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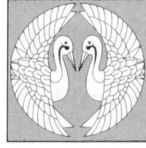
### Front cover:

“The Holy Family with Attendants”, *Muraqqa’* (E 14) in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, Lucknow school, mid-18th century, fragment of folio 91a, 10.0×13.3 cm. Watercolour, gouache.

### Back cover:

“The Madonna Praying before the Crucifix” (top left), “The Madonna of St. Luke” (top right) and “Ibrāhīm ibn Adham and Angels” (bottom), *Muraqqa’* (E 14) in the collection of the St. Petersburg Branch of the Institute of Oriental Studies, attributed to Manohar Dās, Mughāl school, ca. 1590—1595, folio 53a. Sizes: 6.0×7.2 cm, 2.8×5.8 cm, 14.8×19.5 cm. Watercolour, ink and gold on paper.

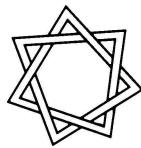
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# TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

D. Kimmage

## SŪRA 106 IN TAFSĪRS: QUR'ĀNIC COMMENTARY AS A HISTORICAL SOURCE

The original Arabic text of the one-hundred-sixth *sūra* of the Qur'ān, the "Quraysh", consists of a mere eighteen words: *Li-īlāf Quraysh, ilāfihim riḥlat al-shitā' wa-l-ṣayf, fa-l-ya'budū rabb hādha al-bayt, al-ladhī aṭ'amahum min jaw' wa-āmanahum min khawf*, which can be translated as follows: "For the *īlāf* of the Quraysh, their *īlāf* of the journeys in summer and in winter, worship the Lord of this House, who fed them when they were hungry and who delivered them from fear". I have left the term *īlāf* untranslated here; the dispute surrounding its meaning will be discussed later. In their efforts to clarify the meaning of those eighteen words, Qur'ānic commentators produced many pages of exegesis. The *sūra* itself represents the tip of an inverted pyramid of exegetical writing that spans hundreds of years and encompasses a variety of important issues. I will survey a stratified section of that pyramid, analysing the works of four major commentators in the hope of charting the evolution of exegetical discourse and evaluating the usefulness of *tafsīr* as a historical source.

The comparative analysis will concentrate on Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1144), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209), and al-Qurṭubī (d. 1272). These commentators were selected for no reason other than that each wrote several pages of commentary on the four lines of *sūra* 106 and that their lives encompass a period of roughly four hundred years. Each commentator's approach will be evaluated individually before an overview of exegetical discourse — as represented by this small sample, of course — is presented.

The ambitious goal of appraising Qur'ānic commentary as a source of information about historical events was inspired by Patricia Crone's comments on the ambiguities of *tafsīr* in "Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam". The commentators relate the content of *sūra* 106 to various facts about the tribe of Quraysh (their trading practices, in particular). In her chapter on sources, Crone exposes the many contradictions in the commentaries. After a barbed summary of the ensuing confusion, she concludes that the exegetical tradition is unreliable as a historical source, saying that "it is ... clear that the exegetes had no better knowledge of what this *sūra* meant than we have today" [1]. In

reference to a specific event, she concludes that "what the sources offer are fifteen equally fictitious versions of an event that never took place" [2]. If Crone's assertion about the unreliability of the sources is correct, the implications for the writing of Islamic history are clearly troubling.

The debate on the historicity of the sources for early Islamic history lies beyond the scope of this paper. An attempt will be made, however, to see whether Patricia Crone's dismissal of *sūra* 106 and its attendant commentaries as historical sources is justified. Crone reads the *tafsīr* as a modern scholar in search of hard facts; awash in contradictions, she finds it wanting and rejects it, concluding that the *tafsīr* does not contain any reliable factual information. Is it possible, however, to weigh it on a different scale?

In "Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory", Jacob Lassner discusses the changes that have taken place in the reading of texts over time [3]. He notes that while the modern reader, confronted by vast numbers of books, reads **extensively**, readers of an earlier age read **intensively**. The pre-modern author embedded myriad subtleties in his text, confident that the reader would unearth them through painstaking scrutiny. "The reading of the text became an intricate game that succeeded in delighting as well as tantalizing each and every player" [4].

As the product of a different age and intellectual climate, the twenty-first-century scholar is left with a variety of imperfect approaches to the interpretation of pre-modern Arabic texts. Borrowing a term from geology, Lassner advances the idea of "establishing the stratigraphy of a text" in order to "impose a semblance of chronological order on multi-layered traditions" [5]. That idea will be applied here to the above-mentioned commentaries on *sūra* 106 in the hope of excavating from those texts a mechanism for better apprehending their contents. Perhaps a deeper understanding of the texts' internal dynamics can parry the revisionists' assertion that *tafsīr* is useless as a historical source. And even if a stratigraphy of the *tafsīr* does not provide convincing grounds for its rehabilitation as a historical source, it can certainly bear fruit in the elucidation of Islamic intellectual history.

## I. The *sūra*

Before turning to the individual commentaries on the *sūra* quoted at the beginning of this paper, I will outline the basic issues addressed in those commentaries. Some of them are questions naturally arising from the content of the verse: what were the destinations of the journeys and why were they undertaken, what is “this House,” why did the Quraysh suffer from hunger and fear. Other issues are linguistic: what is the function of the introductory particle *li*,

how does it affect the meaning of the word “worship” later on in the verse, what is the precise meaning of the word *ilāf*, and what is the origin of the term Quraysh. Throughout, the commentators tend to treat these issues not simply as questions to be answered, but as points of departure for wide-ranging discussions of broader themes, or as opportunities to introduce their readers to the spectrum of thought within the Islamic community on each individual matter.

## II. The commentators

**1. Ṭabarī.** Abū Ja'far al-Ṭabarī was born in approximately 838. Although his family was from a remote section of Persia, he spent most of his life in Baghdad, the intellectual centre of the Muslim world at the time. He was a prolific scholar who wrote a history of the world as well as a multi-volume work of *tafṣīr*. He is credited with having drawn together in his commentary nearly two centuries of exegesis. Jane McAuliffe describes his basic approach as “commensensical,” adding that Ṭabarī had “very little patience for those who strayed too far from the literal sense” [6]. In his commentary on *sūra* 106, Ṭabarī concerns himself with the following questions: the meaning of the term *ilāf*, the function of the introductory *lām* in the Arabic text (and the attendant issue of whether the *sūra* should be read in conjunction with the preceding verse), the precise nature of the journeys in summer and winter, and the details of the hunger and fear from which the Quraysh were delivered by the “Lord of this House”.

Ṭabarī opens his commentary on the verse with a somewhat technical question — variant readings of the term *ilāf*. He agrees with the majority opinion that the first occurrence should be read as *li-ilāf*, yet he reads the second occurrence as *ilfihim* rather than *ilāfihim* [7]. The point is not entirely technical — *ilāf* is the *maṣḍar* of a fourth-form verb; *ilf* is the first-form *maṣḍar*. The fourth form is causative, and its use here implies that some agent caused the Quraysh to undertake a journey in the summer and winter; the first-form *maṣḍar* preferred by Ṭabarī conveys simply that the Quraysh journeyed regularly in the summer and winter.

