

JULIAN BALDICK

The Iranian Origin of the *futuwwa*

1. *The problem*

The aim of this article is to show what has long been suspected, but never demonstrated; the Iranian origin of a most peculiar tradition within Islam: that of the *futuwwa*. The Arabic word *futuwwa* designates both an ideal and an institution: it is proposed here to render it by a neologism: 'young-manliness'. It is widely agreed that the Arabic term does not go back to the very beginnings of Islam, unlike the word *fatā* ('young man')¹. The expression *futuwwa*, when referring to an ideal, designates the qualities of the younger as opposed to the older man: generosity, impetuous valour, self-sacrifice². Thus it is to some extent a counterpart to the term *muruwwa* ('manliness'), which designates the characteristics of the more mature man³. But *futuwwa* (paradoxically, one might feel) is also seen as including *muruwwa* within itself⁴. In the same way, in ancient Iran, the warriors who belong from the beginning to the 'Jungmannschaft' of the people are the 'men' above all others⁵. Here we can see a first indication of the Iranian origin of the *futuwwa*. The word *futuwwa* is also used, when referring to an institution, to cover a type of organization: that of young men who live together before marriage; of fighters or outlaws; of an association of kings, princes and men of religion around the caliph al-Nāṣir (575-622/1180-1225); of members of Islam's main mystical movement, Sufism, and finally, of

¹ Claude Cahen, "Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l'Asie Musulmane du Moyen Age", in *Arabica* 5 (1958): 225-50 and 6 (1959): 25-56, 233-65 (the references here are to the separate page-numbering), p. 34.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4.

³ Cf. Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, vol. 1, Halle a.S. 1889, pp. 1-39.

⁴ Abū 'Abdullāh Muḥammad ibn Abī 'l-Makārim, known as Ibn al-Mi'mār, *Kitāb al-Futuwwa*, ed. M. Jawād et al., Baghdad 1958, p. 149.

⁵ Geo Widengren, *Der Feudalismus im alten Iran*, Köln 1969, p. 38.

on the pre-Islamic Iranian side; but now, after fundamental contributions by Geo Widengren¹⁵ and Marijan Molé¹⁶, it seems that a solution is long overdue. Various specialists have edited, translated and presented treatises on the *futuwwa* (*futuwwat-nāmas*, generally consisting of ethical and initiatory instructions): we shall list only the collection of Abdūlbāki Gölpınarlı and that of Murtaḏā Şarrāf and Henry Corbin¹⁷, and the edition by Muḥammad Ja'far Maḥjūb of Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī Wā'iz Kāshifī's large *Futuwwat-nāma-yi sulṭānī*¹⁸. This last has been the subject of a penetrating article by Jean-Claude Vadet, who also suspects an Iranian origin¹⁹. Finally, we must mention the brave but ill-fated attempt by Sp. Vryonis, Jr. to find the origin of the *futuwwa* in the Byzantine circus factions²⁰. This has been comprehensively disproved by the principal specialist in the study of these factions²¹.

3. The Islamic evidence

The demonstration which follows will concentrate upon the initiatory rituals of the *futuwwa*, as set out in the *futuwwat-nāmas*. But before we come to the texts of the latter, it is necessary, for their elucidation, to examine the evidence of the Muslim historians, notably in their references to the reform of the *futuwwa* by the caliph al-Nāşir. These say very little; but whereas it is conventional to deplore the brevity of historical sources, here this very brevity supports our analysis: only significant, remarkable elements are mentioned, and consequently, in repeating them, one avoids the charge of 'selectiveness'.

The historians of al-Nāşir's reform mention three elements: a) the cup of the *futuwwa*; b) the sporting activities of its members; c) the trousers of the *fityān* (pl. of *fatā*). The sporting activities consist of i) the sending of messenger-pigeons; ii) shooting pellets at birds, an ancient practice which, as is now realised, was long pursued in the Muslim world

¹⁵ *Op. cit.* (n. 5 above).

¹⁶ *Culte, mythe et cosmologie dans l'Iran ancien*, Paris 1963.

¹⁷ "İslām ve Türk illerinde Fütüvvet teşkilatı", in *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 11 (1949): 3-354; Şarrāf (ed.), *op. cit.* (n. 10 above). More recently Şarrāf has edited a volume of essays entitled *Āyīn-i jawānmardī* (Tehran 1363/1984).

¹⁸ [Tehran] 1350/1971.

¹⁹ "La *Futuwwa*, morale professionnelle ou morale mystique", in *Revue des études islamiques* 46 (1978): 57-90 and in particular 80-86.

²⁰ "Byzantine Circus Factions and Islamic Futuwwa Organizations", in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 58 (1965): 46-59.

²¹ Alan Cameron, *Circus Factions*, Oxford 1976, pp. 341-3.

with the adaptation of an ordinary hand-bow, and does not require a sling or cross-bow²². Both kinds of sporting activities are attributed to a previous caliph, al-Mustakfī (333-4/944-6), before his accension. Apparently, in his youth he had frequented the 'ayyārūn ('rogues', 'outlaws', synonymous, as Cahen has shown, with *fiṭyān*²³), and later continued to use their language: this was considered unsuitable, and was one reason for his deposition²⁴.

