

STUDIES IN THE SOCIAL BACKGROUND  
TO THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

### CHAPTER I

This chapter deals with the history and origin of the "Nights", and shows that the development of its contents have taken place in phases. The non-extant Baghdadi collection of the "Nights" is investigated in the light of an existing early collection of stories similar to the "Nights" in contents and background.

### CHAPTER II

An attempt is made here to assess the place of the 'Abbāsid aristocracy, and to demonstrate striking social changes at the court. Special attention is given to the historicity of the Caliphs' stories.

### CHAPTER III

The background to the Middle-class of the "Nights" is discussed to show the significant changes in the spheres of commerce and culture. Special attention is given to trade, travels and business. The conditions and status of the merchant class are also discussed here.

### CHAPTER IV

The economic and social gulf between the upper classes and the lower class is carefully examined. The chapter discusses in some detail the craft-guilds and other organisations of the people of the lower-classes.

### CHAPTER V

Aspects of the relations between Muslims and non-Muslims are explored, and special attention is given to martial relations. The social, economic and cultural standards of the Dhimmis are discussed to assess their status in Muslim society.

### CHAPTER VI

This chapter deals with Islamic institutions and customs and throws light on the position of women under Islam. The division between free and slave women is pointed out, and the effects of this division on moral and social attitudes are discussed. The picture of womanhood in the "Nights" is correlated with evidence from other Arabic sources. Special

attention is given to the educated and fictitious women presented in the "Nights".



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NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS

1 Journals, Series and Miscellanies

b. and bt.	Ibn and bint.
BGA	Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum.
BM	British Museum.
C.A.D.	Century of the Christian era.
C.A.H.	Century of the Islamic era.
CE.	Chamber's Encyclopaedia.
Ch.	Chapter.
Cal. ed.	The Calcutta edition of the <u>Arabian Nights</u> .
EB.	Encyclopaedia Britannica.
Ed.	edition.
EI.	Encyclopaedia of Islam.
Eng. tr.	English translation.
ER.	Edinburgh Review.
ERE.	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics.
ESS.	Encyclopaedia of Social Sciences.
FQR	The Foreign Quarterly Review.
IC.	Islamic Culture.
JA.	Journal Asiatique.
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society.
JE.	Jewish Encyclopaedia.
JESHO	Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient.
JNES.	Journal of the Near Eastern Society.
JRAS.	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society.
The "Nights"	stands for <u>The Arabian Nights</u> or <u>Alf Layla wa-Layla</u> , except in the head-title of each chapter.
Magians	<u>Majūs</u> or Zoroastrians.
MS. MSS.	Manuscript. Manuscripts.
Quran	The Qur'ān.
ZDMG.	Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft.

- 2 Sūras and verses of the Quran are written thus: 4<sup>2</sup>; the first figure indicating the number of the Sūra, and the top figure indicating the number of the verse.
- 3 Works are referred to by the names of authors. When an author has more than one work, short or abbreviated titles of his books are given. In case of modern writers the year of publication is given instead of an abbreviated title. In most cases the word *ibn* is dropped from the abbreviated names of Arab authors, eg. Athīr, Khaldūn and Khaṭīb.
- 4 Where there are generally accepted English versions for the names of the protagonists of the stories of the "Nights", these have been retained. Thus Aladdin, Sindbad and Nuraddin for the Arabic 'Alā' al-Dīn, Sindibād and Nūr al-Dīn respectively.

LIST OF FULL TITLES OF THE STORIES

The following is a list of the main stories of the Arabian Nights which occur in the present study, and which are taken from the Cairo or Calcutta editions, together with some of Galland's orphan stories which are marked in the list by asterisks. The sub-stories included in the list (and marked with letters) are only those referred to in the present work.

The Framework story

- The Merchant and the 'Ifrīt
- The Fisherman and the 'Ifrīt
  - a - The story of King Yūnān and the Physician
  - b - The Petrified Prince of the Black Islands
- The Porter and the Three Ladies
  - a - The story of the First Mendicant
  - b - The story of the Second Mendicant
  - c - The story of the Third Mendicant
  - d - The story of the First Lady of Baghdad
  - e - The story of the Second Lady of Baghdad
- The Three Apples
  - a - The story of Nūr al-Dīn and his Brother Shams al-Dīn,  
Quoted The Two Viziers
- The Hunchback
  - a - The story of the Christian Broker
  - b - The story of the Sultan Steward
  - c - The story of the Jewish Physician
  - d - The story of the Tailor
  - e - The story of the Barber and his Five Brothers
- 'Alī Nūr al-Dīn and Anīs al-Jalīs. Quoted Anīs al-Jalīs.
- Ghānim b. Ayyūb, the distracted lover. Quoted Ghānim.
  - a - The story of the First Eunuch Bukhayt
  - b - The story of the Second Eunuch Kāfūr

- King 'Umar al-Nu'mān and his Sons Sharkān and Daw' al-Makān
  - a - The story of Tāj al-Mulūk & the Princess Duniyā. Quoted Tāj
  - b - The story of 'Azīz and 'Azīza
  - c - The story of the Bedouin Hammād
- Fables
- 'Ali b. Bakkār and Shams al-Nahār
- Qamar al-Zamān and Princess Budūr. Quoted Qamar.
  - a - The story of al-As'ad and his Brother al-Amjad
  - b - The story of Ni'am and Ni'ma
- 'Alā' al-Dīn Abu al-Shāmāt and Zubayda the Luteplayer. Quoted Abu al-Shamat
- The Generosity of Ḥatām al-Ṭay
- The Story of Ma'an b. Zā'ida
- The City of Lebṭa
- The Story of Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik and the Young Bedouin
- Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi and the Ḥajjām
- Ibn Abi Qilāba and the City of Columns Iram
- Ishāq al-Mawṣili and al-Ma'mūn
- The great lady and the Slaughter-house Cleaner
- Al-Rashīd and the False Caliph
- 'Ali the Persian and The Kurd Sharper
- Al -Rashīd. and the Qādi Abu Yūsuf
- Khālid al-Qasrī and the Young Man who pretended to be a thief
- Ja'far al-Barmaki and the Bean-Seller
- Abu Muḥammad al-Kaslān (the Lazybone)
- The Magnanimity of Yaḥya al-Barmaki towards Manṣūr
- Yaḥya al-Barmaki and the Letter-Forgery
- The Caliph al-Ma'mūn and the Scholar
- 'Ali Shār and Zumurrud
- Budūr and Jubayr b. 'Umayr
- The Six Slave-girls and their Master
- Al-Rashīd, the Slave-girl and Abu Nuwās

- The Man who Stole the Golden Plate
- The Rogue from Alexandria and the Captain of the Watch
- Al-Malik al-Nāṣir and the Three Captains of the Watch
- The Sharper and the Governor of Qūṣ
- Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi and the Merchant
- The Woman who gave alms to a poor man
- Abu Ḥasan al-Ziyādi and the Khurāsāni Merchant
- Al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba
- Wardān the Butcher
- The Princess and the Ape
- The Magic Horse
- Uns al-Wujūd and al-Ward fi al-Akmām
- Abu Nuwās and the Three Boys
- 'Abdallah b. Ma'mar, the man from Baṣra and his slave-girl
- The Lovers from the Tribe of Udhra
- The Lovers at School
- Al-Rashīd and the Bathing Zubayda
- Al-Rashīd and the Three Poets
- Al-Rashīd and the Two Slave-girls
- Al-Rashīd and the Three Slave-girls
- Al-Ḥākim and the Merchant
- Kisra Anūsharwān and the Country Girl
- The Water-Carrier and the Goldsmith's Wife
- Yahya al-Barmaki and the Poor Man
- Al-Amīn and Ja'far b. Mūsā
- The Sons of Yahya b. Khālīd al-Barmaki and Sa'īd al-Bāhili
- The Pious Israelite Woman and the Two Wicked Old Men
- Ja'far al-Barmaki and the Old Bedouin
- 'Umar b. al-Khattāb and the Young Bedouin
- Masrūr and Ibn al-Qarībī
- Al-Rashīd's Pious Son

- The Schoolmaster who fell in love on hearsay
- The Foolish Schoolmaster
- The Illiterate Schoolmaster
- The Story of the Rokh
- Ishāq al-Mawṣili and the Merchant
- The Three Unhappy Lovers
- The Lovers from the Tribe of Tay
- The Devotee, the Monks and the Christian Girl
- The Love of Abu 'Isā for Qurrat al-'Ayn
- A Debate on the excellences of Sexes
- Abu Suwayed and the Beautiful Old Woman
- Amīr 'Alī b. Muḥammad and the Slave-girl Mu'nīs
- The Two Women and their Lovers
- The Merchant 'Alī of Cairo
- The Pilgrim and the Old Woman
- The Slave-girl Tawaddud
- The Angel of Death and the Wealthy King
- The Angel of Death and the King of the Children of Israel
- Al-Iskandar Dhū al-Qarnayn and the Contented King
- The Just King Anūsharwān
- The Jewish Judge and his Pious Wife
- The Shipwrecked Woman
- The Godly Negro Slave
- The Godly Man from among the Children of Israel
- The Blacksmith who could handle fire
- The Pious Israelite who found his Wife and Children again
- Ibrāhīm al-Khawāss and the Christian Princess
- Ḥāsib Karīm al-Dīn and the Serpent Queen
  - a - The story of Bulūqūiya
  - b - The story of Jānshāh
- Sindibād the Sailor



- The City of Brass
- The Wiles of Women or Sindibād the Sage and his Seven Viziers
- Jawdar and his Brothers
- 'Ajīb and Gharīb
- 'U tba and Rayya
- Hind bt. al-Nu'mān and al-Ḥajjāj
- Al-Rashīd and the Bedouin Girl
- Al-Aṣma'i and the Three Slave-girls
- Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili and the Devil
- The Lovers of Banū Udhra
- Ḍamra b. al-Mughīra and his girl
- Ishāq al-Mawṣili and the Devil
- Aḥmad al-Danaf and Dalīla the Crafty
  - a - the Adventures of 'Ali al-Zaybaq of Cairo
- Julnār the Mermaid and her Son Prince Badr Bāsīm
- Ardashīr and Ḥayāt al-Nufūs
- King Muḥammad b. Sabā'ik and the Merchant
  - a - Prince Seyf al-Mulūk and the Princess Badī 'at al-Jamāl
- Ḥasan of Baṣra
- Khalīfa the Fisherman
- The Merchant Masrūr and Zayn al-Mawāṣif. Quoted Zayn
- Nūr al-Dīn and Maryam the Girdle-maker
- The Baghdadi Young man and his Slave-girl
- King Jalī 'ād and his son Wirdkhān and the vizier shimās. Quoted Jalī 'ād and Shimās
- Abu Qīr and Abu Sīr
- 'Abdallah of the Land and 'Abdallah of the Sea
- Al-Rashīd and the 'Omāni Merchant
- Ibrāhīm b. al-Khaṣīb and Jamīla
- Abu al-Ḥasan al-Khurāsāni and Shajarat al-Durr
- Qamar al-Zamān and his Mistress

- 'Abdallah b. Fāḍil and his Brothers
- Ma'rūf the Cobbler
- \* - The Nocturnal Adventures of al-Rashīd
  - a - The story of the Blind man 'Abdallah
  - b - Sīdi Nu'mān
  - c - Ḥaṣan al-Ḥabbāk
- \* - Abu Ḥasan the Wag or the Sleeper Awakened
- \* - 'Alā' al-Dīn and the Marvellous Lamp
- \* - 'Alī Bābā and the Forty Thieves
- \* - Prince Aḥmad and the Fairy Peri Bānū
- \* - Al-Malik al-Zāhir and the Sixteen Captains of the Watch

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the social structure of Muslim society and its main divisions. It covers a period extending from the establishment of the 'Abbāsīd caliphate to recent centuries.

The highlights of this study, however, fall upon the 'Abbāsīd age and upon the social life of the Muslim populace in medieval times in general. Purely supernatural material is excluded and a treatment of the collection is attempted in which its realistic aspect is made the focus of attention. References to supernatural elements in the stories are made only insofar as they are related to economic and social conditions, or when they give indications of certain concepts or psychological attitudes of the people concerned.

It may be objected that the coverage of the social environment of a long period may lead to difficulties of chronology but it can be maintained that "the continuity of Arabian social tradition was practically unbroken from almost the beginning of the Khaliphate to the present century." <sup>1</sup>

Unlike political change, social change is slow. After the drastic changes in the different spheres which took place in the 3rd/9th century and culminated in the vigorous and productive cultural stability of the 4th/10th century, the social environment and its basic ideals remained largely unchanged until the onset of the movement of modernisation in the 20th century.

Any differences in social attitudes of the various periods or countries, are, however, pointed out, whenever necessary, as they occur in early Islam, in the Baghdadi and in the Egyptian periods.

Historical and literary documentation is derived from Arabic sources of all periods. However, sources of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries are used as the main and earliest records to the background of the Baghdadi stories. Firstly because these writings are rich in social

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1 S. Lane-Poole, Preface to the Arabian Society in the Middle Ages, London, 1883, XI.

information and, in this respect, remained the primary sources for the later Muslim authors who often transmitted and retransmitted from them. Secondly, as far as bourgeois life is concerned, there was another "Golden period" similar to the 'Abbāsid one in the 7th/13th and 8th/14th centuries of Mamlūk rule in Egypt.

This study arose from the need for a better understanding of the "Nights", and it aims at justifying the importance of the collections as a social comment on Muslim life. The value of different aspects of the "Nights" has in the past been arbitrarily overshadowed by the distinguishing feature of the "Nights", namely, its supernatural aspect.

