



LUCIS/SAS
CONFERENCE

**School of
Abbasid Studies**

Thirteenth
Conference

12-15 July 2016

Lipsius | Room 148 | Cleveringaplaats 1 | Leiden University

Register at lucis@hum.leidenuniv.nl
Find out more at www.lucis.leidenuniv.nl

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INTRODUCTION

Dear conference participants,

As local convenors, it is our great pleasure to welcome you to Leiden University for the 13th conference of the School of Abbasid Studies. Since its founding in March 1979, the School has been instrumental in encouraging new insights and approaches to this critical period of Islamic history. It is hard to think of another forum whose influence has been as far-reaching.

This is the first time the School has met in Leiden, but with its more than 400-year-long history in the study of Arabic and a world-renowned oriental manuscripts collection, Leiden is an especially apt venue for this prestigious scholarly meeting. The Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS) – your host within the university – organises an array of scholarly and public events to support research into Muslim societies past and present. The School of Abbasid Studies conference with its outstanding line-up of international speakers offering a multitude of disciplinary approaches is a wonderful addition to this year's programme.

At the centre of the School's meeting stand of course the papers that will be discussed extensively. Discussions can be continued during the social programme that we have put together for you to introduce you to the city of Leiden as well as the treasures of the university. There will also be opportunities to examine School members' publications which will be on display during the conference.

We would like to thank the sponsors that have made this meeting possible: The Royal Dutch Academy of Science, the Eastern Institute, the Juynboll Foundation, the Leiden University Fund and the Leiden Center for the Study of Islam and Society.

We are looking forward to a stimulating and fruitful couple of days!

Maaïke van Berkel & Petra Sijpesteijn

ABOUT LUCIS

The Leiden University Centre for the Study of Islam and Society (LUCIS) promotes high-quality research on Islam and Muslim societies and communicates the insights and findings of that research to the larger public. By bringing together scholars from a range of disciplines, LUCIS stimulates new perspectives on the vibrant field of Islamic studies at Leiden University. For more information on LUCIS, please visit our website: www.lucis.leidenuniv.nl

ABOUT SAS

The School of Abbasid Studies (SAS) provides a forum for the discussion of the political, cultural, social, economic, religious and intellectual life of the Abbasid Caliphate from c.700 – c.1250 C.E., a time span approximately bounded by the formative period of early Islam and the invasion of the Mongols. The aim of the School is to bring together scholars working on the Abbasid world but in disciplines which would rarely “talk” together – working towards a holistic contemplation of the Abbasid world.

The conferences of the School of Abbasid Studies take place every two years. For more information on the School of Abbasid Studies, please visit: www.abbasidstudies.org

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Tuesday 12 July

LOVE AND THE INTOLERABLE (chair: Letizia Osti)

09.00 – 09.20 Coffee & Tea

09.20 – 09.30 A welcoming word by Maaïke van Berkel & Petra Sijpesteijn

09.30 – 10.00 Mohsen Zakeri *Athqalū min wāshin ‘alā ‘āshiq*, “Heavier than the slanderer on a lover”: *Thethuqalā*, “the insufferable,” vs. the *zurafā*, “the raffiné”

10.00 – 10.30 Pernilla Myrne Experts in intimacy: Female characters in fourth/tenth century erotic stories

10.30 – 11.00 Discussant: Geert Jan van Gelder

11.00 – 11.30 Coffee & Tea

FICTION (chair: Emily Selove)

11.30 – 12.00 Mathew Keegan Abbasid theories of fictive experience and the reception of al-Ḥarīrī’s exordium

12.00 – 12.30 Isabel Toral-Niehoff A case study in *Begriffsgeschichte*: The term *adab* as used in the *‘Iqd al-Farīd*

12.30 – 13.00 Discussant: Shawkat Toorawa

13.00 – 15.00 Lunch

THE INEFFABLE (chair: John Nawas)

15:00 – 15:30 Chafika Ouail Al-Niffari's *mawqif*: Between the "Sacred Valley" and the "Lote Tree of Boundary"

15:30 – 16:00 Lale Behzadi How to cope with disaster: The language of emotion in *al-faraj ba'd al-shidda* texts

16:00 – 16:30 Discussant: Julia Bray

Wednesday 13 July

ADMINISTRATION (chair: Petra Sijpesteijn)