Ṭabarī supports his variant reading of the second occurrence with a reference to ‘Ikrima [8] (d. 723). In addition to reading *ilfihim* for *ilāfihim*, ‘Ikrima reads *lita'alluf* instead of *li-ilāf* at the opening of the verse. Thus, Ṭabarī demonstrates a plurality of opinion among estimable authorities while at the same time buttressing his own reading. Furthermore, he cites a Prophetic tradition which states that the Prophet was heard to say *ilfahum* [9].

Ṭabarī's eventual conclusion is implied rather than stated, which is not surprising. After all, it is unlikely that his readers — educated speakers of Arabic — would have needed much additional explanation in order to grasp a grammar-based argument. His reading may be summarized as follows: the first occurrence of the term *ilāf* is a fourth-form *maṣḍar*, the second (read by him as *ilf*) is a first-form *maṣḍar*; both are derived from the root *ʿlf*. The first usage is causative; the second is not.

But before attempting to discern the meaning of the verse, a brief digression is necessary to determine Ṭabarī's

interpretation of the introductory *lām*. A *lām* can mean several things at the beginning of a sentence — “for” and “marvel at” are the two most likely meanings in this context. Ṭabarī's conclusion here is clearly stated: “My reading of the passage is correct, for it is said that this *lām* is used in the sense of wonderment” [10]. The *lām* of wonderment: Marvel at the *ilāf* of the Quraysh. Following Ṭabarī, we may therefore understand the meaning of the opening line as “Marvel at the *ilāf* of the Quraysh, their *ilf* of the journey in the winter and the summer”.

A great deal has been written about the confusion surrounding *ilāf* and its meaning. If, however, we use the simplest meanings of the root for the first and fourth forms provided in the *Lisān al-ʿarab*, we obtain the following: *alifa* means *lazima*, “to stick to, frequent”, as in “someone frequented this place” [11]; the fourth form is purely causative [12]. Lane translates the first form as “he kept, or claved to it... he frequented it... he became familiar with it” [13]. Updating Lane's usage, we arrive at “get used to”. The causative fourth form becomes simply “to make [someone] get used to [something], cause [someone] to keep doing [something]”. If one assumes that God is the implied agent of causation in the verse, a literal, if decidedly inelegant, English translation runs as follows: “Marvel at God's accustoming of the Quraysh, at their being accustomed to a journey in the winter and in the summer”.

Both Lane and the *Lisān al-ʿarab*, however, list multiple meanings for the fourth-form *maṣḍar*. The most detailed discussion is dedicated to the use of the term in the sense of a covenant of protection during a journey. The *Lisān*, citing Ibn al-ʿArabī (767–846), a Kufan philologist, explains that four brothers of the Quraysh tribe were the bearers of this covenant: “The holders of the *ilāf* were four brothers... they would organize the protection and would follow one another, guarding the Quraysh and their provisions; they were called the protectors” [14]. Ṭabarī, who demonstrates great sensitivity to linguistic nuances throughout his commentary, does not mention this secondary meaning, and it seems therefore reasonable to assume that he interpreted the root in its basic sense of “becoming used to”. As for the journeys, Ṭabarī provides a string of *isnāds* and *matns* about their purpose and destination. Because the passage is a classic example of Ṭabarī's method of textual presentation, it will be analysed here at some length in an attempt to clarify the author's intent in the absence of any obvious authorial comment. The entire passage is reproduced in Appendix.

Ibn ʿAbbās is cited to the effect that the journey was a necessity (*luẓūmuḥum*). The next *matn*, also attributed to

Ibn 'Abbās, states that the journey was forbidden to the Quraysh, presumably by God, and that they were ordered to worship the Lord of this House [15]. To this end, God provided them with food and freed them from fear; consequently, they were able to make journeys of their own volition rather than out of necessity [16]. A number of *isnāds* with curt *matns* follow. 'Ikrima explains that the Quraysh frequented Busra and Yemen before they were ordered to settle in Mecca. Abū Šālih says only that they were traders and that God knew of their love for al-Shām. Qatāda affirms that they travelled in the winter and in the summer. al-Ḍaḥḥāk seconds Qatāda. The next two *matns* (presumably attributed to al-Ḍaḥḥāk since no new *isnād* is introduced) make a grammatical point and fix the destinations of the journeys as Syria in the summer and Yemen in the winter, a view supported by Ibn Zayd. Sufyān says they were traders. Al-Kalbī reaffirms the aforementioned destinations. Finally, Ibn 'Abbās has the Quraysh wintering in Mecca and summering in al-Ṭā'if.

The passage consists of twelve pieces of information with source references. Although Ṭabarī does not comment directly on the veracity of the information he presents, the author's presence can be detected in two facets of the text — its organization and its sources. The twelve *matns* are not in random order; when read as a structured text, they form a coherent account of a shift in Qurayshi trade occasioned by the appearance of Islam. Originally, they traded out of necessity, driven by hunger and beset by fear. God freed them from that necessity, giving them the opportunity to continue trading of their own volition. The remainder of the text clarifies the destination of their journeys, explicates the grammar of the Qur'ānic verse, and finally provides the starting points for their journeys.

On the issue of the fear and hunger from which the Quraysh were delivered, Ṭabarī lists the possible culprits: raids, wars, and leprosy. Faced with scant evidence, he comes to the sensible conclusion that the text should be accepted as saying exactly what it says and nothing more:

"For one's enemy is feared and leprosy is feared, yet God did not specify whether he delivered them from their enemy and not leprosy or from leprosy and not their enemy. His words are general in this respect. The correct interpretation is that the passage is all-encompassing, as is the glory of his commendation, for it is said that he delivered them from both hardships" [17].

If we restate the issues touched upon in the verse as questions, we find that Ṭabarī has provided a clear-cut answer to only one of them — he states unequivocally that the *lām* indicates wonderment at the miraculous blessings bestowed upon the Quraysh by God, not a connection with the previous *sūra*. On the meaning of *ilāf*, the precise nature of the journeys, and the hunger and fear, he is not nearly as clear. His grammar-based argument on the *ilāf* implies that the Quraysh received some sort of divine assistance that allowed them to conduct their trading journeys in relative security. Yet the exact nature of the journeys remains elusive, and the fear and hunger mentioned at the end of the *sūra* are left at face value. Despite these ambiguities, it seems reasonable to infer conclusions from the text when possible, as was done above in the discussion of the journeys.

**2. Zamakhsharī.** Abū al-Qāsim al-Zamakhsharī was born in 1075. His *tafsīr* is "among the most noted and most quoted of Qur'anic commentaries" [18]. His approach differs from Ṭabarī's in that he was an adherent of the Mu'tazilite school. His commentary is a fine example of *al-tafsīr bi-l-ra'y* — interpretation through opinion — as opposed to the more traditional *al-tafsīr bi-l-ma'thūr* — interpretation through received tradition. Much of Zamakhsharī's commentary is based on the explication of grammatical points with references to classical poetry.

Zamakhsharī's commentary on *sūra* 106 opens with an assertion that the opening phrase, *li-ṭilāf* Quraysh, is linked to the ensuing injunction to worship the "Lord of this House". He adds that even if the Quraysh remained impassive in the face of countless other blessings of Allah, they should have been moved to worship Him by this single boon — the *ṭilāf* of the two journeys. Zamakhsharī also notes that the introductory *lām* indicates wonder: "And it has been said that the meaning is 'marvel at the *ṭilāf* of the Quraysh'" [19].

