Poetry as a Source for the History of Early Islam: The case of (al-‐)ʿAbbās b. Mirdās

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Abstract
We expect poetry to be poetical, an expression of emotions, meditative and the like. It seems unusual to even consider the value of poetry as a historical source, but given the characteristics of early Arabic poetry this objective becomes less farfetched: Arab poets used their poetic compositions sometimes as the media of the time, to state publicly their points of view and their deliberations. By studying these we come across motivations, reflections of discussions and considerations of the options that these individuals had. For an era of turmoil like the beginning of Islam we can hardly come closer to the persons who witnessed it than reading and interpreting their own words.

Keywords: Ancient Arabic poetry, early Islam, genesis of religions in context.

In many medieval historical works written and compiled by Arab historians or chroniclers we find the occasional piece of poetry but these fragments are often ignored or—at best—treated as “illustrations” to the text. In the following lines I will try to demonstrate the possible contribution poetry might have to offer to our understanding of the early history of Islam.

One of the first attempts to assess the importance of poetry as a historic source was made by Omar FARRUKH in his Ph.D. thesis Das Bild des Frühislam in der arabischen Dichtung.1 Farrukh points at an interesting passage in the K. al-‐Aghānī:

nahā ʿUmar b. al-‐Khaṭṭāb al-‐nāsa an yunshidā shav’an min munāqadātī l-‐ansārī wa-‐musshrikī Quraysh, wa-‐qāla: ʃ dhālikā shatmu l-‐ḥayyi bi-‐l-‐mayyiti wa-‐taʃdīdu l-‐aghāˈiniz wa-‐qad hadāma llāhu amrā l-‐jāhiliyya bi-‐mā jāˈa min al-‐islāmi 2

“ʿUmar b. al-‐Khaṭṭāb forbade the people to recite something (poetic3) that had to do with the opposition between the Ansār and the polytheists from Quraysh, arguing: that is a case of abuse by a living person towards someone who died and a revival of a grudge. Allah destroyed everything jāhili with what came from Islam.”

1 FARRUKH 1937.
2 FARRUKH 1937: 2; al-‐Iṣfahānī, K. al-‐Aghānī, iv: 140.
3 The verb anshada allows this addition.
The point that Farrukh wants to make is that in early Islam the reading of poetry was suppressed. The quote of ʿUmar’s words seems to indicate that this was done to prevent social uproar or misgivings among the believers in the new faith and their former enemies.

Whatever the purpose of this ban may have been, it shows that poetry was a social factor to be taken seriously, because it could kindle old adversities, so it must have been a threat if it alluded to existing problems. And what is more: it must have conveyed controversial opinions that were still widely held in early Islamic society.

Farrukh could not avoid discussing the authenticity problem of ancient Arabic poetry, but he sides with those who trusted the acumen and sincerity of—for instance—Ibn Hishām, maybe even more so than many of the modern Arabists tend to do. He quotes al-Qālī:

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\text{Al-Zubayr < Muḥammad b. Sallām (al-Jumāhī) < Yahyā b. Saʿīd al-Quṭṭān (d. 813 A.D.):}
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\[
\text{ruwāti l-shi'ri a'qalu min ruwāti l-ḥadīthi li-anna ruwāta l-ḥadīthi yarwūna maṣnū'an kathīran wa-ruwātā l-shi'ri sā'ata yunshidūna l-maṣnū'a yantaqīdūna-hā wa-yaqūlūna: hādhā maṣnū'un. 5}
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“The transmitters of poetry are more sensible than the transmitters of ḥadīth because the latter transmit much that is fabricated whereas the transmitters of poetry, when they recite something fabricated, immediately criticize it and say: this is fabricated.”

Charles J. Lyall seems to be cautious about the use of poetry as a historic source but does not deny the possible usefulness: “But the poems by themselves are not, strictly speaking, history. An Arabian ode hardly ever contains a consecutive narrative of events. … The occurrences touched upon are mentioned … allusively…” He insists that “to utilize these poems” we have to be acquainted with the situation in which they were composed.6

In an article published in 1964 M. Khan tries to prove the credibility and therefore the authenticity of early Islamic akhbār collections like the Sīra of Ibn Hishām, the Maghāzī of al-Wāqiḍī and the Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Saʿd, to name but a few, by evaluating and authenticating the poetry that these works contain.7

In 1968 the same author publishes an article8 that comes much closer to the subject of the present contribution. Its title is “Life of the Prophet at Mecca as reflected in contemporary poetry”. In it Khan discusses several poems by a variety of poets and tries to assess the credibility of these poems in representing the actual historicity of the Prophet’s life and the circumstances of his career. In my opinion the theoretical basis of this article is a valuable contribution to Arabic and Islamic Studies. The main difference between his assessment and the present contribution is that he concentrates on the

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4 Farrukh 1937: 5.
5 Al-Qālī, (Dhayl) al-Amālī, iii: 105.
7 Khan 1964: 249-87.
8 Khan 1968: 75-91.
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biography of one person as mirrored in contemporary poetry whereas my objective is to present an image of an evolving personality in the context of changing social and religious circumstances as expressed in his own words.

AGHA points at the wide use that the akhbāriyyūn made of Arabic verse.9 He goes as far as to suppose that “one may even conjure up an outline … of at least the major contours of early Arab history by solely tapping Arabic verse”. But he argues that before we can work with poetry as a source two obstacles have to be overcome: we need to distinguish between contemporaneous poetry and poetry composed commemorating the event afterwards; secondly, the subject of authenticity has to be discussed for each individual poem.10

Thomas BAUER recently discussed the role that ancient Arabic poetry can play in interpreting the Koran.11 He stresses the importance of intertextuality between the Koranic text and pre-Islamic poetry and arrives at convincing new interpretations of some koranic passages. He discusses the reasons why the “somewhat bulky mass of literature” has hardly been used for interpreting the Koran:12

- the Koran should be understood in itself,
- the authenticity problem of poetry
- and the little that literary texts can contribute to understanding a religious text, a statement similar to the first one mentioned.

The authenticity problem has lost its relevance for the contemporary study of pre- and early Islamic poetry because “[t]he complexity of the corpus puts to rest any notions of falsity, for in order to create such an extensive literature with its own development (sometimes even its own peculiar grammar, syntax and idiom, G.B.) over a considerable time span… it would have been necessary to invent a whole history of literature.”13

If we add the sheer number of verses concerned14 and try to imagine how most of these poems would have been embedded in their own “invented” historical context, the real dimensions of such a fictional undertaking become clear. An operation on this scale would hardly go unnoticed.