- 09:30 – 10:00 Stefan Heidemann Al-Muqaddasī and the administration of the empire re-contextualized
- 10:00 – 10:30 Simon Gundelfinger Geographical and administrative structures in Abbasid al-Shām: A Historical conceptualization
- 10:30 – 11:00 Discussant: Maaïke van Berkel
- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee & Tea
- 11:30 – 13:00 A visit to the Leiden University Library Oriental Manuscripts collection
- 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch

BEGINNING AND END (chair: John Nawas)

- 15:00 – 15:30 Peter Webb Muḥammad and *al-Jāhiliyya*: Pre-Islam in Prophetic *ḥadīth*
- 15:30 – 16:00 Deborah Tor The political revival of the Abbasid caliphate: The reign of al-Muqtafi (530-555/1136-1160)
- 16:00 – 16:30 Discussant: Avraham Hakim

Thursday 14 July

ALTERITY (chair: Monique Bernards)

- 09:30 – 10:00 Peter Pökel How to talk about “Religion”?
Third/ninth-century writers on the
hermeneutics of Holy Scriptures
- 10:00 – 10:30 Alexander Key Late Abbasid Perseo-Arabica:
Fifth/eleventh-century theories of
translation
- 10:30 – 11:00 Discussant: Suleiman Mourad
- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee & Tea

POETRY (chair: Shawkat Toorawa)

- 11:30 – 12:00 Hussain Alqarni *Naqā'id* Poetry in the Post-Umayyad Era
- 12:00 – 12:30 Bilal Orfali Walking in the steps of poets: Courtly
themes in early Sufism
- 12:30 – 13:00 Discussant: Beatrice Gruendler
- 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch

SCIENCES (chair: Ignacio Sánchez)

- 15:00 – 15:30 James Weaver The place of the “foreign sciences” in al-
Maqdisi’s *The Book of the Beginning and
History*
- 15:30 – 16:00 David Bennett The sixth sense and the limits of
perception in pre-Ash‘arite *kalām*
- 16:00 – 16:30 Discussant: Hans Hinrich Biesterfeldt

Friday 15 July

SONG (chair: Monique Bernards)

- 09:30 – 10:00 Dwight Reynolds Song and punishment, or, the perils of performance
- 10:00 – 10:30 Karen Moukheiber Slavery, gender and music in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*: Revisiting the cultural boundaries of women musicians in medieval Islam
- 10:30 – 11:00 Discussant: Camilla Adang
- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee & Tea

MEMORY (chair: John Turner)

- 11:30 – 12:00 Pamela Klasová Remembering the Umayyads in the Abbasid era: The case al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī in the seventh/twelfth-century *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* by Ibn ‘Asākir
- 12:00 – 12:30 Antoine Borrut Forgetting al-Khwārizmī’s History
- 12:30 – 13:00 Discussant: Sarah Savant
- 13:00 – 15:00 Lunch

WRITING THE ABBASIDS (chair: Hugh Kennedy)

- 15:00 – 16:00 Monique Bernards, Michael Cooperson, Najam Haider, John Nawas, Letizia Osti, Shawkat Toorawa, and James Weaver

GENERAL MEETING (chair: Hugh Kennedy)

- 16:00 – 16:30 Business and Where to...?
For SAS members only

ABSTRACTS

Hussain Alqarni

Title: *Naqā'īd* Poetry in the Post-Umayyad Era

Satirical refutations (*naqā'īd*) are a type of lampoon in which two poets exchange satires, both using the same prosodic meter and rhyme. Although satire had been a staple of Arabic poetry in the pre-Islamic era, *naqā'īd* were further developed and enhanced as an art form in the Umayyad era thanks to three poets: Jarīr, al-Farazdaq and al-Akḥṭal. A distinctive feature of early *naqā'īd* is the centrality of tribalism as key motivator of composition. Van Gelder (*Encyclopedia of Arabic Literature*), however, argues that after the Umayyad era this form of satire became sectarian or merely personal. According to Ali Hussein (*The Rise and Decline of Naqā'īd Poetry*), on the other hand, no *naqā'īd* were written after 105/ 724. In this paper I attempt to show that *naqā'īd* poetry did not disappear, nor did it become limited to the personal or sectarian; rather, it continued to flourish throughout the Abbasid era as an expression of tribal pride. I examine several hypotheses to explain this continuity, focusing on the activity of poets far from political centers, the assertion of Bedouin cultural identity in an environment seemingly dominated by Persian influences, and the question of political encouragement of this form of poetry. I investigate two cases of *naqā'īd* from the Abbasid era composed by poets who were regarded as belonging to the group of *sāqat al-shu'arā'* (rearguard poets): al-Ḥakam al-Khudrī (d. 150/767) and Ibn Mayyāda (d. 149/766) on the one hand, and on the other 'Umāra b. 'Aqīl (d.247/861) and various opponents, Abū Janna al-Asadī (d. ?), Abū al-Rudaynī al-'Ukalī (d. ?), Ra's al-Kabsh al-Numayrī (d. ?), Farwa b. Ḥumayda al-Asadī (d. ?) and Nāhiḍ b. Thawma al-Kilābī (d. 220/835).