On the subject of whether or not the *sūra* is connected to the preceding verse, Zamakhsharī introduces a concept from poetry: "This resembles the principle of linked content (*manzalat al-tadwīn*) in poetry, where the meaning of a verse is connected to the verse that precedes it in such a way that it cannot be understood independently" [20]. In addition to the idea of linked content, he cites Ubayy's version of the Qur'ān [21], in which the two *sūras* are printed as one, and 'Umar, who read the two *sūras* as one in the prayer at sunset. Since the only evidence Zamakhsharī presents supports a connection between the two *sūras*, one must assume that the author believed that they were, indeed, connected.

Zamakhsharī briefly discusses *sūra* 106 in light of the preceding *sūra*, which describes the destruction of an army headed by the "lords of the elephant". The "lords of the elephant" are commonly interpreted as having directed their campaign against Mecca [22]; the Quraysh were the caretakers of the Meccan *ḥarām*, and consequently enjoyed Allah's protection: "They were secure in their journeys, for they are the people of the shrine of Allah and the caretakers of his House" [23]. Zamakhsharī mentions in passing that, thanks to this divine protection, the Quraysh were able to travel without fear to Yemen in the winter and Syria in the summer.

On the meaning of the term *ilāf*, Zamakhsharī quotes a line of poetry: *Min al-mu'liḥāt al-raḥw ghayr al-awārik* [24]. This rather confusing line apparently refers to the attributes of a camel — *mu'liḥāt* is absent in Lane; a footnote to Zamakhsharī [25] compares it to the word *mu'tād* and interprets the phrase as a description of a she-camel with a swift, light gait. Zamakhsharī then provides several variant readings of *ilāf* followed by another quote from the poetry, a satirical verse mocking those who would liken themselves to the Quraysh. The verse states that the Quraysh possess *ilf*, while others do not. Lane attributes it to Musāwir Ibn-Hind, a minor, eighth-century Kufan poet, and interprets the term *ilf* as "the safeguard of God" [26].

Zamakhsharī's final comment on *ilāf* is to quote 'Ikrima's variant reading of the *sūra*'s opening line, where *li-ṭilāf* is read as *li-ya' lafa*. Ṭabarī also cites 'Ikrima, although he reads *li-ta'alluf* in place of *li-ya' lafa* (probably a consequence of orthographical imprecision). What, then, does *ilāf* mean in Zamakhsharī's commentary? Once again,

in the absence of additional clarification from the commentator, I would opt for the most obvious reading. The implication of the second poetic excerpt is that *ilāf* is some sort of blessing or safeguard related to Qurayshi trading journeys.

Zamakhsharī then turns to the genealogy of the Quraysh and the origins of their name. He traces their heritage to al-Naḍr ibn Kanāna and states that their name is derived from *qirsh*, a shark. Zamakhsharī tells how Mu'āwiya asked Ibn 'Abbās about the Quraysh; the latter replied with a line of poetry: "For the Quraysh are dwellers of the deep from which the Quraysh derive their name" [27]. Another possibility is that the Quraysh acquired their predatory name because of their success as traders and their ability to turn a profit: "For they profited from their trading..." [28].

Zamakhsharī makes a few minor grammatical points — *rihla* has been read as *ruhla* ("destination"); *khawf* and *jaw'* appear without the definite article in order to underscore their intensity — and then concludes his commentary with a few remarks on the fear and hunger from which the Quraysh were delivered. The fear is depicted as having several possible causes: the lords of the elephant, raiders, or leprosy. The only source cited is a prayer: "And this was all said in Ibrāhīm's prayer" [29]. The idea that the Quraysh feared the caliphate might pass to another tribe is dismissed as "one of the commentaries' spurious innovations" [30]. Zamakhsharī does not specify the cause of the famine afflicting the Quraysh but describes it as so intense that they were forced to eat carrion. Once again, the commentator provides his readers with a variety of possible explanations rather than a single orthodox interpretation. Interestingly, Zamakhsharī expressly discards the only interpretation with political overtones.

To summarize Zamakhsharī's interpretation of the verse: he openly states that the *ilāf* is a boon from Allah and implies that it means safeguard; he implies that the *sūra* is connected to the preceding verse; he briefly mentions that the Quraysh travelled to Syria in the summer and to Yemen in the winter; he explains the origin of the tribe's name; and he describes the intensity of the famine that gripped the Quraysh and the possible sources of their fear, discounting in this regard the loss of political power within the Islamic community as a cause for their fear. For the most part, his views are not buttressed with *isnāds* and

*matns*, but with excerpts from the poetry and grammar-based arguments.

There are a total of seven references (none of which contain *isnāds*) to sources other than the poetry: one to Ubayy and one to 'Umar on whether *sūras* 106 and 105 are connected; one to Ṭabarī and one to 'Ikrima on variant readings of *ilāf*; one to Mu'āwiya's asking Ibn 'Abbās about the origins of Quraysh; one to Ibrāhīm's prayer in the Qur'ān [31]; and, finally, a Prophetic statement on the benefits of reading *sūra* 106. These references complement and support Zamakhsharī's analysis without determining its structure and flow. In keeping with *al-tafsīr bi-l-ra'y*, his text consists, for the most part, of his own analysis.

**3. Al-Rāzī.** Rāzī was born in approximately 1149 in what is today Tehran. Although he travelled extensively in Central Asia, he spent most of his life in Herat, which is located in modern Afghanistan. He was man of passionate opinions and "intemperate irascibility" [32]. His *tafsīr* is notable for its organization as well as its content — the analysis of each verse is divided into issues (*masā'il*) which are then further broken down into various aspects (*wujūh*). Although his *tafsīr* is anti-Mu'tazilite and traditionalist, his interests were far-ranging, and his commentary is "packed ... with philosophical and theological erudition". McAuliffe notes that "the closest, near-contemporary Western parallel to *al-tafsīr al-kabīr* would be the *Summa Theologiae* of Thomas Aquinas" [33].

Rāzī's commentary on *sūra* 106 is quite extensive — he devotes eight pages of text to the verse's four lines. Consequently, this summary will be somewhat more perfunctory and diagrammatic than the two preceding summaries. I will analyze Rāzī's method of argumentation in detail with reference to his interpretation of the introductory *lām*; the remainder of his commentary will be treated in more general terms.

On the subject of the introductory *lām*, Rāzī isolates three main aspects of the issue (*wujūh*): the *lām* indicates a connection to the preceding *sūra*, or to the text that follows it, or only to the word *ilāf*. These three possibilities are systematically explored — an outline of the passage reveals several nested levels of argumentation. The entire eight-page text can be reduced to outline form quite nicely, as is indicated by the following representation of his opening lines:

I. General question of *lām*

A. Issue of connection to preceding *sūra*

1. al-Zujāj and Abū 'Abīda: *sūras* connected; possible objection to this claim
- a. refutation of objection

One can imagine the ease with which his students followed his lectures.