One aspect of the element of the cup is clear. It is drunk from in a ritual which was originally one of expressing obedience to a leader or master²⁵. In the new reform of al-Nāṣir it is to be drunk from to him²⁶. But what of the other elements? The solution is to be found by comparing the *futuwwat-nāmas* with their Iranian antecedents.

The sources mention different types of initiatory investiture: that of girding, 'shadd': binding the waist of the novice with a belt, girdle or cloth; and also that of dressing the initiate in the 'clothing' (*libās*), that is to say the trousers (*sarāwīl*) of the *futuwwa*. Taeschner observed that one can see a distinction between a first ritual, that of the *shadd*, after which the novice remains a novice, and a later stage of 'perfecting' (*takmīl*), which involves the trousers and in which the initiate is first allowed to drink from the cup (from which the fully initiated, rather confusingly, drink on the occasion of the *shadd*)²⁷. This distinction is, indeed, found in the texts²⁸. Let us concentrate upon the *shadd*, the 'girding'.

It has long been suspected that the *shadd* is Iranian in origin²⁹. One

²² *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², 4: 797 (article *ḵaws*).

²³ Cahen, *op. cit.* (n. 1 above), p. 51.

²⁴ Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Malik al-Hamadānī, *Takmila Tārīkh al-Ṭabarī*, Part One, ed. Albert Y. Kan'an, Beirut 1959, p. 182. The historians of al-Nāṣir's reform are (to note only the most important for our purposes): Ibn al-Athīr, *Kitāb al-Kāmil*, ed. C. J. Tornberg, vol. 12, Leiden 1876, p. 286; Ibn Abī 'l-Dam, *al-Ta'rikh al-Muṣaffarī*, MS Alexandria, Maktaba Baladiyya, No. 129B, fol. 212 (according to Muṣṭafā Jawād, in his introduction to Ibn al-Mi'mār, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), p. 52; Abū 'l-Fidā', *Tārīkh*, ed. J. J. Reiske, Hafniae 1789-94, vol. 4, p. 244; Maqrīzī, *Kitāb al-Sulūk*, ed. M. M. Ziyāda, vol. 1, Cairo 1934, p. 172. Cf. Hartmann, *op. cit.* (n. 8 above), pp. 92-108, and Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), pp. 54-69).

²⁵ Ibn al-Mi'mār, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), pp. 238-9, is clearly intent on imposing formulae which express obedience to God, and suppressing those which express obedience to a human master.

²⁶ Abū 'l-Fidā', *op. cit.* (n. 24 above), p. 244.

²⁷ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), pp. 80-1.

²⁸ Ibn al-Mi'mār, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), pp. 207-8.

²⁹ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), pp. 14-5.

naturally thinks of the Mazdean girdle, the *kustīg*, and turns to the important Middle Persian text thereon edited by Heinrich F.J. Junker³⁰. The Islamic literature of the *futuwwa* explicitly says that one should *not* use something resembling the *zunnār* – a word used to designate both the Mazdean *kustīg* and the *zōnarion* of the Christian monks³¹. However, in the Bektashi organization of Sufi dervishes, where the rituals of the *futuwwa* are to some extent preserved, we find the word *zunnār* used³². The invaluable work of Geo Widengren, *Der Feudalismus im alten Iran*, permits us to resolve the matter beyond doubt. Both the archaic materials preserved in the New Persian *Fārs-nāma* of Ibn al-Balkhī (composed at the beginning of the sixth/twelfth century) and the Sassanian bas-reliefs combine to show the significance of the belt as the symbol of obedience, a significance which it retains, explicitly stated, as its primary meaning for centuries in the *futuwwa*³³. To be sure, on the oriental side the belt has other aspects, as in Christian, European chivalry: it serves to hold the sword, and can symbolize chastity (though usually it is the trousers that symbolize this)³⁴. But in the East we do not have the same confusion in the sources as we do in the medieval West, where the ‘girding with the sword’, the ‘delivery of arms’ and the concentration on the belt as the symbol of chastity continue to muddy the picture³⁵.

Now the undoubted Iranian provenance of the *shadd*, an integral and important part of the *futuwwa*, does not, of course, suffice to prove the Iranian origin of the *futuwwa* as a whole. It has already been remarked that the element of the trousers must be Iranian, although this does not prove that the institution itself is from Iran³⁶. To prove this, one must find a configuration, articulation of elements or structure in the Islamic evidence, paralleled in pre-Islamic Iran. If we look at one text with manifestly archaic elements, a much clearer perspective is obtained.

The *Futuwwat-nāma* of Najm al-Dīn Zarkūb Tabrīzī (d. 712/1312–3) tells us that the members of the *futuwwa* belong to three classes: a) *qawlī*,

³⁰ *Der wissbegierige Sohn*, Leipzig 1959.

³¹ Thorning, *op. cit.* (n. 12 above), p. 145.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 30 and 144.