Lale Behzadi

Title: How to cope with disaster: The language of emotion in *al-faraj ba'd al-shidda* texts

For quite some time the history of emotions has become an important research area in History, Classics, and European Medieval Studies. Arabic texts from the Abbasid era offer a wealth of material to examine questions related to the complex issue of expressing, decoding, and interpreting sentiments. The cultural and

temporal transfer with regard to the emotional vocabulary not only opens up new perspectives of the societies in question; it is also a quite illuminating exercise to reconsider the prerequisites of our research tools. In this paper, I present an overview about the results my reading has produced so far and put some open questions up for discussion. As a first step I have chosen texts that already in their titling and design seem to offer an emotional setting (the most prominent collection by al-Tanūkhī). To characterize the semantic field of emotions linked with disaster is just one way of looking at the texts; another would be to highlight the significance and status of certain emotional expressions, thus providing insights into the dynamic relationship between individual feelings and socially accepted behavior. Apart from identifying certain feelings and sorting them into a familiar scale it can be asked how these feelings are embedded in the narrative structure of the text. In order to achieve the desired effect, emotions can be used to perform specific functions. Since the communication of emotions — as any communication process — relies on expectations and attributions, it can be especially revealing to investigate how they are intertwined with certain patterns of narrative.

David Bennett

Title: The sixth sense and the limits of perception in pre-Ash'arite *kalām*

Charting the development of *kalām* in the early Abbasid period, peculiar doctrines abound. A provisional theory of psychology had to be grafted upon an "atomist" platform to accommodate an empirical epistemology and an unflinching monotheism. With no room for ethereal or abstracted representation of objects of perception, those internal faculties which so engaged the attention of the philosophers were reduced to material operations of spirit and perceptible qualities. Here I examine one instance of this process which will illuminate (1) the sophistication of *kalām* psychology and (2) its relation to later philosophical inquiries; moreover, it is a fun problem. Several early *mutakallimūn* posited a sixth sense, or theorized about a sixth object of sense perception. Occasionally, it was "pleasure," or in one case *lidhdhat al-nikāḥ*, the "pleasure of marriage," which I hope I don't have to explain. Insofar as qualities could be known only through some means of perception, the possibility of multiple senses was considered. Another object loomed, however, and it had Qur'ānic precedent: most recently discussed by Melchert in *Arabica* (2015), *visio Dei* was a regular consideration in *kalām* circles. Dirār b. 'Amr is reported to have claimed that God creates a sixth sense for humans in the afterlife whereby they may perceive God's own essence. I present the sources

and contexts for these proposed sixth senses in pre-Ash'arite *kalām* as part of a larger project on the topic planned in collaboration with Taneli Kukkonen (NYUAD).

Antoine Borrut

Title: Forgetting al-Khwārizmī's History

Muḥammad b. Mūsā al-Khwārizmī (d. after 232/847) is arguably one of the most famous scholars of the early Abbasid period. He was notoriously attached to al-Ma'mūn's *Bayt al-Ḥikma*, and enjoys an impressive scholarly fame and legacy, ranging from algebra and mathematics to astronomy, geography, or cartography. Yet, he has been almost totally forgotten as a historian, even if it is well established that he wrote a now lost *Kitāb al-Ta'rīkh*. Why would he have vanished as a historian, while remaining a prominent authority in so many other fields? This is a truly vexing question if we bear in mind that al-Khwārizmī's *History* is more or less contemporary with that written by Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (d. 240/854), usually considered to be one of the oldest extant Islamic chronographies. Any access to al-Khwārizmī's lost *Ta'rīkh* is thus critical to shed light on Abbasid historiography in the making. I argue that such access to al-Khwārizmī's *Ta'rīkh* is possible, with due methodological precautions, through the fragments preserved in later Muslim and non-Muslim sources alike, the latter perhaps best exemplified by the East-Syriac chronicler Elias of Nisibis (d. 438/1046). I try to shed light on the content and originality of this work and at once attempt to trace the transmission of al-Khwārizmī's historical material to understand how he was forgotten as a historian. This will lead us to explore much-neglected historiographical genres, in particular astrological histories, to address the construction of historical knowledge in the early Abbasid period, and to re-evaluate the alleged "gap" of narrative sources that we are facing for early Islam.