BAUER’S argument for establishing an intertextual relationship between the Koran and early Arabic poetry is intriguing and convincing, and it promises relevant results. He hints to one aspect of this poetry that is of particular interest in this context: “… the ways in which pre- and early Islamic society has used this literature for communicative purposes”. One might also say: the poets, the major poets and the lesser ones, confronted with the

10 AGHA 2011: 8.
11 BAUER 2010.
12 BAUER 2010: 700-3.
13 BAUER 2010: 702.
14 The Mawsūʿa Shīʿīyya, a CD-ROM edited by the Cultural Foundation of the U.A.E. in 2003, lists 6,820 poems (= 55,162 verses) for the jāhilī and mukhadrān period. Some verses are of course doubly attributed, but if we add the number of poems/verses that are not presented in edited diwans and are therefore not listed in the Mawsūʿa, this number is easily outweighed.

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emergence of a new religion and the zeal of its Prophet, actually talk back to the Prophet, the members of the Islamic community and society in general, often in poetry.

Still, to identify poetry as a source with historical content and some value for historians is an unusual approach because it seems to contradict our common sense understanding of poetry as an individual expression of emotions. Therefore as a starting point I will use the following digression which will serve as a conceptual reference for the issue at hand.

Digression

In 1830 a number of circumstances led the population in present day Belgium—then part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands—to secede from the northern provinces. This political development provoked a wave of patriotic sentiment in the north and caused King William of Orange to call upon volunteers to serve in his army. This was the beginning of a military campaign called the “Tiendaagse Veldtocht” (Ten Day Campaign) which effectively continued until the next year and was a failure from the beginning: the actual partition of the country had already been decided on a diplomatic level elsewhere in Europe.

Some volunteers were recruited from universities (then called “Hoogeschool” or “Atheneum”). Most of these volunteers were—mirabile dictu—students of Theology. From the University of Groningen about 200 students joined William’s forces as so called “flankeurs”. Their short heroic career consisted mainly of boredom while hanging out in a number of small towns in present day (Flemish and Dutch) Brabant. The casualties were limited. Rumour has it that two of them were injured in a scuffle and one died from falling out of a tree while spying on the enemy.

Without ever confronting the enemy forces the battalion returned to Groningen in September 1831 and King William granted these students a delay for the start of their courses until October 3rd.

During the events leading up to this campaign, when the students left to fight, as well as on their return, a large number of poems were published in the media, also to be recited at various events. From a literary point of view most of these poems have to be assessed as pathetic rubbish. Does this poetry reflect history; can we reconstruct a “past” using these texts?

One of the poets who more or less succeeded in composing reasonably good poetry around these historic developments was B. H. LULofs (1787-1849), professor of Dutch Language and Rhetoric at Groningen University. In a collection of his poetry edited in 1852 we find two poems concerning the Groningen student-volunteers who participated in the Ten Day Campaign, one poem composed on the occasion of their departure and one on their return.

Both poems are composed in stanzas; the first has five stanzas and the second has fifteen. For brevity’s sake we will only have a closer look at the second poem. Its stanzas can be paraphrased as follows:

Stanza 1: Welcome to you, young heroes. Rumour has told us of your courage and loyalty in the hardest of battles. Behold how young and old greet you in awe.

Stanza 2: You defied danger and bitter need, even without food, water and sleep. You never became cowards.

Stanza 3: In the heat of the hard-fought battle when the killing was going on, your courage and your loyalty to King and country did not fail.

Stanza 4: Because of you the Belgians cannot call us cowards. Former grief and misery have been forgotten; we will only die as men.

Stanza 5: Let the virgins bind garlands to the banner from which the enemy fled. Let the banner find its place next to the one that made Galen leave, the banner of the courageous.

Stanza 6: Young heroes! As long as you will live the fatherland will owe you, proud of those who faced death. Future generations will envy you for the occasion to fight for Holland’s right.

Stanza 7: Return to quieter exercises now on the uneasy path to knowledge. First Bellona covered you with bloody bay leaves and now Pallas will adorn you with her olives.

Stanza 8: The garland of scholarship entwined with that of the glory of battle. May Holland’s youth show how it loves the fatherland and that it wants to honour King and Country in peace and in war time.

Stanza 9: We see Europe in tears and in blood. Another people shackled in chains, its neck under a tyrant’s iron foot. Principles fight principles and the truth fights lies and delusions.

Stanza 10: Fortunate is the country in which the people do not fear the ruler and the ruler does not fear the people. Every citizen is safe by law, free from oppression. Honour for the highest and the lowest who deserves it. Order and discipline go hand in hand with rights and freedom.

Stanza 11: You, brave heroes, stay away from mutiny and false freedom. Follow the path of truth to make humanity perfect.

Stanza 12: Humanity goes forward against all odds. Perfection is its ultimate ambition.


17 Ibid., Flankeur-Compagnie (Bij hare terugkomst): 116-20.

18 Bishop Bernhard von Galen of Münster (1606-1678). He besieged the city of Groningen in 1672 but failed to capture it.

19 The Roman goddess of war.

20 This might be an allusion to the Russian-Polish war and the fall of Warsaw between September 6th and 8th, 1831.
Stanza 13: High in heaven there is God who will help his people. Who creates order from chaos and light from darkness. He will be for evermore.

Stanza 14: Welcome once more, brave heroes. You may show the banner that withstood the fire of war. Let maidens attach bay leaf crowns to it. Long live this group of courageous warriors.

Stanza 15: You, two colleagues, who exalted scholarship by war’s glory, worthy the country where the Douzas\(^{21}\) were born. As often as we say your names, we will praise you as scholars and (military) heroes.

The choice for this particular poem is not completely arbitrary: for the purpose of this article we need some parallels to the situation in early Islam that we are going to discuss. These parallel issues are:

- the scale of events is comparable to military campaigns in early Islam;
- when using poetry to report on a military event, we have to at least divide between those who participated and those who did not. B. H. LULOF\(^{S}\) clearly belongs to the latter;
- the situation in which the confrontation occurs should be full of tension and ambitions;
- preferably emotions should run high, or there should be much at stake, at least in the hearts and minds of those who were witnesses.

What does this poem contribute to our understanding of history; to what extent does it reveal a historical reality?

First we find a number of historical data like names and places: It mentions a geographical name (Brabant) and the misery that the volunteers went through. It emphasizes the courage of the troops while under attack (if ever they were) and their effort to save Holland’s national reputation. The scene of the garlands being bound to the banner is a romantic image that introduces the female element, i.e., the maidens who handle these garlands. It also opens the possibility to refer to the earlier distress that the city of Groningen went through under Van Galen and the important role that the old banner had in those days. The stanzas six to eight emphasize the peculiar theme of combining proud scholarship with proven toughness in battle.

Secondly it refers to contemporary circumstances: The stanzas 9-12 draw a sharp contrast between the misery of the political and social situation in Europe at that time and the enlightened leadership and social equilibrium in Holland.

Thirdly it conveys something of the contemporary state of mind: “Praise be to God” is the theme of stanza 13. Stanza 14 repeats the original theme: welcome to the brave heroes. And finally the poet refers to two of his colleagues who apparently went to war alongside the “flankeurs”.