The material of the "Nights" has been so often described as irrational and incredible that its exaggerations have become proverbial both in the East and West. It is the aim of this study to show how far these ironic exaggerations were based on existing conditions. A collection which emerged from a prosperous society of feudal and commercial wealth, in which class structure was not altogether stable, was bound to be strongly coloured by naive and grandiose dreams of success.

Poetry, music, feasting and drinking were the real joys of life among well-to-do people, and in depicting this kind of social background, the "Nights" tries, in addition, to confer and extend these pleasures and enjoyments to heroes of all classes, even the humblest.

But this is not all, for although an uncritical reading of the collection would lead one to judge it as a work full of magic and improbabilities a serious study would result in different conclusions.

Indeed, such improbable happenings as there are, occur against a social background clearly familiar to the audience, and the details are taken from everyday life. Erudite people have regarded the work as worthless, insipid and historically absurd. But coarseness, simplicity and a mixture of fantasy and realism are typical traits of popular literature everywhere. These very qualities, in fact, have made the folklorists in recent times find the humanistic science of folklore in

order to find rational explanations for the seemingly fantastic content of folklore literature.

It may be suggested that the attempt to elicit facts by examining a work of such imaginative character is surrounded with difficulties. This is true, but fortunately the Arabs like a feeling of reality in fairy tales. This becomes clear when one compares the Persian fairy tales with their Arabic imitations and in the latter there is substantial ground to the stories.

The uncultured audience seems to enjoy a degree of realism in presentation and general credibility and verisimilitude in the conduct of the characters, their clothes, food, houses and domestic life.

They do not seem to be deceived by the fantasy of the contents, they take it for granted. It is not important to them whether Nuṛaddin was actually flown by the Jinn from Baṣra to Egypt to marry his cousin, and then returned on the same night to Damascus. The important thing to them is that he is the right man to marry his cousin and have a grand traditional wedding. When they heard him describing that he had been in Egypt the night before and at Baṣra the night before that, they expressed pity that such a handsome young man should have gone mad and told him that he must have been only dreaming.

Thus it has been stated that "contrary to a wide-spread but ill-founded notion the 1001 Nights is decidedly not in the first place a book of fairy tales. In fact it may be said that the genre is proportionally scantily represented...."<sup>1</sup>

The richness of the varied social background has made necessary the selection of a focus for the study. Instead of giving brief descriptions of several aspects, the present study gives detailed accounts of the position and grouping of classes, of the distinguishing characteristics of each class, of the economic, religious and political institutions which moulded social life, and finally of the differences that existed between

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:1 Gerhardt, The Art of Story-Telling (Leyden, 1963), 278.

the upper classes and the humble, the Muslims and the non-Muslims, the educated and the traders, and the men and the women.

How far should the "Nights" be considered as a mirror of its times? It must be pointed out here that it is dangerous to regard any literature as a looking glass of its time. Nevertheless, the way people live, their social and political life, their economic formation must be reflected in their literature. The "Nights", for example, while picturing the happy carefree side of life, tries to ignore its dark aspects of famine, plague and the contentions that accompanied political decline. When life seemed turbulent and difficult, literature attempted to bring laughter and optimism by escaping from reality. But can its escapism be complete? It is noticeable that the "Nights" depicts also the other side of life, namely the difficulties that confronted merchants, political persecution, dangerous travels and bankruptcy. It shows the poverty and anxiety of the members of the lower classes before the supernatural powers come to their aid. The "Nights" throws light not only on daily life, but also on people's moral precepts and on their social and religious attitudes.

The first chapter aims at examining the Arab-Islamic nature of the work, and argues the theories of its origin. Without discussing the history of the contents, it is difficult to study the background to each of its sections.

The present study proposes to treat separately each of the three main classes in society, namely, the aristocracy, the middle and the lower classes. This requires the analysis of the distinguishing features of the class itself and its interrelationship with the other classes. The method of presentation may seem repetitive in as far as the subtitles are concerned; it is however useful, since it gives an opportunity for comparing the different classes.

Non-Muslims are treated separately, first because of the particular status they have in Muslim society, and second, because of the wars with foreign Christians.

Women are also treated as a group apart because of the different rules which governed their lives. The second sex was unanimously regarded as inferior to men. The purpose of this study is twofold: to survey the background to the point in question, and to compare it along with its corresponding aspects in the "Nights", i. e. to correlate the material of the "Nights" with what is known of reality through other Arabic sources.

The result of the method of comparing the "Nights" with other sources is that firstly, the picture of the "Nights" may be found to be in full accord with that given by Arabic sources. Secondly, the "Nights" may make only casual and undetailed reference to some set of facts; in this case the gap is filled by consulting more detailed authorities and references. Thirdly, whenever the "Nights" modifies facts or deviates from reality, either by exaggeration or invention, an attempt is made to give reasons for the modification of facts by the narrator.

Most of the earlier studies on the "Nights" aim at tracing the origin of the collection, and are related to textual problems, differences between the existing MSS and to the dating of the various sections of the collection. This kind of preliminary research was thorough and exhaustive and every attempt or theory has been important in that it has carried research a step further.

Lane and Burton's commentaries on the "Nights" have greatly contributed to the understanding of the social aspects of life and customs and manners of Muslims.

The purpose of the annotations was to facilitate the understanding of the texts, but as the commentaries grew long and detailed they tended to interrupt the progress of the story. They, however, showed for the first time that the fictitious collection embodied also the most realistic aspects. Collected in books, the notes have become a source of Islamic medieval life, and Lane's work, especially, remains incomparable in this field.

Recent critical studies deal directly with the material of the "Nights".



Al-Qalamāwī, for example, explores several topics as they are treated in the "Nights" such as morals, religion, fables, society, education and historical material.

Her work, as she admits, is general in character, and every chapter, she believes, could be developed into a single and fuller study. She also maintains that such a survey must precede any specialised and detailed accounts.

Since research on the "Nights" is still in the preliminary or introductory stages, there remain many aspects of the work which should be brought out into full relief by detailed and exhaustive research. This study does not therefore claim to be comprehensive or complete.

The subject of social life in medieval Islam is so vast and many-sided that it is not possible to treat it fully within the limits of this study, yet considerable light can be shed upon it.

Information about the lives of ordinary people is abundant in the annals and essays of the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. However, later authors especially of the Egyptian period offer but little reference to the life of ordinary people.

How far can we get to know the lives of men and women of the past ages cannot be easily defined. Investigations into their social lives may only give rise to generalisations. It is however hoped that even these few glimpses into the picture of the past may be sufficient to stimulate studies on other aspects of the lives of our forerunners.

## CHAPTER I

### THE HISTORY AND ORIGIN OF THE ARABIAN NIGHTS

#### Introductory Note

The early history of the "Nights" is still obscure, but despite the insufficiency of the evidence, certain conjectures have been put forth by scholars which are probably close to the truth.

The arguments brought forward as regards the origin of the work have been of various kinds, and on this point the orientalist are divided into two main groups; <sup>1</sup> those who maintain that the collection is of Indo-Persian origin, <sup>2</sup> and those who assert that it is of Arab composition and completely different from the archetype the Persian Hazār Afsāna. <sup>3</sup> Most of them, however, agree that the general tone of the work is distinctly and for the larger part exclusively Arabic. <sup>4</sup>

Some of the obscurity arises from the fact that though the collection can be shown to have been in existence for several centuries, no manuscript older than that found by Galland, dated 955/1548 <sup>5</sup> has ever been

- 1 R. F. Burton. Terminal Essay. The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night (10 Vols. Banares, 1886) X. 68.
- 2 J. Hammer. Purgstall, Sur L'origine des Mille et Une Nuits, in JA, 1827, X, 253-56. Note Sur L'origine Persane des Mille et Une Nuits, JA, 1839, VIII, 176. Contes Inédits des Mille et Une Nuits, Extraits de L'original Arabe, Preface to M. G. S. Trébutien's edition (3 Vols., Paris 1828) I, V-XXIX, and Note, Ibid., XXIX-XXXI.
- 3 M. Le Baron Silvestre de Sacy, Compte rendu du Tome 1<sup>er</sup> de la première ed. de Calcutta, Journal des Savants, Nov. 1817, 667-86, reproduced in Dissertation prefixed to the Bourdin's ed. of Les Mille et Une Nuits, Paris 1860, I-VIII; and in Reserches sur L'origine du recueil des contes intitules les Mille et Une Nuits, (memoire lu le 31 Juillet, 1829) in Revue de Paris, 1<sup>er</sup> Serie, V, and under the same title in the Memoires de l'Academie des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 1833, X, 30-64. Lane Review, The Arabian Nights Entertainments, (3 Vols. London 1838-39) III, 735; also Preface, Ibid., I, VII-XXII.
- 4 J. Payne, The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, (9 vols. London, 1882-84) IX, 316.
- 5 D. B. Macdonald, A Preliminary Classification of some MSS. of the Arabian Nights, A Volume of Oriental Studies presented to E. G. Browne, (Cambridge, 1922) 307. Payne, op.cit., Cf. Burton X, 80, note 1,

discovered.<sup>1</sup> Secondly, neither the work called Hazār Afsāna which it was stated was translated into Arabic and popularly known as Alf Layla, nor its versified version of the 11th c.A.D. is extant.<sup>2</sup> Thirdly, apart from a few references giving information on the title and the prologue of the collection, there occurs no mention in Arabic literature of the contents of the "Nights" or its history. Finally though the collection was initially in a written form, it was mainly transmitted from one generation to the other orally.<sup>3</sup> Stories transmitted in this way are inevitably modified and augmented especially since the construction of the cyclical type of tale offers every facility for such expansion and interpolation,<sup>4</sup> and, like the folk-tales transmitted orally throughout the Arab world, for adaptation and alteration both in language and subject matter.<sup>5</sup>

Macdonald thus suggests that the collection has assumed many different forms since it was adapted from the Hazār Afsāna and that perhaps the title is the only thing common to all of the versions.<sup>6</sup> We may therefore proceed now to discuss how this development came about.

Theories on the Origin and the Age of the "Nights"

It was only during the 19th c. A.D., almost a hundred years after the first appearance of the Galland's translation in 1704-1717, that orientalist began to discuss the history and origin of the "Nights".<sup>7</sup>

Though it had been translated into almost every European language during the 18th c., little had been done during this period towards the elucidating of its history.<sup>8</sup>

1 Except a fragment of a 9th c. A.D. MS. see below, 46.

2 In the preface to the Shāhnāma of Firdawsi an anonymous writer reports that the Hazār Afsana was versified by a certain Rasti or Krasti at the court of Mahmūd of Ghazna (see Hammer-Purgstall, Preface, XXI, n.2, Burton X, 72, n.2). As the original reference is inaccessible, see Macdonald's verification of it in The Earlier History of the Arabian Nights, IRAS, 1924, 367, 397.

3 ER., July 1886, CLXIV, 192.

4 Ibid., 190, Burton, X, 92.

5 Hammer, Preface, XXIV. Macdonald, 1924, 357. Burton X, 93.

6 Macdonald, 1924, 390.

7 Burton, X, 68. ER., 1886, 164, 185.

8 Op.cit., Payne, IX, 278.

Galland supposed that the work was designed by anonymous Arab narrators and represented the customs and manners of the Eastern nations such as Indians, Tartars and Persians,<sup>1</sup> hence Europe for upwards of a century was content to compare the "Nights" with the fables of Pilpai.<sup>2</sup>

To support the theory of an Indo-Persian origin, Von Hammer-Purgstall, the Austrian orientalist, was the first to call attention to a passage written by al-Mas'ūdi in his book Murūj al-Dhahab (336/947) in which he refers to the Persian origin of the "Nights".<sup>3</sup>

Al-Mas'ūdi, writing about stories related by the Ikhbariyyūn (pseudo-chroniclers), states that they forged stories about the Magian Fire-temples, Baalbek, Iram Dhāt al-'Imād, and other subjects, in an attempt to make up pleasing stories for their rulers seeking favour with them. "These stories" he goes on "are like the books transmitted to us and translated for us from the Persian, Indian and Greek. The composition of which had the same purpose mentioned above - such as the book of Hazar Afsāna.<sup>4</sup> The people call this book A Thousand Nights (and a Night). It is the story of the King, the vizier and his daughter and her nurse (dāya) (or maid or sister, or the vizier and his two daughters) named Shīrāzād (Shīrād, sic) and Dīnāzād (Dīnarazād) and such as the book of Farza (Jalī'ad, sic) and Shimās<sup>5</sup>

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- 1 The Epistle Dedicatory to Lady d'O, and Preface to The Arabian Nights Entertainments, Eng. version of Galland's tr. (4 vols; Dublin, 1728) I, 1-4.
  - 2 Burton, op. cit.
  - 3 Murūj al-Dhahab, ed. C. Barbier de Meynard, (9 Vols, Paris, 1861-77), IV, 89f.
  - 4 Afsāna means khurāfa or a fanciful and extravagant story, see Lane, Preface I, IX, n., and III, 735. On khurāfa see Macdonald, 1924, 371.
  - 5 For the various forms of these names given in different MSS. and the relationship of the two women, see IRAS, 1924, 362f, and de Sacy, who gives the textual variations of al-Mas'udi's MSS., see Memoires d'histoire et de Litterature Orientale, Paris, 1832, 216, 239-41 and Les Mille et Une Nuits, in Memoires de l'Academie royale des inscriptions et belles-lettres, 1833, X, 30-64 esp. 38-41, 62-4, and N. Abbott, A 9th c. Fragment of the 1001 Nights, in JNES, 1949, VIII, 150-52.

with its stories of the Kings of India and their viziers, and such as the book of Sindbad or other books of this nature."<sup>1</sup>

This passage helps to establish certain important facts; that the Hazār Afsāna had been rendered into Arabic, in the reign of al-Manṣūr (754/775 A.D.) when a wave of translations took place,<sup>2</sup> and that the archetype was known in Arabic under the name A Thousand Nights, and finally, that our "Nights" and the Hazār Afsāna had almost exactly the same prologue.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas Von Hammer maintained that the passage in al-Mas'ūdī was genuine and emphasised its significance in pointing to the origin of the collection,<sup>4</sup> De Sacy regarded it not as authentic but as an interpolation, basing his argument on the fact that the MSS. of Murūj vary in the versions of the names of the personalities concerned and in their relations to each other.<sup>5</sup>

De Sacy asserts that the contents display a true picture of the courts, of the pure Islamic spirit and of the manners and customs of the Arabs.<sup>6</sup> If the passage in Al-Mas'ūdī is genuine, which de Sacy doubts, it shows according to him, only the prologue was of Indo-Persian origin.