³³ Widengren, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), pp. 22–9 and Plate 7; Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārs-nāma*, ed. G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson, London 1921, p. 43.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27; Yaḥyā ibn Khalīl Burghāzī, *Fütüvvet-Nāme*, ed. Gölpinarlı, in *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 15 (1953–4): 147; Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *Riḥla*, ed. C. Defrémery and B. R. Sanguinetti, vol. 2, Paris 1854, p. 264.

³⁵ Cf. Keen, *op. cit.* (n. 11 above), pp. 7, 65, 67, 72–5 and 79.

³⁶ Cahen, *op. cit.* (n. 1 above), p. 72, n. 1.

'of the saying'; b) *sayfī*, 'of the sword'; c) *shurbī*, 'of the drinking'. The first is linked with Adam, the second with 'Alī, the third with Muḥammad. We are told that before Muḥammad the drinking was of wine: he replaced it with salted water. Milk may also be used³⁷.

Our author tells us that in the ritual three bindings for the loins are placed round the cup: one of wool, one of white cotton, and one of leather; because the waist of 'those of the saying' is bound with cotton, that of 'those of the drinking' with wool, and that of 'those of the sword' with leather. Cotton is associated with Adam, as the founder of agriculture and weaving. The reason why 'those of the drinking' are girded with wool is that Abraham girded Ishmael with wool when founding the Ka'ba at Mecca. The drinking, we are then reminded, is associated with Muḥammad. The men of the sword are girded with leather because it is suitable for their profession, as being both supple and firm. Our author now says that nobody except him has said all this before³⁸.

It is evident that 'those of the saying' are at the bottom of the hierarchy; 'those of the sword' in the middle; and 'those of the drinking' at the top. The drinking symbolizes mystical experience and knowledge³⁹; the wool is that of the Sufis, whose very name means 'wearers of wool'⁴⁰. Later, in the Ottoman Empire, in the tenth/sixteenth century, 'those of the sword' are seen as having the most difficult task: we may see here a later development, reflecting the increased power obtained by the military class in the Empire at that time⁴¹.

It is important to bear in mind that the lowest level, that 'of the saying', must also have been characterized by the wearing of the 'trousers of the *futuwwa*'. This text describes the ritual of clothing the disciple in these trousers and, like many others, repeats the famous adage: *lā fatā illā bi-sarāwīl* ('there is no "young-manly one" without trousers')⁴². Moreover, the text refers to the activity of Adam in growing cotton and weaving it to make clothing⁴³. Elsewhere in the

³⁷ Ṣarrāf (ed.), *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), pp. 187–91 of the text.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 191–2 of the text.

³⁹ Cf. Ja'far Sajjādī, *Farhang-i lughāt wa iṣtilāhāt wa ta'bīrāt-i 'irfānī*, Tehran 1350/1971, p. 285.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 359.

⁴¹ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), p. 450; cf. Halil Inalcik, *The Ottoman Empire*, London 1973, pp. 110–1 and 114.

⁴² Ṣarrāf (ed.), *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), p. 196 of the text.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 191–2 of the text.

literature of the *futuwwa* Adam is connected with making of trousers, in an interpretation of Genesis 3:7⁴⁴.

Consequently, we can describe the hierarchy as follows: a) at the lowest level, 'those of the saying'; this is linked with Qur'ān 7:171: 'And when thy Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed, and made them testify touching themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes, ..."'⁴⁵; trousers, connected with Adam, cotton and agriculture; the trousers, undoubtedly of Iranian origin, are explained as representing chastity, since they cover the genitals⁴⁶; b) at the intermediate level, 'those of the sword'; leather, as suitable for the warrior; 'Alī, seen above all as the wielder of the legendary sword Dhū 'l-Fiqār, notably in the well-known saying, often repeated in the literature of the *futuwwa*, 'There is no *fatā* save 'Alī, no sword save Dhū 'l-Fiqār'⁴⁷; it is doubtless this level which should be linked with the sporting activities of the *fityān*, activities to be seen as training for warfare; c) at the highest level, 'those of the drinking', who are specifically linked in our text with the cup⁴⁸; the cup being the emblem of sovereignty, drained in a gesture of obedience to a leader credited with knowledge; this draining of the cup also symbolizes mystical experience and knowledge; wool, and Sufism itself; Muḥammad and Abraham, the predecessor of Muḥammad at the Ka'ba.

Thus our tripartite arrangement is well-established. Some texts have only a bipartite division: 'of the saying' and 'of the sword'⁴⁹. This need not worry us: it may well be due to the reform of al-Nāṣir, and the consequent involvement of theorists alien to the real tradition of the *futuwwa*. In any case it can be seen as a natural development away from an original tripartite division: both 'those of the saying' and 'those of the sword' will be allowed to drink from the cup, and consequently there will be no need for a special class representing it⁵⁰.

The tripartition reappears, as observed above, in a work of the tenth/sixteenth century. There may be reflections of it in various obscure texts. The trio Adam-Abraham-'Alī is mentioned, with reference to the

⁴⁴ Nāṣirī, *Futuwwat-nāma*, ed. Taeschner, in *Der anatolische Dichter Nāṣirī (um 1300) und sein Futuwwetnāme*, Leipzig 1944, 11. 531-8.