This digression also allows us to construct categories of poets and texts. As for poets we could distinguish four categories:

\(^{21}\) Probably a reference to the family Van der Does from Leiden, famous as scholars and military men.
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1. Witness and not biased
2. Witness and biased
3. Non-witness and not biased
4. Non-witness and biased

If we would classify this poem in terms of Arabic genres it would probably be associated with madīḥ. By its very nature the genre madīḥ seems insignificant as a source for historical research: the poet is most of the times not a witness and is certainly biased.

Although we know from other sources that the above mentioned campaign did actually take place, the value of the poem as a historical document is very limited.

1. The poet himself was a witness only to the exit and the return of the troops. He never actually saw their activity on the battlefield nor did he see the enemy.
2. The poet emphasized not only the grand historic connection (Van Galen—present situation) but also the ideology—generally held—that Holland was attacked in spite of its good intentions and its notable position in terms of justice and democracy.
3. The reference to any historical content or situation mainly concerns the ideological motivation to go to war. The poet is obviously not aware of this “battle” belonging to minor skirmishes in the reshaping of Europe whereas the major decisions about it were made on the level of international diplomacy at that time.

It is not only the apparent clumsiness of the whole operation but also the fact that nothing actually happened that makes the poet a non-witness to a non-event.

The story of ʿAbbās b. Mirdās

As a contrast to this poet I chose to discuss a number of poems by (al-)ʿAbbās b. Mirdās.22 This poet converted in 628 AD (8 AH) and participated in the battle of Ḥunayn in 630 AD. He died under the caliphate of ʿUthmān (644-656); it seems safe to assume that he was born around or a little before 600.23

His career reflects the developments during the early Islamic era: he starts as a bedouin tribal leader of the Sulaym in the Hijaz area and at the end of his life he has become a city dweller in a house either in Basra or in Damascus.

Some of the usual sources do have these data to offer about him:

– Al-Ṭabarî in his Ṭārīkh24 mentions ʿAbbās’s discontent and his complaint to Mohammed about the partition of booty after Ḥunayn. Ṭabarî mentions the decision of the prophet (to allot him more) with the words: “Let him shut up” (iqṭaʿu ʿam-ni lisāna-hū).

22 Whether or not the famous poetess al-Khansāʾ was his mother is under debate. See al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās, Diwān: 10-11.
24 Al-Ṭabarî, Ṭārīkh, ii: 174-5.
In his Kāmil fi ʿl-tūrīkh, Ibn al-Athīr\(^{25}\) is even more concise about the story of the booty and ends with “he (the prophet) gave him until he was satisfied” (fa-aʾrā-hu kāhtā rādiya).

In his Uṣd al-ghāba fi maʿrifat al-ṣahāba the same author elaborates a little. He says that ʿAbbās offered the army of the prophet 300 horsemen (whereas ʿAbbās himself makes it a thousand as we will see). Ibn al-Athīr gives a short version of the booty and cites the prophet: “Go and make him shut up” (idhhabū fa-ʾrūṭāʾuʾ an-nī lisānā-hū); Ibn al-Athīr mentions ʿAbbās’s (pre-Islamic) ban on the drinking of wine\(^{26}\) and the biographical note that he built a house in Damascus towards the end of his life. One ḥadīth is attributed to his son Kināna.

Much more attention is devoted to ʿAbbās b. Mirdās in the Sīra:\(^{27}\) he is mentioned as the poet of a verse praising ʿAkk b. Adnān (I: 8); ‘Amr b. Maʿdikarib addresses ʿAbbās in a verse (II: 200) and in II: 268, n. 4, we find a reference to a verse by ʿAbbās; Ibn Hishām mentions a story about an idol (Dimār) that ʿAbbās inherited from his father. The idol starts to speak about a prophet which motivates ʿAbbās to convert to Islam. Elsewhere in the Sīra\(^{28}\) Ibn Hishām includes nine poems by ʿAbbās in his account of the battle of Ḥunayn. All these poems except one are directly connected with this battle.

Other sources for ʿAbbās are mainly from the collection of ḥadīth literature and are repetitive as to the information we already have.

In the following lines I would like to focus on ʿAbbās, his life and his poetry, during a period which can be called turbulent: between 628 and 631 he has to choose between his loyalty towards either the tribe of Ghātafān or Hawāzin—both Qaysī tribes as well as his own tribe, Sulaym—, nonetheless he decides to convert to Islam, as a consequence he is left by his wife, and he takes part in the battle of Ḥunayn against the Hawāzin and is not happy with the resulting booty which brings him into conflict with the Prophet.

The bet

In his Introduction to the Dīwān of al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās,\(^{29}\) al-JABBŪRĪ mentions a story about a wager between ʿAbbās and a certain Ḥuwayṭib b. ʿAbd al-ʿUzza, who was on his way with the Muslim army to Khaybar. ʿAbbās places a bet that the Jews of Khaybar will prevail against the Prophet, and Ḥuwayṭib in turn puts his bet on the alternative outcome.


\(^{26}\) In one of his poems on the occasion of the Ḥunayn battle we find this verse which might shed doubt on this judgement: humū raʾsu ʿl-ʿadhawwi min ʾahli najdin fa-qatlumū aladhdhu mina al-sharābi— al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās, Dīwān: 48.

\(^{27}\) Ibn Hishām, Sīra, i: 8, 200, 268 n. 4.

\(^{28}\) Ibn Hishām, Sīra, ii: 460-70.

Al-JABBŪRĪ interprets this as a sign of sympathy from 'Abbās for the Jewish inhabitants of Khaybar.

The source for this story—not mentioned by al-JABBŪRĪ—might well be the Kitāb al-Maghāzī by al-Wāqidī. The story runs a bit differently there: Ḥuwayṭib is on his way from the Treaty of Ḥudaybiyya with the Muslim army to Khaybar,31 convinced that the Prophet and the new religion will be victorious “over all humanity”. He meets ‘Abbās and the conversation heads towards a wager between the two: ‘Abbās supposes that the Ghaṭafān (!) will win and Ḥuwayṭib of course places a bet on the Muslim army. The men of Ghaṭafān were hired by the inhabitants of Khaybar to help and defend them. It must have been their abilities in battle and the fact that they outnumbered the Muslims that convinced ‘Abbās and a few others like Ṣafwān b. Umayya and Nawfal b. Mu‘awiya to place this bet.

A number of others back Ḥuwayṭib and they put in a total of 100 camels.32 The bet is on, but at that very moment there is an uproar in the middle of which Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb cries: khashītu wa-l-Lāti ḥayyiza ‘Abbās b. Mirdās, “By al-Lat, this ‘Abbās and his companions are getting on my nerves”. Ṣafwān angrily replies: adrakat-ka l-MN’FYT. I suggest to read this unexplainable word as an error for munāfaga. It would explain Ṣafwān’s astonishment of Abū Sufyān’s mistake to swear by the wrong deity: “Hypocrisy has seized you” or “Now you’re exposing yourself”. Abū Sufyān’s reaction is to turn away in silence (askata Abū Sufyān). The details of this sub-story contribute considerably to the human character of this passage.