De Sacy believes that the main body of the work was composed in Syria at a late period (15th c.A.D.), that it was left incomplete or that narrators and imitators attempted later to finish it by inserting romances already current and other tales which are recent since both coffee and tobacco are mentioned in them.<sup>7</sup> He rightly denied the authorship of a single writer since the collection seems to be so vast and varied.<sup>8</sup> However, it is not

1 Murūj . op. cit.

2 Anonymous, Review, The Athenaeum, Oct. 1838, No. 572, 738.  
Hammer, Preface, I, XX-XXI, Mas'ūdī, VIII, 291.

3 J. Horowitz, The Origin of the Arabian Nights, IC., Hyderabad, 1927, 40.

4 Hammer, Ibid., Note, XXIXff, JA, 1827, I, 253-56.

5 De Sacy, Dissertation, I, VI-VII, See above, 23 n. 5.

6 Ibid., I, III, VI-VIII, Anonymous, The Arabian Nights and their Origin, F.Q.R., Oct. 1840, XXIV, 142-144.

7 Op. cit., de Sacy, op. cit.

8 Op. cit., viii.

necessary to assume that the work was left incomplete as an explanation for later accretions, since all popular tales would seem to have been subject to the same process of expansion and alteration.

Von Hammer's theory would seem to be better documented, although he himself divides the collection into three groups of stories: the Hazār Afsāna group or stories of Indo-Persian origin,<sup>1</sup> a Baghdadi 10th c.A.D. group and a more recent Egyptian part, and states that the first complete version could not have been finished till the beginning of the 11th c.A.D. and therefore could not have been known to al-Mas'ūdi and al-Nadīm.<sup>2</sup>

Later, in 1833, a new voice, V.H.Schlegel's, entered the argument between von Hammer and de Sacy, maintaining that many of the tales were taken from Sanskrit works<sup>3</sup> and that when the Muslim narrators had removed and curtailed the Indian polytheistic elements, the result was neither Arab nor Indian but a mixture of heterogeneous material.<sup>4</sup>

The argument and controversial discussion continued and after de Sacy's death, Von Hammar in 1837 brought forward new support for his theory, namely, al-Nadīm's Fihrist (377/987), where in the section on al-Asmār wa'l-Khurāfāt, the resemblance between the prologue of the "Nights" and that of the Hazār Afsāna is confirmed.<sup>5</sup>

According to al-Nadīm, the compilation of fictitious tales and fables goes back to the Old Persians and after them the Ashghanians (Arsacids),<sup>6</sup>

1 Payne, IX, 278.

2 Payne, op.cit. and 284. Hammer, JA., Paris, 1839, VIII, 171-76, and Preface, I, XXIII.

3 De Schlegel, Lettre a M. le Baron Silvestre de Sacy Pair de France, Membre de l'Institut, in J A., 1836, I, 575-80.

4 Schlegel, Ibid., 576.

5 Al-Nadīm, Kitāb al-Fihrist, ed. G.Flügel, (Leipzig, 1871), 304f. Hammer, op.cit.

6 Horovitz, 40.

and lastly the Sasanians. "Thereafter", states al-Nadīm, "this branch of literature increased and spread, and the Arabs translated such works into Arabic, and the orators and rhetoricians took them up, polished their style and ornamented them and constructed tales on similar lines."<sup>1</sup>

The first book to have a definite title and known content, composed on these lines was the Hazār Afsāna. Its theme was the king who used to kill every woman he married until he came to marry a clever girl who averted her fate by the device of telling him each night an unfinished story which she continued the following night, her housekeeper aiding her in her design. Meanwhile she bore a child whom she showed to the king, confessing to him her whole device, whereupon he admired her scheme and spared her life. The book, it was said, was composed for Ḥumāni or Ḥumay,<sup>2</sup> the daughter of Bahman.<sup>3</sup> The book contained less than two hundred stories each story lasting for several nights.<sup>4</sup>

This passage together with al-Mas'ūdi's comment on the "Nights" written 40 years earlier show that both the Hazār Afsāna and its earlier adaptation the Alf Layla contained almost the same number of stories as our "Nights". But the question of how far these three works agree and whence came the different stories is difficult to decide.

Although al-Fihrist's statement is important in that it shows the origin and development of the fictitious tales, it gives us little guide as to the nature and contents of the early "Nights" especially since al-Nadīm states that the Hazār Afsāna, and consequently its Arabic version, is "a worthless book of stupid stories" which he had seen several times in a complete form.<sup>5</sup>

1 Al-Nadīm, Op. cit.

2 Macdonald, 1924, 366, Ṭabari mentions her as Khūmāni, See Tārīkh al-Rusul wa'l-Mulūk, ed. M.J. de Goeje (15 vols, Leyden, 1879-1901), I, 686-89. Mas'ūdi mentions her as Ḥumāya II, 120-123 and Ḥumāny IV, 89f.

3 Nadīm, op. cit.

4 Nadīm, op. cit.

5 Nadīm, op. cit.

Macdonald, maintaining that al-Nadīm had sound taste, concludes that the Hazār Afsāna was of little literary value.<sup>1</sup>

This leads him to investigate the significance of the word khurāfa in Arab tradition, and as a result he discovers that the Arabic story of the man Khurāfa, told by the Prophet to his wife,<sup>2</sup> resembles the plot of The merchant and the 'Ifrit in the "Nights".<sup>3</sup> However it is shown that the three stories by which Khurāfa was redeemed from the jinn are different from the stories which saved the merchant from the 'Ifrit. Because of the resemblance in plots, Macdonald deduces that the first story of the "Nights", mentioned above, must be all that was left of an earlier version of the Arabic "Nights" which was the nearest version to the Hazār Afsāna. He argues that the story lacks the interest of the stories in the "Nights", and that, in this respect, it tallies with the description of the Hazār Afsāna by al-Nadīm as being a book of limp and worthless stories. As our "Nights" contains several long and interesting stories, Macdonald infers that the stories of the first Arabic "Nights" were short and insignificant like those which occur in the Cycle of The Wiles of Women (Sindbad the Wise).<sup>4</sup> Al-Nadīm himself states that the orators immediately took up the translated stories and put them into elegant style, embellishing them and making others resembling them. Despite Macdonald's belief in al-Nadīm's sound taste, the latter seems to conform with the general aesthetic criticism of this genre of literature.

Among the English translators of the "Nights" who have discussed the origin of the collection are Lane, Payne and Burton.<sup>5</sup>

Lane's opinion on the subject agrees with that of de Sacy in that both of them maintain that the work is of Arab composition, and that it is of a

1 Macdonald, 1924, 367.

2 Ibid., 369-79.

3 Al-Mufaddal b. Salama, Kitāb al-Fākhīr, (Cairo, 1380/1960) 168-71.

4 Macdonald, 1924, 376 f, 390.

5 Lane, III, 735-44. Payne IX, 263-392. Burton, X, 63-173.



comparatively late date, But whereas Lane regards Cairo as the birthplace of the collection, de Sacy makes Syria its province of origin.<sup>1</sup> Lane, however, stands alone in his supposition that the work was written by a single author, or at the most two, one commencing the work and the other completing it before or after the commencement of the 16th c.A.D.<sup>2</sup>

He maintains that The 1001 Nights is not the same as The 1000 Nights. Our "Nights", he believes, was "formed on the model, and partly of the contents, of the 1000 Nights; but it is also evident that most of its best tales, and those which constitute its chief portion, are Arab compositions (though not entirely the offsprings of Arab invention); and as the introduction had been greatly altered, it is most probable that other portions which were derived, as far as their general plans and main incidents are concerned, from The 1000 Nights, were altered in a similar manner."<sup>3</sup>

It is not improbable, he states, that the 1000 Nights might have been augmented by various persons in different ages and that this augmented collection served as an "immediate model and in some degree as the ground work of our 1001 Nights", but he cannot think that the 1001 Nights was augmented in successive ages.<sup>4</sup>

He maintains that **only** the general plan and a **couple** of foreign stories had been borrowed from the older collection but that the rest of the work, and especially the material of non-Arab origin, was adapted to the society in which the author lived and hence it certainly disagrees in manner and customs with its archetype.<sup>5</sup>

The different copies and editions of the "Nights", asserts Lane, show no palpable variations, and such as there are, not of significant nature.<sup>6</sup>

1 Lane, op. cit., Preface, I, xv f. De Sacy Dissertation, VIII.

2 Lane, Ibid., I, XIII-XVI.

3 Lane, III, 738.

4 Op. cit.,anf 739.

5 Lane, Preface, I, IX-XIII, XV.

6 Ibid., I, XI f, III, 739.

He argues that if the work had been modernised in successive ages by transcribers how was it that we have not found any copy which had been so modernised within the last three centuries. Similar works such as Baybars and Abu Zayd had been recited and transcribed continuously by public story-tellers, yet they were unchanged, and the manners and customs shown in the oldest copies remained the same.<sup>1</sup>

He bases his theory of a late Cairene composition on the state of Egyptian society exhibited in the work, the frequent allusions and references to later times, and the minute and accurate description of the localities of Cairo.<sup>2</sup>

He supports his view by the fact that Ḥājji Khalīfa, who wrote his bibliography in the 17th c., mentions The 1000 Nights only, which indicates that the 1001 Nights was not commonly known.<sup>3</sup>

The reception of Lane's opinion is conveyed in an article published in the Athenaeum.<sup>4</sup>

Though the reviewer agrees with Lane that the manners and customs as therein described are those of Egypt, he suggests that this was not a fact to be stressed in his argument, since the customs of Muslims in all Arab countries were governed by the same regulating influence of Islam. On the other hand, it is well-known that copyists and compilers were in the habit of altering or suppressing those particulars on which an investigator could base his judgment, such as names, localities, dress, food and drinks.<sup>5</sup>

As regards the late composition of the collection, this same reviewer brings forth very vital evidence to refute Lane's theory and shows that

1 Lane, Op. cit.

2 Lane, III, 740 f.

3 Ibid., 738.

4 Anonymous, Athenaeum, Oct. 1838, 737 f, and Sept. 1839, 741 f.

5 Ibid., 1838, 738, ER. 1886, 192.

The 1001 Nights had been in circulation since the Fātimid times.<sup>1</sup> Thus he quotes a passage from the history of Spain by al-Maqqari (d. 1041/1631)<sup>2</sup> in which he reports on the authority of Ibn Sa'īd (d. 673/1274)<sup>3</sup>, on the authority of another much older writer called al-Qurtī or al-Qurtubi,<sup>4</sup> that al-Āmer Bi-Aḥkām-illāh (494/1101 - 524/1129) built a pavilion called al-Hawḍa on the island of al-Rawḍa for his Bedouin wife. As she was accustomed to the freedom of desert life, she could not endure the confinement of four walls and wrote to her cousin Ibn Mayyāḥ some verses complaining of her life. Her cousin's reply to her, also in verse, contained a strong censure of the caliph. The letter having accidentally fallen into the hand of the caliph, he ordered that the culprit be arrested and his tongue plucked out, a punishment which he fortunately escaped.

These events, remarks al-Qurtī, gave rise to many short tales recounting what passed between the Bedouin girl and her cousin, and then these tales spread among the people and multiplied until the stories developed into a long tale similar to the story of al-Battāl, the tales of The Thousand and One Nights and the like.<sup>5</sup>

The reviewer suggests that there are two ways of explaining this allusion to the "Nights". Either to suppose that the collection existed in the reign of this Fatimid caliph i. e. in the 12th c. A. D., or to infer that the comparison is made by the authority Ibn Sa'īd with regard to a work which existed in his own time, i. e. in the 13th c. A. D.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Athenaeum, 1839, 742.

2 Nafh al-Tīb (2 vols; ed. Dozy, Leyden, 1859-61) I, 653 f.

3 Brockelmann, Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur, (2 vols, Weimar, 1898-1902) I, 336.

4 Macdonald identifies al-Qurtubi (12th c. A. D.) as an authority on legal tradition, whereas al-Qurtī was a historian who wrote under the Fātimid caliph al-'Adid (555/1160-567/1171) See IRAS, 1924, 380 f, and Payne IX, 302.

5 Nafh al-Tīb, op. cit., The same passage is transmitted also by al-Maqrīzi (d. 845/1441), see Khiṭaṭ (2 vols, Bulaq, 1270 A. H.) I, 485, II, 181 f.

6 Athenaeum, 1839, op. cit.

At any rate this evidence indicates that the "Nights" was three to five centuries older than Lane supposed.<sup>1</sup>

As we have no conclusive evidence to show whether the Fātimid "Nights" was similar to ours, Lane may not be wholly wrong in his opinion that the present collection is different from the older collection, but the categorical statement that our "Nights" is an independent and modern work can clearly not be accepted as proven and indeed creates more problems than it solves.