⁴⁵ Ṣarrāf (ed.), *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), p. 187 of the text.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 196 of the text; Ibn al-Mi'mār, *op. cit.* (n. 4 above), p. 251.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 108 of the text.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 189-91 of the text.

⁴⁹ Cf. Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), p. 81.

⁵⁰ Ṣarrāf (ed.), *op. cit.* (n. 10 above), pp. 193-4 of the text.

history of the *futuwwa*, in the discourses of the celebrated mystic Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī (d. 644/1247?)⁵¹. In the eighth/fourteenth century we have, in the Turkish *futuwwa*-literature, a tripartite hierarchy: *yīğit* (young man)/*ahī* (brother)/*seyh* (elder); there is some confusion, because of the interference of the bipartite division just mentioned, but it seems reasonable to take the middle term as representing the fighting man, in between the novice and the elder⁵². In the tenth/sixteenth century we find what appears to be an obscure, archaic conditional curse: the master threatens the disciple, in the initiation, with the penalty of a) drinking poison, b) dying and c) having the earth cover his shame⁵³. We seem to have here a reflection of the threefold arrangement seen above: a) drinking from the cup, b) the fate of the warrior and c) covering the shameful parts of the body with the trousers. This tripartition may be reflected in part of another initiatory text of the *futuwwa*, in a passage preserved in manuscripts from the eleventh/seventeenth century onwards, which gave Thorning much difficulty. The candidate is asked, 'How many bridges have you crossed?' He replies, 'Three. The first, my carnal desire. The second, my strength. The third, my strict insistence'⁵⁴. In the course of the *shadd* the number of knots tied in the binding of the loins is usually, but far from always, three; a text of the eleventh/seventeenth century attacks the practice of tying three knots as being the '*shadd* of the *ghayba* (Persian: a thin strip of iron used in armour)'⁵⁵. But these obscure texts are not necessary for our purpose: the threefold division is firmly and explicitly set out in the text of Najm al-Dīn Zarkūb Tabrīzī, in parallel with the activities of the *fityān* as mentioned in the chroniclers. Other incidences of threefold patterns in the sources can be dismissed as arbitrary didactic devices or as expressions, overt or covert, of the Plotinian dialectic⁵⁶.

4. Iranian antecedents

The tripartition analysed above is clearly anticipated in various places in Mazdean Middle Persian literature, most explicitly in a text

⁵¹ Shams al-Dīn Tabrīzī, *Maqālāt*, ed. Aḥmad Khushniwīs, Tehran 1349/1970, p. 80.

⁵² Burghāzī, *op. cit.* (n. 34 above), pp. 124–30.

⁵³ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), p. 482.

⁵⁴ Thorning, *op. cit.* (n. 12 above), p. 232.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 142 and 151; 'Alī Akbar Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāma*, No. 74, Tehran 1341/1962, p. 404.

⁵⁶ For examples of the latter, cf. our 'Persian Šūfī Poetry up to the Fifteenth Century', in *Handbuch der Orientalistik* I, IV, 2, 2 (1981): 124–6.

presented and translated by Molé⁵⁷. The text concerns the 'three fires'. These are linked with a) the priests; b) the warriors; c) the agriculturalists. As regards these professions, we are told that all three are contained within each of the three. The priests, apart from their liturgical duties, fight as warriors against the Lie, and act as agriculturalists in preparing the sacrifice. The warriors, apart from their specialised duties, have liturgical obligations, and have to act like agriculturalists in preparing arms. The agriculturalists, in addition to their proper and liturgical actions, have to fight off thieves.

Thus the continuity of the tripartite configuration from the Mazdean, pre-Islamic past to the Islamic *futuwwa* is solidly established. Our demonstration is firmly anchored in the texts. It does not depend upon acceptance of the controversial views of Georges Dumézil. To him we do of course owe our inspiration in all that has gone before; but our proof is independent, and confirms and strengthens his arguments, while weakening those of his adversaries.

Let us briefly examine Dumézil's views. From 1938 to around 1950 they were stated as follows: Indo-European society was divided into classes according to three 'functions': a) sovereignty, with its aspects of religion and knowledge; b) strength, notably in war; c) fertility, with its agricultural and erotic aspects. From around 1950 onwards Dumézil's position was altered to a different one; the evidence did not prove that society was really so divided, but only that there was an ideology which presented this as an ideal state of affairs⁵⁸. My own feeling is that the materials show the existence of an ideology consisting of an articulation of these three *concepts*, but not necessarily the doctrine that society should be so divided. The presence of the doctrine outside the Indo-Iranian field, in which it was so strong, could be explained as a later borrowing from Iran⁵⁹. The use of the word 'function', however useful in the past, now seems to obscure the issue. But the evidence would appear to show, for the original Indo-European phase, a tripartite deontology: men have *duties* corresponding to the three concepts, duties to respect them properly.

Now if we return to the Iranian field, with the help of Dumézil, we find the explanation of the cup: among the ancient Scythians, as presented by Herodotus and Quintus Curtius, we see legendary objects

⁵⁷ *Op. cit.* (n. 16 above), pp. 453-4 (cf. also pp. 451-2, 455-7 and 459-67); *Pahlavi Nyāyish* 5. 5-6.