Because the Muslim army prevailed ‘Abbās in the end lost one hundred camels with this wager.

His conversion to Islam33

For this subject we have two versions. For narrative reasons I prefer to discuss the first version elsewhere in this contribution. The second version runs like this:

Version 2

From the story of the wager we might conclude that ‘Abbās did not feel as having an alliance with the Muslim community. That means that he probably had not yet converted. But very soon after this he changed his mind and went as far as taking part in the battle of Ḥunayn two years later. So we may assume that the time of his conversion would be somewhere between Khaybar and Ḥunayn. It does not necessarily mean that he took this decision at one point; he may well have taken some time to think it over. This is at least what the following texts suggest:

31 Also referred to as Khayābir, probably because it consisted of a number of Jewish settlements.
32 In this passage the word khumas suggests that they spread the risk over five participants.
33 The story is taken from Aghānī, xiv: 302 ff. See also al-‘Abbās b. Mirdās, Dīwān: 21 ff.
He went to his camels because he wanted to go and see the prophet. He stayed with his camels overnight and in the morning trusted them to his herdsman. He ordered the herdsman to tell anyone asking about him that he went to Yathrib and not to reckon otherwise than that he wanted to go to and stay with the prophet. He mentions his reasons for doing this:

- His paths are clear (fa-inna manāhija sabīli-hī wādihatun).
- The signs of the truth that he brings are clear (aʿlāmu ma yajī'u bi-hī min al-ḥaqqi nayviratun).
- ‘Abbās is impressed by the military success of the prophet in this passage: I do not see any of the Arabs standing up against him (the prophet) against whom he (the prophet) was not rewarded with a superior victory (probably as a result of Khaybar, G.B.) (wa-lā arā aḥadan min al-ʿArabi yansību la-hī ʿāḏara ʿalay-hi l-ẓafara wa-l-ʿulūw).
- I have come to love him (wa-arā-nī qad uṣqi yatʿalay-yā mahabbatun la-hū).
- I would give my life for his to please God (wa-anā bādhilun nafsī dīna nafsi-hī urūdu bi-dhālika ridā ilāḥī l-samāʾī wa-l-ʾardī).

Motivating his decision ‘Abbās says the following poem:

1. Upon my life: on the day that I zealously made Ḍimār accompany the Lord of Eternity.
2. and left the messenger of God while the Aws were around him—they are his helpers and how frightening they are.
3. I was like someone who leaves the wide open plane in his (needless) want for rugged high ground to follow paths into the unknown.
4. So I started to believe in God whose servant I am and I opposed the one who started to want (earthly) kingdoms.
5. I turned my face towards the direction of Mecca, and I followed the blessed one between the Akhshab mountains.
6. A prophet brought us after Jesus a “source” about the truth; in it is a clear statement about him as well (?)
7. A safe keeper of the Furqān the first mediator and the last one sent who answers the angels.
8. The ties of Islam came together after having been broken; he brought them together until he had the rituals set up.
9. I saw you, o best of all creation, in the middle of praiseworthy kinship as a ruler.

34. Aḡānī, xiv: 304.
35. Aḡānī, xiv: 304.
37. For the story about Dimār see later in this article.

10. You surpassed them in glory, generosity and lofty deeds, and to the furthest limit, where hoofs cannot reach.
11. You are the pure one of Quraysh when the sayyids are together in high ranks, desiring exclusive deeds of heroes, without distraction by women.\footnote{This story seems credible: it states a sequence of events and a clear motivation for 'Abbās’s choice to convert to Islam. The poem is in line with his statements mentioned earlier:}

He admits that he made a mistake by not following the prophet;
he interprets this as a personal error (especially because he did not notice the strength of the Aws);
he converts to Islam (apparently with the extra incentive that Islam in a way continues the preaching by Jesus);
and he concludes his poem with mādhī of the prophet.

The poem nonetheless raises a few points that are probably of interest for the study of early Islam:

- In vss. 2 and 4 'Abbās refers to God as “Allāh”; in vs. 1 however it is “rabb al-‘ālamīn”;
- vs. 8 seems to suggest that in 'Abbās’s perception “Islām” already existed; what needed to be done was “re-assemble the ties and get the rituals straight again”

The follow-up

All of a sudden the tone of the narrative becomes factual: 'Abbās offered the Prophet to go ahead of him to Medina (from) where he wanted to go to Mekka in the year of its capture. He made an appointment with the prophet at Qudayd and he (the prophet) said: “You and your people, meet me in Qudayd”. When the prophet went marching to Qudayd he met 'Abbās amidst a thousand of the tribe of Sulaym. About this 'Abbās b. Mirdās says:

1. Who will tell the people that Mohammed the prophet of God, is rightly guided wherever he goes
2. He called on his God and asked Him as the only one for help so he was fully assisted and bestowed upon
3. We travelled by night because we had an appointment with Mohammed at Qudayd, he leads us to a cause that is justified by God

prophet. Of course Mālik is a prominent name in the jāhiliyya, but it also occurs as “master”: qad bittu mālika-hā wa-shāriba riyyatin qabla l-ṣahābi karīmatin bi-sibāʾi-khā (al-Muraqqish al-Akbar, Dīwān: 84) “I stayed the night as her ‘master’ and drinking to my fill before the morning, a lush drinking in her captivity” (but see the commentary on sibāʾ, 84, n. 2).

\footnote{40 Following the commentary in Aghānī, iv: 305, n. 4.}
\footnote{41 al-'Abbās b. Mirdās, Dīwān: 141-3.}
4. They were complaining among us in the early morning until with the morning light, they made out young heroes and a forest of upright spears on our horses with our coats of mail tight and footmen like a surging stream, sturdy.

5. The leaders of the tribe—if you would ask them—are Sulaym and some among them trace their ancestry directly to Sulaym.

6. An army of Anṣār, they will not forsake him, they are obedient, not disobeying whatever he says.

7. If you have chosen Khālid (b. al-Walīd) to be the commander and made him the leader, then he will certainly lead us in an army that is guided by God; you, its commander, will strike with it in truth the one who has sinned.

8. I have sworn a solemn oath to Mohammed and I fulfilled it: a thousand bridled horses.

9. The leaders of the tribe— if you would ask them—are Sulaym and some among them trace their ancestry directly to Sulaym.

10. The prophet of the believers said: “Go forward (attack)!” And we were eager to do so.

11. We spent the night in Nahy al-Mustadīr; we felt no fear but just awe and firmness.

12. We will obey you until all humanity has converted to Islam and until we have all together become people of Yalamlam.

13. The black and white and also chestnut brown horse will get lost in the middle of it (i.e. the crowd there) and the shaykh will not feel at ease until it is marked.

