amr,
You have escaped hell's burning oven
By serving the one and only God
And abandoning vain idols.
And by attaining the religion which you sought

⁹³ Ibn Hishām, al-Sīrah 1: 259-260; Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, trans. Guillaume, 102.

⁹⁴ Ibid, trans. Guillaume. For the Arabic text see Appendix 7.

⁹⁵ Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 103.

Not being unmindful of the unity of your Lord
 You have reached a noble dwelling
 Wherein you will rejoice in your generous treatment.
 You will meet there the friend of God,⁹⁶
 Since you were not a tyrant ripe for hell,
 For the mercy of richest men,
 Though they be seventy valleys deep below the earth.⁹⁷

Among the devotional practices of the Arabs were some which had come down from the time of Abraham and Ishmael. These included the veneration of the House and its circumambulation (الطواف *al-tawwāf*) during the pilgrimage (الحج *al-Hajj*), the little pilgrimage (العمرة *al-'umra*), the "standing" on 'Arafāt and Muzdalifa (الوقوف, *al-wuqūf*), sacrificing she-camels (القربان *al-qurbān*), and raising the voice in acclamation of the names of Allāh (تلبية, *talbiyya*) saying لبيك اللهم لبيك *labbayka allāhumma labbayka* 'Here I am, O Allāh, here I am' during the *Hajj* and the *'umra* rituals. However, the pagans performed these ritual practices slightly differently from what was assumed to be the Abrahamic versions.⁹⁸ For example, the Kināna and the Quraysh used to chant as they performed *tawwāf* around the Ka'ba saying their *talbiyya*

لبيك اللهم لبيك! لبيك! لا شريك لك إلا شريك هو لك! تملكه و ما ملك

Here I am, O Allāh! Here I am!
 Thou hast no partner except such partner Thou hast.
 Thou ownest him and what he owns.⁹⁹

⁹⁶ That is Abraham Khafīl Allāh.

⁹⁷ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah* 1: 261; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, trans. Guillaume, 103. For the Arabic text see Appendix 8.

⁹⁸ Ibn Kalbi, *Idols*, 28-29. See also Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 35-36.

⁹⁹ Ibn Kalbi, *Book of Idols*, 4-5, my translation; cf. ed. Ahmad Zākī Bāshā (Cairo, 1343/1924) 4; Muqātil b. Sulaymān al-Balkhī, *Kitāb Tafsīr al-Khams Mi'at Āya*, ed. Isaiah Goldfeld (Shfaram:

The acclamation indicates that, as Ibn al-Kalbī points out, the Meccan pagans acknowledged Allāh's unity and might through the *talbiyya* while at the same time associating their gods or their idols with Him, although making them subordinate. However, prayers were offered up to Allāh, not to the gods or the goddesses, as the devotees moved in a processional liturgy around the Ka'ba.¹⁰⁰

Many sources show that different tribes in Arabia before Islam acclaimed different forms of *talbiyya* in accordance with the idol they worshipped. For example, Kister reports that Ḥusain records twenty five *talbiyyas* uttered by Jāhiliyya tribes during the Ḥajj procession.¹⁰¹ He also mentions that in *Risālat al-Ghufrān*, Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī records seven *talbiyya* formulae which are classified according to their prosody and meter. Ḥusain further says that perhaps

Dār al-Mashriq, 1980) 84-85. See also Peters, *Muhammad*, 107, Ibn Ishaq, *Life of Muhammad*; Abū al-Walid Muhammad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Azraqī, *Kitāb Akhbār Makkat al-Musharrafā* (Göttingen: Matba'at al-Madrasa al-Makrūsa, 1275 AH) 134; al-Kalā'ī, *al-Ikhtifā' fi Maghāzī Rasūlillāhi wa Thalāthat al-Khulafā'*, ed. Mustafa 'Abd al-Wāhid, I (Cairo, 1387/1968) 94; Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Tabarī, *Tafsīr* (Cairo, 1969) ed. Shākir, XVI, 289, no. 19973; 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. al-Kamāl al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr* (Cairo, 1314) IV, 40, 359; al-Bayhaqī, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā* (Hyderabad, 1352) V, 45 inf.; Ibn Hazm, *Hajjat al-Wadā'*, ed. Mamdūh Haqqī (Beirut, 1966) 349-50; al-Ḥasan b. Muḥammad al-Naysābūrī, *Gharā'ib al-Qur'ān*, ed. Ibrāhīm 'Aṭwa 'Awad, XVII (Cairo, 1384/1965) 94; al-Khāzin, *Lubāb al-Ta'wīl* (Cairo, 138) III, 261, V, 13; al-Ḥusayn b. Mas'ut al-Baghawī, *Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl: on margin of Lubāb al-Ta'wīl*, III, 261, V, 13; Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī, *al-Milal wa-l-Nihāl* (Cairo, 1387/1967) II, 238, 247; Ibn Sā'id 'Alī b. Mūsā al-Andalusī, *Nashwat al-Tarab fi Ta'rikhī Jāhiliyyat al-'Arab*, Ms. Tübingen I, fol. 194, inf.; Nūr al-Dīn 'Alī b. Abī Bakr al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, (Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1967) III, 223; Abū al-'Alā' al-Ma'arrī, *Risālat al-Ghufrān* (Cairo, 1382/1963) ed. 'A'isha 'Abd al-Raḥmān, 535 (with an additional hemistich: *Abū banātin bi-fadak*; it is explained by Abū al-'Alā' as pointing to the idols that were in that time in Fadak); Ibn al-Athīr Majd al-Dīn al-Mubārak b. Muḥammad, *Jāmi' al-Usūl* (Cairo, 1368/1949) III, 444, no. 1377; 'Umar b. Muḥammad al-Mausīlī al-Dabīlī, *Kitāb al-Wasīla* (Hyderabad, 1392/1973) 196; A. Guthrie, *The Significance of Abraham* (1955) 116.

¹⁰⁰ Peters, *Muhammad*, 114.

¹⁰¹ S. M. Ḥusain, "Talbiyyāt al-Jāhiliyya" *Proceedings of the 9th All India Organization Conference* (Poona: India Organization Conference, 1937) 361-369; cf. M.J. Kister, "Labbayka, allāhumma Labbayka...: On a monotheistic aspect of a Jāhiliyya practice" *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* (Jerusalem, 1980) 33-57; and *Society and Religion from Jahiliyya to Islam I* (Hampshire: Variorum, 1990) collected studies in memory of Dr. Isaiah Sachar, 33.

the *labbayka allāhumma labbayka* “was adopted from the first responders to the call of Abraham.”¹⁰² Although he carefully collected and edited the texts of *talbiyya*, however, Ḥusain does not indicate in most cases the sources from which he derived the material.¹⁰³

Al-Ya‘qūbī (d. 248 H) records twenty-two *talbiyyas* of certain tribes preceded by a short explanation of the gods and idols worshipped by the pagan Arabs in his *Tārīkh*.¹⁰⁴ More detailed explanations are given by Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb (d. 145 H) in his *al-Muḥabbar*,¹⁰⁵ where he gives a list of idols worshipped by different tribes. Yet Muqātil b. Sulaymān offers the complete texts of several *talbiyyas* in the course of his commentary on the phrase: ... *wajtanibū qaula al-zūri* (Qur’ān 22: 31) in his *Tafsīr*, accompanied by a list of the idols worshipped by various tribes. Muqātil for his part considers *zūr* to be equivalent to *al-kadhb*, lying, which is synonymous with *al-shirk* inherent in the pre-Islamic *talbiyya*, i.e., associating gods, goddesses and idols with Allāh, the one true God. Thus he defines *zūr* as *al-shirk fī al-talbiyya*, i.e., attribution of a partner to Allāh in the *talbiyya*.¹⁰⁶

Muqātil lists fifty-six forms of *talbiyya*. However, several of these

¹⁰² Ḥusain, *Talbiyyāt*, 362.

¹⁰³ Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 33-57.

¹⁰⁴ Aḥmad b. Abī Ya‘qub b. Ja‘far b. Wahb al-Khātīb al-Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh al-Ya‘qūbī* (Najf, Maṭba‘at al-Ghary, 1358 SH/1939 AD) I: 212-13.

¹⁰⁵ Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, ed. Ilse Lichtenstaedter (Hyderabad: Maṭba‘at Jamī‘at Dā‘irat al-Ma‘ārif al-Uthamniyya, 1361 AH/1942 AD) 311-315; the list of the idols is on 315-18.

¹⁰⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr al-Khams*, 84-85; cf. Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 34-35.

talbiyyas are in fact variations on others. The first eight *talbiyyas* were uttered referring to the names of gods. The ninth was uttered by non-*Ḥum* women who performed the *ṭawwāf* while naked. The tenth one listed is the *talbiyya* of Adam. The following twenty (11st-31rd) are the *talbiyyas* of different tribes addressed to certain gods or idols. Muqāṭil introduces these *talbiyyas* with the phrase *talbiyat al-‘arab fī al-jāhiliyya*, and closes by saying *wa hādhihi ru‘ūsu ṭawāghītihim...* These forms of *talbiyya* correspond to those recorded by Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb. In *talbiyya* no. 23, which was uttered by Sa‘īda’s worshippers, the last line breaks the *saj’*-rhyme: *miyāḥa* and *raqāḥa* followed by *ṭā‘a*. Similar phrases are recorded in the al-Muḥabbar of Ibn Ḥabīb except that they end with *al-naṣāḥa*.¹⁰⁷ Finally, *talbiyyas* (32nd–56th) are listed in conjunction with specific tribes, or with both the tribes and the idols’ names. Three of this series (33rd, 34th, 36th) are reported on the authority of Ibn Ishāq; one (35th) is on the authority of al-Sha‘bī (d.109 AH).¹⁰⁸

However, the variety of the *talbiyyas* as recorded in Muqāṭil’s Tafsīr, and the different utterance formulae and authorities, indicates that the chapter was constructed by combining many different sources. This is made clear by the fact that two out of five basically contain only the first ten of these *talbiyyas*. One could, as Kister speculated, say that some parts were added by the transmitter of the Tafsīr, al-Hudhayl b. Ḥabīb al-Dandānī.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Ibn Ḥabīb, Al-Muḥabbar, 313; cf. Kister, “Labbayka,” in Society, 34-35.

¹⁰⁸ Kister, “Labbayka,” in Society, 35.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 36.

A discussion of the *talbiyyas* mentioned above, in addition to a few other sources which may shed some light on important aspects of this ritual utterance, will be given in the second part of the next chapter, entitled 'Allāh as the Highest God'.

As in Islamic times, the pre-Islamic *Hajj* was not a single act but a series of complex rituals. Each of its elements identified a moment in the Abrahamic story. For example, the construction of the Ka'ba by Abraham and his son Ishmael, as described in the Qur'ān 2: 127-129,¹¹⁰ and the walk around Ṣafā and Marwa as mentioned by the Qur'ān 2: 158¹¹¹ and 22: 26-29,¹¹² are circumstantial evidence of the continuity of Abrahamic belief among the pre-Islamic Quraysh.¹¹³

Muslims believe that the walk between al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa, crossing on area which is called Sā'ī, commemorates the moment when Ishmael and his mother Hagar were left by Abraham in the desert. At that time Ishmael was only a little

¹¹⁰ "When Abraham and Ishmael built the House (i.e. Ka'ba), they dedicated it saying 'Accept this from us, lord. You are the One that hears and knows all. Lord, make us Muslims (submissive to You); make of our descendants a nation that will be Muslims. Teach us our rite of worship, and turn to us with mercy. You are the most forgiving and merciful. Lord, send forth to them an apostle of their own who shall declare to them Your revelations, shall teach them the Book and wisdom, and shall purify them of sin (i.e., incorrect ways of worship). You are the Mighty and the Wise One."

¹¹¹ "Indeed Ṣafā and Marwa are two of Allāh's shrines. It should be no offence for those who perform *Hajj* or 'umra to the the house to walk around them. He who does good of his own accord shall be rewarded by Allāh. Allāh has knowledge of all things."

¹¹² "When We prepared for Abraham the site of the Sacred house We said: 'Worship none beside Me. Keep my House clean for those who walk around it, and those stand upright or kneel in worship.' Exhort all men to make the *Hajj*. They will come to you on foot and on the backs of swift camels from every distant quarter; That they will come to avail themselves of many benefits, and to pronounce the name of Allāh on the appointed days over the cattle which He has given them for food. Eat of their flesh, and feed the poor and the unfortunate. Then let them clean themselves, fulfill their vows, and do *ṭawwāf* around the Ancient House."

¹¹³ Peters, Muhammad, 116.

child. He was thirsty, and his mother went to find water for him. She went to al-Ṣafā praying to Allāh and asking help for Ishmael; then she went to al-Marwa and did the same. After a while, she was terrified by the cries of wild beasts around Ishmael. She therefore went hurrying back to Ishmael and found him scrabbling with his hand at a pool water beneath his cheek while he drank. She made him a small hole, and gathered¹¹⁴ the water saying ‘*zumī, zumī*’ meaning ‘gather!’. Thus it was forever after called ‘Zamzam’.

Based on al-Azraqi's¹¹⁵ view, Peters regards the term *Ḥums* as designating the pre-Islamic religious practitioners who called themselves “the people of the *Ḥarām*” (that is Ka‘ba). This group consisted of tribesmen from the Quraysh, Kināna, Khuzā‘a, Amīr b. Sa‘sa‘a, al-Aus, al-Khazraj, Judham, Zubayd, the Banu Dakhwān of B. Sa‘īm, ‘Amr al-Lāt, Thaḳīf, Ghatafān, Ghauth, ‘Adwān, ‘Allāf, and Quḍā‘a. They declared that they were the sons of Abraham, the people of the holy territory, guardians of the shrine and citizens of Mecca. They used to perform the *Ḥajj* pilgrimage every year.¹¹⁶ During the pilgrimage season the *Ḥums* used to make the halt at ‘Arafāt, whence they would depart, and cry out the *talbiyya*: “We are present (*labbayka*), O Lord, we are present,”¹¹⁷ which they recognized as one of the institutions of the Abrahamic *Ḥajj*. The pilgrims could not perform the *ṭawwāf* around the Ka‘ba except with the cloth of *Ḥums*. If they could not afford it they

¹¹⁴ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muḥammad*, 45.