⁵⁸ Georges Dumézil, *Mythe et épopée*, Paris 1968-71, vol. 3, p. 338.

⁵⁹ Cf. C. Scott Littleton, *The New Comparative Mythology*, Berkeley 1982, pp. 73-4.

falling from the sky: a) agricultural equipment, b) an axe (or an arrow and a lance) and c) a cup, put in correspondence with the tripartition agriculture/war/religion; the cup, used in the cult for pouring libations to the gods, represents the religious⁶⁰. The cup is found today, in the folklore of the descendants of the Scythians, and the legends of their neighbours, as Dumézil has shown: it represents leadership and intelligence⁶¹.

Also on the old Iranian side, we must refer to the study of Andreas Alföldi, 'Königsweihe und Männerbund bei den Achämeniden'⁶². He begins by recalling Plutarch's description of the Iranian kings' ritual duties on their accession, supposedly laid down by Cyrus: the new ruler is obliged, after removing his robe and donning that worn by Cyrus before he became king, to a) taste a fig-cake, b) chew terebinth and c) drain a cup of sour milk⁶³. One is tempted to connect this with Dumézil's tripartite schema: the fig-cake would represent not only agriculture, but also pleasure (a part of his third 'function'); the terebinth-eating we know to be part of the arduous training of the young Persian warriors⁶⁴, and the cup would stand for religious sovereignty.

Alföldi continues by evoking Strabo's picture of the young Persians being hardened to the warlike life from the age of 5 to that of 24⁶⁵. The text of Strabo says of the Persian youngsters: 'These are called Kardakes, since they live on thievery; for "karda" means the manly and warlike.' The nineteenth-century editors of Strabo condemned this sentence as an interpolation: to them it seemed a most incommodious interruption of the exposition of Persian education⁶⁶. But the deciphering of a palimpsest has supported its authenticity. Besides, observes a twentieth-century editor of Strabo, such marginal observations are common in this author⁶⁷. To us it seems an archaic element, comparable, as Alföldi observes, to other traditions in the Indo-European field: that of the *latrones Romuli* at the Lupercalia, and that of the Spartans⁶⁸.

⁶⁰ Dumézil, *op. cit.* (n. 58 above), vol. 1, pp. 446-7; Herodotus IV 5-7; Quintus Curtius VII 8, 17-9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 463-6.

⁶² *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde* 48 (1952): 11-6.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 12; Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 3. 2.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13; cf. Widengren, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), p. 83.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-5; Strabo 15.3.18.

⁶⁶ Strabo, *Geographica*, ed. Gustavus Kramer, vol. 3, Berolini MDCCCCLII, p. 258.

⁶⁷ Strabo, *Geographica*, ed. Wolfgang Aly, vol. 4, Bonn 1957, p. 142.

⁶⁸ Alföldi, *op. cit.* (n. 62 above), p. 15.

It has also been objected that 'Kardakes' is the name of a people, different from the Persians⁶⁹. The name has been seen as connected with that of the Kardoukhoi⁷⁰. But there are counter-examples showing it to have been used to indicate professional soldiers in general⁷¹. In particular, the sentence agrees with a fragment of Aelius Dionysius, who says that the *kardakes* are not a people, but mercenaries; the Persian call everything manly and thievish *kardax*⁷². The Kardoukhoi are a people. The first part of their name appears also as *Gord-* in Greek and Latin (Strabo says that *Kard-* was the earlier, *Gord-* the later Greek form). This is partly because the initial indigenous sound had no equivalent in Latin and Greek⁷³. Some confusion has perhaps been caused by the fact that the Kardoukhoi were celebrated for their skill as fighters⁷⁴.

Widengren identifies the *kardakes* with the Middle Persian plural *kārdāgān*. This occurs in various texts, and is taken to mean 'migrants', 'tramps', 'wayfarers', 'travellers'. Sir Harold Bailey has seen, in the root *kār-*, a general indication of the 'mobile' as opposed to the 'settled' life, expressed in Old Persian *kāra-*, 'army', and Pahlavi *kārīg*, 'soldier', and *kārezār*, 'battlefield'. Émile Benveniste has observed that *kāra-* might possibly be linked to the name for the 'army' in the Germanic dialects: Gothic *harjis*, Old Icelandic *herr*, Old High German *hari*. This leads us to the old German marauding warrior bands, and their comradesly solidarity⁷⁵. It is of course necessary to bear in mind that the Greek text may be giving a false etymology. Thus one might perhaps be inclined to see, behind *karda*, Middle Persian *gurd*, 'hero'; cf. *gurdīh*, 'heroism', *gurdwār*, 'befitting a hero'⁷⁶, New Persian *gurd*, 'strong, brave, valiant; a hero'⁷⁷. In the text of the *Shāh-nāma gurd* and

⁶⁹ Kramer, *op. cit.* (n. 66 above), vol. 3, p. 258.

⁷⁰ Marcel Launey, *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques*, vol. 1, Paris 1949, p. 486.

⁷¹ H. Stephanus, *Thesaurus linguae Graecae*, vol. 4, Paris 1841, col. 960.