As the outline indicates, Rāzī first cites al-Zujāj and Abū 'Abīda to the effect that the Abyssinians were routed thanks to divine intervention for the benefit of the Quraysh: "God destroyed the lords of the elephant so that the Quraysh might prevail and continue to make their journeys in the winter and summer" [34]. He counters with three arguments the possible objection that the Abyssinians were routed simply because they were unbelievers. First, God reserves the punishment of unbelievers for the Day of Resurrection (*mu'akkhar li-l-qiyāma*); second, even if their unbelief led to their destruction, God can act with more than one purpose; and third, even if God smote them for

their unbelief alone, it is possible to view the Abyssinians' fall "for the *ilāf* of the Quraysh" because the Quraysh benefited from it even if that was not God's express intention in the matter. Having refuted this objection, Rāzī restates his view that the Abyssinians were routed for the *ilāf* of the Quraysh (for their benefit).

He then mentions the view that the *lām* is a contraction of *ilā* and that the *ilāf* is a blessing bestowed upon the Quraysh by God. Rāzī cites al-Farrā' (751–822) to the effect that all divine boons are equal: "A blessing of God is a blessing, and all blessings are equal" [35].

Rāzī then turns to various views on the issue of whether *sūra* 106 is connected to the *sūra* that precedes it, the *sūra* of the Elephant. While some have insisted that

they are independent of each other, Ubayy ibn Ka'b's text merges them; furthermore, 'Umar read them together in the evening prayer. Rāzī notes, however, that their related content does not indicate that they are one *sūra*. In fact, the entire Qur'ān reinforces and confirms itself throughout as though it were a single verse.

In the next paragraph, Rāzī asks why the defeat of the Abyssinians should be a reason (*sabab*) for the *ilāf* of the Quraysh. Noting that the lack of agriculture in Mecca made it necessary for the Quraysh to secure food and clothing through trade, he explains that as keepers of the *haram* they enjoyed the respect of the kings with whom they transacted business. Had the Abyssinians been allowed to ransack the *haram*, the Quraysh would have lost their prestige as the keepers of the shrine (*ahl al-bayt*). Consequently, God brought about the defeat of the Abyssinians so that the glory of the Quraysh would grow rather than diminish.

Rāzī then argues that the proof of a connection between the *sūras* lies in the fact that the injunction to worship the "Lord of this House" is an allusion to the preceding *sūra*, which describes an attempt to destroy that House. He concludes that "this shows a connection between the beginning of this *sūra* (i.e. *sūra* 106 — *D. K.*) and the preceding *sūra*" [36]. On the possibility of a connection to the remainder of the verse, Rāzī cites without comment the views of Sibawayhi (second half of the 8th century, d. ca. 796), the eminent Basran grammarian, and al-Khalīl (d. ca. 791), a grammarian with whom Sibawayhi studied, who asserted that the Quraysh are being urged to worship the "Lord of this House" as a sign of gratitude for the *ilāf*.

The discussion of the *lām* ends with the possibility that it is connected only to the word *ilāf*. Al-Kisā'ī (737—805), al-Akhfash [37], and al-Farrā' (751—822) are cited as saying that this is the *lām* of wonderment at God's having led the Quraysh from their former state of sinful idolatry to their current nobility. Once again, there is no authorial comment.

Clearly, Rāzī believes that there is a tie between *sūra* 106 and the preceding verse. He carefully investigates several justifications for this view and rejects those he finds unconvincing. Although dissenting opinions are presented at the conclusion of the section, their effectiveness is diminished by the bulk of the preceding material and by the author's support for reading the *sūras* in conjunction with one another. They are not rejected, however; nor is it inconceivable that the *lām* can perform all three functions.

Rāzī does not limit himself to intricate discussions of technical matters. As indicated by his comment on the essential unity of the Qur'ān as a self-reinforcing text, he is interested in the philosophical implications of his theological commentary. I will briefly discuss some of his philosophical digressions after a condensed summary of the remainder of his commentary on *sūra* 106.

After explaining the role of the *lām*, Rāzī analyses the *ilāf*, arriving at a meaning that combines "accustoming to" and "preparation for". He discusses the nature of the *ilāf* and the distinction between protection from harm and procurement of benefit in the framework of the tribe's relation to God. He discusses four possible origins of the name "Quraysh" — the shark, success in trade, tribal unity, and care of the shrine and its pilgrims. No aspect of the verse is left untouched — there is a discussion of the journeys, the nature of worship, the role of the house, and the hunger and fear from which the Quraysh were freed.

Two philosophical digressions merit special attention: one on the nature of the earth, the other on the metaphor of nourishment. In the first case, Rāzī explores the role of God's beneficence — the bestowal of food upon the Quraysh (*iṭ'āmuhum*) — when the earth has already been created for man: "He created for you all that is on earth" [38]. In response, he urges his readers to consider the things that make up the world beyond the satisfaction of their most basic needs. These include the stars, the heavenly bodies, the four elements, and the unity of the limbs amid the diversity of their forms and representations (*jumlat al-aḍ'ā' 'alā-khtilāf ashkālīha wa-ṣuwariha...*). Consequently, God's bestowal of food upon the Quraysh should not evoke obedience in the manner of animals, as cattle obey the master who provides their fodder, but sublime worship.

The most fascinating element of the preceding passage is that it betrays the influence of Greek philosophical concepts and a preoccupation with the deeper implications of religious commentary. McAuliffe writes that Rāzī was "conversant with the Islamic philosophical tradition as represented by, among others, al-Fārabi" [39]. Al-Fārabi (870—950) wrote commentaries on Plato and Aristotle, and it is perhaps through him that we encounter Platonic and Aristotelian imagery in Rāzī's commentary on *sūra* 106.

Finally, in a passage on the view that God brought security to the Quraysh by introducing them to Islam, Rāzī notes that before the arrival of the Prophet, the people of Mecca were boorish and ignorant. It was Muḥammad's reception of the divine revelation that helped them to surpass the Jews and Christians in wisdom. Rāzī concludes that "the bestowal of food that nourishes the body evokes thanks, while the bestowal of food that nourishes the spirit is truly no reason for thanksgiving!" [40]. The greatness of God's beneficence is thus underscored by His willingness to bestow spiritual nourishment without any expectation of recompense.

**4. Al-Qurṭubī.** Qurṭubī begins his commentary on *sūra* 106 with a discussion of whether the *sūra* is connected to the verse that precedes it, dealing first with those who see a connection between the two *sūras* before turning to dissenting opinions. In support of a link, Qurṭubī cites Ubayy's edition of the Qur'ān, an *imām* who read the two *sūras* together, 'Umr al-Khaṭṭāb, the grammarian al-Farrā', and Ibn 'Abbās. In support of the opposing view, Qurṭubī notes that the two *sūras* are separated by the *basmla*, the traditional first line, and that the *lām* may be connected to the later injunction to worship the "Lord of this House". Qurṭubī cites al-Khalīl to the effect that the *sūras* are not connected. Finally, al-Kisā'ī and al-Akhshaf are quoted as saying that the *lām* is the *lām* of wonderment.

In the absence of direct authorial comment, the order of presentation and the authorities cited would seem to indicate Qurṭubī's endorsement of the view that *sūra* 106 is a continuation of *sūra* 105. Furthermore, he manages to link the two *sūras* without eliminating other avenues of interpretation, implying that the Qurayshi flight to Yemen in the face of Abrahā's onslaught helped to accustom them to the ways of the road: "Allah did this for the *ilāf* of the Quraysh, that they grow accustomed to journeying and that no one dare [attack] them" [41].