¹¹⁵ Al-Azraqī, *Akhbār Makkah*, 122-32.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 132; cf. Peters, *Muhammad*, 94-8. See also Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muḥammad*, 87-89

could do *ṭawwāf* in their ordinary clothes or naked; the men went completely naked while the women laid aside all their garments except for a shift with an open back or front. Afterwards they had to throw the clothes away so neither they nor anybody else could make use of them again.¹¹⁸

In the context of this acclamation, Allāh was addressed not only as “the Lord of the Ka‘ba,” but was also declared to be the master of the other gods, such as Manāt, al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā (*rabb al-thālithat al-ukhrā*), and Sirius (*rabb al-shi‘ra*).¹¹⁹

Besides the *talbiyya*, the Qurayshites performed *ṣalāt* (الصلاة the specific ritual when one submits oneself to Allāh, now generally taken to mean Islamic prayer) at certain times and performed *du‘ā* (الدعاء), calling upon God as well. Quoting Qur’ān 8:35, Peters says the Quraysh *ṣalāt* was “nothing but whistling and clapping” whereas *du‘ā* was “a personal prayer of supplication, directed...to the various idols worshipped by the Arabs...They bear the name of the god, the name of the suppliant and a formula of supplication, a request for help, a cure, prosperity.”¹²⁰ It may be presumed that they also preserved specific times and places to perform this ritual.

¹¹⁷ Kister, “Labbayka,” *Society*, 33-57. He remarks, “This may be a quite faithful exposition of their belief.”

¹¹⁸ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 87-88. Kister, “Mecca and the Tribes of Arabia,” in *Studies in Islamic History and Civilization* (Jerusalem: Cana, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986) 33-34.

¹¹⁹ Peters, *Muhammad*, 98. See also Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*; and Gibb, *Arabic Literature* (1962) who refers to Qur’ān 53: 49.

¹²⁰ Peters, *Muhammad*, 114-15.

CHAPTER TWO

ALLĀH

A. ARAB DEITIES

Before the advent of Islam, Arabs professed a number of belief systems, such as the Sabeian, the Manichean, and the Zandaqa, in addition to Judaism and Christianity. Some adopted what theologians, along with Freud, call 'natural religion,' wherein nature is considered to be the only cause of life and death, and so denied the existence of God or any notion of life after death. Others, particularly the settled population, acknowledged God and resurrection but rejected the messengers of God, while still others believed in the transmigration of the human spirit after death (*tanāsukh*).¹ However, the ancient Arabs mostly worshipped either idols or stars, in addition to unseen creatures, such as angels and *Jinn*. For example, the Himyar, the Thaḳīf and the Iyād in the Hijāz worshipped the sun goddess personified by the idol al-Lāt,² whom they regarded as a daughter of God; the Kināna of southern Hijāz worshipped the moon goddess personified by al-Hilāl or al-Qamar;³ the Lakhm, who resided on the border between Arabia and Iraq, and the Judhām of the Syrian desert, paid homage to the planet Jupiter (al-Mushtarī);

¹ Shahrastāni, *al-Milāl wa-al-Nihāl* I (Beirut: Mu'assasat Naṣr li-al-Thaqāfa, 1981) 432-433. See also Ḥaūfi, *al-Hayāt al-'Arabiyya*, 290, Zaydān, *Tārīkh al-Ādab wa-al-Lughā al-'Arabiyya*, 1: 61, W. Robertson Smith, *The Religion of the Semites* (New York: Meridian Books, 1956) 49; cf. Fariq, *History*, 20.

² Gonzague Ryckmans, *Les religions arabes préislamiques* (Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1951) 8.

³ Ibid.

the Tayyi of north-west Nejd adopted Canopus (Suhayl); the Asad in the western Nejd worshipped Mercury (ʿUṭarīd); the Tamīm, who dwelled in the region between Nejd and the Shaṭṭ al-ʿArab, worshipped the fifth star in the constellation of Taurus (al-Dabarān); and the Aus and the Khazraj in Yathrib, later called Medina, worshipped the goddess of fate and death personified by al-Manāt, which they also considered another of God's daughters. Of all the gods and goddesses, however, the planet Venus (al-ʿAthār) personified by Hubāl and al-ʿUzza,⁴ was the most popular.⁵

The inhabitants of the Ḥijāz worshipped the gods or goddesses in their vicinity; those living in towns went to venerate the gods or goddesses at special places called *masājīd*, while the Bedouin usually performed such rituals in the oases near their campsites. Besides worshipping idols, stars, and heavenly bodies, some Arabs also revered stones and trees with special characteristics, which often came to be used to describe the tribes, or were passed on from one tribe to another. Hence, it was not unusual for a tribal confederation to share a divine patron, which then was adopted as the lord of a shrine and served as the central cult of the federation.⁶

Ibn Ishāq⁷ and other Islamic historians have listed the idols worshiped by the pagan Arabs as follows:

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ For more details see Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 322; and Shahrastānī, *al-Milāl*, I, 433-34; Ryckmans, *Les Noms* I, 27; cf. Fariq, *History* 20.

⁶ Peters, *Muḥammad*, 105-7; cf. Fariq, *History*, 20.

⁷ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muḥammad*.

1. Manāt⁸ was reported to be the oldest of the idols of the Arabs, and was adopted by the Aws and the Khazraj of Yathrib or Medina. It was the Arabs custom to name their children 'Abd Manāt⁹ and Zayd Manāt their respect.¹⁰ 'Amr b. Luḥayy set up Manāt on the seashore of al-Mushallal¹¹ in Qudayd,¹² a region between Mecca and Medina. The Arabs, particularly the Aws and the Khazraj,¹³ and the inhabitants of Mecca and Medina, including the Azd and the Ghassān, used to pay homage to her by venerating and offering her sacrifices gifts. But the descendants of the Ma'add, Rabī'ah, and Muḍar tribes¹⁴ still preserved to a slight degree the faith of the religion of Ishmael.¹⁵

According to Abū Munzir, on the authority of Abū 'Ubaydah b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Ammār b. Yāsir¹⁶-- a most knowledgeable person on the subject of the Aws and the Khazraj -- these two tribes as well as the residents of Yathrib¹⁷ would

⁸ This was one of the names of the Arabs' gods mentioned in the Qur'ān 53: 20: "And Manāt, the third idol besides;" Ryckmans, Les Religions, 14; Ryckmans, Les Noms Propres Sud-Sémitiques I (Louvain: Bureaux du Muséon, 1934) 18; Wellhausen, Reste, 25-29; Azraqī, Akhbār Makka, I, 78-79; Ibn Ḥabīb, Muḥabbat, 316; Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh I, 212.

⁹ Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 105, 144.

¹⁰ Ibid, 133, 284.

¹¹ Al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat, 214; al-Ḥamawī, Buldān IV, 543.

¹² Al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat, 120, 185; Yaqut b. 'Abd Allāh al-Hamawī, Mu'jam al-Buldān IV (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir wa Dār Bayrūt, 1955-57) 42.

¹³ They were two of the main groups of South Arabian tribes. Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 83. 259.

¹⁴ They were three of the main groups of North Arabian tribes. Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 20.

¹⁵ Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, ed. Aḥmad Zakī Bāshā,, (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1952) 8; idem, Idols, 12. Also see Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh Azraqī Akhbār Makka, 75.

¹⁶ Cf. Ṭabari, Tārīkh II, 863, 868; Yaqut, Buldān IV, 653.

¹⁷ al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat, 2, 124; Yaqut, Buldān IV, 458-468, 1009-1010.

not shave their heads after the *Hajj*, but instead waited until, having made the compass of the Ka'ba, hastened from 'Arafat and completed the rites at Mīna, they got to Manāt, to whom they would cry *labbayka*, etc. They would not consider the *Hajj* complete unless they had visited Manāt. For this reason, 'Abd al-'Uzza b. Wadī'a al-Muzannī and others said:

إنني حلفت يمين صدق برة بعمنة عند محل آل الخزرج!

An oath, truthful and just, I swore
By Manāt, at the sacred place of the Khazraj.¹⁸

She continued to be venerated by the Quraysh and others until the idol was destroyed by 'Alī b. Abī Tālib and all of its treasures were taken away.¹⁹ Among these treasures were two swords presented to her by al-Ḥarīth b. Abī Shamir al-Ghassānī,²⁰ the king of Ghassān. One sword was called Mikhdam and the other Rasūb, as mentioned by 'Alqāma in his poem:

مظاهر سربالى حديد عليهما عقيلا سيوف: مخذم و رسوب

Wearing two coats of mail as well as
Two studded swords, Mikhdam and Rasūb.²¹

Another report, however, said that these swords were found in the temple of the Fals,²² another idol belonging to the Ṭayyi, which was also destroyed by

¹⁸ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 8-9; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 12-13. During the Jahiliyya, the Aws and the Khazraj were called by a single generic name, namely the Khazraj. That is why the poets mention only 'the sacred place of the Khazraj' when they mean both.

¹⁹ I.e. the capture of Mecca 629-630 A.D.; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 108-110, 276.

²⁰ The same as Al-Ḥarīth b. Jabala. See Theodore Nöldeke, *The Princes of Ghassān from the House of Gafna*, trans. Pendali Jouse and Costi K. Zurayk (Beirut: 1933) 22.

²¹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 9. Idem, *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris 13.; Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets* (London: 1870) 107.

‘Alī.²³

2. Al-Lāt²⁴ belonged to the ‘Attāb b. Mālīk of Thaqīf of Ṭā’if, who had built an edifice over her. She was a rock in the form of a cube, beside which certain Jews used to prepare barley porridge, on the site of the left minaret of the present Mosque of al-Ṭā’if. She was reported to be more recent date than the Manāt. It was also visited and venerated by the majority of the Arabs. They also named their children after her, such as Taym al-Lāt b. Tha’laba b. ‘Ukāba,²⁵ Taym al-Lāt b. Rufayda b. Thawr, Zayd al-Lāt b. Rufayda b. Thawr b. Wabara b. Murr b. Ud b. Ṭabikha, Taym al-Lāt b. al-Namīr b. Qāsiṭ b. Zayd al-Lāt, etc.²⁶ ‘Amr b. al-Ju’ayd refers to al-Lāt in the following verse:

فإني و تركي وصل كأس لكالذي تبرأ من لات، و كان يدينها!

In forswearing wine I am like him who hath abjured al-Lāt,
Although he had been at one time her devotee.²⁷

Al-Mutalammis²⁸ alludes to the same idol in his satire addressed to ‘Amir b. al-Mundhir:²⁹

أطردتني حذر الهجاء، و لا و اللات و الانصاب لا تثل!

²² Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 9; Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 911-913.

²³ Ibn Kalbi, *Asnām*, 9-10; idem, *Idols*, 13-14. Also see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh* I, 1706-1710.

²⁴ Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 3; Ryckmans, *Les Noms*, 3; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 29-34, Qur’ān 53: 19 Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 183; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, 79-84; Ya’qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 315.

²⁵ Ibid, 315.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Asnām*, 10; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 14.

²⁸ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi’r wa-al-Shu’arā’* I, 85-88.

²⁹ The king of Lakhm, who was better known as ‘Amr b. Hind; Abū al-Faraj al-Isfahānī, *Kitāb al-Aghani*, 109-110.

Thou hast banished me for fear of lampoon and satire.

No! By al-Lāt and all the sacred baetyls,³⁰ thou shalt not escape.³¹

Al-Lāt continued to be worshipped until the Thaḳīf converted to Islam,³² and it was destroyed and burnt by al-Mughīra b. Shu‘ban.³³ Referring to this event, Shaddād b. ‘Arid al-Jushami³⁴ called upon the Thaḳīf neither to worship her anymore nor attempt to avenge her:

و كيف نصرکم من ليس ينتصر؟	لا تنصر(وا) اللات إن الله مهلكها
و لم تقاتل لى أحجارها، هدر.	إن التي حرقت بالنار فأشتعلت،
يظفن، و ليس بها من أهلها بشر.	إن الرسول متى ينزل بساحتكم

Come not to al-Lāt, for Allāh hath doomed her to destruction!
How can you stand by one which doth not triumph?
Verily that which, when set on fire, resisted not the flames,
Nor saved her stones, is inglorious and worthless.
Hence when the Prophet in your place shall arrive
And then leave, not one of her votaries shall be left.³⁵

Aws b. Ḥajar, swearing by al-Lāt, writes:

و باللات و الغزى و من دان بينها و بالله، إن الله منهن أكبر!

By al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā and those who in them believe,
And by Allāh, verily He is the greater than both.³⁶

³⁰ George Aaron Barton, "Poles and Posts" in James Hastings, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics (Edinburgh: T. & T, 1908-1927); D. M. Kay "Maṣṣebbāh", Ibid; G. A. Barton, Semitic and Hamitic Origins: Social & Religion (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1934) 150ff.

³¹ Ibn al-Kalbī, Asnām, 10; Idols, trans. Faris, 14-15. Cf. Abū al-Faraj, al-Aghānī XXI, 207.

³² 9 A.H./630-631 A.D; see Ibn Hishām al-Sīrah, 914-917.

³³ Later became the governor of Baṣra and Kūfa; d. 50 A.H./670 A.D.; al-Ma‘ārif, 150-151; Yaqut, Buldān IV, 337-338; cf. Ibn Hishām al-Sīrah, 871.

³⁴ Ibn Hishām, Ibid.

³⁵ Ibn al-Kalbī, Asnām, 11; Book of Idols, trans. Faris, 15. Cf. Yaqut, Buldān X, 6-8; Ibn Qutayba, al-Shi‘r wa-al-Shu‘arā’, 99-102. Also Rudolf Geyer, "Gedichte und Fragmente des ‘Aus ibn Ḥajar," Sitzungsberichte der Philosophisch-Historischen Classe der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften 126 (Vienna, 1892) pt. XIII, sec. XI, line 2.