A more acceptable idea is that Egypt was the haven at which an older version of the "Night" arrived, took its final shape and was retransmitted later to the Arab world.<sup>2</sup> This is confirmed by a recently discovered fragment of a manuscript of the 9th c.A.D. which seems to have been carried to Egypt from Antioch.<sup>3</sup> Among the scholars who have asserted that the work is of Arabic origin is Salhānī, the editor of an expurgated version of The "Nights".<sup>4</sup> He maintains that the collection is a completion of an unfinished work of al-Jahshiyari, who

1 Op.cit., Lane's reply to this is that the One added to the Fātimid 1000 Nights was an interpolation by certain copyists as explained by de Sacy (Lane, III, 737, De Sacy, op.cit.). Payne thinks that the evidence put forward by the Athenaeum is weakened while Lane's argument is substantiated, since Hajji Khalifa mentioned only the old 1000 Nights and discarded The 1001 Nights because it was more modern. (Payne IX, 303f.) But why al-Magrizi who lived 150 years after Ibn Sa'id also refers to it as 1001 Nights? Is this also due to the error of copyists? However, it seems that in these arguments, there is an overemphasis on the significance of the title, and that both titles pointed to the same work especially since Hajji Khalifa, as late as the mid. 17th c. A.D., lists the works as The Thousand Nights. One can therefore claim with fair certainty that because the two titles pointed to the same collection, copyists did not deem it wrong to insert the word One or dispense with it, and hence the use of both titles appears in MSS. whose dates range from the 10th c. to the 17th c. A.D.

2 See below, 48.

3 N.Abbott, 1949, VIII, 163

4 Alf Layla Wa Layla, Introduction(4 Vols, Beirut, 1889) 5 - 8.

in the 10th c. A.D. attempted to compile a collection of 1000 tales based on the older "Nights" but without the division of each story into nightly episodes. But al-Jahshiyāri is said to have collected 480 tales before death overtook him, and this is almost twice as many stories as the "Nights" contains,<sup>1</sup> so that the idea that the present "Nights" is a completion of this author's book can hardly be accepted.

Payne and Burton share the same theory of the origin and history of the collection. They hold that the 13 stories, which appear in all MSS, and editions, comprise the original work or what they call the nucleus, and can be dated between the 8th - 13th centuries A.D.<sup>2</sup> The ground for this view is chiefly that all these stories have a general character in common, whereas the later tales of the collection vary both in number and position of the tales in different MSS, and show signs of miscellaneous sources.<sup>3</sup>

The oldest tales, they believe, consist of the Indian independent tales incorporated into the collection during its growth, and the Hazār Afsāna type of fairy tales which entered into Arabic with the translation of the archetype in the 8th c. A.D.

They reject the idea of a single writer and state that many scribes and compilers took part in producing the works.<sup>4</sup>

1 See below 45.

2 Payne, IX, 289. Burton, X, 80 f.

3 Op.cit. E.R. 1886, 191

4 Payne IX, 288-91. Burton X, 93f, 127.

Attempts by scholars to find a definite origin for the collection were inconclusive because they tended to judge the whole by evidence which applied to parts of it only. All those groups who claimed that the work was either Indo-Persian or purely Egyptian or wholly Arabic failed to agree because the "Nights" has passed through several stages before attaining the present form. In the case of a collection which existed mainly in an oral form for so many centuries and in different countries, it is not surprising that the question of dating and origins is difficult to decide.<sup>1</sup>

Burton suggest that the dating and origin of each story should be done by a careful separation of "The subject matter and the language manner."<sup>2</sup> The implication here is that an older plot might have been recast in later times.

At the outset, investigators depended on internal chronological evidence, topographical indications and the significance of names to assign dates to the stories.<sup>3</sup> These were however eventually found unreliable for they seemed to be, more often than not, interpolations, later accretions or even utterly contradictory.<sup>4</sup>

Evidence of special customs or manners, such as the use of tobacco, coffee, guns and wines, later came to be regarded as a more reliable means of dating the stories.<sup>5</sup>

1 ER., 1886, 185.

2 Burton X, 67.

3 Ibid., 80 - 87, Payn IX, 288-304, Macdonald, 1924, 383-390

4 ER., 188, Athenaeum, 1838, 737

5 Burton X, 85 - 92, De Sacy, op. cit.

Scholars on the evidence available have given the following approximate dates for the different parts of the collection. These begin from the 8th or 9th c. A.D. when in the time of al-Manṣūr (d. 159/775) or of al-Ma'mūn (d. 218/833), a wave of translations brought the popular collection into existence.<sup>1</sup> To this phase belong the prologue and the nucleus of ancient tales and Indo-Persian stories. The core of the collection, consisting of 13 stories, was adapted into Arabic between the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. A number of Baghdadi stories of varying length, containing 'Abbāsīd elements, were composed between the 10th or 12th c. A.D. The most recent Egyptian stories are placed in the 15th and 16th centuries A.D., while the work assumed its present shape in the 13th c. A.D.<sup>2</sup>

One method of determining the date of a story and its birthplace is to study it in several editions and MSS., and compare these different versions of the story with regard to language and customs, in an attempt to isolate the passages or words interpolated. Salier employed this method to cast light upon the source and date of the story of Abu al-Shāmāt.<sup>3</sup>

It can be concluded that although dating of the stories cannot be accurate, the approximate dates of the three main sections of the collection is reasonably well established.

In the following study no attempt is made to survey and reproduce the lengthy investigations made in this field.<sup>4</sup> It is proposed only to examine those aspects most pertinent to this thesis, such as the role of the Arab narrators in adapting the foreign motifs to their environment.

1 Hammer, Preface, I, XXf, Note, XXX Mas'ūdī, VIII, 290f.

2 Burton, X, 93 f. Elisseeff. Thèmes et Motifs des Mille et Une Nuits (Beirut, 1949) 25.

3 Salier, Materialy dlia datirovki ob Alā ad-Dīn Abu Shāmāt, in Izvestia Akad. Nauk, U.S.S.R., Moscow, 1928, 299-310, quoted by Elisseeff, op. cit.

4 The sum total of all the arguments, pro. and contra., on the collection are summarised by J. Oestrup in Studien Über 1001 Nacht (Stuttgart, 1925) 9, 80-2, 91, 99, 105f.

### The Prologue and the Title of the Nights

The prologue has also been called the framework story because it extends to the end of the collection encompassing all the stories within its frame.

As regards the origin of the prologue, de Goeje suggests that the framework story and the story of Esther both go back to old Persian folk-lore.<sup>1</sup>

This hypothesis is based on information from Arabic sources which identify Ḥumay (var. Ḥumāni or Khūmāni),<sup>2</sup> for whom the Hazār Afsāna was said to have been compiled, with Esther on the one hand and with Sheherezade on the other hand.<sup>3</sup>

It seems that these Arab historians who had learned from the Book of Esther that there had once been a Persian queen of Jewish origin, attempted to identify her among the Persian queens and by a combination of certain biblical data with similar data of Persian origin,<sup>3</sup> they connected her with Ḥumay who was also named Sheherezade.<sup>4</sup>

1 De Goeje, De Arabische Nachtvertellingen, in De Gids, 1886, III, 385-413. See also, EB. art. Thousand and One Nights, ed. 1910-1911, XXVI, 883-85, Elissēeff, 33, Macdonald, 1924, 355, 364.

2 See above, 26, n. 2.

3 Ṭabari mentions Esther as the mother of Bahman, and Khūmāni as his daughter and wife, also entitled Sheherezade, I, 589. Mas'ūdi, (II, 122, 127, 129) mentions the name of this Jewish girl as Dīnazād and again as Shahrzād; and in I, 118, he tells how a Persian king married a captive Jewish girl. Ḥamza combines the two names and calls her Queen Humachahrazād, (h instead of h). See Tārikh Sinyy, Mulūk al-Ard Wa'l Anbiyā', ed. Gottwaldt (2 vols, Leipzig, 1844-48), I, 25.

4 Horovitz, 42.



Thus de Goeje argues that since Humay was taken to be identical with Esther and at the same time bore the name Sheherezade, therefore, she could be identified with the Sheherezade of the Hazār Afsāna.<sup>1</sup>

De Goeje's suggestion of a similarity between the two stories puts back the date of the Hazār Afsāna to the 2nd or 3rd c. B.C., the conjectural period for the origin of the Book of Esther.<sup>2</sup>

Horovitz refutes this opinion by arguing that the collection was said to be compiled for Humay and not recited by her, and that while Esther's life was never in danger, Sheherezāde had to fight for her life and convert a "tyrant to clemency". What seems to be a common feature of the two stories is that they were both acted on the same stage namely the Persian court, and that the part of a deliverer from a distressing danger falls upon a woman.<sup>3</sup>

Cosquin, a French folklorist, was the first to reject de Goeje's analogy between Esther and Shaherezade. He maintains that similarity of names is no evidence of historical fact. He distinguishes between the literary treatment of the two heroines, different both in manner and in the purpose for which they recount their tales to the King and suggests that Esther's story may in fact have its roots in Babylon.<sup>4</sup>

Commenting on Cosquin's rejection of de Goeje's opinion, Macdonald puts forward a third opinion.<sup>5</sup> Referring to the names Humāy, Sheherezade, Bahman and Esther, he argues that the concatenation of these names as they occur in the Arabic sources indicates that the Indian folk tales to which Cosquin refers in order to prove an Indian rather than a Persian origin of the prologue, must have

1 De Goeje, E. B., op. cit.

2 Horovitz, op. cit.

3 Op. cit.

4 E. Cosquin, Le Prologue Cadres des Mille et Une Nuits, Les Légendes perses et le livre d'Esther, Revue Biblique, Jan. 1901, VI, 7-49, 161 - 97.

5 IRAS, 1924, 363 f.

become very closely associated with Persian and even Jewish legendary history.<sup>1</sup>

The hypothesis, that the prologue of The Hazār Afsāna was regarded as purely Persian, was widely accepted until Cosquin proved that it was in essence of Indian origin.<sup>2</sup>

We have no positive evidence for the theory that the Indian stories had been naturalised in Persia, but the existence of Indian parallels similar in all essential points to the prologue of the "Nights", denotes that the theme of the Hazār Afsāna probably goes back to an Indian prototype.<sup>3</sup>

Cosquin analysed the prologue into three parts, and showed the existence of each of these parts in the Indian narrative literature; these are:

- I The story of a great personage, betrayed by his wife and brought into despair, who recovers his health on learning that another person is equally betrayed.
- II A superhuman being and his damsel, who is unfaithful to him even though he keeps her in close confinement.
- III The story of a clever woman who escapes a danger which menaces her and her father.<sup>4</sup>

Part I of the prologue was a motif translated into Chinese in 251 A. D. from the Buddhist Tripitaka.<sup>5</sup>

Part II has its parallels in stories from the Katha Sārit Sāgara.<sup>6</sup> This theme, of a woman imprisoned by a jinni and constantly deceiving him, occurs also in the Buddhist Jataka.<sup>7</sup>

1 Macdonald op. cit. and n, 1.

2 Cosquin, Ibid; 7 - 49

3 Horovitz, 43.

4 Cosquin, 9f, 14f. Horovitz, op. cit.

5 Cosquin, 13 f., Horovitz, 44.

6 C.H. Tawney, The Ocean of Story, being Tawney's tr. of Somadeva's Katha Sārit Sāgara (2 Vols; Calcutta, 1884), II, 79-81, 98 f.

7 Cosquin, 21f, 24f, Horovitz, op. cit.

As for part III, the combination of a king, his vizier and the latter's two daughters is a motif which has been found in Jain, Siamese, Javanese and Laotian stories,<sup>1</sup> a fact which indicates that all probably have a common Indian source.<sup>2</sup>

The mode of stringing stories together, as Sheherezade does, for the purpose of guarding against a dreaded event and postponing its occurrence is frequently employed in Indian narrative literature.<sup>3</sup> In the Indian *Sukasaptati*, for instance, a wise parrot keeps a woman from betraying her absent husband by telling her part of a story each night, and concluding it with the words: "The rest I shall tell you to-morrow if you stay at home."<sup>4</sup>

Cosquin also brought to light the fact that the prologue of The Hundred and One Nights agrees with the Indian parallel much more than does the prologue of our "Nights".<sup>5</sup>

The question raised here is whether the Hazār Afsāna supplied part or the whole of the prologue. The evidence provided by al-Murūj, and al-Fihrist shows that in the 4/10th c. the prologue consisted of part III only.<sup>6</sup> One cannot be sure whether the Hazār Afsāna's prologue mentioned nothing at all as to the reason for the King's cruelty towards women, or whether al-Mas'ūdi and al-Nadīm, for the sake of brevity, omitted the incidents, which made the King disgusted with women. Why and when were part I and II inserted into the prologue?<sup>7</sup> We shall in the following, attempt to show that the prologue of the Persian archetype was expanded and argued by the Arab narrators in order to establish a justification for Shahrayār's cruelty.