Qurṭubī turns next to a discussion of various readings of the term *ilāf*, citing readings endorsed by Ibn 'Amir (*li-i'lāf*), Ṭabarī and al-A'raj (*li-yalaḥ*), 'Ikrima and Ibn

Mas'ūd's edition of the Qur'ān (*li-ya'laf*), and certain Meccans (*li-īlāf*), as well as the consensus reading (*īlāf*) put forward by "the rest" (*al-bāqūn*) [42]. Qurṭubī seems undisturbed by the divergent opinions — the point of the passage is not to indicate a single correct reading, but rather to convey the plurality of readings among estimable authorities. On the coexistence of contradictory opinions, Gätje writes that "for the later Muslim exegetes, the contradictions resolve themselves in part by the fact that differing interpretations are accepted alongside one another as admissible and correct" [43]. This acceptance of contradictory material characterizes much of Qurṭubī's commentary on *sūra* 106.

Qurṭubī then presents a number of explanations for the origin of the term Quraysh — it is derived from a root meaning "profit" (*taqrīsh* = *iktisāb*) and indicates that they were successful traders; or it points to their unification after years of dispersion (*iqṭirāsh* = *tajammu'*); or it is based on their role as caretakers of the Meccan *ḥarām* (*qarsh* = *taftīsh*); or it underscores their might by likening them to a fearsome beast of the sea, the shark (*qirsh*). Although the range of authorities cited is quite rich — ranging from poetic excerpts to Prophetic traditions — once again, no interpretation is singled out as demonstrably superior. The intent appears to be both to convey a range of opinion and to introduce anecdotal information that demonstrates the tribe's high standing in Arabian society.

Turning to the *sūra*'s second line, Qurṭubī treats, in turn, variant readings of the second occurrence of *īlāf*, the meaning of the term, the reason for the journeys, and their destination. As in previous instances, he does not establish a single orthodox interpretation, preferring instead to present a variety of opinions. Two aspects of this section deserve special attention — a specific definition of the term *īlāf*, and an extended story about the origins of the Qurayshi journeys.

In the section on Ṭabarī, I noted that both Lane and the *Lisān al-'arab* treat *īlāf* as a technical term referring to a contract of protection for a trading journey (see above). Citing al-Harawī "and others", Qurṭubī identifies four brothers as holders of the *īlāf* and defines *ālaḥa* as "to guard" [44]. He is quite clear on the last point, quoting al-Azhārī: "*īlāf* is protection with guards" [45].

On the origin of the Qurayshi journeys, Qurṭubī tells an engaging, if odd, story of deprivation. When a family was afflicted with extreme hunger, they would sequester themselves in a tent and prepare for death. This practice was called *i'tifād*, defined by the *Lisān al-'arab* as follows: "When a man shuts himself in and requests nothing until he dies from hunger" [46]. 'Amrū b. 'Abd Mināf, a Qurayshi leader, had a son, Asad, who played with a boy from an impoverished family. When his playmate warned Asad that his family was about to undertake the *i'tifād*, a tearful Asad ran to his mother, who obligingly passed some food along to the starving family. When 'Amrū heard of this, he gathered together his tribe, reminded them of their high standing as caretakers of the shrine, broke bread for a broth to feed the starving (thereby acquiring the sobriquet *Hāshim* — "he who breaks"), and organized two trading journeys — one to Yemen in the winter and another to Syria in the summer [47].

Having established the origin of the journeys, Qurṭubī turns to their destinations. He offers two possibilities, both familiar: that the winter journey was to Yemen and the summer journey to Syria, or, according to Ibn 'Abbās,

that the Quraysh spent winters in Mecca and summers in al-Ṭā'if. A line of poetry in support of the latter view is quoted before the commentator moves on to other issues. Once again, Qurṭubī states no clear preference for one interpretation over another.

Qurṭubī then isolates four issues and discusses each one in turn: whether the first word of *sūra* 106 is connected to what precedes it in *sūra* 105, the calendar, the seasons, and the interplay of Allah's blessings and the times of the year. Qurṭubī quotes a jurist — Abū Bakr b. al-'Arabī — and "others" in support of a connection between *sūras* 105 and 106 before launching into a discussion of the proper techniques of reading [48]. The commentator stresses the innate superiority of poetry to prose and the necessity of pausing at certain times to maintain the rhythm of the poetry:

"The Qur'ānic rhymes are among the beauties of poetry, and whoever makes them apparent by pausing reveals their beauty. Omitting the pauses hides their beauty and makes the poetry like prose, which fails to do justice to what is being read" [49].

Calendrical issues then occupy Qurṭubī for a time. He discusses the appearance of the Pleiades as a sign of winter's departure and summer's arrival, various intricacies of the Coptic calendar, the fact that there are two seasons rather than four, and, finally, the appropriateness of the Qurayshi journeys to the season in which they take place.

The brief discourse on reading shores up Qurṭubī's earlier hint that *sūras* 105 and 106 can be read in conjunction with one another, while the calendrical digressions embroider the journeys and their destinations with myriad details and justifications. The final line of the section underscores both the wisdom of and common sense of the journeys:

"[It is] possible that a man may move freely between two places at two different times, where each location is better (lit. more blessed — *D. K.*) than the other, as when one is in the north during the summer and in the south during the winter, like windows for ventilation and sackcloth to keep one cool and felt and *yānūsa* to keep one warm" [50].

Qurṭubī treats the injunction to worship the "Lord of this House" as a reminder of the countless blessings bestowed upon the Quraysh, among which the *īlāf* of the journeys should be the ultimate cause of their devotion to God. On the description of God as the "Lord of this House", Qurṭubī singles out for special mention His deliverance of the tribe from idolatry and His ennoblement of the Quraysh by appointing them keepers of the Meccan shrine. Thus, the Quraysh should accustom themselves to worshipping God just as they have grown accustomed to travelling in the summer and winter: *Ay li-ya'lafū 'ibādat rabb al-ka'ba, ka-mā ya'lafūna al-riḥlatayn* [51].

The final section of the commentary is devoted to the fourth line of the *sūra*, and opens with quotes from *sūras* 2 and 28 (see n. 31) on Ibrāhīm's prayer and the Meccan shrine. Qurṭubī then relates that the Meccans did not immediately accept Muḥammad's message, which caused the Prophet to call a famine down upon them. When the Quraysh finally accepted Muḥammad's message, God inspired the Ethiopians to load ships with provisions to feed the starving Meccans, whose land then began to bloom. The story is presented without sources or comment. Immediately after, al-Ḍaḥḥāk, al-Rabī, Sharīk, and Sufyān are



quoted as saying that the Quraysh were delivered from the fear of leprosy. Two other possibilities are that, according to al-A'mash, the Quraysh feared leprosy or, according to 'Alī, that they feared losing the caliphate. No interpretation is singled out as correct.

Qurṭubī's commentary is characterized by frequently detailed digressions — on the Coptic calendar and the constellations, for example — and elaborate stories — on the practice of starving to death in isolation. He does not pre-

sent *isnāds*, preferring to cite only the original source. Although there is a great deal of detailed information, much of it is mutually contradictory and some of it is entirely baffling; throughout, the contradictions are allowed to co-exist without authorial intervention. Although Qurṭubī does indicate his own opinion at one point — in a digression on the proper technique of reading poetry — the overriding impression is one of impressive erudition unalleviated by discriminating analysis or firm organization.