3. Al- 'Uzzā³⁷ belonged to the Quraysh and Banū Kināna. She was overseen by the Banū Shaybān and Banū Hashīm in Ḥurād,³⁸ and stood in a valley of Nakhla al-Shamiyya,³⁹ alongside al-Ghumayr⁴⁰ to the right side of the road from Mecca to Iraq, above Dhāt 'Irq⁴¹ approximately nine miles from al-Bustān.⁴² She was reported to be more recent than either al-Lāt or Manāt, as is shown by the fact that Arab personal names incorporating the element "al-'Uzzā" were a later phenomenon than those based on al-Lat, e.g., 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Ka'b b. Sa'd b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm. It is said that 'Abd al-'Uzzā b. Ka'b was among the earliest names used in conjunction with al-'Uzzā.⁴³

The first person to introduce al-'Uzzā to the Arabs was Zālim b. As'ad b. Rābi'a b. Mālik b. Murra b. 'Awf.⁴⁴ He built a house over her called Buss⁴⁵ in which the Arabs used to have oracular communications. According to Ibn al-Kalbī, al-'Uzzā was the greatest idol among the Quraysh, to which they offered

³⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, Asnām, 11; Book of Idols, trans. Faris, 15.

³⁷ Ryckmans, Les Religions, 26, Wellhausen, Reste, 34-35; Azraqī, Akhbār, 79-84; Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 38; Ibn Ḥabīb, Muḥabbar, 315; Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, 212.

³⁸ Yaqut, Buldān II, 229.

³⁹ Ibid, IV, 769.

⁴⁰ Ibid, III, 816.

⁴¹ Ibid, III, 651-652.

⁴² Yaqut, Buldān I, 611-612.

⁴³ Ibn al-Kalbī, Asnām, 11; Book of Idols, 16.

⁴⁴ Muḥammad b. Muḥammad Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-'Arūs min Jawāhir al-Qāmus 15 (Kuwait: Maṭba'at Ḥukumat al-Kuwayt, 1965) entries *bss*, 223.

⁴⁵ Yaqut, Buldān I, 622-623; Murtaḍā al-Zabīdī, Tāj al-'Arūs, 443.

exclusive gifts and sacrifices.⁴⁶ The Quraysh used to invoke her during their circumambulation of the Ka'ba saying:

و مناة الثالثة الأخرى!

و اللات و العزى

و إن شفاعتهن لترتجى!

فإنهن الغرائق العلى!

By al-Lāt and al-'Uzzā, and Manāt, the third idol besides!
Verily they are the most exalted females
Whose intercession is to be sought.⁴⁷

The Quraysh presented to her a ravine (*shi'b*) called Suqām,⁴⁸ quite close to the sacred territory of the Ka'ba. Abū Jundub al-Hudhālī al-Qirdī composed a poem describing a woman, with whom he was in love, who made him swear by al-'Uzzā:

بفرع التى أحمت فروع سقام:

لقد حلفت بهذا يمينا غليظة

أباديك أخرى عيشنا بكلام!

"لئن أنت لم ترسل ثيابى فانطلق،

فأمسى يروم الأمر كل مرام

يعز عليه صرم أم حويرث

She swore an earnest and solemn oath
By her to whom the vales of Suqām were dedicated:
'If thou wouldst not return my clothes, go.'⁴⁹

Dirham b. Zayd al-Awsī said:

إنى و رب العزى السعيدة و الله الذى دون بيته سرف!

⁴⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 12; *Book of Idols*, 16.

⁴⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 12; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 17. Cf. Ṭabarī *Tārīkh* I, 1192-1196. They were also called the daughters of Allāh; al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān fi Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* XXVII (Cairo, 1323-1330) 34-36; Frederick Victor Winnett, 'The Daughters of Allāh,' *The Moslem World* 30 (1940): 113-130. The Qur'ān 53: 19-20 rejects this claim saying that what they said was not from Him but merely names they and their father invented.

⁴⁸ Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 100.

⁴⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 12-13; *Book of Idols*, 17-18; trans. Faris. See also Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 100.

By the Lord of al-'Uzzā, the propitious,
And by Allāh betwixt whose House (and Suqām) Sarif stands.⁵⁰

The Quraysh also made a special place for al-'Uzzā called Ghabghab⁵¹
where they offered sacrifices. Al-Hudhalī speaks satirically about her in
attacking a man married to a beautiful woman named Asmā':

لقد أنكحت أسماء لحى بغيرة من الأدم أهداها أمرؤ من بنى غنم!
رأى قذعا فى عيها إذيسوقا إلى غيبغ العزى، فوضع فى القسم!

Asmā' was married to the jawbone of a little cow
Which one of the Banū Ghanm had offered for sacrifice.
As he led it to the Ghabghab of al-'Uzzā,
He noticed some defects in its eye;
And when the cow was offered upon the altar,
And its flesh divided, his portion was foul.⁵²

Ḥassān b. Thābit,⁵³ addressing al-'Uzzā in Nakhla, said:

Through the grace of God I testified that Muḥammad
Is the apostle of Him who reigneth above the Heavens;
And that John's father and John
Have worshipped Him with acceptable and meritorious works;⁵⁴
And that which standeth by the dam in the valley of Nakhla⁵⁵
And those who worship her are removed from truth, hopelessly lost.⁵⁶

The last person to have custody of al-'Uzzā was Dubayya b. Ḥarami al-

⁵⁰ Ibn al-Kalbi, *Asnām*, 13; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 17-18. See also Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* II, 166-168; Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 665.

⁵¹ Ibn Durayd, *Sifat Jazīrat*, 177; Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 772-773.

⁵² Ibn al-Kalbī, *Asnām*, 13; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris 18. See also Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 87.

⁵³ Ibn Quṭayba, *Al-Shi'r*, 170-173; Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* IV, 2-17.

⁵⁴ Cf. the Qur'ān 3: 32-36, 4: 85, 19:1-15, 21:89-90.

⁵⁵ Namely al-'Uzzā; see above.

⁵⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 28; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris 38. For Arabic text see appendix 9. Cf. Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* IV, 10; *Diwān Ḥassān ibn Thābit* (Leiden and London, 1910) ed. ed. Hartwig Hirschfeld, 44-45.

Sulamī.⁵⁷ Her final destruction was a bitter pill for the Quraysh to swallow. When Abū Uḥayha Sa'id b. al-'Aṣ b. Umayya b. 'Abd Shams b. 'Abd Manāf was on the point of dying, Abū Lahab found him weeping. He told Abū Lahab that he would die very soon but that it did not matter; what did bother him was the fact that nobody would worship al-'Uzzā after he was gone. Once Abū Lahab assured him that he would take care of her, Abū Uḥayha was relieved.⁵⁸

Despite her recent origin al-'Uzzā was the most respected of the gods. After her came al-Lāt and then Manāt;⁵⁹ indeed the Quraysh offered her exclusive honor of visitations and offerings. This was perhaps because of her close proximity, as the Thaḳīf preferred Manāt. Nevertheless all Arabs visited those idols, even if they did not hold each of them in the same regard.⁶⁰

4. Hubal was another idol of the Quraysh, the greatest in fact amongst those idols set up around the Ka'ba.⁶¹ It was a red agate image with the right hand broken off. Later the Quraysh made a gold hand for it. The first to worship Hubal was Khuzayma b. Mudrika b. al-Ya's b. Muḍar. Thus it was also called Khuzayma's Hubal. Located in the middle of the Ka'ba alongside a well,⁶² there were traditionally placed before it seven divination arrows each bearing a

⁵⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, 14; Book of Idols, 20.

⁵⁸ Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, 14-15; Book of Idols, 21.

⁵⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, 16; Book of Idols, 22-23.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ryckmans, Les Religions, 8, 14; Ryckmans, Les Noms, 9; Azraqī, Akhbār, 73; Ibn Ḥabīb, Muḥabbar, 315-18; Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, 211; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, Book of Idols, 23-24.

⁶² Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 64, 66.

different inscription. On one of them was written *ṣarīḥ* 'pure' or 'clear', while on another was found *mulṣaq* 'alien or unclear'.⁶³ These two were often used by the Quraysh to seek divine decision whenever they doubted the lineage of a newborn baby. They would bring the baby before Hubal and shuffle the arrows, then throw them to Hubal. If the word written on the arrow closets to it said *ṣarīḥ*, they would declare the child legitimate and accept it, while if it said *mulṣaq* they considered the child illegitimate and so rejected it. These arrows were also used for divination on deaths, marriages, setting out on journey, etc. In short, they turned to Hubal whenever they disagreed upon or doubted something.⁶⁴

It was before this Hubal that 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib shuffled the arrows to find out which of his children should be sacrificed to fulfil his vow, and it was also the same Hubal whom Abū Sufyān b. Harb addressed after his victory at the battle of Uḥud saying: *أعل هبل! u'lu huba!* "Exalt Hubal!" (i.e. may thy religion triumph).⁶⁵

5. Isāf (Asāf) and Nā'ila, who were sacrificed to at Zamzam were worshipped by the Quraysh and Khuzā'a.⁶⁶ On the authority of Abū Ṣāliḥ 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās⁶⁷ and Ibn al-Kalbī, Abū Mundhir Hishām b. Muḥammad said that these

⁶³ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 17-18; *Book of Idols*, 23-24.

⁶⁴ Ibid. See also Azraqī, *Akhbār* I, 73-74.

⁶⁵ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 18; *Book of Idols*, 24.

⁶⁶ Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 211; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 218.

⁶⁷ The cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad, d. 69AH/688-689 AD; Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfahanī, *Hilyat al-Awliyā' wa Tabaqāt al-Asfiyā'* I (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khanji, 1932-38) 314-329; al-Nawawī,

had once been Isāf b. Ya'lā/Baghy, and Nā'ila d. Zayd/Dik of Jurhum. They were found guilty of having had sexual relations in the Ka'ba and were transformed into *miskhs* (stones) by Allāh. The first person among Ishmael's offspring to worship them as idols was Hudhayl b. Mudrika.⁶⁸ Bishr b. Abī Khāzim al-Asadī says:

مقامات العوارق من إساف

عليه الطير ما يدنون منه

Full of awe, they draw not nigh unto it,
But stand afar like the menstruating women before Isāf.⁶⁹

6. Suwā' was adopted by Hudhayl b. Mudrika b. Ilyās b. Mudar in Ruḥat⁷⁰ in the vicinity of Yanbu',⁷¹ one of the villages near Medina. The custodians of the temple were the Banū Lahyān.⁷² However, the Hudhailites⁷³ do not mention this fact in their poems. Instead, we find mention of it in the works of Yemeni poets. According to Ryckmans it is also probable that the idol was a goddess worshipped by the Hamndān tribe, though the word Suwā' was masculine in

Tahdhīb al-Asmā' wa-al-Lughat (Damascus: Idārat al-Ṭibā'at al-Muniriyya, 1997) 351-354.

⁶⁸ Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, 6; Book of Idols, 8; Ibn Durayd Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq (Egypt: Mu'assasat al-Khanji, 1958) ed. F. Wüstenfeld, 108; Azraqī, Akhbār, 74-75; cf. Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 37-38.

⁶⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, 17.

⁷⁰ Yaqut, Buldān II, 878; Azraqī, Akhbār, 85.

⁷¹ Ibid., IV: 1038-1039; Ryckmans, Les Religions, 16; Ryckmans, Les Noms I, 23; Wellhausen, Reste, 18-19; Ibn Ḥabīb, Muḥabbar, 216; Munammaq, 405; Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, 212.

⁷² Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 109.

⁷³ A part of the Hudhailites' poems was published by John Godfrey Lewis Kosegarten under the title Kitāb Sharh Ash'ār al-Hudhaylīn (Hildesheim : G. Olms, 1983); the remaining part was published by Julius Wellhausen in Skizzen und Vorarbeiten I (Berlin: Druch und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1884).

the Thamudite language.⁷⁴

7. Wadd was worshipped by Kalb b. Wabra of Quḍā'a in Dūmat al-Jandal, according to these verses from *Ishtiqaq*.⁷⁵

لهو النساء، و إن الدين قد عزمنا.

حياك ود! فإنا لا يحل لنا

May Wadd keep thee alive! For to us it is unlawful
With the women to dally and wanton, so our faith hath resolved.⁷⁶

8. Yaghūth was worshipped by the An'um of Tayyi' and the Madhīj of Jurash.⁷⁷
According Ryckmans, it took the form of a lion, and symbolized the sun.⁷⁸ One poet reportedly said:

فناجزناهم قبل الصباح

و سار بنا يغوث إلى مراد

Yaghūth led us unto the Murād
And we vanquished them before the morning.⁷⁹

9. Ya'ūq was adopted as god by the tribe of Khaywān and Hamdān,⁸⁰ who lived

⁷⁴ Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16; Ryckmans, *Les noms*, 23; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 6; *Book of Idols*, 8-9.

⁷⁵ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 13; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16; Ryckmans, *Les Noms I*, 8; Yaqut, *Buldān* II, 625-629, and IV, 912-916; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 14-18. It is also called *Dawmat al-Jandal*. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 316; ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 405; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212.

⁷⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 6; *Book of Idols*, 9; trans. Faris. The verse is by al-Nābigha al-Dhubyānī; cf. *Le Diwan de Nabiga Dhobyani* (Paris, 1869) ed. and trans. Hartwig Derenbourg; also Carlo Alfonso Nallino "Il verso d'an-Nabighah sul dio Wadd," in *Rendiconti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei* 29 (1920): 283-290.

⁷⁷ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 237; Yaqut, *Buldān* II, 59-61; Ryckmans, *Les Noms I*, 16; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 19-22; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 317; *Munammaq*, 405.

⁷⁸ Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16.