Simon Gundelfinger

Title: Geographical and administrative structures in Abbasid al-Shām: A Historical conceptualization

We are provided with numerous accounts on the *futūḥ al-Shām*, the majority of which were written during the Abbasid period, but these reports remain highly problematic in several regards: Do these reports reflect actual geographical and administrative structures of the region? Is it reasonable to assume that the

distribution of administrative zones largely followed Roman-Byzantine standards? Even for the Umayyad period, in which al-Shām became the center of caliphal authority, our knowledge of the arrangement of al-Shām's subdivisions, mainly referred to as *junds*, is still very limited. However, the Abbasid period produced a number of literary sources that can be read as geographical depictions and, in contrast to the "pure" *futūh* reports, may shed light on the geographical and administrative structure of al-Shām. Previous research on Abbasid geography has tended to draw a picture harmonizing the various concepts provided by authors from different phases of Abbasid rule. A close reading of the sources focusing on the varying literary descriptions of al-Shām and the frontier region of Byzantium reveals significant degrees of change of central authority in the Abbasid province.

Stefan Heidemann

Title: Administration of the Empire – The Integration of the Empire under the Ṭāhirids

The Ṭāhirid dynasty is sometimes portrayed as the first autonomous and even independent dynasty of the Islamic Empire. In this paper, I argue that the Ṭāhirids were indeed prominent in the imperial administration and apparently autonomous in their decision making in Khurāsān, but they were also very well integrated in the empire. Khurāsān was from the eastern realms of the empire the most integrated part concerning tax administration. So it seems that the Ṭāhirids fostered close relations with the caliphal center of the empire in Baghdad and Samarra aiming at integration rather than the setting up of an autonomous Ṭāhirid regnum. In this regard, the Ṭāhirids can be seen as continuing the efforts of the Barmakids.

Matthew Keegan

Title: Abbasid theories of fictive experience and the reception of al-Ḥarīrī's Exordium

In this paper I trace the genealogy and reception of al-Ḥarīrī's "apology for fiction" through Abbasid writings about the theories of fiction. Drawing on hypotexts by Ibn Sīnā (d. 427/1037), Ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d. 328/940), Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), Ibn Buṭlān (d. 458/1066), Ibn Nāqiyā (d. 485/1092), and the paratexts of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, I show that al-Ḥarīrī's exordium engaged with a sophisticated theoretical context in which certain kinds of fictive writing were understood to provide the reader with virtual experiences of the real world — which I call the "poetics of

virtual experience." It has been argued that the overt fictionality of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt* was problematic for the supposedly conservative Islamic poetics that governed the aesthetics of *adab* in late Abbasid society. Al-Ḥarīrī's "apology" is thought to have disguised the text's problematic fictionality. These readings of the *Maqāmāt* and its context are challenged by reevaluating the manuscript tradition of the critique of Ibn al-Khashshāb (d. 567/1172) and Ibn Barrī's (d. 582/1187) response to it and by drawing on commentaries that remain in manuscript, such as that of al-Panjdhī (d. 584/1188). In light of these commentaries, al-Ḥarīrī's "apology" can now be understood as a marker that successfully situated the text within an existing discourse on the fictive. Building on the poetics of virtual experience, scholars like al-Panjdhī and Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1200) articulated novel theories of allegory to interpret and adapt the *Maqāmāt* in new ways. By drawing on the theories and practices of Abbasid authors, I suggest that the specifically Abbasid discourses and practices of fictive writing and allegorical reading cannot be mapped onto modern notions of fiction.