### III. Comparison

Because of the volume of text involved, an exhaustive comparison of the four commentaries lies beyond the scope of this study. Instead, I will concentrate on the authors' treatment of two specific issues — the meaning of the term *ilāf* and the destinations of the journeys. Although the small number of commentaries analysed here precludes the advancement of a bolder thesis, I intend to show in this section that there is a general trend toward greater elaboration in the later commentaries. This tendency is evident both in the commentaries on *ilāf* and on the journeys. The implications of this phenomenon will be discussed in the final section.

**1. The meaning of *ilāf*.** Ṭabarī presents six *matns* that deal directly with the meaning of *ilāf*: it is interpreted once as an indication that the journeys undertaken by the Quraysh were not difficult, four times as a blessing, and once as a sign of unity and amity among the Quraysh [52]. In the first five of the six *matns*, a complete *isnād* is provided; only the last item is ascribed to *ba'd ahl al-ta'wīl*.

Zamakhsharī devotes scant attention to the meaning of *ilāf*. He provides a rather basic definition based on the root — *ālāftu al-makān ūlifuhu ilāf[an]*: *idhā ālaftuhu, fa-anā mu'lif* — quotes a few variant readings (including Ṭabarī's), and cites two passages from the poetry [53]. No *isnāds* are provided.

Rāzī's treatment of *ilāf* is more detailed — he considers it a separate issue (*mas'ala*) consisting of three aspects (*wujūh*). The first issue concerns various readings based on the roots '*lf* and '*zm*'; the second presents the meaning as God's establishment of amity among the Quraysh and refers to a well-known prophetic tradition [54]; finally, he discusses the meaning put forward by the grammarians al-Farrā' and Ibn al-'Arabī — preparation and outfitting [55].

Qurṭubī begins by quoting Mujāhid to the effect that the journeys did not present special difficulties for the Quraysh [56]. He quickly moves on, however, to the tale of the four brothers who were the holders of the *ilāf*. Here, finally, we encounter the specialized definition of *ilāf* found in Lane and the *Lisān al-'arab* (see above).

**2. The journeys.** Ṭabarī's commentary on the journeys of the Quraysh, reproduced in Appendix and analysed in detail above, is a classic example of *isnād-matn* presenta-

tion. The basic conclusion is that the Quraysh travelled to Syria in the summer and to Yemen in the winter.

Zamakhsharī abridges Ṭabarī's conclusions, omitting the lengthy *isnāds*; he gives the same destinations, states that the journeys were undertaken to promote trade and obtain provisions, and adds that, as keepers of the shrine, the Quraysh did not have to fear raiders.

Rāzī embellishes this dry tale of commercial expeditions with details about the origins of Qurayshi wealth. He introduces the story of Asad's playmate and the practice of starving to death in isolation when afflicted by a lack of food. Qurṭubī reiterates the familiar destinations of the journey. In his discussion of their origin, however, the story encountered first in Rāzī appears with further embellishments.

**3. Conclusion.** The limited comparison conducted above highlights most of the major differences between the commentators. Ṭabarī is extremely straightforward — he seldom strays from issues directly tied to the text and presents his findings in the traditional *isnād-matn* format. Zamakhsharī is more concise — he illuminates a narrower range of opinions than Ṭabarī and does not provide full *isnāds*; he also sprinkles his text with frequent references to classical poetry. Rāzī is more elaborate — his commentary is intricately organized and bristles with philosophical digressions and detailed stories. Like Zamakhsharī, Rāzī does not provide full *isnāds*, preferring instead to cite only the original source. Finally, Qurṭubī is even more prone to bouts of story-telling than Rāzī, although he lacks the former's penchant for philosophy. At certain points, he provides full *isnāds*, while at other times he notes only the original source.

The basic progression is from limited commentary with fully indicated sources to heavily embroidered commentary with scant attributions. Ṭabarī employs relatively few technical terms in his *isnād*-laden text. Later commentators prune the *isnāds* even as they embellish their texts with new terms. The story of the Qurayshi practice of isolated starvation in times of deprivation is indicative of this trend. It is entirely absent in the two earlier commentaries, appearing for the first time in Rāzī; by the time Qurṭubī repeats the tale, he uses a technical term for the practice — *i'tifād*.

### IV. *Tafsīr* as a historical source

Referring to the commentaries on *sūra* 106, Patricia Crone flatly states that the "tradition says nothing that cannot be inferred from the text of the *sūra* itself" [57]. But drawing inferences from a text is not like extracting ore from the earth — there is no single scientifically perfected

method that surpasses all others in efficiency. The shifting intellectual climes of recent centuries have wrought numerous changes in what we infer from a text and how we infer it; the changes that have taken place since Ṭabarī wrote his *tafsīr* are far greater and more complex.

Consequently, the inferences drawn by Crone and Ṭabarī from a four-line verse of the Qur'ān are bound to conflict, but the sparks thrown off by their friction may cast a dim light on the chasm that separates the modern secular historian from the tenth-century Muslim commentator. And somewhere at the bottom of that chasm may lie the key to unlock the maddeningly elusive texts of Ṭabarī's age. So even if Ṭabarī tells us nothing other than what he infers from the text, he tells us a great deal.

What, then, does he tell us? In an attempt to find out, I will compare the architecture of his text to Patricia Crone's chapter on sources in which she so artfully demolishes *tafsīr* as a historical source. Her chapter is a fine example of concise, well-ordered, late twentieth-century academic prose. She clearly states her thesis at the outset, she buttresses it with twenty pages of meticulously documented examples, and then reiterates her thesis at the end with a brief comment on its implications. The form of her chapter dovetails perfectly with the expectations of her field. Whether or not her readers agree with her, the entire debate takes place within the current discourse of academic inquiry, and is perfectly intelligible even to her most dedicated opponents [58].

Ṭabarī's text does not fit so nicely into our labelled boxes. To begin with, the discourse of Qur'ānic commentary is relatively foreign to this writer, who is expressing his thoughts in terms more similar to Crone than Ṭabarī. Yet if we operate on the assumption that an organizational principle does indeed underlie Ṭabarī's text and that his text was written with the expectations of his readers in mind, something should emerge from an analysis of its component parts.

He does not begin with a thesis, nor does he close with one. Rather, he proceeds methodically through the verse, examining each phrase (and sometimes each word) in turn. For the most part, he presents the attributed views of others, venturing his own opinion at only three points in the commentary. He appears content to provide his readers with a range of conflicting opinions without always clarifying his own stand on a particular issue. Are there perhaps guideposts embedded in the text which would have clarified for his readers those sections which today seem hopelessly opaque?

In a text that consists almost entirely of attributed nuggets of information — *matns* and *isnāds* — the order of their presentation and the exact nature of their attribution would appear to be the only possible indications of the author's unstated opinion. In my analysis of Ṭabarī's commentary, I concluded that his section on the journeys (see Appendix

can be read as a coherent description of Qurayshi trading practices. That conclusion was based on the order of presentation rather than on the nature of attribution. A detailed study of the *isnāds*, with reference to any biographical information we may possess, is another way of approaching the passage. Recent work with prophetic traditions may provide useful techniques for the analysis of seemingly opaque *isnāds* [59].