⁷⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Asnām*, 7; *book of Idols*, trans. Faris 9. See also *Ishtiqaq*, 238; Nashwān b. Sā'id al-Ḥimyarī, *Muntakhabāt fi Akhbār al-Yaman min Kitāb Shams al-'Ulūm wa Dawā' Kalām al-'Arab min al-Kulum* (Leiden: 1916) ed. 'Azīm al-Dīn Aḥmad, 97.

⁸⁰ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 252; Yaqut, *Buldān* II, 512; Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen*, 22-23; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 317; *Munammaq*, 405; cf. Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 36.

about two nights' journey from Mecca. Yet Ibn al-Kalbī was unable to find any Hamdānite or other Arab tribe members named after Ya'ūq nor any verses referring to it. Perhaps because the Hamdānites were close to Ṣan'ā,⁸¹ they may later have become mixed with the Ḥimyar,⁸² who accepted Judaism.⁸³

10. Nasr was worshipped by the Dhū al-Khalā' of Ḥimyar, who were located in a place called Balkha.⁸⁴ There is no record of this idol either, very likely because, as just pointed out, the Ḥimyarites relinquished idolatry and embraced Judaism.⁸⁵

The five aforementioned idols (Wadd, Suwā', Yaghūth, Ya'ūq, and Nasr), according to Abū al-Mundhir, were the idols which the people of Noah used to worship, as stated in the Qur'ān 71: 21-24: "Said Noah, 'O Lord! they rebel against me, and follow those whose riches and children do but aggravate their ruin.' And they plotted a great plot; and said, 'Forsake not your gods, Forsake not Wadd and Suwā', nor Yaghūth and Ya'ūq and Nasr.' And they caused many to err; and thou, too, shalt be the means of increasing only error in the

⁸¹ Al-Ḥasan b. Aḥmad al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat al-'Arab (Leyden, 1884-1891, reprint San'a: Markaz al-Dirāsa wa-al-Buḥūth al-Yamanī, 1983) ed. D. H. Müller, 55.

⁸² Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 217.

⁸³ Ibn al-Kalbī, Idols, 9; Ṭabari, Tārīkh al-Rusul wa-al-Muluk I (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977-1987) 918ff; Ḥamza b. Ḥasan al-Iṣafahānī, Tārīkh Sana Muluk al-'Ard wa al-Anbiyā' (Leipzig, 1884/Beirut: Dār Maktabat al-Ḥayāt, 19--) 133-134.

⁸⁴ Ryckmans, Les Religions, 16; Ryckmans, Les Noms I, 23; Wellhausen, Reste, 22-24, Yaqut, Buldān I, 714, IV, 780-791; Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, 212; Ibn Ḥabīb, Muḥabbar, 217.

⁸⁵ It was during the reign of Tubba', the royal title of the kings of the second Himyarite kingdom (ca. 300-525 AD, interrupted only by the first Abyssinian period, A.D. 340-378); cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, Book of Idols, 10.

wicked.”⁸⁶

11. Ri'ām, a temple, belonged to the Ḥimyar and the Yemenites in Ṣan'ā'⁸⁷ where they offered sacrifices and performed ritual veneration. It was destroyed by Tubba' when the Ḥimyarites converted to Judaism.⁸⁸ However, when 'Amr b. Luḥayy brought an image to them they returned to their former practice, idolatry.

12. Dhū al-Khalāṣa, an idol with a crown of white quartz upon its head was worshipped and presented with sacrifices by the Daws, the Khath'am, the Bajīla, and the Azd⁸⁹ of al-Sarāh⁹⁰ as well as the tribes of Hawāzin living in the vicinity of Tabāla, located between Mecca and Yemen about seven nights journey from the former.⁹¹ Its was looked after by the Umāma of the Bāhila b. A'sur.⁹² One poet wrote:

مثلى و كان شيخك المقبوراً.

لو كنت ياذا الخلصة الموتوراً

⁸⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, Asnām, 7-8; Book of Idols, 10-11; Wellhausen, Reste, 13; Ryckmans, Les Religions, 16.

⁸⁷ Yaqut, Buldān II, 882-883; al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat, 203; al-Ḥamdānī, al-Iklīl min Akhbār al-Yaman wa-Anṣāb Ḥimyar VIII, ed. Nabih Amin Faris (Beirut: Dār al-Yamaniyya, 1987/Princeton, 1940) 66-67; al-Ḥamdānī, The Antiquities of South Arabia (Princeton, 1938) trans. N. A. Faris, 46-48, Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, 212; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, Book of Idols, 10-11.

⁸⁸ Cf. al-Iṣfahānī, 131; Wahb Ibn Munabbih, Kitāb al-Tijān (Hyderabad, 1347) 292-297; Ṭabari, Tārīkh I, 903-906; Yaqut, Buldān II, 882; cf. Ḥamdānī, al-Iklīl, 66; al-Ḥamdānī, The Antiquities of South Arabia, 47.

⁸⁹ Better known as the Asd; see Nashwan b. Sa'id al-Ḥimyarī, Shams al-'Ulūm (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1951) 3; Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 283; al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat, 70.

⁹⁰ The range of mountains stretching from the extreme limits of Yemen north to the Hijaz; see al-Ḥamdānī, Sifat Jazīrat, 67-71.

⁹¹ Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 177.

⁹² Ibn al-Kalbī, Kitāb al-Asnām, 22; Book of Idols, 29-30; Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, 164-165; Ryckmans, Les Religions, 8, 17; Wellhausen, Reste Arabischen, 45-48.

لم تنه عن قتل العداة زورا

If thou, O Dhu-l-Khalāṣa, wert the one wronged,
Thy father the one murdered and buried,
Thou wouldst not have forbidden the killing of the enemy.⁹³

Khidāsh b. Zuhayr al-‘Āmiri,⁹⁴ referring to Dhū al-Khalāṣa, addressed
‘Ath‘ath b. Waḥshi al-Khath‘ami thus concerning an agreement contracted
between them but violated by the latter:

و ذكرته بالله بينى و بينه

و ما بيننا من مدة لو تذكرنا

و بالمروة البيضاء يوم تبالة

و محبة النعمان حيث تنصرا.

And by Allāh I reminded him of the covenant that existed between us twain,
And of the age long friendship which both of us shared;
And by the White Quartz Idol of Tabāla.⁹⁵
And the oath of al-Nu‘mān⁹⁶ when he embraced the faith of Christ.⁹⁷

According to Ibn Ishāq, the image of Dhū al-Khalāṣa was erected in the
lower part of Mecca. It was said that its worshippers decorated the idol with
beautiful necklaces, and offered it various gifts such as barley, wheat, milk, or
ostrich eggs.⁹⁸

It was destroyed and burnt by Jarīr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Bajāfī (d. 54 AH/674)⁹⁹
with the aid of the Aḥamas clan of the Baḥīla. Thereupon, a woman of the

⁹³ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 22; *Book of Idols*, 30; trans. Faris.

⁹⁴ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi‘r wa-al-Shu‘arā’*, 37-56.

⁹⁵ That is, Dhu-l-Khalāṣa

⁹⁶ He was Al-Nu‘mān III (580-602), son of al-Mundhir, nicknamed Abū Qābūs; see al-Isfahānī. 111;
P. K. Hitti, *History of the Arabs* (London, 1949) 83-84.

⁹⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 22; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 30-31.

⁹⁸ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 9.

Khath'am said:

و بنو أمامة بالولية صرعوا	ثملا يعالج كلهم أنبوبا.
جاءوا لبيضتهم فلا قوا دونها	أسدا تقب لدى السيوف قبيبا.
قسم المذلة بين نسوة جثعم	فتيان أحمس قسمة تشعبا.

The Banū-Umāma, each wielding his spear,
Were slaughtered at al-Wafiyya, their abode;
They came to defend their shrine, only to find
Lions with brandished swords clamoring for blood.
The women of the Khath'am were, then, humiliated
By the men of the Aḥmas, and abased.¹⁰⁰

Later on the Muslims were to build a threshold at the gate the Mosque of Tabāla where Dhū al-Khalaṣa used to stand.¹⁰¹

13. 'Ammanas or Ammianas¹⁰² was worshipped by the Khaulān. Ibn Ishāq as well as Ibn al-Kalbī report that al-'Adīm,¹⁰³ a clan of Khaulān, used to divide their crops and cattle between 'Ammanas and Allāh. If any portion of the herd earmarked for Allāh wandered into that destined for 'Ammanas' they left it alone; but if any of 'Ammanas' share was in Allāh's, they returned it to its proper place.¹⁰⁴ It was said that there is a reference to this custom of Khaulān

⁹⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Sīrah*, 56; Nashwan al-Ḥimyarī, *al-Ma'ārif*, 149; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 304-305.

¹⁰⁰ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 23; *Book of Idols*, 31; trans. Faris.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibn al-Kalbī writes it 'Umayānus and 'Umyānis. See *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 27-28; *Book of Idols*, 37-38; Ryckmans *Les Religions*, 17; Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah*, 53; Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 731, IV: 941, Wellhausen, *Reste*, 23-24.

¹⁰³ The text of Ibn al-Kalbī gives this as al-Udūm which also called al-Uṣūm, whereas al-Ḥamdānī, *Sīfah*, 144, and Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah*, 53, have 'al-'Adīm. In Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 731, it is 'al-Adhūm.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 27; *Book of Idols*, 37-38; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 227; Yaqut, *Buldān* II, 499; Ryckmans *Les Religions*, 17; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 36-37.

in the Qur'ān 6: 137: "They assigned a portion to Allāh of the crops and cattle He has created; and say this is Allāh's and this is for our partners. Thus what is for their partners does not reach Allāh and what is for Allāh goes to their partners. Evil is their judgment."¹⁰⁵

14. Fals, an idol adopted by the Ṭayyi', was an image made of red rock set up in a patch of black stone lying between the two mountains Aja' and Salmā.¹⁰⁶ Its was the Bawlān who worshipped it for the first time, and looked after it.¹⁰⁷ The last of the Bawlān to retain it was Ṣayfi.¹⁰⁸

15. Ruḍā' was a temple belonging to the Rabī'a b. Sa'd b. Zayd b. Manāt.¹⁰⁹ It was destroyed by al-Mustaghīr 'Amr b. Rabī'a b. Zayd b. Manāt b. Tamīm¹¹⁰ in the early years of Islām. The latter is reported to have said:

و لقد شددت على رضاء شدة
و دعوت عبد الله في مكروهاها،
فتركها تلا تنازع أسحما.
و لمثل عبد الله يغشى المحرما!

I marched against Ruḍā' and burnt it down,
And left it a heap of ashes, charred and black.

¹⁰⁵ Qur'ān 61: 137.

¹⁰⁶ Abū al-Farāj, *al-Aghānī* X, 155; this is reported by al-'Anazī Abū 'Alī on the authority of Hisham b. Muḥammad Abū Mundhir related to Abū Bāsil al-Ṭā'ī from his uncle 'Antara b. al-Akhras. See also Abu Tammām, *Ash'ār al-Hamāsa* (Bonn, 1828) ed. Freytag, 108, 784; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 232; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 51-53; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 17; Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 912, I: 122-130; al-Ḥamdānī, *Sifah*, 125-126, 137, 144.

¹⁰⁷ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 237. Ibn Ḥabīb gives Nejd for the place it was erected, *Muḥabbar*, 316.

¹⁰⁸ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 37-38; *Book of Idols*, 51-53; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 39.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 19; idem, *Book of Idols*, 25; Yaqut, *Buldān* II, 789; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 154; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 18; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 58-59; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 39.

¹¹⁰ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 154.

I called upon 'Abd Allāh's aid for its destruction;
Verily it is one like 'Abd Allāh who would dare unlawful things to do.¹¹¹

16. Sa'd, a tall rock image in the desert near Jedda, was adopted by the Mālik and the Milkān of Banū Kināna b. Khuzayma b. Mudrika b. Ilyās b. Mudar.¹¹² But later on they abandoned it when one of their tribesmen, who had brought his camels to it for its blessing, saw them shy and bolt in every direction on smelling the blood shed upon it. Thereupon the man became furious, and picked up a stone and threw it at it at the idol saying, "May Allāh accurse you, O god! (i.e., Sa'd) Thou hast caused my camels to fly away." Gathering his camels he returned home saying:

أَتَيْنَا إِلَى سَعْدَ لِيَجْمَعَ شَمْلَنَا	فَشَتَّتْنَا سَعْدَ. فَلَا نَحْنُ مِنْ سَعْدَ!
وَهَلْ سَعْدَ إِلَّا صَخْرٌ قَبْتَنُوفَةٌ	مِنَ الْأَرْضِ، لَا يَدْعَى لَفًى وَلَا رَشْدَ.

We came to Sa'd in hope he would unite our ranks,
But he broke them up. We will have none of him.
Is he not but a rock in barren land,
Deaf to both evil and good.¹¹³

17. Dhū al-Kaffayn was worshipped by the Munhib b. Daws. It was destroyed and burnt by al-Ṭufayl b. 'Amr al-Dawsī when they converted to Islam.¹¹⁴ While doing this he is said to have declared:

يَا ذَا الْكَفَيْنِ لَسْتُ مِنْ عِبَادِكَ!	مِيلَادُنَا أَكْبَرُ مِنْ مِيلَادِكَ!
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¹¹¹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb*, 19; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 26. Cf. *Sifah*, 56; *Buldān* II, 789.

¹¹² Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 17; Tabari I, 1105; al-Hamdānī, *Sifah*, 47; Yaqut, *Buldān* III, 92; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 9, 17; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 59-60; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 316; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, 212; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 32; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 37.

¹¹³ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 23-24; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris 32; Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 37.

¹¹⁴ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah*, 252-255; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 296; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 65; Azraqī, *Akhbār*, 85; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 32.

إني حشوت النار في فؤادكا!

O Dhū al-Kaffayn, I am not one of thy servants (anymore)
Our birth is nobler than thine.
I have stuffed thy head with fire and burnt thy shrine.¹¹⁵

18. Dhū al-Shara¹¹⁶ was adopted by the Banū Ḥarīth b. Yashkur b. Mubashshir¹¹⁷ of the Azd. According to Ryckmans, it was originally worshipped by the Nabatean and Aramaen.¹¹⁸ One of the Ghaṭārīf¹¹⁹ referred to it:

إذن لحللنا حول ما دون ذى الشرى و شج العدى منا خميس عرمرم!