1 Cosquin, 28, 35 - 41. Macdonald, 1924, op.cit.

2 Cosquin, op.cit. Macdonald, op.cit.

3 Horovitz, op.cit.

4 Op.cit. Cosquin, 46.

5 Cosquin, 25 - 9, Macdonald, 355 f. The 101 Nights is a North African collection of stories translated into French by M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes, see Les Cent et Une Nuits, 1911;

6 See above, 37.

7

Al-Nadīm merely states that it was the custom of a Persian King that when he married a woman and had spent the night with her, to kill her in the morning, until Sheherezade devised a means of saving herself by relating to him fragments of her stories each night.<sup>1</sup> According to this account, one is inclined to think that Shahrayār's cruelty has been originally of a type similar to the cruelty of Bluebeard towards women.<sup>2</sup>

One of the reasons which makes us believe that the three parts were brought together later in their development, and that they did not form a part of the Persian prologue of the Hazār Afsāna is the separate existence of each of the three parts of the prologue in the narrative literature of various nations as mentioned above.<sup>3</sup> In Europe for example, only part I and II of the prologue were included in Italian stories of the 14th c. A.D. (1347-1424).<sup>4</sup> The "Nights" itself repeats the motif of an unfaithful woman imprisoned by a jinni (part II), in a separate form included in the cycle story of The Wiles of Women.<sup>5</sup>

The second piece of evidence, which supports this view, is to be found in a MS. of The "Nights" at the British Museum which presents us with a form of the prologue closest to the form described by the Arab sources.<sup>6</sup> In this version, there is no account of the journey of Shahzamān to his brother Shahrayār (part I), nor of the episode of the jinni and his unfaithful wife (part II). It simply relates that Shahrayār the son of Qāsīm, the King of Baṣra, found out that his beautiful wife was unfaithful to him after he had followed her one day and

1 Nadīm, op. cit.

2 Elisseeff, 35.

3 See above, p 37f.

4 Horovitz, 38f, 44.

5 Nights, III, 193.

6 Alf Layla Wa-Layla, MS. No. add, 7407 (4 Vols), fol. 1a, See Athenaeum, 1839, 741 on the great difference between the contents of this MS. and the Egyptian recension of the "Nights".

discovered that she did not go to the baths, as she had told him, but went to see her lover, and that thereafter Shahrāyār killed every woman he married. The expansion of the framework story is therefore made to justify the King's action. The Arab narrator, by adding part II to the prologue, tries to show that not only wives are unfaithful to their husbands and deserve punishment, but that even women imprisoned by 'Ifrīts constantly deceived them.

Horovitz points to the absence of the name Shāhzamān, King Shahrāyār's brother, from the account of the story given in al-Fihrist, and comments on the "hybrid" formation of the name from the Pehlevi word shāh and the Arabic word zaman.<sup>1</sup>

If this fact is taken into consideration, it would seem that the choice of an apparently but not actually Pehlevi name indicates that the role of Shāhzamān in Part I of the prologue is a late accretion worked into the original structure of the prologue by the Arab narrator.

The expansion of the framework story must have taken place after the time of al-Mas'ūdī and al-Nadīm (10th c.A.D.).

We have no evidence as to where the expansion had taken place. Perhaps both Iraqi and Egyptian narrators have contributed to the framework story. Although the Iraqi MS. mentioned above<sup>2</sup> does not give the prologue in full, there is no reason to think that the prologue could not have been expanded in Iraq. This hypothesis can be supported by the evidence of another MS. in the British Museum<sup>3</sup> which is akin to the above-mentioned Baghdadi MS., in that they have the theme of "the wife going to the bath" in common. This Baghdadi MS. already has the 3 parts of the prologue given in full, which indicates that the Iraqi narrators may have known the prologue in both its fuller and briefer forms.

To sum up, the prologue does not seem to be a mere translation.<sup>4</sup>

1 Horovitz, 42f.

2 See above, 39.

3 Alf Layla Wa-Layla, (3 Vols), B.M.MS., Or. 5312, fol1a f.

4 Cf. Lane, Preface, I, x.

Although its three parts are basically Indian in origin, the part of the trio (Part III) is mainly Persian because the important motif, which made Sheherezade relate her stories, namely the danger that threatened her life, is not referable to older Indian narrative literature.<sup>1</sup> As for the part played by the Arab narrator, it has been shown above, that he fused the three parts of different origin to introduce the stories of his own collection of the "Nights".

We move now to another point, namely the title of the "Nights".

The collection seems to have had three different titles: Alf Khurāfa, Alf Layla and Alf Layla Wa-Layla. The common word in all three titles is the word "Thousand" (Alf).

The Arabic translation of Hazār Afsāna was Alf Khurāfa, but soon after its translation the collection was popularly known as Alf Layla.<sup>2</sup>

Littmann suggests that Layla had been substituted for Khurāfa "when, with the Arab, the framework and the other stories were combined."<sup>3</sup> But even in the Hazār Afsāna, the prologue could hardly have been separate from the other stories since al-Fihrist clearly states that Sheherezade's story may have lasted for several nights.<sup>4</sup>

N. Abbott attributes the change to "a moment of passing insight" in the rehtorician who made the change, since it is a pleasantly alliterative title and more appropriate for the collection.<sup>5</sup>

It would seem that the change of the title from Khurāfa to Layla was made to suit the purpose of the prologue which did not really have the intention of presenting a thousand stories but of covering a great number of nights.<sup>6</sup>

1 Horovitz, op. cit.

2 Mas'ūdi, op. cit.

3 EI., art. Alf Layla Wa-Layla (Leyden, 1960), I, 362.

4 al-Nadīm, op. cit.

5 N. Abbott, JNES, 1949, VIII, 152.

6 Op. cit., Oestrup, 87.

The title may also have been altered so as to incorporate not only khurāfas, i. e. fictitious and fairy tales, but also historical anecdotes, fables and other sorts of narratives.

It is suggested that the number 1000 both in the Persian and Arabic versions meant only a large number and a long duration. Thus The Thousand Nights of Baghdad is unlikely to have included exactly a 1000 nights.<sup>1</sup>

The second change was the addition of "one" to the title 1000 Nights. The reason, purpose and date of this change have also been interpreted by surmise. It has been suggested, not very convincingly, that the Arabs had an aversion to exact numbers and preferred to go over an even number by one, or to fall short of it by one, as for example the Islamic rosary consists of 99 beads and not a hundred.<sup>2</sup>

However, Littmann's suggestion that both the numbers "1000" and "1001" are used to signify a great number seems a more probable explanation. He further suggests that the addition of "one" as a means of expressing the innumerable owes something to the influence of the alliteration in the Turkish bin bir (1001).<sup>3</sup>

It is also noticeable that Arabic books with the title "1001" appeared in the 7th/13th c. such as The Thousand and One Slaves and The Thousand and One Handmaidens,<sup>4</sup> coinciding with the increase in Seljuki influence in the Middle East.<sup>5</sup>

It was Lane however who emphasised the significance of the discrepancy in the titles in support of his view as regards the recent composition of the collection.<sup>6</sup> But as we have mentioned above, the later addition of

1 Oestrup, 85f, Littmann, op. cit.

It is a phrase like the Spanish mañana which indicates any future time.

2 Gildmeister, Scriptorum Arabum de rebus indicis (Bonnae, 1838) 84-87. Horovitz, 41, Lane, III, 738.

3 Tausendundeine Nacht in der arabischen Litteratur (Tübingen, 1923,) 10. It is to be noted that Arabs in conversation tend to indicate a large number by alliterating numerals such as 66, 77, 99, thus an insect with numerous legs is called Abu Arba'a Wa-Arba'in (the 44-legged insect).

4 Brockelmann, Ibid, I, 352.

5 Horovitz, 41.

6 See above, 28.

"one" made little or no difference to those well acquainted with the work, as is shown by the inconsistency in references to the title throughout the Muslim ages.<sup>1</sup>

In conclusion, the title, at the outset seemed to have retained the hyperbole of the Persian hazār in Hazār Afsāna, while the addition of "one" may owe something to the influence of the alliterative (and inexact) bin bir of Turkish. As time passed however, the Arab narrators were able to bring the imaginary scheme into realisation by distributing the 264 stories over an exact number of 1001 nights.

The alteration of khurāfa to Layla served the purpose of describing better the collection after the addition of Arabic anecdotes and realistic stories. In addition the narrators were then no longer under<sup>an</sup> obligation to keep to the exact number of a 1000 stories as they would have had to do had the title remained Alf Khurāfa.

#### The Development of the Contents

The development of the contents have also been a matter of considerable conjecture and controversy.

The general theory supposes that the contents developed in phases, during which only the <sup>frame-</sup>work story and the title remained mainly fixed and almost unaltered. It is believed that the Hazār Afsāna had lost its original form shortly after its translation into Arabic,<sup>2</sup> and was constantly being altered, adapted and supplemented.<sup>3</sup> Consequently, the collection had become "the basin into which all the numerous streams of Arabic Story discharge their flow; or, to express it otherwise, a microcosmos in which all the various genres of the Arabic story-tellers' art appear."<sup>4</sup>

The question of determining the contents still awaits the discovery of new evidence for clarification.<sup>5</sup> The obscurity is due not only to the

1 See above, 31, n. 1.

2 Abbott, 1949, 151, 154, 163.

3 Payne IX, 287-290.

4 Horovitz, 56.

5 Abbott, 1949, 162.



absence of an adequate number of old manuscripts and of literary references to the collection, but also to the fact that collections similar to the "Nights", and connected with it, are likewise non-extant, such as al-Jahshiyāri's Alf Samar (4th/10th c.) and the versified version of the Hazār Afsāna (5th/11th c.).<sup>1</sup>

The scanty references to the collection is due to the attitude of the Arab man of letters to khurāfa literature and popular narrative literature. Thus the "Nights" was regarded as belonging to a despised category of literary product which lacked moral purpose.<sup>2</sup> Because of the edifying nature of its contents, Kalīla Wa-Dimna, for example, had a respectable status denied to the "Nights".<sup>3</sup>

On the other hand, how can we account for the loss of a collection of stories written by an author of the calibre of al-Jahshiyāri, or books of practical philosophy containing apologues or precepts such as the book of Marūk and Barsanās (70 books in all),<sup>4</sup> This has been attributed again to the general lack of interest in fiction and narrative literature as a whole, for one notices that the Arab men of letters never translated works such as the Indian Ramayāna and Mahabharāta, or of the Greek plays and the Homeric poems.<sup>5</sup> However, the real factor for the mass-loss of narrative works, whether translations or the compositions of reputable Arab authors, was the deterioration of their standard in language and subject matter when these works passed into the hands of the common people and became a source of amusement to them.<sup>6</sup>

1 See above, 22, n. 2. Oestrup, 7, 81f.

2 Payne, IX, 304. See also al-Tawhīdī's opinion of the triviality of khurāfa literature, Kitāb al-Imtā' Wa'l-Mu'ānasa (3 Vols. Cairo, 1942), I, 23.

3 H. Fawzi, al-Sindibād al-Qadīm (Cairo, 1943) 182.

4 Hamza, Ibid., I, 41f.

5 Fawzi, op. cit.

6 Hamza, op. cit., Macdonald, 1924, 370, Mas'ūdī, IV, 89f, al-Nadīm, 304. Stories like Shimās and Sindbad the Sage mentioned in the sources seemed to have been saved from loss by incorporating them into the "Nights", IV, 154, III, 156. Stories connected with the Quran or Tradition such as Lugman the Wise, Og ('Ouj) and Buluqiya, are preserved in the Arabic sources (see Hamza I, 64, Al-Tha'labī, Qisās al-Anbiyā' al-musamma bi'l 'Arā'is (Cairo, 1282/1859), 259, 381.

The impression obtained from Arabic sources during the first two centuries of the 'Abbāsīd era, conveys the idea that there was a great public demand for stories which resulted in a flourishing narrative literature of the populace, especially in the time of al-Mu'tadīd (289/902) and al-Muqtadir (d. 320/932).<sup>1</sup>

This increase in the bulk and popularity of story literature attracted the attention of the celebrated writer al-Jahshyārī (d. 331/942) and induced him to compile a collection of stories of superior quality, chosen from Arab, Persian, Greek and other sources. The connotation of the title of his work Alf Samar signifies its kinship with the collection Alf Khurāfa and Alf Layla. He, however, discarded the division of each story into nights, and intended to collect exactly a thousand stories, each of them fifty pages long and told on a separate night.<sup>2</sup>

He had collected 480 stories before death interrupted his work. Even his incomplete collection would have been greater than the "Nights" both in the number and the length of the stories.<sup>3</sup>

The relation of al-Jahshiyārī's collection to the early "Nights", like the relation of the latter to the Hazār Afsāna remains unknown.<sup>4</sup> However, al-Jahshiyārī had undoubtedly contributed to the development of the narrative literature of the 10th c. A.D. including the "Nights".<sup>5</sup>

1 Athīr, VII, 336. Tabarī, IV, 2165. Nadīm, 300. Šūlī, Akhbār al-Rādī Wa'l Muttaqī (Cairo 1354/1935) 5f.

2 Nadīm, 304f.

3 The "Nights" contains 264 stories of all lengths, from a few lines story to several hundred pages, (Payne IX, 267). For the number of stories see Burton's lists drawn from various MSS. (X, 457-63 and 515-31). The bulk of al-Jahshiyārī's work, had it been finished, would have been five times the length of Kitāb al-Aghānī, (Macdonald, 1924, 368).

4 Abbott, 162.

5 Abbott, op. cit., Macdonald, El, art. Hikāya, II, 305.

As the tendency to embellish, imitate and construct stories increased, the level of the respectability of narrative literature decreased, since scribes and anonymous narrators replaced reputable story-tellers to meet the increasing public demand for tales.<sup>1</sup> This decline must have been so distinct that even al-Jahshiyārī's effort to bring uniformity and dignity to the collection failed, and both the "Nights" and his own collection passed into obscurity. The survival of the "Nights" for so many centuries seems to have depended solely on the inexhaustible enthusiasm of the common people.