Does any of this bring us closer to answering the original question of Quranic commentary's usefulness as a historical source? Despite my reluctance to answer a concrete question with an equivocating digression, I feel compelled to do so. Although this paper has delved into four texts that contain information about Qurayshi trading practices, there is scant evidence presented here to suggest that a revision of Crone's conclusion is either viable or necessary. Where did the Qurayshi *really* go in those summers and winters? On the basis of Ṭabarī, Zamakhsharī, Qurṭubī, and Rāzī, I cannot answer that simple question in terms that would satisfy a professional historian.

Still, I find Crone's wholesale rejection of the *tafsīr* as a historical source premature. While *tafsīr* should not be used as an independent historical source, this study has, I hope, demonstrated the possibility of working with the commentaries on their own terms rather than dismissing them for failing to fulfil our expectations. Translated into specific suggestions for the employment of Qur'ānic commentary as a historical source [60], my conclusions read as follows: (1) more detailed attribution and a comparative lack of embellishment render earlier texts preferable as sources, (2) all of the commentaries are governed by a sophisticated and **comprehensible** internal dynamic that can inform the modern reader of the author's opinion even when that opinion is not explicitly stated, (3) taken in conjunction with other sources and treated with the requisite caution, the commentaries can enrich our inquiries.

Finally, I refer the reader to Juynboll and Lassner for examples of how techniques suggested by the preceding conclusions function in practice. Juynboll's *isnād* analyses, cumbersome and time-consuming though they may be, can be applied to information presented in Ṭabarī just as easily as to prophetic *ḥadīth*. The textual analysis upon which Lassner relies for his insights into Abbasid propaganda can also have a clarifying effect on the frustratingly opaque *tafsīr*. I hope I have shown that the commentaries discussed in this paper merit fresh attention along the lines suggested above, and that Patricia Crone's rejection of *tafsīr* as a historical source is not the last word on the mysterious movements of those Qurayshi traders so many years ago.

## Appendix

### 1. Ibn 'Abbās → 'Alī → Mu'āwīya → Abū Ṣāliḥ → 'Alī:

in saying "their having grown accustomed to the journeys in the winter and the summer", He says: they [the journeys] were a necessity.

### 2. Ibn 'Abbās → Abū Ubayy → Ubayy → 'Ammā → Abiyy → Muḥammad b. Sa'd

"for the accustoming of the Quraysh", He forbid them the journey, ordering them to worship the Lord of this house. And they had enough provisions. Their journeys were in the winter and the summer, and they had no rest in the winter or in the summer. And so He delivered them from their hunger and their fear. They grew accustomed to journeying and travelled or remained in one place depending upon their desire, and this was one of God's blessings upon them.

|   |
|---|
| <p><b>3. 'Ikrima → Dāwūd → Ibn 'Abd al-A'lā → Muḥammad b. al-Muthannā</b><br/>the Quraysh had frequented Busra and Yemen, going to one in the winter and the other in the summer, "worship then the Lord of this House", and He ordered them to settle in Mecca.</p>                                      |
| <p><b>4. Abū Šāliḥ → Ismā'il → Sufyān → Mihrān → Ibn Ḥamīd</b><br/>"For the accustoming of the Quraysh, for their having grown accustomed", they were traders, and God knew that they were fond of Syria.</p>   |
| <p><b>5. Qatāda → Mu'mar → Ibn Thawr → Ibn 'Abd al-A'lā</b><br/>"For the accustoming of the Quraysh", it was the custom of the Quraysh to make a journey in the winter and in the summer.</p>   |
| <p><b>6. al-Ḍaḥḥāk → 'Abīd → Abū Mu'ādh → al-Ḥusayn</b><br/>"For the accustoming of the Quraysh", they had grown accustomed to journeying in the summer and in the winter.</p>  |
| <p><b>7. Ibid. (assumed)</b><br/><i>ilāfihim</i> is in the genitive case by ellipsis, as though the passage read "<i>li-ilāf Quraysh li-ilāfihim</i> [my emphasis] <i>riḥlat al-shitā' w-al-ṣayf</i>". As for <i>riḥla</i>, it is in the accusative case because it is the object of <i>ilāfihim</i>.</p> |
| <p><b>8. Ibid. (assumed)</b><br/>"Their journey in the winter and in the summer". The Quraysh made two journeys, one to Syria in the summer, and another to Yemen in the winter.</p>  |
| <p><b>9. Ibn Zayd → Ibn Wahb → Yūnis</b><br/>"Their journey in the winter and in the summer". They made two trading journeys: to Syria in the summer, and to Yemen in the winter. During the winter, Syria was too cold for them, and their winter journey was to Yemen.</p>                              |
| <p><b>10. Sufyān → Mihrān → Ibn Ḥamīd</b><br/>"Their journey in the winter and in the summer". They were traders.</p>   |
| <p><b>11. al-Kalbī → Mu'mar → Ibn Thawr → Ibn 'Abd al-A'lā → Sufyān → Mihrān → Ibn Ḥamīd</b><br/>"Their journey in the winter and in the summer". They took two journeys, one to Yemen in the winter, and one to Syria in the summer.</p>   |
| <p><b>12. Ibn 'Abbās → Sa'īd b. Jubayr → Ubayy → Khaṭṭāb b. Ja'far b. al-Mughīra → 'Āmir b. Ibrāhīm b. al-Aṣḥabānī → 'Umrū b. 'Alī</b><br/>"Their having grown accustomed to the journey in the winter and in the summer". They would summer in Mecca and winter in al-Ṭā'if.</p>                         |

### Notes

1. P. Crone, *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (Princeton, 1987), p. 210.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 220.
3. Although Lassner's comments are directed at historical treatises on the 'Abbāsīd revolution, I believe that his observations on changes in the reader's approach to the text can effectively be applied to Qur'ānic commentary as well.
4. J. Lassner, *Islamic Revolution and Historical Memory* (New Haven, 1986), p. 19.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 30.
6. J. D. McAuliffe, *Qur'ānic Christians* (New York, 1991), p. 44.
7. Abū Ja'far Muḥammad b. Jarīr Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-bayān* (Cairo, 1954), xxix, p. 305.
8. Unless otherwise noted, biographical information is taken from the most recent possible edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*.
9. Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, p. 305. The prophetic reading substitutes the accusative for the genitive. The genitive implies a repetition of the first phrase with the word Quraysh omitted ("For the *ilāf* of the Quraysh, [for] their *ilf* of the journey..."); the accusative implies a slightly different construction with the same basic meaning ("For the *ilāf* of the Quraysh, [as pertains to] their *ilf* of the journey...").
10. *Wa-l-sawāb min al-qawl fī dhālika 'indānā an yuqāl: inna hādhihi al-lām bi-ma'nā al-ta'ajjub*. See Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, p. 306.
11. *Wa-fulān qad 'alifa hādha al-mawḍi'.*
12. *Lisān al-'arab* (Beirut, 1972), i, p. 79.
13. E. W. Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984), i, p. 79.
14. *Aṣḥāb al-ilāf arba'at ikhwatin... wa-kānū yu'allifūn al-jiwār yutbi'ūn ba'duhu ba'dan yujīrūn Quraysh bi-miyarihim yusammawna al-mujīrīn*. See *Lisān al-'arab*, i, p. 10.
15. Ṭabarī, *op. cit.*, p. 307.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Wa-l-'uduww makhūf minhu, wa-l-judhām makhūf minhu, wa-lam yakḥṣu Allāh al-khabr 'an annahu āmanahum min al-'uduww dūna al-judhām, wa-lā min al-judhām dūna al-'uduww, bal 'amm al-khabr bi-dhālika: fa-l-sawāb an ya'umm ka-mā 'amma jull thanā' ihī, fa-yuqāl: āmanahum min al-mu'anniyyayni kilayhima*. See *ibid.*, p. 309.
18. McAuliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
19. *Wa-qīla al-ma'nā: 'ajjibū li-ilāf Quraysh*. See Jaddallāh Muḥammad b. 'Umar al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Kashshāf 'an Ḥaqā'iq Ghawāmid al-Tanzīl*, ed. by Muḥammad 'Ulayyān al-Madhkūr (Beirut, 1947), iv, 801.