Alexander Key

Title: Late Abbasid Perseo-Arabica: Fifth/eleventh-century theories of translation

This paper discusses the fifth/eleventh-century moment when scholars across what is now Iran were writing in Arabic but speaking Persian. The bilingualism of Ibn Sīnā, ʿAbd al-Qāhir al-Jurjānī, Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī and their peers has been noted, but its implications for their scholarship have not been fully worked through. I will talk about the way that poetry and proverbs functioned as a social and political medium for scholars to deal with the Perseo-Arabic literary interface, trace poetic and bureaucratic interactions between Arabic and Persian speakers back into the first/seventh century, and ask how both philhellenic philosophers (al-Fārābī) and Arabist literary theorists (al-Jurjānī) theorized the ability of different languages to point to the same ideas.

Pamela Klasová

Title: Remembering the Umayyads in the Abbasid era: The case al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī in the seventh/twelfth-century *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq* by Ibn ʿAsākir

In this paper, I examine the historiographical treatment of al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf al-Thaqafī, the legendary Umayyad governor, in the seventh/twelfth-century biographical work *Tārīkh madīnat Dimashq*. The study shows how the memory of

the eminent Umayyad figure was transmitted over time, how it acquired symbolical meaning, and how it was appropriated by various narrators in the Abbasid era. Ibn 'Asākir's chapter on al-Ḥajjāj is approached from two perspectives, first examining the *akhbār* individually before turning to the composition of the chapter as a whole. In this first instance, I consider the relationship between the *akhbār* and their *asānīd*, classifying the *akhbār* according to the professions and the ideological stances of their narrators. Through this examination, I find the personal ideologies and professions of the narrators to be two crucial factors that influenced the genre of *akhbār* transmitted. I argue that the different narrators — litterateurs, jurists, traditionists, and historians — incorporated and employed the figure of al-Ḥajjāj in their accounts for different purposes. I then move on to a holistic examination of Ibn 'Asākir's account of al-Ḥajjāj to clarify the role he played in creating a particular vision of the Umayyad ruler. Thus, I underline the differences in historiographical concerns between the narrators of the *akhbār*, on the one hand, who oftentimes used historical material to comment on contemporary debates, and on the other hand, historians like Ibn 'Asākir's, who wanted to create a unified and coherent vision of the past.

Karen Moukheiber

Title: Slavery, gender and music in *Kitāb al-Aghānī*: Revisiting the cultural boundaries of women musicians in medieval Islam

The iconic representation of women musicians and songstresses in medieval Islam has often been reduced to the image of the alluring slave singing-girl so skillfully drawn by al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/868) in *Risālat al-Qiyān*. However, slavery and gender favored a number of transformations in the engagement of women, slave and free, with music. Al-Iṣfahānī's (d. 356/868) *Kitāb al-Aghānī* includes the biographies of numerous famous songstresses from early Islam into Abbasid times, who were slaves such as 'Arīb, freedwomen such as Jamīla or free women such as the Abbasid princess 'Ulayya bt. al-Mahdī. In addition to the variety of legal and social statuses held by women musicians, medieval Islam witnessed the growing legitimization of male musicians paralleled by the persecution of the previously accepted *mukhannathūn* or effeminate male musicians and an increasingly critical attitude towards slave and free women musicians. This paper investigates a selection of biographies of women (and men) musicians and singers from *Kitāb al-Aghānī* and proposes answers to the following question: How did slavery and gender transform the roles of slave and free women musicians and songstresses in medieval Islam, in

terms of the venues and nature of musical performances, the different uses of music and the audiences' expectations?

Pernilla Myrne

Title: Experts in intimacy: Female characters in fourth/tenth century erotic stories

The books Ibn al-Nadīm mentions in the section "Compositions about Sexual Intercourse, Persian, Indian, Greek and Arab in the form of titillating stories" are lost, but since several female protagonists have given name to these stories, it seems that their main characters were women. One title is, for example, Burjān and Ḥabāḥib, another is Bunyāndukht. Quotations from these stories are found in erotic literature, especially in the fourth/tenth-century *Jawāmi' al-ladhdha* by 'Alī b. Naṣr and they show how these women were portrayed as sexual experts and advisers. Burjān and Ḥabāḥib are married elderly women who advise an unknown king about how to please women. Bunyāndukht is portrayed as a wise woman to whom people turn for questions about sex. 'Alī b. Naṣr's *Jawāmi' al-ladhdha* contains many additional anecdotes about female protagonists who act as erotic experts. Most prominent is the Umayyad Ḥubbā al-Madīniyya, the character of many bawdy Abbasid anecdotes whose expertise here is elaborated on. For this paper I have collected citations about stories with female protagonists mentioned in *Fihrist* and *Jawāmi' al-ladhdha* from later erotic literature, where they often occur in settings that are fundamentally different from the fourth/tenth-century erotic encyclopedia. I examine the motif of (often elderly) women as "experts in intimacy," and consider how this may reflect a social reality on the one hand, and is appreciated as sexually exciting on the other — as, for instance, in explicit erotic stories about a mother who advises her daughter. I also discuss how the motif intersects with other representations of elderly and/or sexually active women in Abbasid literature.