The growth of the collection was facilitated by the convenient prologue, and the system of cycle story which had been utilised by the Persian, the early Arab narrators, the Egyptian compilers and finally by the European editors and translators.<sup>2</sup>

The discovery of a fragment of a MS. which can be dated, from internal evidence, as of the 3/9th c. is an event of great significance, since it casts light on the nature of the early contents of the "Nights" and the date of its composition.<sup>3</sup>

In the opening sentence of this fragment of MS., Dīnāzād asks Sheherezade to "strike an example" by relating to her stories "on virtue or default, power or ignorance, generosity or avarice, courage or cowardliness", things which denote Man's human nature and his characteristics. Or to recount to her a story about courtly manners, or one of Syrian or Bedouin origin.<sup>4</sup>

The variety of tales, indicated above, shows that the stage of development of narrative literature, to which al-Nadīm refers as "the stage of construction and creative imitation",<sup>5</sup> had already been reached by the narrators of the "Nights" during the 3rd/9th c. and not only in Iraq but also in Syria.<sup>6</sup>

1 Macdonald, 1924, 370. Abbott, 157.

2 Abbott, 164. See below, 86f.

3 Abbott, 131-63.

4 Ibid., 132-36, 145.

5 Fihrist, 304.

6 Abbott, 145f, 154. The MS. was written in Syria but transferred to Egypt where it was discovered.

In the light of this evidence, and since Arabic sources unanimously place the Indian and the Hazār Afsāna stories in the same category as the popular Arabic compositions, the question arises whether it was at this early stage of its development that the "Nights" ceased to be an organised collection of a specific number or type of tales, and had already turned into a mere framework into which could be incorporated, inserted or added newly composed or already well-known stories of various origins and sources.<sup>1</sup>

If this is so, then the early "Nights" must have shown a more bewildering variety than our recent and organised collection.

It may well be thought that there has been no standard text of the "Night" containing a limited number or fixed kind of stories throughout its long history.

Indeed the fact that all the references to the collection which we possess are restricted to the title of the collection, and a brief outline of its prologue, supports the view that "there never was, until much later, a clearly defined collection of tales recognised as strictly the 1001 Nights."<sup>2</sup>

Attempts to show the various forms of the collection were made first by Macdonald and then by Abbott. Macdonald distinguishes five forms of the "Nights" during its long history:

- 1 The Original Persian Hazār Afsāna.
- 2 An Arabic version of the Hazār Afsāna.
- 3 A form in which the framework story (prologue) is taken from the previous work followed by stories of Arabic origin replacing the original Persian stories. The Arabic element here was insignificant and lacking in interest.
- 4 "The Nights" of the late Fātimid period. This may have been the same as form 3 and was evidently popular in Egypt.
- 5 The "Nights" represented by Galland's MS. which is closely akin to all other manuscripts of the collection that have hitherto come to light.<sup>3</sup>

1 Cf. Burton, X, 92f.

2 H.A.R. Gibb, Arabic Literature, An Introduction, (Oxford), 1926, 107, Athenaeum, Oct. 1828, 737.

3 IRAS, 1924, 390.

N. Abbott in her study of the evidence derived from the 9th c.A.D. manuscript of the "Nights", shows the same successive stages in the evolution of the work but slightly modifies Macdonald's general outline and supplements it.<sup>1</sup>

- 1 An 8th c.A.D. translation of the Hazār Afsāna which was a complete and literal translation perhaps entitled Alf Khurāfa.
- 2 An 8th c.A.D. Islamised Arabic version of the above work entitled Alf Layla. This could have been either partial or complete.
- 3 A 9th c.A.D. composite collection containing both Persian and Arabic materials. While most of the Persian stories came undoubtedly from the Hazār Afsāna, other story-books, e.g. Shimās and Sindbad the Sage, were not improbable sources.<sup>2</sup> However Abbott thinks that the Arabic materials were not as insignificant as Macdonald believed them to be.
- 4 The 10th c. Alf Samar of al-Jahshiyārī, which was probably designed to include, among other materials, all the current stories of the "Nights" and to supersede it; but to this work we have no clue to guide us.
- 5 A 12th c.A.D. collection augmented by material from stage "four" and by Asiatic and Egyptian tales of local colour.<sup>3</sup>
- 6 The final stage in the evolution of the work extends to the early 16th c.A.D. Egyptian folk tales and counter-Crusade tales are among the prominent additions at this period.

The conquest of Mam lūk Syria and Egypt by the Ottomans (1512-1520 A.D.) closed the last chapter of the history of the "Nights" in its oriental homeland.<sup>4</sup>

It has been suggested that the additional stories were determined by the efforts of the narrators to bring the number of the nights up to exactly

1 JNES., 1949, 163f.

2 Abbott, op.cit., Macdonald, 1924, 390.

3 Abbott, op.cit.

4 Abbott, op.cit. Lane, Preface, I, XIII, EL., I, 362.

1001.<sup>1</sup> However, considering the immense number of tales circulating in the Arab countries before the 12th c., a deficiency in the number of tales could hardly have been the cause of these more recent additions and alterations.<sup>2</sup>

In shaping the contents of the "Nights", in its various stages, several factors played a part, such as the loss of older manuscripts, the capricious choice of the compilers and the taste and customs of the audiences at different places and times.<sup>3</sup>

Leaving now the form of the "Nights", we turn to a discussion of the contents of the work. The "Nights" is characterised by variety of content covering a wide field of literary genres and representing various ages. There are stories of Alexander, King Solomon, Persian Kings, Pre-Islamic anecdotes and stories of the Islamic dynasties until Mamlūk times.<sup>4</sup>

The material thus represented has been distributed roughly under five chief heads:<sup>5</sup> (a) Histories and long romances; (b) Anecdotes and short stories dealing with historical personages, and with adventures of everyday life relating mainly to the 'Abbāsīd period; (c) Romances and romantic fictions, containing elements of the supernatural, either purely fictitious (fairy tales), or set against a background of Muslim everyday life; and the "contes fantastiques", such as stories of miracles and saints and exaggerated "inventions"; (d) Fables and apologues; (e) Tales containing tests, discussions and disputations.<sup>6</sup>

1 Littmann, El., op. cit.

2 See above, 45f.

3 Athenaeum, Sept., 1839, 741f.

4 Payne, IX, 312, Littmann, El., I, 358f. Burton, X, 90f.

5 Payne, IX, 367f.

6 Op. cit.

The most striking and characteristic types of stories in the collection, are the disputation (munāzra) stories and the cycle-story.<sup>1</sup> There is a marked difference between the Indian test-stories and the Arabic disputation stories as exemplified in the Baghdadi story of the learned slave-girl Tawaddud.<sup>2</sup>

Discussion or disputation literature seems to have been popular in educated circles in the Arab countries. It was evidently also popular among contemporary Greeks, Persians and the Christians of the East and West,<sup>3</sup> since the Questions of 'Abdallah b. Salām, a famous book of disputation,<sup>4</sup> was translated into several Eastern languages.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Mas'ūdi also mentions the subjection of Hunayn, in the time of al-Wāthiq, to such a test,<sup>6</sup> and examples of similar catechisms frequently occur in Arabic sources.<sup>7</sup>

Von Grunebaum maintains that the Arabic subject of al-munāzara (disputation) may be traced back to the Greek genre of "Exercises in Fictitious Discussions".<sup>8</sup>

- 1 The cycle-story is discussed below, 57f.
- 2 Indian test-stories, Nights, IV, 154, III, 156, Arabic discussion stories, Ibid., Tawaddud, II, 337, 272, 333, I, 223-31, 246-53.
- 3 Horovitz, 51.
- 4 Al-Masā'il (Cairo, 1867), consist of 1404 questions, put to the Prophet by b. Salām, a Jew who was converted to Islam after the Prophet's answers to these questions were given.
- 5 Horovitz, op. cit.
- 6 Murūj, VII, 181.
- 7 Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'yān (Biographical Dictionary) ed. and tr. W.M. de Slane, (4 vols., Paris and London, 1842-71), I, 238-40, Mas'ūdi, VI, 369.
- 8 G. von Grunebaum, Greek form Elements in the Arabian Nights, JAOS, 1942, XXII, 287.

Whatever the origin of this branch of literature may have been, the genre represented in the Arabic stories of the "Nights" is purely Arabic both in subject matter and thought.<sup>1</sup>

The stories of the "Nights" depict all classes of society, from Kings to their poorest subjects. It mainly deals with city dwellers such as merchants, judges, schoolmasters, saints, craftsmen, labourers, slaves and their rulers of caliphs, sultans, viziers and courtiers.

The wide variety of the contents is closely bound up with the history of the collection and its gradual development. In the following study, each part of the collection will be briefly examined, as this will help us to distinguish the social background which it reflects.

#### Foreign Elements in the "Nights"

In this section we propose to discuss how far the "Nights" is to be regarded as a borrowed work, and how far it was the creation of the borrowers and reciters.

Evidence shows that it was not the translation of Persian and Indian fairy tales which first introduced the Arabs to the world of fiction. The early Arabs enjoyed fairy tales and classified them under the title The Tales of Khurāfa.<sup>2</sup>

The Arabs would seem to have heard these from people such as the merchant al-Ḥārith b. al-Nadr, who endeavoured to challenge the Prophet by telling the people diverting and entertaining khurāfas.<sup>3</sup> He was punished by death, not because he related fairy tales but because of his deliberate attempt to compete with the Quranic tales, and divert the attention of Muslims from their new religion, by teaching them how to sing and play the lute.<sup>4</sup>

1 Horovitz, op.cit., suggests that a Greek story of a philosopher afflicted by a slave-girl (Fihrist, 439, ed. Cairo, 1348) may be a parallel to the Arabic story of the "Nights" Tawaddud, but this is mere conjecture because we do not know the content of the story listed in the Fihrist.

2 Mufaddal, Fakhir, 168-71. Macdonald, 1924, 371f. Horovitz, 46.

3 Quran, 31 6-7. Baydāwi, Anwār al-Tanzīl (2 vols, ed.n.p., 1314 A.H.) II, 252.

4 Op.cit. Mas'ūdī, VIII, 93f. Cf. Abu al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, Kitāb al-Aghānī (20 vols., Bulaq, 1285 A.H.) I, 10f. Burton X, 128.



A tradition shows that the Prophet himself used to relate to his wife 'Ā'ishā stories about a man named Khurāfa.<sup>1</sup> The Quran itself acknowledged the world of Jinn, and the superhuman world of the Arabs abounds in several classes of Jinn and 'Ifrīts.<sup>2</sup>

'Umar I fought the tendency among the people to cherish fairy tales and fictitious stories, but soon after the first century of Islam, narrative literature flourished.<sup>3</sup>

European commentators overestimated the foreign elements in the "Nights".<sup>4</sup> The search for each single plot and motif has persisted and several parallels have been found in various sources of foreign origin.

Von Grunebaum believes that the Arabic "language and local colour effectively obscure the foreign origin of the greater part of the subject matter. The spirit of Islam has come to permeate tales of Jewish, Buddhist and Hellenistic inventions + Muslim institutions, Muslim mores and Muslim lore have quietly replaced the cultural conventions of the source material and lent to the corpus that unity of atmosphere which is so eminently characteristic of Islamic civilisation and which will prevent the observer from noticing at first sight the motley array of heterogeneous elements of which it is composed."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Fākhīr, op.cit., al-Sharīshī, Sharḥ Maqāmat al-Ḥarīrī (2 Vols, Būlāq 1300/1883) I, 73.

2 Quran, Sūrat al-Jinn, 72, and 27<sup>17,39</sup>, 6<sup>112</sup>, 21<sup>82</sup>, 24<sup>12</sup>.

3 Burton, op.cit.

4 R.Hole writing in 1797 states that the "Nights" was regarded as literary imposition, but now its genuinness is no more disputed, Remarks on The Arabian Nights Entertainments, (London, 1797) 2. Schlegel, in 1833, argued that the work was an Arabic plagiarism of Sanskrit stories, see above, 25.  
See also, Anonymous, F.Q.R., 1840, XXIV, 146-56.

5 Grunebaum, Medieval Islam (Chicago, 1953), 294.

However, the finding of parallels proves nothing definite, as themes of these stories and legends recur "not only in the literatures of the most widely different peoples of the East and West, but also in the popular traditional lore of every part of the earth, even among illiterate peoples"<sup>1</sup> who have not read or translated foreign literature.

Islamic civilisation flourished in the part of the world which had been for a long time the cradle of ancient civilisations. The Greeks and Persians were the last two competing powers in the pre-Islamic period, with the local settlement acting as a permanent link between the alternate rules. When the Arabs of Arabia conquered these parts, Islamic ideas came into contact with both the late and ancient civilisations of the area, and gradually fused with new cultures of wider range and variety.<sup>2</sup>

Most literary works have themes and motifs which are traceable to previous writings, but the moulding of the materials in new forms and shapes produce different works of art.

Hence, the foreign materials lying in Arabic books or circulating as folk tales, had been handled by the narrators, who might have been unconscious of their origin and source, in a manner which produced a work predominantly Arabic in character and exhibiting unmistakable Muslim cultural background and religious atmosphere, both in tone and treatment.<sup>3</sup>

The early Baghdadi group of tales, which comprise some of the best tales in the collection, has been regarded as part of the foreign portion of the "Nights", and grouped with the ancient tales of pure Indian and Persian origin; firstly, because these Baghdadi tales contain motifs and episodes of a superhuman nature which can be traced back to foreign narrative literature, and secondly because they are composed in imitation

1 Horovitz, 57, 45. Hole, Ibid., 226-28.

2 Cf. Grunebaum, JAOS, 1942, 279f, on the Biblical and Quranic stylistic patterns deriving from Greek novels. He thinks that the apocryphal writings of the New Testament freely used Greek novel elements, and later acted as a media between Greek and Arabic narratives.