20. *Wa-hādha bi-manzilāt al-tadmīn fī-l-shi'r*: wa-huwa an yata'allaqa ma'nā al-bayt bi-l-ladhī qablahu ta'alluq[an] lā yaṣīḥḥu illa bi-hi. See *ibid*.

21. Ubayy (d. 639) was a secretary of the Prophet who compiled an edition of the Qur'ān. See H. Gätje, *The Qur'an and its Exegesis* (Berkeley, 1976), p. 24.

22. According to tradition, *sūra* 105 (The Elephant) refers to an expedition against Mecca in 570 led by Abraha, an Ethiopian king. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, "Abraha", and also Gätje, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

23. *Wa-kānū fī riḥlatayhim āminīn li'annahum ahl ḥarām Allāh wa-wulāt baytihi*. See al-Zamakhsharī, *op. cit.*, p. 801.

24. *Ibid*.

25. *Ibid*.

26. Lane, *op. cit.*, i, p. 79.

27. *Wa-quraysh hiya al-latī taskun al-baḥr bi-ha summiyat Quraysh[un] Quraysh[an]*. See al-Zamakhsharī, *op. cit.*, p. 802.

28. *Li'annahum kānū kassābīn bi-tijāratihim*... See *ibid*.

29. *Wa-qila dhālika kulluhu bi-da'ā' Ibrāhīm*. See *ibid.*, p. 803.

30. *Min bida' al-tafāsīr*. See *ibid*.

31. *Sūra* 2, āyat 126: *wa-idh qāl Ibrāhīm rabb ij'al hādha balad[an] āmin[an] wa-razaqa ahlahu min al-thamarāt*... and *sūra* 28, āyat 57: ...*a-wa-lam numakkin la-hum ḥarām[an] āmin[an] yugbā ilayhi thamarāt*... M. Pickthall, *The Glorious Koran* (Albany, 1976), pp. 23 and 514.

32. McAuliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

33. *Ibid.*, pp. 63—9.

34. *Ahlaka Allāh aṣḥāb al-fīl li-tabqā Quraysh*, *wa-mā qad alifū min riḥlat al-shitā' w-al-ṣayf*. See al-Fakhr al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Cairo, s. a.), xxxi, p. 103.

35. *Ni'mat Allāh ni'ma*, *wa-ni'ma li-ni'ma sawā'*. See *ibid.*, p. 104.

36. *Fa-hādha yadull 'alā ta'alluq awwal hādhihi al-sūra bi-l-sūrat al-mutaqaddima*. See *ibid.*, p. 105.

37. "Al-Akhfash" is the cognomen of three grammarians: al-Akhfash al-Akbar (d. 793), who taught both Sībawayhi and al-Asmā'ī, and al-Akhfash al-Awsat (d. between 825 and 835), who was a pupil of Sībawayhi, are the two most likely choices in this context. See *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, i, p. 21 and Brockelman and Pellat.

38. *Khalāqa la-kum mā fī-l-'arḍ jamī'an*. See Rāzī, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

39. McAuliffe, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

40. *Thumma it'ām al-ta'ām al-ladhī yakūn ghidhā' al-jasad yūjib al-shukr*, *fa-it'ām al-ta'ām al-ladhī huwa ghidhā' al-rūḥ a-lā yakūn mawjib[an] li-l-shukr!* See Rāzī, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

41. *Av fa-ja'ala Allāh dhālika li-tilāf Quraysh*; *ay li-ya'lafū al-khurūj wa-lā yujtara'a 'alayhim*. See Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Aḥmad al-Anṣārī al-Qurtubī, *al-Jāmi' li-aḥkām al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1967), p. 201.

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 201—2.

43. Gätje, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

44. Qurtubī, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

45. *Al-tilāf*: *shibh al-ijāra bi-l-khafāra*. See *ibid*.

46. *Al-i'tifād an yughliq al-rajul bābahu 'alā nafsīhi fa-lā yas'al aḥad ḥattā yamūt jaw'[an]*. See *Lisān al-'arab*, iii, p. 295.

47. Qurtubī, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 206.

49. *Fa-thabita bi-dhālika anna al-fawāsil min mahāsin al-kalām al-mandhūm*, *fa-man aḥara fawāsilahu bi-l-wuqūf 'alayha fa-qad abda mahāsinahu*. *Wa-tark al-wuqūf yukhfi tilka al-mahāsin*, *wa-yushabbih al-manthūr bi-l-mandhūm*, *wa-dhālika ikhlāl bi-ḥaqq al-maqrū'*. See *ibid.*, p. 207.

50. ...*Jawāz taṣarruf al-rajul fī-l-zamānayn bayna mahāllayn*, *yakūn ḥāluhuma fī kull zamān an'am min al-akhar*: *ka-l-julūs fī majlis al-baḥr fī-l-ṣayf*, *wa-fī-l-qibli fī-l-shitā'*, *wa-fī-tikhādh al-badāḥnājāt wa-l-khaysh li-l-tabrīd*, *wa-l-libd wa-l-yānūsa li-l-daf'*. See *ibid.*, p. 208.

51. *Ibid*.

52. Tabarī, *op. cit.*, pp. 305—6.

53. Zamakhsharī, *op. cit.*, p. 801.

54. *Wa-allafa bayna qulūbikum fa-aṣḥaṭtum bi-ni'matihi ikhwān[an]*.

55. Rāzī, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

56. Tabarī contains the same quote, although he provides the full *isnād* where Qurtubī gives only the last two transmitters.

57. Crone, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

58. In "Meccan trade and the rise of Islam: misconceptions and flawed polemics", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, CX (1990), pp. 272—86. R. B. Serjeant dissects Crone's thesis and finds it wanting on virtually every level. Though he is incisive and convincing, I note only that his arguments display a somewhat disturbing tendency to buttress assertions about the distant past with reference to present practices in the Arab world, an approach for which "traditional" Orientalists have drawn much criticism.

59. For example, G. H. A. Juynboll's "Some *isnād*-analytical methods illustrated on the basis of several woman-demeaning sayings from *ḥadīth literature*" (*Al-Qantara*, vol. X, fasc. 2, Madrid, 1989). Both Juynboll's article and my own experience indicate that this approach is rather time-consuming.

60. I am assuming that the area of inquiry here is the early history of Islam.