Bilal Orfali

Title: Walking in the steps of poets: Courtly themes in early Sufism

It is common practice in modern times to read mystical poetry and apply it to our mundane lives and loves. Sufis in the early period did the opposite. Their mystical hymns often spun out of the courtly poetic *ghazal*, panegyric, and wine songs. This paper highlights the relation of the Arabic courtly poetic canon to early Sufism. Sufi *akhbār* and poetry evoke past poets and their poetic heritage. They tend to quote or

refer to eminent poets whose poetry must have been widely circulated and memorized. Yet, Sufism places this readily recognizable poetry in a new context that deliberately changes the past. Majnūn (d. ca. 68/688) becomes the Sufi who left reason aside; his beloved Laylā stands as a symbol of divinity. Abū Nuwās (d. ca. 200/814) becomes a toxic Sufi and his wine a symbol for divine wisdom and knowledge. Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 283/896), Abū Tammām (d. 231/846), al-Buḥturī (d. 284/898) and al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) stand in the court of the quintessential generous patron, God, and seek his bounty. It is in some sense a process of a metaphorization in which the reality of the pre-Islamic, Umayyad, and Abbasid models now acts as a device or metaphor for the Sufi poetics. To the Sufis these earlier poets are the Sufi's predecessors, their prototypes. The courtly motifs and topoi refer to the human experience of the divine, or to the memory of it. The same motifs are also a reminder of past poets who have stood in the same position.

Chafika Ouail

Title: Al-Niffarī's *mawqif*: Between the "Sacred Valley" and the "Lote Tree of Boundary"

In Islam, the word Prophet (*nabī*) does not signify one who predicts the future, though this is its linguistic meaning, and this is also one characteristic of Prophecy. In fact, the word has gained a specificity by denoting one who is totally surrendered to God's sovereignty, and has been chosen to receive the Divine revelation. Prophecy is seen as a gift bestowed by God upon his specific prophets, yet this gift can also be bestowed upon some chosen people who are not prophets. They are called friends of God (*awliyā*) and their prophecy is earned by inheriting from one of the prophets. The purpose of this paper is not to deal exhaustively with prophecy and sainthood issues. I rather focus on one specific topic, the relationship between prophecy and sainthood in Sufism through the fourth/tenth-century mystic al-Niffarī's experience dealing with the key concept "*waqfa*" as a moment of prophetic revelation. At the moment of *waqfa* al-Niffarī converses with God until he reaches the Beatific vision, and then he shares this very moment with Him. Between talking to God and seeing Him, al-Niffarī embraces two prophetic models, Moses and Muḥammad, in many ways. The purpose of my paper is to track and discuss the features of these prophetic models.

Peter Pökel

Title: How to talk about "Religion"? Third/ninth-century writers on the hermeneutics of Holy Scriptures

Abbasid scholars, writers and translators have been much concerned with the hermeneutics of translation. Translation as a hermeneutical practice bears in a broader sense on Holy Scriptures and especially the question of understanding their ambiguities. Scholars like al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869) and Ibn Qutayba (d. 276/889), for instance, were very careful in their dealing with theological discourses, paying much attention to possible sensitivities of the topic. In this paper, I focus on the works of these two scholars and the intellectual context of their treatment of methodological principles interpretation and understanding of Holy Scriptures. Topics I touch upon include questions and problems of hermeneutics that are discussed in these works and the role of the translator and the *mufassir* as a cultural mediator as seen by al-Jāhīz and Ibn Qutayba. The concept of *bayān* as a clear and understandable linguistic expression — a self-referential characteristic of the Qurʾān — is discussed as well as the manner in which this concept challenges interpretative possibilities of understanding Holy Scriptures and how the two authors construe the concept of *majāz* in this context.