14. We went to attack them like sandgrouses in a row in the morning and we noticed that each one of them was oblivious about his brother.

15. From the morning until we left Ḥunayn in the evening; by that time its waters were streaming with blood.

16. If you wanted you could see from all sides a quick horse and its rider crashing down, his spear broken.

17. The Hawāzin were protecting their herd against us; they always liked to see us failing and depriving.

18. We hit Quraysh, their lean and their fat ones, those who do well to keep silent and those who speak (i.e. all of them).

19. What we experience from them is something I witnessed before and I assisted in it the one who was more cautious.

20. How many days did the best of us meet at Mūsā with tribes of Naṣr and a group of Ibn Aslam.

21. How much vengeance did our swords take, not to mention the spears with which we made blood flow copiously.

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42 Following the commentary of al-JABBūRĪ’s edition it is a mountain where the ḥajj passes on the way from Yemen.

43 I suggest to read: wa-an’ama bifzan bāla-hum fa-takallama and interpret it as a parallel to the ghayth and samīn opposition. But it is a difficult passage.

44 According to the commentary in al-JABBūRĪ’s edition this is a trench of the Banū Rabī’a.
In terms of Arabic “genres” this poem constitutes a mixture of *khabar* and a short *madiḥ* (of the prophet) at the beginning and halfway; towards the end it turns into *fakhr*. How can we classify this poem in terms of its value as a historic source?

- The poet is part and witness of the action.
- He is not impartial.
- The poem refers to persons and places, which allows us to even date it to the year 630 A.D. when the battle of Ḥunayn took place (vs. 16).
- A number of participants in the action are named and their role does not contradict historic data (Muḥammad, Khālid b. al-Walīd, Hawāzin and Quraysh)

If we assess the position and role of the individuals and groups participating in this battle the following image emerges:

- ‘Abbās has become a straightforward follower of the new religion and his relationship with the prophet is one of request and deliver: an army of a thousand men from the tribe of Sulaym in full armour.
- Because the reinforcement army of Sulaym arrived in the dark, some of the other Anšār began to complain, but they were satisfied when they saw the number of troops in daylight.
- For ‘Abbās God is to a certain extent a participant: he guides the army that is led by Mohammed, while Khālid b. al-Walīd acts as a military commander.
- The Anšār were well motivated for their ultimate goal (Islamizing the world) and courageous because they believed in their cause; they just felt awe before the battle, no fear.
- The battle plan is structured: fighters took position in a row.
- A certain amount of rancour motivates at least Sulaym: the Hawāzin had apparently not been the nicest of neighbours.
- And ‘Abbās also has a grudge against Quraysh, so he willingly assists one of the Quraysh, i.e. Mohammed, whom he expects to treat Sulaym better.
- The battle of Ḥunayn was a bloody affair.

Some elements are missing:

- ‘Abbās is proud of his achievement to get 1000 men and horses together, proud to be part of the Anšār, but he leaves the bloody result of the battle uncommented. He might well have expressed pride over the result, but he does not do so.
- He presents his motivation to join the Anšār and to rally his tribe to do the same as an overnight decision. In his autobiographical notes in prose, though, he mentions his past as a polytheist and to a certain extent tries to convey the image of his struggle to become a monotheist. Therefore we can safely assume that his conversion from polytheism to monotheism (Islam) must have been “cooking” for a while.

45 The conversion stories 1 and 2 elsewhere in this article.
He mentions no other options for his future; we might therefore conclude that he is glad to have joined the early Islamic community.

The separation

Apparently 'Abbās’s decision to join the Muslim forces in battle was a bridge too far for his wife. Ḥabība or Ṣafiyya b. al-Ḍahhāk b. Sufyān al-Sulamī decides to leave him, she breaks up her tent and moves back to her family. This is what she has to say about her decision: 46

1. Did it not reach 'Abbās b. Mirdās that I saw that the people are destined for disasters?
2. Every hero of the Anṣār has joined them, every hero of his own tribe, defending it in adversity
3. (when), together with everyone who drops the sword fiercely, the heads of lean, intelligent horses lead him (the hero)/it (the tribe) to death
4. [By my life if you follow the din of Muhammed and leave the faithful ones and the benefactors)] 47
5. Then you have proudly changed this spirit for lowness on the day when the sharp blades of the swords hit against each other
6. People who are in front during the battle, intelligent people among us and people of gifts (= generous)
7. Their swords are power over the humble one and their horses are arrows for the enemy in difficult circumstances

Vss. 4 and 5 have also been translated by GOLDZIHER. 48 These verses are critical, not only in the context of this poem but also with regard to the general subject of this contribution, because they contain Ṣafiyya’s (or Ḥabība’s) motivation for her decision.

la-‘amr-i la-in tāba’ta dīnā Muḥammadīn wa-faraqta ikhwāna l-ṣafā wa-l-ṣanā‘ī l-... tilka l-nafs... dhillan bi-‘izzatin ghaddāta khtilāfī l-murḥafāṣī l-qawāṭī

GOLDZIHER’s translation of line 5 is:

This soul has exchanged lowness for pride on the day when the sharp blades of the swords hit against each other

This translation poses two problems, one technical and one concerning content:

– He chose the wrong subject for the verb BDLT with which line 5 starts: the metre (tawīl) does not allow to read baddalat, but it should be baddalta/i/u, which means

47 GOLDZIHER 1966: 18, n. 1 argues extensively why the ikhwān al-ṣafā are not to be identified as the Ḥikwān al-Ṣafā‘.
48 Ibid.
that al-nafs cannot be the subject of this verb. The text in al-Aghānī reads al-nafsa. It is then followed by a second object, dhīlan. The phrase bi-ʾizzatin would then have to be a third (indirect) object (Lisān al-ʿArab: baddaltu l-khātima bi-l-ḥalqati, “I replaced the signet-ring with the simple ring”).

– In line with the context I prefer to assume that the verse is constructed like this phrase: fa-ulāʾika yubaddilu llāhu sayyiʿāti-him ḥasanātin (Q 25:70) (“those, God will change their evil deeds into good deeds”).