⁷² Cf. Aly, *op. cit.* (n. 67 above), vol 4, p. 142; Aelius Dionysius and Pausanias, *Fragmenta*, ed. E. Schwabe, Lipsiae 1890, p. 180, No. 222.

⁷³ *RE*, 10: 1934 (article *Kardoukhoi*); Strabo 16.1.24.

⁷⁴ Xenophon, *Anabasis* III 5.15-6.

⁷⁵ Widengren, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), p. 84; *Drakht ī Āsūrīg*, ed. and tr. Māhyār Nawwābī, [Tehran] 1346/1967, 1.18; W. B. Henning, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 13 (1949-50): 643, n. 2; *Bundahishn*, ed T. D. Anklesaria, Bombay 1908, p. 51, 1.11; Mihrdād Bahār, *Wāzha-nāma-yi Bundahishn*, Tehran 1345/1966, p. 229; Bailey, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies* 7 (1933): 79-80; Benveniste, *Le vocabulaire des institutions indo-européennes*, vol. 1, Paris 1969, pp. 111-5. I am extremely grateful to Elizabeth Tucker for her most kind advice on this problem.

⁷⁶ D. N. MacKenzie, *A Concise Pahlavi Dictionary*, London 1971, p. 38.

⁷⁷ F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, London [1892], p. 1079.

mard ('man') are sometimes connected and have sometimes been confused⁷⁸.

The sentence in Strabo, whoever composed it, and whatever the true etymology, corresponds to the later image of the *fatā*/*'ayyār*: brave young man/rogue, outlaw. It is doubtless this ancient combination of youth with thievery that produces markedly different indications, now of one aspect, now of the other, in the Islamic sources which refer to the *fityān*⁷⁹.

5. Further arguments

There are further arguments which confirm the thesis put forward above, although the correspondence already noted between the pre-Islamic Iranian traditions and the Islamic materials is in itself sufficient proof. These further arguments may be summarised under two headings: a) the geographical indications; and b) the un-Islamic character of the *futuwwa*.

A. The geographical indications

The early geographical distribution of the terms *fityān* and *'ayyārūn* is essentially Irano-Mesopotamian, corresponding to the extent of the Sassanian empire⁸⁰. The *aḥdāth* ('young men') of Syria do not seem, as Cahen observes, to possess the same organization or institutions⁸¹. In Sistan we find a dynasty of *'ayyārūn*, the Saffarids, and there is literary evidence of their anti-Arab and Iranian national feeling⁸², as well as indications that they are a continuation of a pre-Islamic Iranian military tradition⁸³. In Fars we find an early indication of a house for the *fityān*⁸⁴. The latter are particularly linked with Khurāsān⁸⁵.

Later, the *fityān* will be strongly implanted in Anatolia: but they will be so as part of the culture of heavily Iranicized Turks⁸⁶. When Ibn

⁷⁸ Fritz Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahname*, Berlin 1935, pp. 693-4.

⁷⁹ Cahen, *op. cit.* (n. 1 above), pp. 34-7 and 51.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 71.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁸² *Ibid.*, pp. 47-8; S. M. Stern, 'Ya'qūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment' in C. E. Bosworth (ed.), *Iran and Islam*, Edinburgh 1971, pp. 535-55. One will avoid following Stern in asserting that this shows the depth of Iranian national feeling in general.

⁸³ Molé, *op. cit.* (n. 16 above), pp. 451-2.

⁸⁴ Vadet, *op. cit.* (n. 19 above), p. 80.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 81-6.

⁸⁶ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), pp. 277-87; Cahen, *Pre-Ottoman Turkey*, London 1968, pp. 195-6.

Baṭṭūṭa, coming from North Africa, encounters the *fityān* there they represent a novel phenomenon for him⁸⁷. *Futuwwa*-literature is not composed in Egypt before the Ottoman conquest⁸⁸. On the other hand, in classical Persian literature we find the two long novels of the *jawānmardān*⁸⁹. In the Ottoman period, we are told that the practices of the *pīrs* (elders) of the *futuwwa* in Iraq, Khurāsān and Turkestan are different from those of the *pīrs* of Mecca, Medina, Syria and the other Arab countries⁹⁰.

B. The un-Islamic character of the futuwwa

This is well brought out by the uncompromising jurist Ibn Taymiyya (d. 728/1328): the institution does not belong to the canonical, established and codified Islam of the third/ninth century. It and its terminology are alien to the *sharī'a*. The spiritual pedigrees of the masters of the past, going back to Muḥammad, are fakes: they include manifestly non-existent persons⁹¹. Moreover, the un-Islamic nature of the institution is illustrated by the surprise and disapproval with which the Muslim historians treat al-Nāṣir's reform. He will be viewed with condescending amusement for his encouragement of sporting activities⁹², and dismissed as resorting to low company in a desperate attempt to shore up a declining dynasty⁹³. The initiative is presented as coming first of all from his boon-companions, not from the men of religion who collaborated in the venture⁹⁴.

Finally, the un-Islamic character of the institution will be demonstrated by its failure in Islam generally. Whereas the Sufi organizations founded around the same time were to flourish and last, the *futuwwa* of al-Nāṣir will not continue as a pan-Islamic bulwark of Islam. The decline is most evident in the *Futuwwat-nāma-yi sulṭānī* of

⁸⁷ Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, *op. cit.* (n. 34 above), vol. 2, pp. 260–5.