Dwight Reynolds

Title: Song and punishment, or, the perils of performance

Life close to the center of power has always been precarious, particularly when that power is embodied in the person of a caliph, emir, or other figure whose all too human whims and moods can cause the rise or fall of those closest to him. This is certainly true for political figures who serve capricious superiors, such as viziers or governors who serve at the pleasure of the caliph, and for those who make occasional appearances at court, such as scholars and poets. But one social group that was repeatedly subjected to the whims of the powerful was that of singers and musicians, both male and female, whose every performance involved a potentially dangerous choice of material and an equally perilous effort to produce the expected level of skill and expertise. Beyond the risky business of the performance itself lay as well the patron's possible anger at personal behaviors that displeased him. This essay examines a number of cases in which singers were punished as a result of performances or behaviors that angered their patrons. Several examples are examined to draw conclusions about the interaction of power, performance, and punishment in the courts, East and West, of the Abbasid era.

Deborah Tor

Title: The political revival of the Abbasid caliphate: The reign of al-Muqtafi (530-555/1136-1160)

The Abbasid Caliphate experienced a turning point during the Seljuq era. The caliphate lost its political power from 326/936 onward and the caliphs were pensioned figureheads under, first, the rule of various *amīr al-umārā*² and then, for a century, the Shi'ite Buyids. Despite all this, the fiction that all Sunni political authority flowed from the caliph, and that great rulers from dynasties such as the Sāmānids and Ghaznavids were mere *amīrs* serving them, was still maintained. The Great Seljuq Dynasty, however, became in the sixth/eleventh century the only power since the Abbasid political collapse to conquer the entire Middle East and, consequently, marked an ideological crisis in the history of the Abbasids. The Abbasid caliphs, for their part, never accepted – nor even resigned themselves to – the political situation prevailing in the Islamic world. While during the first half century of Seljuq rule the Abbasids were largely powerless to curb the Seljuqs, the situation began changing during the civil war (485-500/1092-1105) that ensued upon the death of Malik-Shah, and reached its culmination during the triumphant reign of al-Nāṣir (d. 622/1225). While al-Nāṣir has received some scholarly attention, the reigns of the earlier caliphs had until recently never received a close examination that utilized even the full range of the Arabic sources, let alone the equally important Persian ones. In this paper I focus on illuminating the most important reign in the history of the revival of Abbasid political power, that of caliph al-Muqtafi li-Amr Allāh (530-555/1136-1160) by utilizing all the major sources for the period, ranging from detailed chronicles, dynastic, vizierial and caliphal histories, to local histories and religious works.

Isabel Toral-Niehoff

Title: A case study in *Begriffsgeschichte*: The term *adab* as used in the *ʿIqd al-Farīd*

In this paper I discuss my research project in progress, which aims at introducing the method of *Begriffsgeschichte* (as elaborated by Reinhard Koselleck) and the more recent developments in Dietrich Busse's *Historische Semantik* (combining Koselleck's approach with Foulcault's *Analyse du discours*) into the field of Classical Arabic Studies. Both approaches are well established and commonly used in German historical studies. For this paper, I have selected a case study of one key term taken from a emblematic work to illustrate my research: the use and meaning of *adab* in the *ʿIqd al-Farīd* by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih (246–328/860-940. My presentation

is divided into three parts. First, I generally sketch the history and main features, as well as the assumptions and techniques of the approaches of conceptual history, historical semantics and discourse analysis. Second, I explore how these methods might contribute to our understanding of the notion of *adab* by applying them to an example taken from the *ʿIqd al-farīd*. Finally, I would like to discuss with the audience an evaluation of the approach of *Begriffsgeschichte* in general and more particularly if and how it can be applied to our field of Abbasid studies — what is its potential, what problems arise, what are the limits, and what kind of modifications would be required from a *Begriffsgeschichte* to be of use to our field.

James Weaver

Title: The place of the “foreign sciences” in al-Maḡdisī’s *The Book of the Beginning and History*

Muṭṭahar b. Ṭāḥir al-Maḡdisī finished his *Kitāb al-baḍʿ wa-l-taʾrīkh* in Bost around the middle of the fourth/tenth century. The book assembles an astounding array of material on history, geography, theology, philosophy, eschatology, cosmology and astronomy. Al-Maḡdisī devotes space to the discussion of other peoples and religious communities as such, but also where he approaches topics systematically, he frequently presents in fairly detailed fashion the opinions of the pre-Socratics, Aristotle, Plato, Christian, Jewish and Dualist groups, as well as Indian religions. Other “encyclopaedic” works of the period (e.g., al-Khwarazmī’s *Mafātiḥ al-ʿulūm*) make a foundational distinction between Arabic-Islamic sciences and “foreign sciences,” which seems absent from al-Maḡdisī. This paper examines al-Maḡdisī’s perspective on the foreign sciences, paying particular attention to the arrangement of his material and his categorization of knowledge, with the aim of understanding the place of the *Book of the Beginning* in the larger discourse on the place and role of the foreign sciences in the period.