We would descend upon the region surrounding Dhu-l-Shara,
And our mighty army would then smite the foe.¹²⁰

19. Al-Uqaysir was an image set up by the Lakhm, the Judhām, the ‘Āmila, and the Ghaṭafān.¹²¹ It stood in the hills of Syria. Zuhayr b. Abī Sulmā mentioned it in one of his verses saying:

حلفت بأنصاب الأقيصر جامدا و ما سحفت فيه المعاديم و القمل!

I swore by the baetyls of al-Uqaysir a solemn oath,

¹¹⁵ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 24; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 33. Cf. Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīrah*, 254. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 318, with slightly different ending of the first line: *tuladika* instead of *‘ibādika*.

¹¹⁶ Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 17; Ryckmans, *Les Noms* I, 9. This was the chief god of the Nabataens. Its chief sanctuary was in Petra, where a large, black, quadrangular unhewn stone was dedicated to it in a temple. See also F. Buhl, "Dhu-al-Sharā," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam* II, 1st edition (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1913): 965-66; Alexander B. W. Kennedy, *Petra, Its History and Monuments* (London, 1925) 35, 41, 57, 73, 76, 77; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 48-51.

¹¹⁷ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 300; where Yashkur is the brother of Mubashir.

¹¹⁸ Ryckmans, *Les Noms* I, 9.

¹¹⁹ The name under which the ‘Āmir b. Mubashshir were known.

¹²⁰ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 24; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 33.

¹²¹ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 164, 167, 313, 225; al-Hamdānī, *Sifāh*, 129, 132; Wellhausen, *Reste Arabischen*, 62-64; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 16-17. See also G. L. Della Vida, "al-Ukaisir," *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 33-34.

Where the foreparts of the heads and the lice are shaven.¹²²

Rabī' b. Dabū' al-Fazārī praised it in his verse saying:

فإننى و الذى نغم الأنام له حول الأقيصر، و تهليل!

By him to whom the melodies of mankind rise,
And round al-Uqayṣir men sing his praise and glory.¹²³

Another poet who mentioned al-Uqayṣir was al-Shanfarā al-Azdī, a confederate of the Banū Fahm who said:

و إن أمراً أجار عمرا و رهطه على، و أثواب الأقيصر! يعنف.

By the (honored) garments of al-Uqaysir!
One who hath come to the aid of 'Amr and his friends reproacheth me.¹²⁴

20. Nuhm belonged to the Muzayna. Its was looked after by Khusa'ī b. 'Abd Nuhm of the Muzayna of Banū 'Adā'.¹²⁵ Later when he was informed about Muḥammad's mission, he destroyed the idol and cursed it saying:

ذهبت إلى نهم لأذبح عنده غتيرة نسك، الذى كنت افعل.

فقلت لفسى حين راجفت عفلها: أهذا إله أيكم ليس يعقل.

أبيت، فدينى اليوم دين محمد، إله السماء الماجد المتفضل.

I went to Nuhm to offer unto it
A sacrifice of devotion, as I was wont to do.
But on the second thought I said to myself,
'This is but a mute god, dumb and void of wit?'
I refused to sacrifice; from this day my faith is that of Muḥammad

¹²² Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 24; *Book of Idols*, 33; trans. Faris.

¹²³ Ibid; cf. al-Isfahānī, *al-Aghānī* VIII, 72, XIX, 99.

¹²⁴ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 25; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 34. Cf. Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* XXI, 134-143, 141; Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 162.

¹²⁵ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqaq*, 111; cf. Ryckmans *Les Religions*, 17-18; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 57-58. See also *Lisān al-Arab*, entry 'dy.

(Servant of) the great God of Heaven, the Excellent (Lord).¹²⁶

Umayya b. al-Askar also said:

إذا لقيت راعيين في غنم أسيدين يحلفان بنهم

بينهما أشلاء لحم مقتسم، فامض، و لا يأخذك باللحم الغرم!

When thou meetest two black shepherds with their sheep,
Solemnly swearing by Nuhm,
With shreds of flesh between them divided,
Go thy way; let not thy gluttony prevail.¹²⁷

21. 'Ā'im was the idol of the Azd of al-Sarāh.¹²⁸ Zayd al-Khayr or Zayd al-Khayl

wrote the following verse about it:

تخبر من لا قيت أن قد هزمتهم، و لم تدرك ما سيماهم، لا، وعاشم!

Thou wouldst tell those whom thou wouldst meet that I have defeated them,
Though thou wouldst not know their mark, nay, by 'Ā'im.¹²⁹

22. Su'ayr was the idol of the 'Anaza.¹³⁰ It was reported that one day Ja'far b. Abī

Khalās al-Kalbī, riding his camels passed Su'ayr not long after the 'Anaza had
offered it their animal victims. His camels thereupon fled away at the smell of
fresh blood spilled around the idol.¹³¹ Of this Ja'far said:

¹²⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 25; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 34.

¹²⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 25; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 35. Cf. Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* XVIII, 156, 163.

¹²⁸ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 35; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 66; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 35.

¹²⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 35; *Book of Idols*, 35; trans. Faris. Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* XVI, 57, where the last word of the second hemistich reads *wa-l-'amā'imu*, which consequently changes the meaning into 'turbans.'

¹³⁰ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 194; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* has Sa'ir, while *Tāj al-'Arūs* has Su'ayr. See also Wellhausen, *Reste*, 61; cf. Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 35.

¹³¹ In *Buldān* III, 94, the name given is Ja'far b. Khalās al-Kalbī; in the "Jamharah", *Escorial*, folio 210r-v, it is given as Ja'far b. Abī al-Jallās.

حول السعير تزوره أبنا يقدم

نفرت قلوصى من عتائر صرعت

ما إن يحير إليهم بتكلم

و جموع يذكر مهطعين جنابه

My young camels were startled by the blood of sacrifice
Offered around Su'ayr whither Yaqum and Yadhkur¹³² go
On pilgrimage, and stand before it in fear and awe,
Motionless and silent, awaiting its oracular voice.¹³³

23. The Banū al-Harīth b. Ka'b of Najrān had a house that they usually venerated and called the Ka'ba,¹³⁴ mentioned by A'sha in one of his odes:

(To visit) the Ka'ba of Najrān is an order incumbent upon you;
(You would not be released therefrom) until you dismount in front of its gates.
There we would visit Yazīd, 'Abd Manāt, and Qays—in truth,
they are the best of its lords.¹³⁵

Some say that it was not intended for worship, but was merely a hall, meeting house, or perhaps assembly place for the tribe. However, Ibn al-Kalbī assumes that there was no such house since none of the Harīth had ever mentioned it in their poetry.¹³⁶ I presume there was a celebrated house or hall or place which was highly respected by the Harīth which they themselves called the 'Ka'ba' but only metaphorically. A'sha however describes their attitude towards this place as being the same as that displayed by the Arabs towards the Ka'ba in Mecca.

24. Another Ka'ba, also known as Dhū al-Ka'abāt belonged to the Bakr and the

¹³² Abū Mundhir said that Yaqum and Yadhkur were the sons of 'Anaza. See also Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 194; *Sifāh*, 172.

¹³³ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 36; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 35.

¹³⁴ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 155; cf. Al-Ḥamdānī, *Sifāh*, 83-86, and 127; Yaqut, *Buldān* II, 703-704 and IV, 751, 759; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212.

¹³⁵ Ibn Quṭayba, *al-Shi'r*, 135-143; *al-Aghānī* VIII, 77-87. See also *Diwān al-A'sha* (London, 1928) ed. Rudolf Geyer, 122; cf. *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 39.

Taghlib; these were the sons of Wā'il and 'Iyād respectively in Sindād. It was located in the lower part of the *sawād* of Kuffa, north of Najrān,¹³⁷ the region between Kūffa and Baṣra. A'sha of the Banū Qays b. Tha'laba composed the following verse about it:

Between al-Khawarnaq and al-Sadīr and Bāriq
And the temple Dhū al-Ka'abāt of Sindād.¹³⁸

This was the Ka'ba mentioned by al-Aswad b. Ya'fur in one of his odes. Nor was this house a place of worship, but rather a celebrated edifice, as al-Aswad explained.¹³⁹

25. Many people bore names in combination with 'Abd which may or may not have referred to an idol, such as 'Abd Yafīl, 'Abd Ghanm, and 'Abd Kulāl.¹⁴⁰ In addition, according to Hishām b. Muḥammad Abū Mundhir, the Quraysh had another idol called Manāf.¹⁴¹ This explains the name borne by 'Abd Manāf among them. However, it is not known where and when the idol was erected or by whom. It was reported that menstruating women were prohibited from

¹³⁶ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Asnām*, 28; *Book of Idols*, 38-39.

¹³⁷ Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, 285; al-Ḥamdānī, *Sifāh*, 8, 45, 45ff., and 176; Yaqut, *Buldān* I, 171, 231, and 636-653, III, 164-165, and IV 322-327; Ibn Quṭayba, *al-Shi'r*, 134-135; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212; Ibn Ḥabīb; *Muḥabbar*, 217; cf. *Book of Idols*, 39.

¹³⁸ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, trans. Guillaume, 39. He cried out this verse when his father was murdered, and he sought to avenge him. He went to Dhu-al-Khalasa and shuffled the divination arrows, but the result was a message forbidding him to seek revenge. Some said that the man was Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujr al-Kindi; Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghani* VIII, 70. For the life of Imru' al-Qays, see *ibid*.

¹³⁹ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Book of Idols*, 39.

¹⁴⁰ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 19; *Idols*, 25; Ryckmans, *Les Religions*, 32, 111, 175, 267.

¹⁴¹ Ryckmans, *Les Religion*, 17; *Les Noms* I, 18; Wellhausen, *Reste*, 56-57.

approaching the idol as mentioned by Bal'ā' b. Qays b. 'Abd Allāh b. Ya'mar al-Shuddakh in the following verse:

و قرن قد تركت الطير منه كمعتنز العوارك من مناف.

A matchless peer. I no longer augur at its shrine,
But stay away as the menstruating women stand afar off from Manāf.¹⁴²

Besides these idols and holy places, the pagan Meccans worshipped four animals as divine, and did not eat nor mount them: these were Sā'iba, Baḥīra, Waṣīla, and Ḥāmī.¹⁴³ Sā'iba was a she-camel which gave birth to ten fillies without an intervening colt. She was set free, and was never ridden. Her hair was never shorn, and only a guest was allowed to drink her milk. When she gave birth to a filly afterwards, and its hair was split, it was allowed to go about with its mother, and like its mother was never ridden and was left unshorn; likewise only a guest was allowed to drink of its milk. This filly was called Baḥīra. Waṣīla on the other hand was an ewe which had ten twin ewes in succession without the intervening birth of a male lamb. The last, Ḥāmī, was a stallion who sired ten consecutive fillies without an intervening colt being born. His back was taboo so he was never ridden and his hair was left unshorn. He was allowed to run among the camels and mount them. Beyond that no use was made of him.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb al-Asnām*, 20; *Book of Idols*, 28; trans. Faris. This related to the ancient custom of the Arabs that prohibited menstruating women to come near or touch their idols.

¹⁴³ It is said that, concerning this custom, Allāh revealed the verse: 'Allāh demands neither *Baḥīra*, nor *Sā'iba*, nor *Waṣīla*, nor *Ḥāmī*. The unbelievers invent a lie against Allāh, though most of them do not know it (Qur'ān 5: 103).

¹⁴⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 330-31; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 408-09; cf. Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 40.

B. ALLĀH, THE LORD OF THE GODS

Allāh was already very well-known and was highly respected among the Quraysh before the Islamic mission. It was simply held that Allāh was not the only God. He was associated with other gods and goddesses in both His cult and shrine, as is demonstrated by the pagan *talbiyya* "Here I am, O Allāh, here I am; You have no partner except such a partner as You have; You possess him and all that is his."¹⁴⁵

It seems obvious that Allāh was not merely a God but was widely acknowledged as the highest God, the supreme deity of the entire Meccan pantheon. Moreover, He had achieved this position regardless of whether it was the result of a natural progression toward monotheism, or the growing influence of Judeo-Christianity of the time, or was introduced into Arab culture through commercial exchange from northern Jordan. Nevertheless, evidently of all the Meccan divinities, Allāh alone was never represented by an idol or image.¹⁴⁶ This fact, of course, implies that Allāh was different from others, and could not be represented by any object. This also implies that Allāh was seen as a very high Being, the Holy, to whom it was felt inappropriate to assign a shape. Had he been given a shape, it would have meant that He was not different, but this was not the case.

¹⁴⁵ Al-Azraqi, *Akhbār Makka*, 134; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 33-34. See also Peters, *Muhammad*, 117-18.

¹⁴⁶ Peters, *Muhammad*, 107.

Ibn Ishāq writes in his *Sīrah*¹⁴⁷ about Abraha's¹⁴⁸ invasion of Mecca in the year the birth of the Prophet Muḥammad (571 AD), relating how when Abraha sent his messenger to 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib¹⁴⁹ telling him of his intention to destroy the Ka'ba, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib said: "Allāh knows that we do not wish to fight him for we have not the power to do so. This is Allāh's sanctuary and the temple of His friend Abraham."¹⁵⁰ In other words, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib meant that it was up to Allāh to defend it against Abraha or to let it pass to the enemy because it was His shrine and His sanctuary. If Allāh let Abraha have the Ka'ba, then there was nothing one could do to defend it since one could not oppose His will.

The story goes on to tell of how 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and one of his sons went to al-Mughammis¹⁵¹ to see Abraha and asked him to return his two hundred camels. Dissatisfied at this request Abraha said: "You pleased me much when I saw you; then I was much displeased with you when I heard what you said. Do you wish to talk to me about two hundred camels of yours which I have taken, and say nothing about your religion and the religion of your forefather which I have come to destroy?" 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib replied: "I am the owner of the camels and the House has an owner who will defend it."¹⁵²

¹⁴⁷ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 20-28.