3 De Sacy, Dissertation, IV-VIII, Payne, IX, 284.

of the plots of Indo-Persian tales.<sup>1</sup>

It is very possible, however, that these supposedly foreign motifs might have entered the collection through the channel of folk-tales. Macdonald distinguishes three stages in the process of the composition of some tales of the "Nights". First, the simple folk-lore elements current orally and in the memories of people. Second, these elements worked up and used in stories by conscious literary artists, either reciters or writers. Third, the ultimate incorporation of the resultant story in specific recensions of the "Nights".<sup>2</sup>

Among the folk-loric themes which had been manipulated in the "Nights", one can regard themes such as the forbidden chamber, metamorphoses, beast marriages, Jinn and Ins marriage, talking animals, petrified cities and magic power.<sup>3</sup> Such themes are widely spread among various nations. "Their groundwork is neither modern nor medieval, neither western nor eastern."<sup>4</sup> They have their origins in folk-memory, and perhaps connections with remote savage sources.<sup>5</sup>

Further, parallels which have been found in Greek, Jewish, Indian and Persian narrative literatures have also been found to exist in ancient sources,<sup>6</sup> for instance, the monkey scribe in the story of The Second

1 Oestrup, 107, Elisséeff, 43-7.

2 IRAS, 1924, 361.

3 S. Thompson, The Types of the Folk-Tale; a classification and bibliography (Folklore Fellow Communications No.74; Helsinki, 1928) 25/27, 47, 50, 53, 59, 62, 107f, 109 111f, 116. See also, Motif-Index of folk literature (6 Vols; Copenhagen, 1955-58) I, 526, 502, 517.

4 J.A. Macculloch, Folk-memory in Folk-tales, (being the Quarterly translation of the folk-lore society), in Folk-lore Quart. Review, Sep., 1949, LX, 307, 310.

5 Ibid., 307-15.

6 Littmann, 1001 Nacht, 19f. Grunebaum, 1942, op.cit.

Mendicant may have had his prototype in That the scribe of the Egyptian God who is often represented as a monkey, as well as in the Indian Hanuman the monkey-leader of the Ramayāna.<sup>1</sup> Al-Khidr's prototype, which is supposed to have been derived from Jewish sources, can also be traced to a Babylonian prototype. Similarly, the journeys of some heroes in the "Nights" to fetch the water of life may reflect the theme of the Babylonian epic of Gilgamesh.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore motifs which seem foreign in origin, might have survived in Mesopotamia or the Nile Valley from ancient times, and had been assimilated into Syriac, Greek or Jewish literature and then transmitted to the Arabs by the Romance of Alexander or the Jewish Apocrypha.<sup>3</sup>

The Arab narrator availing himself of either folk tales motifs, or of material drawn from a source which has become a common property for several nations, appropriated these themes to specific protagonists of the Arab and Islamic sphere of culture.<sup>4</sup>

It is significant to note the treatment of these motifs by Arab narrators. For example, the theme of falling in love with the picture of the heroine,<sup>5</sup> is used in the Persian story Ardashīr,<sup>6</sup> in its Arabic imitation Tāj al-Mulūk and in the Arabic composition Ibrāhīm b. al-Khaṣīb.<sup>7</sup> It is noticeable here

1 Littmann, Ibid, 22, Qalamāwi, Alf Layla Wa-Layla (Cairo, 1958) 22f.

2 Littmann, op.cit. E.I., I, 363.

3 Littmann, op.cit. Grunebaum, 1942, 280.

4 Horovitz, 57, Nights, I, 44-69, IV, 250,304.

5 Thompson, Motif-Index., III, 499.

6 Nights, III, 480 Cal.ed.

7 Nights, I, 292, IV, 250 Cairo ed.

that the element of the marvellous, which is far more powerful in the Persian original, becomes less significant in its Arabic imitation and practically vanishes in the Arabic version of the theme of falling in love with a picture.

In their literary and creative imitations, and the employment of widely spread folk-loric motifs, the Arab narrators did not only improve the original material but also excelled other nations who borrowed themes from the same common sources. They successfully presented stories of great universal appeal and created a narrative literature and a rich and divergent collection such as the "Nights".<sup>1</sup> As regards the borrowed stories, Macdonald states that the compilers sometimes "stole their brooms ready made."<sup>2</sup> The word "stole", however, is hardly justified in this context, because the anonymous narrators have been honest enough to admit their borrowings. Thus they tend to preserve in the same collection both the original story and its Arabic imitations, as for example, in the story of Jānshāh and its Arabic imitation, Hasan of Baṣra.<sup>3</sup>

Secondly, it is noticeable that when a narrator is transmitting an ancient story, he attempts to acknowledge its antiquity, in other words to declare his debt to the ancients by reciting at the close of such stories: "This is all that has reached us of the Sindbad", or "of the King and his viziers and people",<sup>4</sup> or: "Surely your story will be recorded hereafter, and read to the people for generations and generations."<sup>5</sup>

1 Athenaeum, 1838, 737.

2 IRAS., 1924, op.cit.

3 Nights, III, 47, 337.

4 Nights, The Wiles of Women (Sindbad the Sage), III, 156 and and Jalī'ād, IV, 154.

5 Nights, II, 112, III, 300.

The significance of foreign names in the collection is of no great value in assigning the origin of a story.<sup>1</sup> Names, whether of lands, cities or persons, should only be regarded as an external criterion in deciding the nationality of a story, since names more often than not, seem to be deliberately preserved to help the narrator to indulge in fancy and the world of imagination.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the Arabisation of the name Ardashīr to Tāj al-Mulūk or Sayf al-Mulūk in three similar stories, has not, by any means, affected the plot of the original Persian story Ardashīr which shows little or no alteration in either the Persian or the Arabic versions.<sup>3</sup>

A number of fairy tales are of Persian origin,<sup>4</sup> and there are two distinctly Indian stories in the collection, namely The Wiles of Women,<sup>5</sup> and Jalī'ād and Shimās.<sup>6</sup> These two stories may be considered among the ready-made tales incorporated in the "Nights". Lane notes that the verses in such stories are, as a rule, few or non-existent.<sup>7</sup>

The Indian narrative literature has also contributed to the collection certain methods of constructing cycle-stories and the pattern of narration.<sup>8</sup> In a cycle-story, the sub-tales are organised within the framework of the continuous theme. A cycle-story is the product of the Indian narrative pattern of stringing together several stories to gain time,<sup>9</sup> and render

1 Oestrup, El., art. Alf Layla Wa Layla (Leyden, 1913) I, 253.

2 Nights, I, 295, III, 273.

3 Ibid., III, 480, Cal.ed., and I, 292, III, 300, Cairo ed.

4 Burton, X, 123. Among the obvious survivals are: Jānshāh, The Magic Horse, Qamar and Ardashīr, Nights, III, 47, II, 2 & 3, 79 and Cal.ed., III, 480.

5 Nights, III, 156. Oestrup notes that Sindbad is a deformation of the Indian Siddhāpti or the Syriac Syntipas; Oestrup, 26.

6 Nights, IV, 154, also known in Arabic sources as the Indian story of Shimās, Hamza, I, 41, Mas'ūdi, IV, 89f.

7 Lane, III, 741f. Cf. Nights, II, 300, III, 47.

8 Horovitz, 43-45.

9 Oestrup, El., I, 254, M. Gerhardt, 1963, 395.

impossible a dreaded event either by telling unfinished stories or promising to tell a better one. Although this pattern of stringing together stories can be found in ancient Egyptian narratives, it is a specific characteristic of Indian narrative literature, and parallels of such stories are to be found in the Panchatantra, Hitopadesa and the Katha Sārīt Sāgara.<sup>1</sup>

Sheherezade follows this pattern by repeating certain sentences each night, e.g.: "If the King let me live I'll recount to you the remainder of the story", or "I'll tell you a better story", or "This is nothing compared to what I shall relate to you of the story of so and so".<sup>2</sup>

In the Arabised version of this Indian device, the framed stories may be told not only to defer a dreaded decision, but also to redeem someone who is condemned to death or execution and to ransom him by telling pleasant stories;<sup>3</sup> or merely to obtain pardon and escape punishment, or gain rewards.<sup>4</sup> More frequently, however, the pattern is employed mainly to entertain the listeners, satisfy their curiosity or perhaps to allay the caliph's depression.<sup>5</sup>

The other Indian pattern of once speaking for a certain point of view and once speaking against it, which is used principally in the Indian story Ialī'ād<sup>6</sup> to postpone or accelerate the death of the King's son, is modified in the Arabic stories and replaced by the Arabic pattern of once speaking "in praise of something" and once speaking "in blame of it" for the purpose

1 Horovitz, 44, Payne, IX. 314, Burton, X, 78.

2 Nights, I, 9, 13, II, 79, 168.

3 Nights, I, 8, 97, 105, 109, 113.

4 Ibid., I, 39, 93.

5 Ibid., I, 292, II, 226, 263.

6 Ibid., IV, 154; two parallels of stories which are strung together and told by two opposing groups.

of exercise in disputation (munāzara).<sup>1</sup>

Apart from the framework story, there is another device of "inserting" new stories. This is used in the Indian tales to ward off a threat or danger, or to give moral instruction. It is introduced by the Indian phrase, "Do not do to me what so and so did to so and so", and after the question, "And what did so and so do?"<sup>2</sup>, the story is inserted. The recounting of inserted stories in difficult situations may also be introduced by the Sanskrit expression "Katham etat", i. e. "How is that?"<sup>3</sup>

In Arabic, the "inserting" device is usually used, not to introduce short instructive stories, but lengthy stories with the object of refreshing or pleasing the listeners.<sup>4</sup>

According to Grunebaum, the Greek form elements in the "Nights" do not only include motive survivals from the Greek novel and correspondence of plots,<sup>5</sup> but also similarities in patterns of style, methods of presentation and emotional conventions. Both the "Nights" and the Greek novel show lack of characterisation, and have interest only in events and thrilling situations.<sup>6</sup>

The technique of love-tales, he maintains, is strikingly the same in both works. There is frequent separation and reunion of the lovers when Fate rules supreme. Lovers go through hardship and perils, their agonies pile up, and then all troubles are suddenly uplifted and they are happily reunited.<sup>7</sup>

1 Ibid., II, 272, 333-37.

2 Ibid., I, 21, IV, 158, 162f.

3 Oestrup, op. cit.

4 Ibid., I, 180-292. For details on framed stories see Gerhardt, 394,f, 422.

5 Grunebaum, 1942, LXII, 277-92, esp. 278, 282.

6 Ibid., op. cit., and 283.

7 Ibid., 281.



The conventional shades of emotions in both works show love as a disease with its symptoms of weeping tears, frequent faintings, sleeplessness, desperation and madness.<sup>1</sup> Other similarities are shown in the identical scenery which describes palaces and gardens, the habit of recounting the hero's lives, the use of drugging (banj) and the importance of dreams and the custom of exchanging letters between lovers.<sup>2</sup>

But, as we have mentioned above, resemblances such as these could be the outcome of the fusion of cultures and diffusion of literature.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, stories with plot similarities or common motifs could have been derived from the same common source.

It should be further noted that ancient romanticism and conventional emotions have found fertile ground in the civilizations of widely different nations, especially at a certain stage of their development.<sup>4</sup>

To sum up, it would seem that foreign elements in the "Nights" have entered the collection by two ways; directly, by the transmission of a number of Indian and Persian tales, and indirectly, i. e. by creative imitation. The Muslim civilisation was the medium through which the ancient culture was transmitted to the medieval world, and it is in the nature of every civilisation to borrow and assimilate the cultures of the predecessors. This happened in Europe during the revival of arts and letters under the influence of classical models in the 14th to 16th centuries A.D.

1 Ibid., 283f.

2 Ibid., 286, 288, 289.

3 See above, 53f.

Grunebaum considers even the Folk-loric elements of the "Nights" to be derived from Greek sources (Ibid., 290), but cf. Halliday W.R. Indo European Folk-tales and the Greek Legends (Cambridge, 1933), 50f, on the process of the diffusion of folk-tale motifs.

4 Halliday, op. cit.

The process of borrowing foreign names, motifs and patterns to introduce local compositions can be likened to the process of filling Indian or Persian boxes with Arab dates.

### Methods of Development

After the translation of the Hazar Afsana, the growth of its Arabic version Alf Layla was achieved by the following methods:

- 1 The incorporation and insertion into the collection of popular independent stories whether of foreign origin or of Arabic composition.
- 2 The creative imitation of older plots to produce new Arabic stories.
- 3 The addition of the Arabic anecdotes and stories and the insertion of fables into the collection.

Sindbad the Sailor, 'Umar al-Nu'man and Ahmad al-Danaf<sup>1</sup> are among the most important incorporated stories. New stories were incorporated because of the changing taste of the readers and hearers over the long centuries, and perhaps a great part of the Hazar Afsana stories were outdated and too insignificant to last. Sindbad represents the adventures of the Arab merchants and seafarers in India and Ceylon in the 4th/10th c.<sup>2</sup>

The incorporation of 'Umar al-Nu'man, belongs to a more recent age, for various MSS. are differentiated, among other things, by the inclusion or the omission of this romance.<sup>3</sup>

It was perhaps the importance attached to the Crusade wars which decided the incorporation of the latter story.

The proof for the incorporation of independent stories is provided by an old MS (dated 16th C.A.D.), found in Tübingen library.<sup>4</sup> The story of Sul and Shumul is shown here on the borderline of passing over from independent existence into a recension of the "Nights". In the first 35 pages, there comes

1 Nights, III, 96, I, 183, III, 236, see below, 72f

2 Elisséeff, 41. See Hole, Ibid., a study of the story.

3 Nights, I, 183. Macdonald, Classification, 1922, 321.

4 Sul and Shumul, edited by Seybold (Leipzig, 1902).

division into nights, and the form of address is "Oh King". After p.35 though spaces have been left for the numbers of nights, these have not been inserted. The form of address has become "O Gentlemen", or "the reporter ... or narrator ... said." This MS. therefore shows that the narrator is at his work of augmentation, but half way through he merely copies the MS. forgetting that Sheherezade is the speaker and the King is the listener.