‘Abbās reacts to the break up of his marriage

‘Abbās takes the opportunity of the successful battle of Ḥunayn and the courage he showed in that battle to address the break up and to comment on Ṣafiyya’s words of blame:

1. What remained of the relationship with Umm Muʾammal has in a headstrong way been cut off and she changed the intention to an unfulfilled promise
2. She had sworn by God that she would not break the ties, but she did not live up to it and did not fulfil her promise
3. A woman of the (tribe of) Khufāf, the wadi of al-ʿAqiq was her resort in summer and among the Bedouins she would live in Wajra and ‘Urf
4. If Umm Muʾammal follows the unbelievers she makes my heart even more sad apart from her remoteness (from me)
5. The messenger will tell her that we did not consent and only asked our Lord for an alliance
6. and that we lived up to our promise to the leader, the prophet Muhammad of a thousand (men) whereas no other group completed that number
7. With outright heroes from Sulaym, the greatest, they obey and do not disobey one letter away from his command
8. Khufāf, Dhakwān and ‘Awf, you see them like male camels, black, following the she-camel
9. As though our reddish-white mail and helmets, like lions who meet in their dens with hanging ears
10. In us is the strength of God’s dīn without undue claims and we doubled the force of those who were already with him
11. in Mecca when we came to it as if our banner were an eagle that—after it had circled over them—wanted to grab

49 ARBERRY 1964: 368.
50 al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās, Dīwān: 114-6; Ibn Hishām, Sīra, ii: 464-6. I chose to partially not use Guillaume’s translation in The Life of Muhammad (GUILLAUME 1978, repr.): 580-1, because it is presented outside of its communicative context, the dialogue, so to say.
51 A simile to represent the adherence to their leader.
52 An image of the flaps of their helmets. So GUILLAUME 1978 (repr.): 580.
12. those with their watchful eyes; when it hovers over their pastures you would think that there is unrest among them.\footnote{Guillaume 1978 (repr.): … on ist prey (riding) on horses which gazed upwards. You would think when they gallop in their bits there is a sound of jinn among them.}

13. In the morning when we trampled down the polytheists because we did not find any compensation or regret for the cause of God’s messenger.

14. On a battlefield in the middle of which no one heard a whisper from us except inciting yells and the cracking of heads.

15. With white swords that make the heads fly from their necks (lit.: fixing points) and with which we cut the necks of warriors.

16. Many a creature did we leave behind, slain, cut into pieces and also widows, cursing their husbands in grief.

17. It’s God’s satisfaction that we have in mind, not that of humans do we crave, because to God belongs all that is apparent and all that is hidden.

His wife’s accusation that ‘Abbās became submissive under the new religion certainly kicked in: he does his utmost to avoid to be seen as a coward. First he states that only what was left of the relationship was cut off. Then he starts blaming her for not keeping her vow, although she belongs to the tribal elite. ‘Abbās deplores her choice to opt for paganism. He seems to distance himself from his decision and points out to his wife that initially he only wanted a (profitable) alliance, but then he stresses his stable allegiance to God and to the leader, Mohammed. In vs. 13 ‘Abbās expresses the reason for the revenge on Quraysh: they never cared about the message of the prophet. He pictures himself as someone who takes a task on his shoulders and gets things done. Finally the description of the bloody battle against Quraysh is straightforward fakhr.

Contesting the spoils

As mentioned earlier, a number of versions of this story circulate but the essence of the story is that ‘Abbās was not satisfied with the part of the spoils that he received from the Prophet after the battle of Ḥunayn. He was displeased and addressed the Prophet:\footnote{al-‘Abbās b. Mirdās, Dīwān: 110-2.}

1. It was spoils that I found through my attack on the horse(s) in the plain land
2. and through my waking over my tribesmen so that they could go to sleep; when the people lay asleep, I did not
3. But my spoils and that of (my horse) al-‘Ubayd became (divided) between ‘Uayna and al-Aqra’
4. I was fearless in the war but was not given anything; I should not have been deprived (?)
5. except young camels that I was given, to the number of their four legs!\footnote{Guillaume’s translation (1978 repr.: 595).}
6. There was no stronghold nor confining wall better than (Ibn) Mirdās in the whole crowd
7. I was not less of a man than both of them (sc. ‘Uyayna and al-Aqra’); the one that you humiliate today will not be lifted up

The end of vs. 7 sounds like a threat: if I am being humiliated, do not count on me anymore for help or military support. The prophet said: “Bring him away and cut his tongue off away from me”. The bystanders appreciated the true meaning of these words, drawing ‘Abbās aside and just silencing him by offering a larger part of the spoils. No wonder that this extra part was precisely 100 camels. Compare the story about the wager.

Again in terms of Arabic “genres” we are looking at fakhr in the second part of the poem. In the first three lines we read a monologue, addressed to the Prophet and the crowd of victorious but seemingly greedy warriors.

Du’mūṣ and laqāḥ

The focus of the enmity between ‘Abbās and his wife is the change of ‘Abbās’s attitude towards power; from a tradition in which power is bestowed on the best of the tribe without hereditary succession he moves to a point where he accepts the legitimacy of power attributed to someone who does not belong to his own tribe, nor can this leader be regarded as a tribal leader in the normal sense of the word. Safiya probably felt that the young Muslim community could hardly be considered a “tribe” or Mohammed a sayyid.

One of the things we can observe is that apparently the emergence of the Prophet’s message caused some strain in society, probably both on a personal and on a tribal level. The underlying causes of this strain and ensuing conflicts might lie in the transition from a tribal to—in some ways—a “modern” society. Morals and values, traditional dependencies, started to shift. This process may well have started earlier— we might even interpret the emergence of Islam partly as a result of the tension between sedentary or urban and nomadic Arabs in which the former were on the winning side.

Women felt most worried about their position: I suggested some time ago that the motivation for the poetess al-Khansāʾ (maybe the mother of ‘Abbās b. Mirdās) to compose a large number of marāthī for her two brothers Šākhr and Mu‘āwiya and to recite them at the market of ‘Ukāz may well have been an attempt to glorify the jāhilī concept of murū’a as opposed to moral standards as they developed within the circles of well-to-do tradesmen who populated small towns and travelled around a lot as businessmen. From the poem by Ḥabība/Ṣaфиyya bt. al-Dahḥāk b. Sufyān al-Sulami we might infer that what women of their status would reject was the acceptance by men of an authority outside the jāhilī tradition, i.e. someone else than was chosen by the clan or tribe to be the sayyid, a rejection of any form of hereditary legitimation of power. A sayyid that would have been chosen by the clan would possess courage, loyalty and endurance and would be

willing and able to protect the needy, in marāthī usually referred to as the widows and orphans (al-arāmil wa-l-yatāmā).

One would not need much more than a verse by ‘Abbās like

\[
\text{ata’nā-ka ħattā aslama l-nāsū kullu-hum}^{57}
\]

“We will obey you (Mohammed) until all mankind has converted to Islam”

to infuriate his wife who probably disapproved of any outside authority and expects her husband to be a true and independent sayyid.

The aversion of kingship among pre-Islamic Arabs is expressed in the word laqāḥ, for instance in the expression hayyun laqāḥun, “a tribe that does not submit to kings”. ‘Abīd b. al-Abraṣ says:

\[
\text{abaw dīna l-mulūk fa-hum laqāḥun idga nūdībū ilā ḥarbīn ajābū}^{58}
\]

“They refuse to serve kings because they are laqāḥ (but) when they are incited to war, they will answer”

The opposite of this expression—appreciation of kingship—is the metaphor of the duʿmūṣ, identified by ULLMANN as “larva”.\(^59\) According to more recent sources the word refers to the Triops cancirformis (= tadpole shrimp) or the Triops granarius,\(^60\) both common in the Middle East. They are considered surviving fossils and live in temporary pools in desert-like areas. Because of their habitat their life cycle is short. Eggs are left in the temporary pool and can survive up to ten years of drought after which a new generation of triops simply re-appears.