¹⁴⁸ He was an Abyssinian Christian who was sent by his master the Negus to fight Aryaṭ of Yemen. After the death of Aryaṭ he killed Negus *amīr* who saved him from death and proclaimed himself as the leader and the king.

¹⁴⁹ He was the leading *shaykh* of Mecca and the grandfather of the Prophet Muhammad.

¹⁵⁰ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 24.

¹⁵¹ It is also pronounced al-Mughammas, a place about two miles from Mecca.

Realizing his inability to defend the Ka'ba, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ordered his people to withdraw from Mecca and took up a defensive position outside the town. Yet before leaving he took hold of the metal knocker of the House, and with other Quraysh stood beside him praying to Allāh and imploring His help against Abraha's army. He said: "O Allāh, a man protects his dwelling, so protect Yours. Let not their cross and craft tomorrow overcome Thy craft."¹⁵³

Ibn Ishāq reports that the Quraysh were held in great esteem among Arabs for the event of Abraha. The Arabs said that the Quraysh were the people of Allāh, that Allāh fought for them and thwarted the attacks of their enemies. They composed many poems¹⁵⁴ concerning this same occurrence. Let us consider one such by 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ziba'rā b. 'Adī b. Sa'd b. Sahm b. 'Amr b. Huṣayṣ b. Ka'b b. Lu'ayy b. Ghālib b. Fihr:

Withdraw from the vale of Mecca for
From of old its sanctuary has not been violated.
When it was sanctified, Sirius had not been created.
No mighty man has ever attacked it.
Ask the commander of the Abyssinians what he saw.

He who knows what happened will tell the ignorant.
Sixty thousand men returned home,
Nor did their sick recover after their return.
'Ad and Jurhum were (in Mecca) before them.
God has set it above all creatures.¹⁵⁵

Ṣayfī Abū Qays b. 'Āmir al-Aslat b. Jusham b. Wā'il al-Khaṭmī also said:

Rise and pray to your Lord and stroke

¹⁵² Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 24-25.

¹⁵³ Ibid, 25-26.

¹⁵⁴ I prefer to translate *al-bayt* as the House or the Shrine rather than Guillaume's translation 'the temple', as well as referring to translate *allāh* as Allāh rather than as God.

¹⁵⁵ Ibn Ishāq, Life of Muhammad, 28, trans. Guillaume; cf. Ibn Hisham, al-Sira al-Nabawiyya, 1: 72. For Arabic text see Appendix 11.

The corners of this temple between the mountains.
 He gave you a convincing test
 On the day of Abū Yaksūm¹⁵⁶ leader of the squadrons.
 His cavalry was in the plain, his infantry
 Upon the passes of the distant hills.
 When the help of the Lord of the Throne reached you,
 His armies repulsed them, pelting them and covering them with dust.
 Quickly they turned tail in flight, and none
 But a few returned to his people from the army.¹⁵⁷

Referring to the elephant that provided Abraha's transportation, and to the

ḥanīf Umayya b. Abū al-Ṣalt b. Abū Rabī'a, al-Thaqafī said:

The signs of our Lord are illuminating.
 None but infidels doubt them.
 Night and Day were created and all
 Is abundantly plain, its reckoning is fixed.
 Then the merciful Lord revealed the day
 By the sun whose rays are seen everywhere.
 He held the elephant fast in al-Mughammas until
 It sank to the ground as though it were hamstrung.
 Its trunk curled ring-wise; it lay motionless as;
 A boulder flung down from Kabkab's rock.
 Round it Kinda's king, warriors,
 Mighty hawks in war.
 They abandoned it and departed headlong
 All of them; the shank of each one of them was broken.
 In God's sight at the Resurrection every religion
 But the *ḥanīf* is doomed to perdition.¹⁵⁸

On the authority of 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, Yazīd b. Abū Ḥabīb al-Miṣrī from Marthad b. 'Abd Allāh al-Yazanī, from 'Abd Allāh b. Zurayr, al-Ghāfiqī told the story of how Shayba 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib dug the well Zamzam. When he discovered the opening of the well 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib cried '*Allāh Akbar*', showing his great pleasure and amazement. The Quraysh disputed 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's claim to this

¹⁵⁶ That was Abraha.

¹⁵⁷ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 29, trans. Guillaume; cf. Ibn Hisham, *al Sira al-Nabawiyya*, 1: 73. For Arabic text see Appendix 12.

¹⁵⁸ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 29-30; cf. Ibn Hisham, *al Sira al-Nabawiyya*, 1: 74-75. For Arabic text see Appendix 13.

discovery, saying that they also had a right to it. At last they agreed to seek out a woman diviner of the Banū Sa'd Hudhaym, who lived in the uplands of Syria. On the way 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib's company ran out of water, but the others refused to give them any for fear that they too would die of thirst. In his desperation, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib told his companions that each should dig a hole for himself so that in the event that one of them died, his companions could thrust him into it and bury him, and that even if the last of them had no one to bury him, it was better that one man died unburied than the whole. Then suddenly reversing his decision, 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib rose and urged his companions to mount their horses to search the country around them for water. Miraculously, at that very moment fresh water began to flow from beneath his feet. Instantly, he cried '*Allāh Akbar*'. From that time on the Quraysh never disputed his claim to Zamzam.¹⁵⁹

It was said that when 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib was digging Zamzam, the Quraysh came to prevent him from doing so. He vowed that if he had ten sons who could protect him from the Quraysh, he would sacrifice one of them. Afterwards he did have ten sons, whom one day he adjudged mature enough to hear about his vow. He gathered them together and told them about it, and then in accordance with Quraysh custom, he asked his sons to write their names on arrows and had somebody cast them for him. Of all his sons, 'Abd Allāh, the youngest, was his favorite, so he prayed that he above all should escape this casting of lots, but addressed this prayer to Allāh, and not to other gods such as Hubal, etc.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ Ibn Ishāq, *Life of Muhammad*, 62-63; cf. Ibn Hishām *al-Sira al-Nabawiyya*, 166-67.

¹⁶⁰ Ibn Ishāq, *Ibid*, 66-68.

Moreover, when the Prophet Muḥammad was born, ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib thanked and prayed to Allāh, not to Hubal or others.¹⁶¹

Although given to worshipping idols and images, the Meccans nevertheless swore oaths in the name of Allāh. For instance, when her husband told Ḥalīma, daughter of Abū Dhu’ayb of Banū Sa’d b. Bakr, the Prophet Muḥammad’s foster mother, that she had taken in a blessed creature, she said: “By Allāh, I hope so.” When her fellow caravaners sensed that something significant had happened to her and her family, they said: “By Allāh, an unusual thing has happened.”¹⁶² It is alleged that when the Christian monk of Buṣrā known as Baḥīra showed hospitality to the Quraysh caravan, which included Abū Ṭālib and his nephew the young Muḥammad—something he had never done before—one of them said: “By Allāh, Baḥīrā! Something extraordinary has happened today; you used not to treat us so, and we have often passed by you. What has befallen you today?”¹⁶³

The Arabs declared the supremacy of Allāh over their gods and goddesses, even over their principal deities Hubal, al-Lāt, al-‘Uzzā and Manāt, through their *talbiyyas*. There is no doubt as to the genuineness of their acknowledgement of Allāh as the Lord of the Ka’ba and even as superior to other divinities, a fact clearly remarked by Kister in his article on *labbayka* where he says that “this may

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 70.

¹⁶² Ibid, 71.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 79-81. Baḥīrā did this because he saw how a cloud overshadowed a young man among the people, i.e. Muḥammad. When they stopped in the shadow of a tree near his cell, the cloud overshadowed the trees, and its branches were bending and dropping over the young man until he was in the shadow beneath it. Along with his knowledge, such a miracle happened only to a messenger from God.

be quite a faithful exposition of their belief."¹⁶⁴ Besides many records show that the Arabs did have genuine affection for the Mecca sanctuary, particularly the Ka'ba, and did perform Hajj and 'umra every year. They also invoked Allāh to protect them from enemies, and against those who violated the sanctity of the Ka'ba and the treaty of peace of the holy months of the Hajj.

Further examination of the *talbiyya* may shed some light on important aspects of this ritual utterance, and particularly, what ideas the pagan Arabs held regarding Allāh. The *talbiyya* of Ḥums, a group closely connected to the Ka'ba which enjoyed a special, privileged existence among the Arabs, was well known for its association with Allāh and other idols, and its religious duties to the Ka'ba during the Hajj season. The *talbiyyas* of other tribes were usually attributed to the Ḥums as well as to their gods.¹⁶⁵

In their *talbiyya* the Asad called Allāh the One and the Subduer, the Lord to whom every creature asks for blessing and forgiveness, *al-wāḥid al-qahhār wa-al-rabb al-ṣamad*, and refused to worship any idol. Then they described themselves as the faithful, the generous, the strong, the protectors of the weak and needy, the wealthy, and the great in number.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁴ Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 36.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 36-37; Muqāṭil, *Tafsīr*, 23b, no. 41. See also H. A. R. Gibb, "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia," *Harvard Theological Review* (1962) 275-76.

¹⁶⁶ Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 364, 365; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 1: 212, Muqāṭil, *Tafsīr*, 23a, no. 35; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 38. The very phrase occurs in the Qur'ān 112: 2, which is one of the attributes of Allāh as 'the Lord to whom people direct themselves in their needs'.

The Ash'ariyyūn and 'Akk uttered the *talbiyya* in *saj'* and *rajaz* form, which is typical of Yemeni poetry. In their *talbiyya* they declared that they had come to the magnificent House of Mecca to perform ḥajj for the sake of *al-Raḥmān* the Gracious; and admitted that Allāh knows the sins of sinners, and forgives them at once because no one is free from making mistakes.¹⁶⁷ On the authority of Abū Burda, the son Abū Mūsā al-Ash'ārī, we learn that when 'Umar asked him about the *talbiyya* of the Ash'ariyyūn, Abū Burda quoted the following verse:

اللهم هذا واحد إنما اطهه الله وقد اثما إن تغفر اللهم¹⁶⁸

The Azd declared Allāh as *rabb al-arbāb* (the Lord of lords), who distinguishes between sinners and good-doers; they said that had it not been for Him, they would never have made *sa'y* (the quick walk) between Ṣafā and Marwā, nor would they have given charity, chanted the *talbiyya* and joined the Quraysh in shaving their heads. With no humble tone they boasted that if God had not enlightened them,

¹⁶⁷ Husain, All India Oriental Conference, 365; Ya'qūbī, Tārīkh, 213.

¹⁶⁸ Ibn Manẓūr records the utterance of Abū Khirāsh al-Hudhali during the *sa'y*:

اللهم هذا خامس إن تما ; أتمه الله و قد أتما ; إن تغفر اللهم تغفر جما ; و أي عبد لك لا ألما

Ibn Manẓūr in Tāj 'l-Aruz as well as the Kitāb al-Aghānī, ascribe the latter to Umayya b. Abī al-Ṣalt. Ibn al-Kalbī states, on the other hand, that the verse was uttered by al-Dayyān, i.e., the ancestor of the Banū Dayyān, during prayers. However, Husayn and Muqātil declare it to be the *talbiyya* of the Ash'ariyyūn. See Muqatīl, Tafsīr, 24a, no.51, Husayn, Kitāb al-Islāh, p.365, no.3; al-Suyūṭī, Sharḥ Shawāhid al-Mughnī (Damascus, 1386/1966) ed. al-Shinqīṭī, rev. Aḥmad Zāfir Kūjan, 625, no. 388 (with the variant in the first hemistich: *hādha rābi'un*). Aḥmad b. Ḥamdān Abū Ḥatim al-Rāzī, Kitāb al-Islāh II (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1958) ed. Husayn al-Ḥamdānī, 15; cf. Kister, Society, 42-43. According to Abū al-A'lā' al-Ma'ārī, the *talbiyya* may be been uttered in a form of the *qāṣida* metres. However, most of them are in form of *saj'* or *rajaz*. Goldziher's analysis shows that *saj'* and *rajaz* are used in invocations, curses, wisdom sayings, and in oracular utterances. Gibb says that *saj'* and *rajaz* have connection with the style of the Qur'ān. He assumes it as the established style of religious discourse in the period of the Jāhiliyya (Arabic Literature, Oxford 1963, 14-15, 34-35; and "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia" Harvard Theological Review, 55 (1962): 269-80. "Tradition stresses the efficacy of *saj'* invocations uttered in the ḥaram of Mecca in the period of the Jāhiliya and directed against wrong-doers and oppressors" (Kister, Society, 41-

they would never have done ḥajj to the House either.¹⁶⁹

The Daus declared Allāh to be a *rabb al-aṣnām* (the Lord of the idols),¹⁷⁰ while the Ghassān invoked Allāh on behalf of their kings, addressing Him as the Lord of the Ghassān, and expressed the hardship of their journey on foot and horseback.¹⁷¹ Similarly the Rabī'a addressed Allāh as the Lord of Rabī'a al-Qash'am,¹⁷² saying that they meant to answer His call upon Ḥajj sincerely and obediently. Kister, however, mentions four other versions of the *talbiyya* of Rabī'a. The First begins *لَبَّيْكَ حَجًّا حَقًّا تَعْبَادًا وَرَقًا لَبَّيْكَ labbayka ḥajjan ḥaqqan ta'abbudan wa riqqan,*¹⁷³ a confirmation that they did not trade during the Ḥajj season. The second contains some additional phrases describing the rush to Mecca to join the Quraysh in shaving their heads as the sign of having completed the ḥajj ceremonial rites. Yet one version reflects a divergence by the Bakr b. Wā'il on behalf of Rabī'a who left their idols protected and safe in order to show their obedience and servitude to Allāh, the God who was worshipped neither by Christians nor by Jews.¹⁷⁴ The last version adds that the Rabī'a came to Mecca with the pure intention to worship, not

42).

¹⁶⁹ Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 365; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 213.