Peter Webb

Title: Muḥammad and *al-Jāhiliyya*: Pre-Islam in Prophetic *ḥadīth*

When unraveling the strands of memories which constitute the rise of Islam, scholars confront the venerable paradigm of *al-Jāhiliyya*, a concept in Arabic literature that expresses both the chronological era of pre-Islamic time and the ethical state of un-Islamic behavior. *Al-Jāhiliyya* is accordingly often invoked as Islam’s binary opposite, prompting notions that Islam was intended as an outright

replacement of *al-Jāhiliyya*, a consciously new order, a shift from “barbarism” to “enlightenment,” and (implicitly) a shift from evil to good. The sense of a direct transition from *Jāhiliyya* to *Islām*, however, obscures the continuities between Late Antiquity and the Muslim era and essentializes Islam, fixing it as one precise system created in a stroke as the polar opposite of its precursor. Since Islam’s tenants and practices evolved during its early centuries (and continue to do so up to this very day), the idea of *al-Jāhiliyya* can be expected to have developed in Muslim imaginations, too. The pluriform Muslim visions of pre-Islam, its place in Islamic history, and the extent to which *al-Jāhiliyya*’s associations reflect the world from which Islam emerged are the subject of my current research. In this paper, I focus on one specific aspect and trace the contours of *al-Jāhiliyya* in *ḥadīth*. By comparing references to *al-Jāhiliyya* and the construction of pre-Islamic time in Ibn Abī Shayba’s “pre-canonical” *al- Muṣannaf* with the later “canonical” corpus, I demonstrate how the use of Arabian pre-Islam and its association with Prophet Muḥammad changed over time in the discourse of Abbasid *ḥadīth* scholars of the third/ninth century.

Mohsen Zakeri

Title: *Athqalū min wāshin ‘alā ‘āshiqi*, Heavier than a slanderer on a lover: The *thuqalā’*, “the insufferable,” vs. the *ẓurafā’*, “the raffiné”

Al-Washshā’s (d. 325/937) book *al-Muwashshā* is the quintessential source for the concept of *ẓarf*, defined as, e.g., “refinement, wit, elegance, politeness, courtesy,” and *ẓarīf* (pl. *ẓurafā’*) as “aesthete, bon vivant,” among others. The antithesis, *thaqīl* (pl. *thuqalā’*), “the insufferable, unbearable, abominable,” has hardly attracted interest in western studies, though Arabic literature of especially the Abbasid period include a good number of (chapters of) books on the subject. An important independent work is *Dhamm al-thuqalā’*, “Censure of the insufferable people,” (ed. Köln 1999), written by Muḥammad b. Khalaf b. al-Marzubān (210-309/825-921), a contemporary and acquaintance of al-Washshā. Numerous quotations on the *thuqalā’* from Ibn al-Marzubān in the literature suggest that the edited text is defective. Nonetheless, the work allows us to create a catalogue of social behavior and values current at the time. The *thuqalā’* (in Persian *ḡirān-jānān*) are indiscreet, show no reservation or prudence, and are indiscrete up to a point that they are not welcome at the gathering of friends. Frequent use of diverse metaphors in proverbs about the *thuqalā’* are a good indication of people’s concern about disagreeable social conduct. The meaning of *ẓarf* and *adab* overlap in several ways, and he who has *adab* is a *ẓarīf*, whereas he who lacks *adab* is a *thaqīl*. In this context, *adab* is not

a set of moral values, but rather social etiquette, associated with *muruwwa*. The concept of *muruwwa* covers a broad range of noble qualities and behavioral traits required from the *ẓarīf* and to be avoided by the *thaqīl*. It is the subject of another book written by Ibn al-Marzubān (*al-Muruwwa* , ed. Beirut 1999), a perfect complement to his *Dhamm al-thuqalā*².



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