This typical feature must be the reason behind the metaphor. The word duʿmūṣ was used for someone who keeps popping up at the courts of kings.\(^61\) ULLMANN mentions a number of Belege but this specific use of the metaphor seems to be limited to hanīf-poetry. There are two very similar instances, in both cases by hanīf-poets, who seem to be proud that they or their tribesmen are regular visitors of kings:

In a poem in which he explains his behaviour as an inquisitive man Zayd b. ‘Amr b. Nufayl says of himself:

\[
\text{duʿmūṣu abwābī l-mulūk-} \text{ ki wa-jāʾihun li-l-kharqī nāḥu-h}
\]

“popping up at the gates of kings, and his camel crossing the desert” (G.B.)\(^62\)

\(^{57}\) Aghānī, xiv: 306.

\(^{58}\) Dīwān ‘Abīd b. al-Abraṣ, 29.

\(^{59}\) ULLMANN 1995: 145-60. It is difficult to identify the duʿmūṣ. Based on elaborate work on a variety of sources Ullmann argues that the most probable meaning is ‘larva’.


\(^{61}\) See for instance al-Zamakhsharī, Mustaqṣā, I: 118: ... \text{du’ māṣ wa-huwa al-rajal al-dakhkhāl fi ‘l-umār al-zawwār lil-mulūk “... the du’ māṣ, a meddlesome man, a frequent visitor of kings”}\.

\(^{62}\) IBN HISHĀM, Sīra, I, 229. IN GUILLAUME’S translation, Life of Mohammad, 102: A man who persistently frequents the gates of kings / Whose camel crosses the desert.
And Umayya b. Abī l-Ṣalt says in his marthiya on the victims of Badr:

du‘mūṣi abwābi l-mulūk wa-li-l-ḥarāqī fāṭīḥ

“popping up at the gates of kings (G.B.), crossing the desert, victorious”

‘Abbās’s conversion, version 1

This version of the circumstances in which ‘Abbās converted to Islam is not important in itself or in the parenthesis to the other story, referred to before as version 2, but within the framework of the chapter about ‘Abbās in the K. al-Aghānī as such. Until now I had to deviate from the narrative order of this chapter: ‘Abbās’s poem with his reaction to the separation and his bragging about his heroic deeds in the battle of Ḥunayn is missing in Abī l-Faraj’s account. It seemed logical to add it to the first separation fragment here.

Another story missing from the Aghānī is the wager between ‘Abbās and Ḥuwayṭī. Because this wager took place immediately before Khaybar and obviously before ‘Abbās’s conversion it had to be placed between both accounts.

Version 1 of ‘Abbās’s conversion is a different case: it precedes version 2 in the Aghānī, which in itself is peculiar because both show some common factual ground, but version 1 is of a completely different nature. It runs like this:

‘Abbās inherited an idol from his father named Ḍimār. He committed himself to build a shrine (?) (bayt) around it and went to it each day and night. When the message of the Prophet appeared the deity spoke to him in verse:

1. Tell all the tribes of Sulaym: the friend has died; long live the people of the mosque (masjid)
2. The one from Quraysh who inherited prophethood and guidance after the Son of Maryam is well guided
3. Ḍimār has perished; it was once worshipped before the book (came) to the prophet Mohammed

Later on ‘Abbās has an apparition of the prophet when he falls asleep on his camel, after which he decides to acknowledge the Prophet as his leader, convert to Islam and return to his home country to burn the deity Ḍimār.

In this story miraculous things happen—a talkative piece of wood, an apparition in a dream—but it all ends well. The story has a high “grandpa-tell-us-a-story” quality. The
poem cited in this story as the words of the speaking deity hardly qualifies as being of any historic or referential value. Indeed one might for instance wonder if there were any masājid at the time of ‘Abbās’ conversion. The last verse is a bit clumsy lacking a verb for “reached”. It seems that this poem deserves a different approach from than the other poems.

Hilary Kilpatrick distinguishes five kinds of story-telling in the *K. al-Aghānī*: Two of the types qualify as applicable in the case of the chapter in the *Aghānī* about al-ʿAbbās b. Mirdās:

- chronological organization
- alternation of themes

The chronology of episodes is the strongest organizational principle in the *akhbār* about ʿAbbās, but here and there we can sense a slight tendency towards the second kind of organization, defined by Kilpatrick as follows: “Such articles are reminiscent of those mediaeval paintings or icons in which the subject’s portrait, his essence, as it were, is surrounded by little scenes depicting characteristic incidents from his life.” In the story of ʿAbbās, Abū l-Faraj seems to mingle the two organization principles. So this might be an example of the “mixed form” that Kilpatrick pre-supposes.

The ʿAbbās chapter starts with the almost ubiquitous exposé of his lineage and a short hint at the “spoils” theme, probably to indicate his closeness to the Prophet. But as soon as the storyteller takes over, ʿAbbās’s conversion is the start of it all. It is at this point that Abū l-Faraj may have decided to mention both versions, just to be complete. But I think we have to bear in mind that narration time is not necessarily identical with narrated time. In that sense version 1 of ʿAbbās’s conversion to Islam may well be a fictional representation in hindsight towards the end of his life.

**Conclusion**

It would be hard to argue that it is not ʿAbbās b. Mirdās or his wife who are talking: their words fit their situation and the changes inside and outside their relationship. ʿAbbās becomes a fervent supporter of the prophet and the new religion, although he is keen to see his personal ambitions and profit fulfilled. His wife however sees things differently, distances herself from this modernism and wishes to cling to traditional values.

If we accept this position, if we see these poems as personal statements, they convey the image of a society in which Islam was met with enthusiasm, but it is also clear that it caused considerable stress and anxiety: traditional alliances between clans were breaking up, traditional relationships did not hold under this cultural-ideological strain, and aspirations in life were suddenly re-defined. These poems illustrate how drastic the preaching of this new religion was and the impact it had on early Islamic history.

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68 Ironically Ḥabība’s (or Saḥīfa’s) conclusion would be more in line with modern behavioural patterns than those that are—rightly or wrongly—associated with Islam.
The continuity and discontinuity of tradition and innovation that went along with this emergence of Islam characterizes “par excellence” a period of such upheaval, putting long lived values and convictions under stress.

ʿAbbās witnessed the turbulent years between 628 and 630 AD. He had to make choices, both superficial and principal. But considering the loss and gain of 100 camels it also seems that his “career change” is not completely void of some opportunism.