¹⁷⁰ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, no. 56; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 36.

¹⁷¹ Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 213; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 36; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 24a, no. 54.

¹⁷² Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 367; Ibn Hishām, *Kitāb al-Tijān* (Hyderabad, 1347) 219; and see on *qash'am* as the sobriquet of Rabī'a, s. v. q sh 'm; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 212. Cf. Kister, "Labbayka," *Society*, 37.

¹⁷³ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 1: 100

¹⁷⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Ibid*; Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 36.

to ask for a gift nor for economic reasons.¹⁷⁵ Similar indications recur in the *talbiyyas* of others, such as of the Azd and Banū Wabara who worshipped Sā'ida.¹⁷⁶

The Ḥimyar and Hamdān addressed Allāh on behalf of their kings and rulers (*'an al-mulūk wa-al-aqwā*), who treated their kinsmen justly, and avoided shameful acts of wickedness. In return they promised humble submission and obedience to Allāh, the God of mankind and the Praiseworthy (*al-Ḥamīd*).¹⁷⁷

Although the Arabs spoke of their servitude and devotion to God, it was only in rare cases that they addressed Him in a humble and gentle tone. For example, the Judhām addressing Allāh as the God of the idols (*ilāh al-aṣṇām*), and the Gracious (*al-Raḥmān*) prided themselves on their royal descent, and on possessing forbearing minds (*ḥalīm*).¹⁷⁸

The Jurhum, who were no longer extant by the time of the coming of Islam, were reported to have two different of *talbiyyas*. The firstly, a short one, which was identified as the *talbiyya* of Daws and Khuza'a—the worshippers of Dhū al-Kaffayn; these claimed themselves to be the servants of Allāh and the first of mankind to take Him as Guidance.¹⁷⁹ The second and longer one had some

¹⁷⁵ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 22, no. 4; cf. *LA*, s.v. r q ḥ: some people used to utter in their *talbiyya* in the period of the Jāhiliyya: *ji'nāka li-l-naṣāḥa wa lam na'ti li-l-raqāḥa*. Kister, 'Labbayka,' in *Society*, 36.

¹⁷⁶ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 22b, no. 23, 23b, no. 36, 39, 44; Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, 313.

¹⁷⁷ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 23b, no. 43; Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 39.

¹⁷⁸ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, no. 52; com. the fragmentary *talbiyya* in al-Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*; cf. Kister, *Society*.

¹⁷⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 314-15.

additional notes saying that the sanctuary of Ḥarām was a new found property for others, while for them it was an inheritance from Allāh because they were the first people in His land, and they caused it to flourish. Hence, to be deprived of Him was really something they could not bear.¹⁸⁰ They even prided themselves being the first to come to Allāh's meeting place, and to prevent anyone from violating and attacking the cult of the sanctity of Ḥarām.¹⁸¹

People in the Ḥadramawt, Kinda and Sakūn referred to Allāh as the supreme God, superior to their gods and goddesses. So we see in their *talbiyyas* that besides associating their gods and goddesses with Allāh, they declared that it was His decision whether to destroy the former because they were His.¹⁸² Since He was the Wise One (*al-Ḥakīm*), however, He would leave them alone.¹⁸³ The Qays 'Aylān presented themselves and their idols as humbly submissive to *al-Raḥmān*, and came sincerely to the *Dayyān* on foot and horseback, leaving their property and family behind.¹⁸⁴ In addition they complained about their animosities with Bakr b. Wa.'il whom they accused of having come between them and Allāh, making their journey during the ḥajj unsafe, and publicly exposed their disbelief in Him. They implied

¹⁸⁰ Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 40;

¹⁸¹ Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 366; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 1:212; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 22a, no. 6, 23a, no. 30; al-Ya'qūbī, *op.cit.*, I, 296; al-Baghdādī, *Khizānat al-Adāb* II, 246, sup.; comp. Ibn Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, 314. About Jurhum see W.M. Watt, "Djurhum" *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden: E.J. Brill). Cf. Kister, 'Labbayka,' in *Society*, 40.

¹⁸² *Buldan* IV, 769.

¹⁸³ Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 366; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 1:213; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 24a, no. 53; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 38.

¹⁸⁴ Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 366; Ya'qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 1:213; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 23b, no. 37; comp. the *talbiyya* of 'Akk and the Ash'ariyyūn : *hajjun li-l-Raḥmān, dhallat lahu l-aṣnām*.

that if it were not for the Bakr, people would hurry to performed the ḥajj.¹⁸⁵ Similarly, the Abū Qays tribe—the worshippers of Dhū al-Lība, invoked Allāh that He might turn Muḍar away from them, make their journey safe, and protect them from the lords of Hajar.¹⁸⁶ The Thaḳīf asked forgiveness for their sins, obediently yielding their goddesses al-Lāt and al-‘Uzzā to Allāh, and then urged Him to forgive them as well.¹⁸⁷ The Tamīm declared Allāh to be the Creator to whom they offered prayer and invocation (لربها دعاء وأخلصت wa *akhlaṣat li rabbiḥā du‘ā’aha*).¹⁸⁸

The Banū Najrān, preceded by Kurz b. ‘Alqama, uttered the following *rajaz* when they came to Medina to meet the Prophet:¹⁸⁹

إليك تعدو قلعا ودينها معتردا في بطنها جنينها مخالفنا دين النصراني دينها

It is important to note that these *rajaz* verses are typical of Yemenī poetry, which is especially true of the *talbiyyas* of the Asad and Ghatafān.¹⁹⁰ Yet these *rajaz* are among Jāhilī material adopted as Muslim ritual invocations. For example, according to several traditions ‘Umar used to recite these verses during his ḥajj.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁵ Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 45.

¹⁸⁶ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 314; cf. Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 45.

¹⁸⁷ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 1:212; Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 366; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 24a, no. 48; cf. Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 36.

¹⁸⁸ Ya‘qūbī, *Tārīkh*, 1:212; Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 23a, no. 33; cf. Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 38. Comp. Husain, *All India Oriental Conference*, 366.

¹⁸⁹ Ibn Hajar, *al-Isāba*, V, 586, no. 7403; al-Kalā‘ī, *al-Ikhtifā*, 1: 259; cf. Kister, “Labbayka,” in *Society*, 44.

¹⁹⁰ Muqātil, *Tafsīr*, 22a, no.8.

¹⁹¹ Al-Bayhaqi, *al-Sunan al-Kubrā*, V, 126; al-Bakrī, *Mu‘jam mā ista‘jam* (Cairo, 1368/1966) ed.

Also, some say that the Prophet himself used to utter them during his *ifāda* from 'Arafat.¹⁹²

Yet the *talbiyya* of Adam is perhaps unique and slightly different from the rest of those preserved from the Jāhili period. It describes the creation of Adam as the magnificent craftsmanship of Allāh Himself, for which they were very grateful, and then declares Him to be the Lord of the Ka'ba.¹⁹³ Apparently, the genuineness of this *talbiyya* is disputed by scholars who say that it is based on the Islamic concept of the first creation of humankind, namely Adam, and was only adapted to the Jāhili age in order to establish a connection with the Islamic.¹⁹⁴

This discussion of the variety of the *talbiyyas* may lead us to a better understanding of the religious ideas held by the pre-Islamic Arabs. They obviously had gods and goddesses they favored beside Allāh, and places in which to worship them. They also had the custom of sharing, as a tribal confederation, gods and goddesses with their allies and neighbors. Nevertheless they believed in a supreme

Mustafā al-Saqā, 1191inf.-1192; Abū Shayba, *al-Musannaf* IV (Hyderabad 1386/1966) ed. 'Abd al-Khāliq al-Afghānī, 81; 'Alī b. Abū Bakr Nur al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id* III (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabi, 1982), 256; al-Muttaqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-Ummal* V (Hyderabad: Osmania Oriental Pub. Bureau, 1945-1975) 116, no.866, 111, no. 837 (with addition: *wa ayyu 'abdin laka lā alammā*); Muhibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, *al-Qirā'*, 414; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, s.v. *wdn*; cf. al-Fākihī, *Tārīkh Makkah*, fol. 531a; Abū 'Ubayda, *Majāz al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1382/1962) ed. F. Sezgin, II, 249, no. 898; Murtaḍā al-Zābidī, *Ithāf al-Sāda al-Muttaqīn* IV (Cairo: Dār al-Ma'arif, 1311) 386.

¹⁹² Ibn 'Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, s.v. *wdn*; Muhibb al-Dīn al-Ṭabarī, *al-Qirā'*, 414, Nūr al-Dīn al-Haythamī, *op.cit.*, III, 156: cf. Kister, *Society and Religion*, 44.

¹⁹³ Al-Zurqānī, *Sharh Mawahibb al-Laduniyya* (Cairo, 1327) IV, 13-14; Ibn Kāthīr, *al-Sīrah al-Nabawiyya* IV (Cairo, 1385/1966) ed. Mustafā 'Abd al-Wāhid, 88; 'Alī b. Burhān al-Dīn, *al-Insā al-Uyūn : al-Sīra al-Halabiyya* III (Cairo, 1382/1962) 251. It is recorded that the Banū Tamīm and Rabī'a used to rally in al-Muḥassab and leave according to an established order so as to avoid clashes among them. See also al-Fākihī, *Tārīkh Makkah*, fol. 481b; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 44.

¹⁹⁴ Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 45-46.

God, whom they called Allāh and acknowledged to be the Owner of the Ka'ba, as shown in a verse uttered by Qays b. Munqidh b. 'Ubayd b. Ḍaṭīr¹⁹⁵ b. Ḥubshiyya b. Salūl al-Khuzā'i¹⁹⁶ (7th AD):

وإلا فأنصاب يسرن بغيب

تلينا ببيت الله أول حلفة

We swore first by the House of Allāh,
And failing that, by the baetyls which in al-Ghabghab stand.¹⁹⁷

Thus it is conceivable to argue that during the ḥajj liturgical rites, they did indeed direct themselves to this supreme God, despite al-Ya'qūbi's report that, before performing the ḥajj in the Mecca-sanctuary, every tribe would go first to its idols and pray there; they would then start to chant their *talbiyya* until they reached Mecca.¹⁹⁸ Howsoever they may have begun these rituals, yet their *talbiyyas* demonstrate the relation between the tribal deities and the supreme God. From this we might infer that the Jāhiliyya tribes were not purely polytheist, as it is said that these idols were merely means to bring them closer to God. But they were in fact *mushrikūn*, i.e. while accepting and admitting the existence and the supremacy of Allāh, they nevertheless associated their other deities with Him, even as they subordinated them.¹⁹⁹

The *talbiyyas* indeed expose rich veins of religious vocabulary and terminology. The Arabs declared Allāh the supreme God, and attributed to Him

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* XIII, 2, where it was Ḍayāṭit.

¹⁹⁶ He was Qays b. Ḥudābiyya whose mother was of the Ḥudāb of the Kināna, though others said of the Ḥudād of Muḥārib. Cf. Abū al-Faraj, *al-Aghānī* XIII, 2-8; *Ishtiqāq*, 276.

¹⁹⁷ Ibn al-Kalbī, *Kitāb Asnām*, 13; *Book of Idols*, trans. Faris, 19.

¹⁹⁸ Ya'qūbi, *Tārīkh*, I; 212.

divine names like *al-Raḥmān* (the Gracious), *al-Dayyān*, *al-Ma'būd* (the Solely to be worshipped), *al-Ṣamad* (the Self-Sufficient), *al-Qaḥḥār* (the Subduer), *al-Karīm* (the Privileged), *al-Gḥāfir* (the Forgiver), *al-Hād* (the Guider), *al-Ḥalīm* (the Forbearing), and *al-Ḥakīm* (the Wise One). Brockelmann, the first to study the compilations of ancient Arabic poetry and their religious terms, came to the conclusion that various expressions pertaining to the conception of Allāh in the Jāhiliyya were a genuinely Arabic religious perception, and had not been borrowed from Judeo-Christian concepts, nor even from animist beliefs.²⁰⁰ Gibb, another historian who dealt with classical Arab history, reaches the rather similar conclusion that the monotheistic concepts held by the Arabs were their own,²⁰¹ a point which can be found particularly in the compilations of genuine old Arabic forms of *saj'* and *rajaḥ*.

¹⁹⁹ Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 47-48.

²⁰⁰ C. Brockelmann, "Allāh und die Götzen, des Ursprung de Islamischen Monotheismus," *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* 21 (1922) 99-121; cf. Kister, "Labbayka," in *Society*, 48.

²⁰¹ Gibb, "Pre-Islamic Monotheism," in *Harvard Theological Review*, 269-271; idem, *Studies on the Civilization of Islam* (Boston, 1962) ed. S.J. Shaw and W.R. Polk, 192; cf. C. Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York, 1933) 54-56; W.M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953) 158-161.

CONCLUSION

This study has shown that, despite their fundamentally pagan nature, the Arabs before Islam acknowledged the existence of Allah as the Supreme God. Some of them even retained what was believed to be the pure faith of Ishmael, the son of Abraham, who was regarded as the actual founder of their nation. Study of their poetry furthermore indicates how they regarded nature as the creation of the Mighty God, Allah. Undeniably, they admired beauty and pursued leisure, which is natural. Nevertheless, in the end they sought blessings from Allah, not from their gods or goddesses. In some cases, the pagan Arabs abandoned their idols because these did not fulfill their needs.

A concrete link in their belief to the religion of Abraham, the *ḥanīfiyya*, was their admiration of the Ka'ba , the ancient shrine in the middle of Mecca, which Allah ordered Abraham and his son to build in order to indicate the direction of prayer. It is not surprising that they called it *Bayt Allāh*, the House of Allah.