⁸⁸ Cahen, *op. cit.* (n. 1 above), p. 67.

⁸⁹ Farāmarz ibn Khudādād ibn 'Abdullāh al-Kātib al-Arrajānī, *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, ed. P. N. Khānlārī, Tehran 1347/1968; Muḥammad Bīghamī, *Dārāb-nāma*, ed. Dhabīḥ Ṣafā, Tehran 1339–42/1960–3.

⁹⁰ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), p. 521.

⁹¹ Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmū'a al-rasā'il wa 'l-masā'il*, ed. Sayyid Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, Part One, Cairo 1341/1923, pp. 147–60.

⁹² Maqrīzī, *op. cit.* (n. 24 above), vol. 1, p. 172.

⁹³ Ibn Khaldūn, *Kitāb al-'Ibar*, Bulaq 1284/1867, vol. 3, p. 535.

⁹⁴ 'Alī ibn Aḥmad al-Sakhāwī, *Tuḥfa al-aḥbāb*, ed. Maḥmūd Rabī and Ḥasan Qāsim, Cairo 1356/1937, p. 17.

Ḥusayn Kāshifī (d. 910/1504–5). There is a manifest loss of comprehension regarding the meaning of the rites⁹⁵, counterbalanced by a plethora of artificial explanations, the inauthenticity of which is most obvious in the arbitrary interpretation of the letters of the alphabet⁹⁶.

Thus the *futuwwa* either dissolves into Sufism, continuing in the Bektashi organization of dervishes, or, in Iran, in the Khāksār tradition⁹⁷; or it is fragmented into the craft-guilds⁹⁸; or it survives among the *lūṭīs*, the ‘tough guys’ of modern Iranian urban neighbourhoods⁹⁹; or it inspires, with its ideological force, the *zūrkhānas*, the traditional gymnasia still flourishing in Iran¹⁰⁰. But it shows itself unable to operate as a pan-Islamic institution. Only the name is revived, in Iraq during the Second World War, to designate an organization for giving youth pre-military training¹⁰¹. Thus we can account for the very great difficulty that the *futuwwa* has caused to modern historians of Islam: it naturally appears strange and impalpable to them because it is essentially Indo-European in origin.

6. Iran and the Indo-European field

The Iranian materials can be understood much better by means of comparisons with Indo-European examples. Stig Wikander, Widengren and Dumézil have already done the pioneering groundwork necessary for the study of the Iranian warrior in an Indo-European context¹⁰². But it is the work of Pierre Vidal-Naquet on the Greek side which seems most helpful for defining and understanding the role of the *fatā*/*‘ayyār*.

⁹⁵ Cf. Vadet, *op. cit.* (n. 19 above), pp. 63 and 88–9.

⁹⁶ Kāshifī, *op. cit.* (n. 18 above), pp. 27–8, 35–6, 106–8 and 121.

⁹⁷ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), pp. 406–7; Richard Gramlich, *Die schiitischen Derwischorden Persiens*, vol. 1, Wiesbaden 1965, p. 80. Willem Floor, ‘Guilds and *futuwwat* in Iran’, in *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 134 (1984): 106–14, observes that it is not clear whether the *futuwwa*-association known as the *Faqr-i ‘Ajam* (‘The Poverty of the Iranians’) in nineteenth-century Iran was part of the Khāksār organization, or just affiliated to it.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 408–23.

⁹⁹ Michael M. J. Fischer, *Iran: From Religious Dispute to Revolution*, Cambridge, Mass. 1980, pp. 140–2.

¹⁰⁰ I have not seen the dissertation of M. Sedigh-Imani, *L’institution du zurxāne a Téhéran dans les années 1920–1979*, Paris, mémoire de l’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, 1980; judging from the summary in *Abstracta Iranica* 4 (1981): 173, No. 635, it should be of great value for the study of *javānmardī*.

¹⁰¹ Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), p. 422.

¹⁰² Wikander, *Der arische Männerbund*, Lund 1938; Widengren, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above); Dumézil, *Heur et malheur du guerrier*, Paris 1969.

Vidal-Naquet establishes a dichotomy between a) the heavily-armed hoplite, the older, more mature man and b) the young, lightly-armed initiate, who operates by guile¹⁰³. Just such a dichotomy is shown in the long Persian novels of the *futuwwa*, as is observed by William L. Hanaway, Jr.: 'The 'ayyār must be a commando, a spy, a speedy messenger who is also clever with words, and a shrewd advisor to his prince. While the prince fights in public, the 'ayyār fights in private. The prince is brave, strong, and handsome, while the 'ayyār is agile, clever, and self-effacing'¹⁰⁴. Now it seems possible to reply to the question put in a recent article by Marina Gaillard on the long novel *Samak-i 'Ayyār*, an article which also concentrates on the opposition between the 'ayyār and the prince: which of the two is the real hero of the book?¹⁰⁵. The answer, of course, is that both must be the joint heroes, since this is the very essence of the ancient idea: the one is the necessary complement of the other.