Two methodological principles are prominent in the discussion about the historical value of early Arabic poetry:

1. The poems can best be interpreted as historical sources in chronological order; sometimes this order has to be reconstructed on the basis of the content of these poems.
2. The poetic material cannot provide us with answers to every kind of questions.

Ad 1: These poems can only be studied and interpreted as interdependent texts in their chronological order. This intertextual approach has proved to be fruitful and can open new horizons in our understanding of (early) Arab culture as Thomas BAUER’s *Altarabische Dichtkunst* shows: Arab poets actually knew each others’ works and poets reacted to these texts, always trying to improve earlier poems. In doing this BAUER addresses a number of problematic items in early Arabic poetry at once: the creative technique, the historic links between these poets and the authenticity of the poetic material itself.

Another example of intertextual relationship in early Arabic poetry was my attempt to reconstruct the human aspects involved in the run-up to the Ḥarb Basūs: interdependent poems that revealed the drama of recklessness, anger, shame and distress in a very complicated relational situation.

Ad 2: It is hardly fruitful to look for factual data in poetry. Where ʿAbbās claims to lead a thousand warriors to Ḥunayn, this number must be questioned or interpreted as *mubālagha* and/or *fakhr*. Three hundred would probably be a more appropriate estimation. A final methodological question is whether or not the findings in this poetical material can be generalized. We have to realize that—maybe apart from the *lusūs*—we are discussing works of poets who belonged to or were associated with the elite of pre-Islamic society. One might argue that their feelings, considerations and conclusions were not only personal but more widely felt within their own families and tribes. But in a tribal society that was breaking up along religious lines and in which religious groups were forming, this is not necessarily true and has to be verified with other data. One could imagine that the process to do so would have three steps:

- The construction of (parts of) biographies on the basis of poetry and the small stories that go with it.
- Comparison of these data with other sources like *hadīth*, *sīra* and *maghāzī*-literature, the result of which can be threefold: poetry would corroborate these


sources, clarify them or contradict them, in which case the result would at least be a definable problem of interpretation.

– Extrapolation of the result to a story that would at least have a reasonable claim to being historical.

And it would be interesting to see if and how the developments we can trace resulted in a shift in the role of poets as spokesmen for their tribe to spokesmen for religious and political groups. And how the role of poets changed with an elite that started as gentry, became chivalry in the era of Islamic expansion and ended as nobility at the Arab-Islamic courts.

References

Primary sources


Secondary sources


Poetry as a source for the history of early Islam


Appendix: The Texts

a) ‘Abbās’s conversion, see above pp. 146-147

\[
\begin{align*}
1 & - \text{بَلَيْنَي} اِذَا نَقُولُ أَجْعَلْ جَاهِدًا \\
2 & - \text{وَتَرْكَكُمُ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ وَالْأَوْلِيَّةَ} \\
3 & - \text{وَأَنْصَارُ عَمَّا} \\
4 & - \text{كِتَابُكُمُ السَّرِّ وَالْحَمْرَ} \\
5 & - \text{وَهُمْ يَسِيرُونَ} \\
6 & - \text{فِيَّ الحَقَّ فَيُمَّا فَيْضَيْكَ} \\
\end{align*}
\]
b) ‘Abbās explains his conversion, see above pp. 147-148. Dīwān ‘Abbās, 141-143.

1- فمن مَيْلِسِعُ الأَقْوَامِ أَنْ تَمْهِداً رَسُولُ الْإِلَهِ، رَايُّهُ، هِيَّةً بِمَسَا

2- فَأَصْبَحَ قَدَ وَقَى إِلَيْهِ وَأَنْعَمَ

3- سَرْتُوهَا وَوَعَدْنَا فَذِيدًامَا تَمْحِداً

4- فَخُلَّاهُمَا كَسَدَا قَاطِعَ الآيَ غَرَّرُوُسَا مَسْلِيْمُ وَفِي هَمِّ هُمْ مِنْ تَسْلِمَا

5- قَيْلَ سَنَةُ الحُسَنِ إِنْ كَتَبَتْ سَآيَةً

6- وَجَنِدْ مِنَ الأَنْصَارِ لَا يُخَذِّلُونَهُ

7- أطَاعُوا فَما يَغْضَوَنَّهُمَا تَكْلِمُوا

8- فَإِنَّهَا وُجِدَتُ فِي الْقَوْمِ حَائِداً

9- فَمَلِكَتْ هِدَايَةُ اللَّهُ أَنَّهَا أَمْسِيَةً

10- يَسَخِّرُوهَا فَأَكْنُلْهَا أَلْفَ مِنْ الحَيْلِ مُلْحَمَا

11- وَجَبَ إِلَيْهَا أَنْ تَكُونَ مُهِمَّةً

12- وَيَمُشَّي السَّمِيْنُ يَمْشِي مَيْلَمَا يَيمُنُ الْخَوْفِ الْأَرْبَعَةُ وَتَحْرَمُوا

13- أَطْلِعُوا كَحْيَةً أَسْلَمُ الْبَيْضُ كُلْهُمَا

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c) ‘Abbās’s wife reacts, see above p. 150. Aghānī, 195.

1- ألم يبه عتاس بُن سردار أتسي
2- آنهاهم من الأنصار كله مصيب
3- بكُل شديد الوقع عضب، يقودها
4- لعمرى لسن تابعت دين تُعزى
5- لبَذَلَت تلك النفس ذلاً بعَرْض
6- وقوم هم السراش المقدَّم في السوهي
7- سويفُهم عَر السذَّال وخَيلُهم

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e) **Contesting the spoils**, see above pp. 152-153. *Dīwān ʿAbbās*, 111-112.

1- وكانَتْ نفاهَا تلافَتهُمَا

2- وِإِبَّاغُهَا الْفَسْوَمُ أَنْ يُرِقُّهُمَا

3- فَأَفْصِلَنَّ نَهْبٍ وَنَهْبِ الْغَبْثِ أَبَنُ وَأَبَنَّهُنَّ وَإِلَى الْقَوْمِ وَالْأَفْقٍ

4- وَقَدْ كَثَّتْ فِي الْحَرَّبِ ذَا تَدْرَا

5- إِلَّا أَفَانِلْ أَغْلِبِهِمَا

6- وَمَا كَانَ حَصْنٌ وَلَا حَابِسٌ

7- وَمَا كَثَّتْ دُونَ امْرِيْ مِنْهُمَا

f) **ʿAbbās’s conversion 1**, see above p. 155. *Aghānī*, 192.

1- قُلْ لِلْقَبَائِلِ مَنْ سَلَّمَ كُلُّهَا ِ

2- ِ إِنَّ الْأَلْسِنَ زَوَّرتُ الْبَيْنَةَ وَالْمُهْمَدَيَ

3- ِ حَلَّ كُلُّ الَّذِينَ قَضَى تَحْكُمَ ِ