Every year the Arabs went to Mecca to perform the *ḥajj* and *ṭawwāf* around it, crying out their *talbiyya*, examples of which expose a rich religious vocabulary and terminology. Brockelmann, the first to draw attention to this body of literature, adduced a copious body of references to Allah and Raḥmān in *Jāhili* poetry. He also pointed out the various expressions of the concept of Allah in the *Jāhiliyya*: God the Creator, the Lord of the creatures, the Omnipotent, the God who punishes and grants rewards, all of which explain why He must be feared, revered, and praised. Brockelmann also suggests that expressions like *ḥamd*,

khashya, *hudā*, and *taqwā*, which occur in *Jāhili* poetry, point to a kind of religious perception of a High God. Admitting the existence of Judeo-Christianity in Arabia, he nevertheless rejects the assumption that the concept of Allah was an idea borrowed either from one of these revealed religions or from animism.¹ Gibb, who starts from a different point of view and uses different material, reaches a rather similar conclusion, and stresses that the original Arabian concept of monotheism belonged to the Arabs.² These ideas were compiled in the older indigenous Arabic forms of *saj'* and *rajaz*, which expose their belief in Allah, the supreme God of the Ka'ba, even though they associated Him with their gods and goddesses.

Another link between pagan and *hanīfiyya* beliefs was respect for the holy month, the avoidance of any tribal dispute during the *hajj* season, and the absolute ban on fighting in the vicinity of *Bayt Allāh*. The safety implicit in the sanctuary (*al-ḥarām*) of this enclosure was guaranteed at that time.

For a people not given to abstraction, an unseen God was a difficult notion to fathom. It may have been this reason, or even their distance in time from Abraham and Ishmael, which led them to adopt material objects as gods and goddesses, developed slowly but certainly from the original beliefs inherited from their forebears. First they did it to show their gratitude toward the Ka'ba whenever they were away from it. Then, probably, they got used to the practice, and developed it

¹ C. Brockelmann, "Allah und dei Götzen, der Ursprung de islamischen Monotheismus," Archiv für Religionswissenschaft 21 (1922) 99-121; cf. Kister, Society, 48.

² H.A.R. Gibb, "Pre-Islamic Monotheism in Arabia," 269-271; idem, Studies on the Civilization of Islam (Boston, 1962) ed. S.J. Shaw and W.R. Polk, 192; cf. C. Torrey, The Jewish Foundation of

as a custom. Later generations may have regarded these practices as a legitimate part of the religion. Besides, their journeys to pagan countries during trade season tempted them to do so, especially when the wishes of those who served idols seemed always to be granted.

However, the Arabs did indeed maintain their faith in one God above all others. This was Allah, the Lord of the gods and goddesses. He was the One who could not be represented by anything. He was the God of mankind who controlled the fate of every single soul. Therefore, it was He alone that had to be worshipped and feared.

This interpretation, however, is not without its challenges. Watt, for example, says that the pre-Islamic monotheism of the Arabs was not native but had sprung originally from Judeo-Christianity or even from "natural religion." Others cast doubt on the validity of the sources indicating that monotheism existed before Islam saying that Muslims in the early generations grafted Islamic values onto the pre-Islamic verses. If this is so, how then could it be that the verses still retain the same rhyme, and a continual flow of ideas, since we know that ancient Arabic poetry did not cover only one theme at a time but touched on all subjects of a nomadic and tribal nature? Besides, Muslims had no reason to do so, since Islam respects highly the historical record of former generations, to be taken both as a warning and example what may take place if Muslims do not follow the Revelation of Allah. Furthermore, the Qur'ān itself does not condemn religious poetry; on the contrary, it suggests that Muslims express their faith and belief in Allah in any

Islam (new York, 1933) 54-56; W.M. Watt, Muhammad at Mecca (Oxford, 1953) 158-161.

possible way. If poetry were the best gift, why should they not use it? Moreover, a new idea is not easily assimilated by one community without a similar concept already being in existence among them, already forming the core of their identity.

As far as can be shown by Islamic historical records, the main reason that the Quraysh rejected Islam and Muḥammad's mission was economic, and not simply because they believed that the Arabs would desert them by accepting Islamic teachings and abandoning paganism. What they principally feared was a loss of revenue. For it is well-known that the Quraysh were traders, and that they made other Arabs pay for food and safety during the *ḥajj* season. The Quraysh could never contemplate losing their exceptional and advantageous position among their people.

Since their poets enjoyed a privileged reputation in their society, the Quraysh at first claimed that Muḥammad was an extraordinary poet and even a sorcerer. However, his sayings could not be classified into any type of poetry known to them, nor could they be interpreted as the teachings of Judeo-Christianity. Thus it was that the very ideas of their ancestral religion (*ḥanīfiyya*), the religion of Abraham and Ishmael, almost became extinct or known only to a few. So it may then be assumed with some confidence that ancient Arabic poetry bearing on religious subjects was an original expression of pre-Islamic Arab belief in Allah, the supreme God and the God of the Ka'ba, which was the primary teaching of *ḥanīfiyya*.

This is far from the final word on this topic, although it is hoped that it will help to clarify some of the issues involved on both the politico-religious and literary levels.

Appendix 1

حسابكم و الله خير محاسب
عليكم رقبيا غير رب الثواقب
لنا غاية قد يهتدى بالذوائب
تؤمنون، و الاحلام غير عواذب

فبيعوا الحرا ب مملحارب و انذكروا
ولي امرىء فاختار ديننا فلا يكن
اقيموا لنا ديننا حينما فانتم
و أنتم لهذا الناس نور و عصمة

Appendix 2

يلف الصعب منها بالذلول
فيسرنا لمعروف السبيل
و ما دين اليهود بذي شكول
مع الرهبان في جبل الجليل
حينما ديننا عن كل جبل
مكشنة المناكب في الجلول

ارب الناس أنبياء أمت
ارب الناس إنضللنا
فلو لا ربنا كنا يهودا
و لو لا ربنا كنا نصارى
و لكننا خلقنا انخلقنا
نسوق الهدي ترسف مذعنات

Appendix 3

كل نعيم، لا حالة، زائل
قضى عملا، المرء ما عاش أمل
ويبقى إذا ما أخطأته الحياتل
أما يحظك الدهر؟ أمك هابل
لعلك تهديك القرون الأوائل
و دون معد فلتزعك الموائل

الا كل شئ، ما خلا الله، باطل
إذا المرء أسرى ليلة ظن أنه
حياتله مبثوثة بسبيله
قو لا له، إن كان يقسم أمره:
فإن أنت لم تصدقك نفسك فانتنسب
فإن لم تجد من دون عدنان والدا

إذا كشفت عند الإله المحاصل

وكل امرئ يوما سيعلم سميّه

Appendix 4

يا لخير صبحنا ربّي ومسانا

الحمد لله مसानا و مصبحنا

مملوءة طيق الأفاق سلطمانا

رب الحنيفية لم تنفذ حزائنها

ما بعد عاييتنا من رأس محيانا

الا نبني لنا منا فيخيرنا

و بينما تفتني الأولاد أفتانا

بيننا يربيتنا آباؤنا هلكوا

ان سوف يلحق أخرانا بأولنا

و قد علمنا لو ان العلم ينفعنا

Appendix 5

و قولاً رصيا لا يني الدهر باقيا

إلى الله أهدي مدحتي و ثنائيا

إله و لا رب يكون مدائيا

إلى الملك الأعلى الذي ليس فوقه

فإنك لا تخفي من الله خافيا

ألا أيها الإنسان إياك و الردي

فإن سبيل الرشد أصبح باديا

و إياك لا تجعل مع الله غيره

و أنت إلهي ربنا رجائيا

حنانيك إن الجن كانت رجاءهم

أدين إلهها غيرك الله ثانيها

رضيت بك - اللهم - ربا قلن أرى

بعثت إلى موسى رسولا مناديا

و أنت الذي من فضل من رحمة

إلى الله فرعون الذي كان طاغيا

قلت له يا اذهب و هارون فادعوا

بلا وتد، حتى أطمأنت كما هيا

و قولاً له: أنت سويت هذه

بلا عمد، أرفق - إذا - بك

و قولاً له: أنت رفعت هذه

منيرا، إذ ما جنة الليل هاديا
فيصبح ما مست من الأرض ضاحيا
فيصبح منه البقل يهتز رابيا
و في ذاك آيات لمن كان واعيا
و قد بات في أضعاف حوت لياليا
لأكثر - إلا ما غفرت - خطايا
علي، و بارك في بني و ماليا

و قولاً له: أنت سويت وسطها
وقولاً له: من يرسل الشمس غدوة
و قولاً له: من ينبت الحب في الثرى
و يخرج منه حبه في رؤوسه
و أنت بفضل منك نجيت يونس
و إني و لو سبحت بإسمك ربنا
فرب العباد ألق سيبا و رحمة

Appendix 6

أدين إذا تقسمت الأمور
كذلك يفعل الجلد الصبور
و لا صنمي بني عمر و أزور
لنا في الدهر إذ حلمي يسير
و في الأيام يعرفها البصير
كثيرا كان شأنهم الفجور
فيربل منهم الطفل الصغير
كما يتروح الفصن المطير
ليغفر ذنبي الرب الغفور
متى ما تحفظوها لا تبوروا
و للكفار حامية سكير
يلاقوا ما تضيق به الصدور

أربا و احدا، أم ألف رب
عزلت اللات العزى جميعا
فلا العزى أدين و لا ابتنيها
و لا هبلا أدين، و كان ربا
عجبت و في الليالي معجبات
بأن الله قد أفنى رجالا
و أبقى آخرين بغير قوم
و بينا المرء يغتر ثاب يوما
و لكن أعبد الرحمن ربي
فتقوى الله ربكم احفظوها
تري الأبرار دارهم جنان
و خزي في الحياة و إن يموتوا

Appendix 7

له الأرض تحمل صخر انغالا
على الماء، أرسى عيها الجيالا
له المزن تحمل عذبا زالا
أطاعت، فصيت عليها سجالا

و أسلمت و جهي لمن أسلمت
دحاهها فلما رآها استورت
و أسلمت و جهي لمن أسلمت
إذا هي سيقت إلى بلدة

Appendix 8

تجنيت تنورا من النار حاميا
و تركك أوثان الطواغي كما هيا
و لم تك عن توحيد ربك ساهيا
تعلم فيها بالكرامة لاهيا
من الناس جبارا إلى النار هاريا
و لو كان تحت الأرض سبعين واديا

رشدت، وأنعمت ابن عمرو، وإنسا
بدينك ربا ليس رب كمثلته
و إراكك الذين الذي قد طلبته
فأصبحت في دار كريم مقامها
تلاقي خليل الله فيها، و لم تكن
و قد تترك الإنسان رحمة ربه

Appendix 9

رسول الذي فرق السموات من عل،
له عمل في دينه متقبل،
ومن داندنها فل من الخير معزول؛
رسول أتى من عند ذي العرش مرسل،
يجاهد في ذات الإله و يعدل

شهدت بأذن الله أن محمدا
و أن أبا يحيى و يحيى كليهما
و أن التي بالسد من بطن نخلة
و أن الذي عادى اليهود، أين مريم
و أن أبا الأحقاف إن يعزلونه

Appendix 10

ليست بحوب أو تطيف بمأثم	و لقد أردت بأن تقام بنية
راغوا و لاذوا فى جوانب "قودم."	فأبى الذين إذا دعوا لعظيمة
ولوا و أعرض بعضهم كالأبكم	يلحون أن لا يؤمروا فإذا دعوا
فى ذى أقاربه غموض الميسم.	صفح منافعه و يغمض كلمه

Appendix 11

كانت قديما لا يرام حريمها	تنكلوا عن بطن مكة، إنها
إذ لا عزيز من الأنام يرومها	لم تخلق الشعرى ليالي حرمت
و لسوف ينبي الجاهلين عليمها	سائل أمير الجيش عنها اما رأى
و لم يعيش بعد الإياب سقيمها	ستون ألفا لم يؤوبوا أرضهم
و الله من فوق العباد يقيمها	كانت بها عاد و جرهم قبلهم

Appendix 12

بأركان هذا البيت بين الأخشاب	فقوموا فصلوا ربكم، تمسحوا
غداة أبي يكسوم هادي الكتائب	فعندكم منه بلاء مصدق
على الفاذفات في رؤوس المناقب	كتيبته بالسهل تسمى و رجله
جنود المليك بين ساف و حاصب	فلما أتاكم نصر ذى العرش ردهم

فولوا سراعاً هاربين و لم يؤب

إلى أهله ملحبش غير عصائب

Appendix 13

إن آيات ربنا ثاقبات

لا يماري فيهن إلا الكفور

خلق الليل و النهار فكل

مستبين حسابه مقدور

ثم يجلو النهار رب رحيم

بمهارة شعاعها منشور

حبس الغيل بالمغمس، حتى

ظل يحبو كأنه مغفور

لازما حلقة الجران كما

قطر من صخر كبكب محدود

حوله من ملوك كندة أبطا

ل ملاويث في الحروب صفور

خلفوه ثم ابذعروا جميعا

كلهم عظم ساقه مكسور

كل دين يوم القيامة عند

الله إلا دين الحنيفة بور

Appendix 14

Arabic Transliteration

Initial	Medial	Final	Alone		Initial	Medial	Final	Alone	
ب	ب	ب	ب	b	ط	ط	ط	ط	t
ت	ت	ت	ت	t	ظ	ظ	ظ	ظ	z
ث	ث	ث	ث	th	ع	ع	ع	ع	'
ج	ج	ج	ج	j	غ	غ	غ	غ	gh
ح	ح	ح	ح	h	ف	ف	ف	ف	f
خ	خ	خ	خ	kh	ق	ق	ق	ق	q
د			د	d	ك	ك	ك	ك	k
ذ			ذ	dh	ل	ل	ل	ل	l
ر			ر	r	م	م	م	م	m
ز			ز	z	ن	ن	ن	ن	n
س	س	س	س	s	و			و	w
ش	ش	ش	ش	sh	ه	ه	ه	ه	h
ص	ص	ص	ص	s	ي	ي	ي	ي	y
ض	ض	ض	ض	ḍ					

Vowels, diphthongs, etc.:

Vowel short: ا a; ا u; ا i; long: آ ā; و ū; ي ī.

Diphthongs ay; aw alif maqsūrah: ا ي a

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