Thus we are given an understanding of the significance of the sporting activities in the *futuwwa*: the sending of messenger-pigeons which permit a victory by intelligence rather than brute force; and the firing of pellets from a bow, which can be used by a clever young man, not yet in the full strength given by age. It may be recalled that in the classical Greco-Roman world and the medieval West to fight with projectiles fired from a sling or bow was considered to belong to the area of guile. This idea is alien to the Arabs and Islam¹⁰⁶.

As for the initiation, we need not imagine, as one might from reading Dumézil and Widengren's presentations of the Iranian materials in an Indo-European perspective, that the use of masks to disguise men as animals represented the ancient Iranian initiatory ritual for young warriors¹⁰⁷. There may well have been different rituals. Alongside the initiatory *test* (a confrontation with a masked figure), there was probably an initiatory *investiture*, such as we see surviving in the *futuwwa*.

¹⁰³ *Le chasseur noir*, Paris 1981, pp. 169-74 and 204.

¹⁰⁴ Introduction to abridged translation of Bīghamī, *op. cit.* (n. 89 above): *Love and War*, Delmar, New York 1974, p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ 'Samak-e 'Ayyār et Xoršid-šāh: héros réel et héros apparent', in *Studia Iranica* 14 (1985): 199-224. Cf. her book, *Le Livre de Samak-e 'Ayyar: Structure et idéologie du roman persan médiéval*, Paris 1987.

¹⁰⁶ *Encyclopaedia of Islam*², 4: 795 (article *ḵaws*).

¹⁰⁷ Dumézil, *op. cit.* (n. 102 above), pp. 138-9; Widengren, *op. cit.* (n. 5 above), pp. 16-9.

Passing to Irano-Roman comparisons, we must of course consider the *iuvenes*, the young fighting men of ancient Rome¹⁰⁸. The antiquity of their patron goddess, Iuventas, is guaranteed, as Dumézil has observed, by the archaic variant form Iuventa¹⁰⁹. Roman tradition puts her, with Terminus (representing the division of fields), alongside Jupiter in the pre-Capitoline cult¹¹⁰. Dumézil has linked this articulation with that of a god of sovereignty, Mitra, and two minor deities, Aryaman (representing entry into the community of men) and Bhaga (representing the division of goods), on the Indo-Iranian side¹¹¹. I am inclined to see these triple articulations as corresponding to the tripartite ideology, reflected in the interior of the first concept, as in the Middle Persian text mentioned above.

In a later period, we may observe that the *neoi*, the eastern, Greek form of the *iuvenes*, are most strong and curable in Anatolia, just as later on the *fityān* will be strongest and most enduring there¹¹². The *neoi* die out in the third century AD; we can rule out a direct filiation to the Syrian *aḥdāth* of the Islamic period¹¹³.

As for the *iuvenes* of the northern provinces, the speculation of Rostovtzeff seems convincing: the indigenous associations of Indo-European origin would have mingled with the Roman ones¹¹⁴. From this result, no doubt, medieval European chivalry was to emerge: our findings on the Iranian and Islamic side parallel the conclusion of Maurice Keen, that medieval European chivalry was not essentially Christian in character¹¹⁵, and echo the work of Georges Duby, who follows the transition from the tripartite ideology reconstructed by Dumézil to that of the 'three orders' in medieval Europe¹¹⁶. Hence the parallels between the *futuwwa* and chivalry, notably in the division into classes, resembling the 'three orders'¹¹⁷; and also the peculiar and

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Dumézil, 'Jeunesse, éternité, aube', in *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale* 10 (1938): 289-301.

¹⁰⁹ Id., *La Religion romaine archaïque*, Paris 1966, p. 204.

¹¹⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus 3.69.

¹¹¹ Dumézil, *op. cit.* (n. 109 above), pp. 204-55 and *Les dieux souverains des Indo-Européens*, [Paris] 1977, pp. 91-109, 140-5 and 169-82.

¹¹² Forbes, p. 16.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹¹⁴ M. Rostovtzeff, *The Social and Economic History of the Roman Empire*, vol. 1, Oxford 1957, p. 128.

¹¹⁵ *Op. cit.* (n. 11 above), pp. 11, 45, 49, 252 and *passim*.

¹¹⁶ *Les Trois Ordres*, Paris 1978.

¹¹⁷ Cf. Taeschner, *op. cit.* (n. 6 above), p. 81.

ancient blend of horsemanship, military activity and ethico-religious ideals, which makes the words 'chivalry' and 'chevalerie' so confusing.

But the most striking, and also the most archaic Indo-European parallel of the Iranian and Islamic materials is to be found in Crete. Here Strabo quotes a source from the fourth century BC, Ephorus, on the initiation of boys: at the end the boy is given three gifts, prescribed by law: a military outfit, an ox and a cup¹¹⁸. Atsuhiko Yoshida has pointed to the Cretan practice's Indo-European counterparts, which naturally lead to anthropological comparisons in a much wider field¹¹⁹.

¹¹⁸ Strabo 10.4.21.

¹¹⁹ "Survivances de la tripartition fonctionnelle en Grèce", in *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, 166 (1964): 21-38.