Hence it has been assumed that the story was never actually a part of a recension of the "Nights", as the numbers would have been inserted.<sup>1</sup>

It is rather difficult to determine that the story had never belonged to the collection without first investigating the internal evidence. The mere fact that the story does not appear in Galland or Zotenberg's<sup>2</sup> recensions is not enough to assert that it is alien to the collection. The story appears also in a Turkish MS. discovered by Ritter and dated by him as a MS. of the 14th c.A.D.<sup>3</sup> which makes it older than Galland's MS. dated 1537 A.D. It is to be noted, however, that not all the MSS. especially the isolated ones, are properly divided into nights.<sup>4</sup>

By reading the story one can see no reason to regard it as unrelated to the "Nights", at least to an early recension of the collection. Internal examination shows that the story is concerned with the love and marriage of two cousins, a thing which has more kinship with the early Islamic period than does the sort of love which occurs between a master and his slave-girl which is the central theme of later stories.<sup>5</sup> The love of the Jinn-woman

1 Macdonald, 1924, 359f. Horovitz, 38.

2 The full Egyptian recension of the Nights was edited by Zotenberg in 1888 and is called Zer.

3 Kitāb al-Hikāyat al-'Ajība ed. Wehr (Damascus, 1956), 265.  
See below, 79.

4 Macdonald, Classification, 313f, 316. JRAS., 1924, 391.

5 Cf. Oestrup, 74.

for al-Sūl is enlisted in the Fihrist under the title "Stories on love between the Jinn and Ins and vice versa".<sup>1</sup>

The role of Satan to subjugate the Muslim hero by tempting him to denounce his faith in order to restore his bride - which he refuses to do - features early Islamic rationalism, when perhaps the pre-Islamic paganism has not been totally uprooted.<sup>2</sup> At any rate, it does not tally with the late Islamic and particularly the Egyptian profound religious faith.

On considering these points and knowing that the MS. is of Syrian origin, we may ask, can this be one of the Syrian or Iraqi tales which were left out by the Egyptian compiler? Why does it appear only in the Tubingen MS. which belongs to a group of MSS. that is older and quite different from the Zotenberg's MS?<sup>3</sup> Can it be assumed that Galland represented the form which the "Nights" simulated in Egypt and not the form which was popular outside Egypt at the same age or before. If we consider that this MS. intended to contain stories of Iraqi or Syrian origin, popular in countries other than Egypt, then the case of Sūl and Shumūl would show an attempt by the narrator to restore, by incorporation, an ousted story to a recension of the "Nights", rather than interpolate an alien story.

The development of the collection by adding tales in imitation of Persian prototypes is represented in stories like Hasan of Basra which is a replica of the Persian tale Jānshāh.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Fihrist, 305.

2 Seybold, 82 f, 93, Wehr, 282

3 Macdonald, 1924, 377, 391, Classification, 310, 318

4 Nights, III, 47, 337

The Arabic story is more interesting than and superior to its prototype.<sup>1</sup> Despite the dominance of the fairy element in both stories, Jānshāh is purely fictitious, unrealistic and unconvincing, whereas Hasan of Basra shows touches of realism in the resistance of the Jinn family to the marriage of their daughter to Hasan, and in the encounter between Queen Zubayda and the fairy wife.

In the "Nights" the process of creating new stories by imitation consists in the rearrangement of episodes of earlier plots, and the treatment of similar themes either in a slightly or radically different pattern, with the addition of local colour to the new story.<sup>2</sup> This is like the rearrangement of coloured bricks in a new and different order rather than the invention of a completely new plot.<sup>3</sup> Examples of thematic and structural resemblances are shown in both the Baghdadi and Egyptian tales.<sup>4</sup>

The development by augmentation means the addition of Arabic anecdotes and stories about caliphs and sultans.

Unlike the short instructive Indian stories which are introduced by "Kathum etāt", the Arabic stories are introduced by the Arabic pattern of transmitting information through a chain of authorities e.g. "so and so relates from/ of so and so", or "it has been related" (yuhka anna).<sup>5</sup>

The Arabic stories and anecdotes are marked by the social and historical background of the period they depict, and have been added intermittently.<sup>6</sup>

1 Oestrup, 28

2 Halliday, Ibid, 28 f.

3 Ibid, 22 - 8

4 For recurrent themes which occur in Baghdadi stories see Nights I, 65, 130, and for Egyptian stories see, II, 168, 242, IV, 94.

5 Nights, II, 206, 320, 330f.

6 Payne IX, 368.

As a result of periodical augmentation, there exists some variation between different recensions of the "Nights" as regards the number and the kind of anecdotes.<sup>1</sup>

The Arabic anecdotes are of several subjects. First the legendary and historical which alludes to well-known persons, as Ḥatām al-Ṭay, Abu Nuwās, al-Ḥajjāj, etc.<sup>2</sup> Second, stories related to the Umayyad, 'Abbāsīd and Fāṭimid caliphates. Most of the anecdotes have been traced to their parallels in Arabic sources, as al-Mas'ūdī, al-Ṭabari, al-Tha'labī, al-Tanūkhī, the book of al-Aghāni and others.<sup>3</sup>

August Müller supposes that the stories existing already in Baghdad entered the collection in the Buwayhid and Seljuk times, other orientalisists suggest a later date.<sup>4</sup>

It is easier to trace the anecdotes to their sources than to designate the date of their entrance to the collection since many of them are transmitted repeatedly by historians of widely separated periods.<sup>5</sup>

The narrator however could not have related humorous or quasi-historical events concerning the caliphs until after their reigns had long been over.

The anecdotes, on the whole, are curiously distorted or show gross anachronism.<sup>6</sup>

1 For example, some of the anecdotes on the generosity of the Barmakis found in Cal. ed. II, 186, 204-210, are missing in the Cairo ed. (for variations see lists of stories, Burton X, 448-463, and Lane, II, 404, 635. and Cal. ed. II, 287, 310, 368, 376, 383, 390, 403f, 413-17.

2 Payne, IX, 313f. Burton X, 132f.

3 Payne, Burton and Lane have traced back as many anecdotes as possible. See also JAOS., 1896, Nos. 16, 42 and IRAS, 1904, 273-93.

4 A. Müller, Zu der Marchen der Tausend und Eine Nacht, in Bessenberger's Beiträge, 1888, XIII, 240, Elissëeff, 49, Horovitz, 47.

5 Abbott thinks that the problem of interrelationship between the material of early and later sources helped in misleading Lane to assign so late a date to the "Nights", see JNES, 1949, 163.

6 Payne, X, 369.

The Fables appear in the collection either in one mass, or scattered within the cycle-stories. A number of them are annexed, en bloc, to the end of the story of al-Nu'mān.<sup>1</sup>

India has been pointed as the birthland of fables where Kalīla wa-Dimna and the Panchatantra had originated.<sup>2</sup>

Burton, however, does not agree that India was the original birth-place of Fable-literature, and argues that the history of fables is traced back to remote antiquity, to ancient Egypt, Babylon and the Alexandrian era.<sup>3</sup>

Babylonian fables are to be found in the story of Ahiqār,<sup>4</sup> and Egyptian fables appear in a Leyden Papyrus dated (1200-1166 B.C.).<sup>5</sup>

Burton suggests that these ancient animal tales and parables had blended and spread over the land from Rome to China. The Indians took them up and formed out of them, by expansion and further additions, a separate and distinct branch of literature round about the 2nd c.A.D.<sup>6</sup>

The Buddhistic fables are short and up to the point, but the Arabic fables of the "Nights" are longer and involve several events in one fable.

They expose, to some degree, political, social and religious aspects.<sup>7</sup> The human element plays a significant part, that sometimes the narrator may foist in, with the fables, stories of men and their fellowmen in their relation with animals, as in the story of The Shepherd and The Devotee.<sup>8</sup>

1 Nights, II, 30-53, IV, 163, 183.

2 Payne, IX, 314.

3 Burton, X, 115-123.

4 Ahiqār is found only in a Madrid MS. of the "Nights" which is of Christian origin, (Macdonald, IRAS; 1924, 391, Classification, 308).

5 Burton, X, 116.

6 Ibid., 120.

7 Ibid., 121-122, and Nights, II, 30-53.

8 Ibid., II, 36f.

### The Theory of Layers

The growth of the collection by various methods applied to the work at different ages, resulted in the formation of, mainly, three layers in the collection. Von Hammer was the first to distinguish the Hazār Afsāna layer, the Baghdadi and the later Egyptian layers.<sup>1</sup>

August Müller was a pioneer in assigning certain stories to their corresponding layers.<sup>2</sup> Noldeke gave an approximate definition of the tests by which each layer could be recognised, but it was Oestrup who made a precise and detailed division of the stories into layers.<sup>3</sup>

It is essential to note however that though the three layers are plainly discernible, there can be no distinct and clear line to separate them, especially in the cycle-stories.<sup>4</sup> Several stories were reshaped in Egypt and may show Egyptian traits without being originated in Egypt. Due to the ignorance of narrators of dates and historical facts, and to the haphazard growth of the collection,<sup>5</sup> there is a kind of entanglement of plots of various provinces and ages, and individual fairy tales, legends, fables or historical anecdotes do not always occur in independent forms.<sup>6</sup> It would be, therefore, misleading to regard everyone of these tales an original entity without first disengaging, if it were possible, the alien and inserted material.

There are however certain general characteristics to distinguish between the three groups. The Egyptian stories can be identified by their ironical attitude to the corruptibility of authorities. Oestrup introduced a

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1 Hammer, Preface, XXIV-XXVI.

2 Müller, Ibid., 222-44.

3 Th. Noldeke, Zu den Agyptischen Märchen, ZDMG, XLII, 1888, 68-72, Oestrup, 106f.

4 Nights, I, 93-105, Macdonald, 1924, 383-90.

5 Athenaeum, 1839, 741, 1838, 737.

6 Horovitz, 56f, 54.



valuable and interesting guide to distinguish between each of the layers. He brought to notice the difference between the demons which figure in the Egyptian tales and those which appear in Persian and Baghdadi stories of the earlier layer.<sup>1</sup> The Jinn in the latter group of tales are distinguished by their free action in a world independent from the world of human beings.<sup>2</sup> The Persian and Baghdadi kind of Jinn take personal interest in the affairs of the protagonists. They threaten human beings, plot against them, or otherwise help them out of difficulties, and even intermarry with people.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to this, the Jinn in the Egyptian stories are controlled by the possessor of a talisman, who uses them as subjects to procure his personal wishes, lend him power to solve his difficulties and challenge his enemies.<sup>4</sup> They are unable to use their power and their free will, and once the talisman is transferred to a different possessor, they automatically turn to serve their new master.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from this, the Egyptian story tends to be dominated by the element of magic and the supernatural which have a prominent part in shaping people's destiny,<sup>6</sup> whereas the Baghdadi story is mainly concerned with the exposure of everyday life and with men and their craftsmanships in a world of realism, and hence it is brief, accurate in presenting its episodes, organised and true to life.<sup>7</sup>

1 Oestrup, 74.

2 Nights, I, 13, II, 232.

3 Ibid., I, 8, 46-8, II, 83, 241.

4 Ibid., III, 199-224.

5 Ibid., IV, 352. There are, however, exceptions to this rule, e.g. the story of the Two viziers, Nights, I, 69, which is regarded as Egyptian, see V. Chanvin, La Recension Egyptienne des Mille et Une Nuits (Liege, 1899), 8, and where the demons seem to be free agents acting on their own accord and transporting the hero from Iraq to Egypt; perhaps this is because the story is an imitation of the Persian, Qamar al-Zamān Nights, II, 79-152.

6 Oestrup, 74f.

7 Op.cit. Elisseeff, 47-50, Nights, I, 93-113.

Noldeke ascribes this disparity to the historical and psychological differences between the two peoples.<sup>1</sup>

As an example of this kind of difference, Oestrup has cited the story of Bāsim The Smith<sup>2</sup> whose manuscript contains two versions, an Egyptian and a Syrian version, in which the Egyptian ending of the story confirms Oestrup's theory.<sup>3</sup>

The story is concerned with al-Rashīd, his vizier and executioner who, wandering in disguise, meet Bāsim the Smith and try to play on him a series of tricks, hoaxes and humorous incidents. These culminate in the episode of imprisoning the man by the order of the caliph who merely wants to poke fun at the smith, and eventually releases him and uncovers the identity of himself. In the Egyptian version, however, the narrator copies the story up till the end where the supernatural element is brought to interfere, and Bāsim's relief comes about at the hand of a woman fairy who, like a godmother, emerges from the wall of the prison, liberates the poor man and enriches him. Later he is reconciled to the caliph and receives an ample reward from him as well.

It is to be noted that the variation in the two endings indicates that the use of the miraculous element in the Egyptian tale does not seem to be a mere expression of the extraordinary for its own sake or for amusement, but as an important instrument employed for the deliverance of desperate people, and is regarded as a miraculous termination of human pains and troubles.

The other criteria for differentiating between the layers are: first, the detailed references to the topographical indications which appear in Egyptian tales, where the transcriber seems acquainted with Cairo streets

1 ZDMG., 1888, XLII, 68f. Elisseeff, 49.

2 Oestrup, op. cit., and 109.

3 Edited by B. Landberg, Paris, 1888.

and localities, whereas Baghdad and Basra are vaguely described;<sup>1</sup> second, the mention of coffee, tobacco and guns points to the recent composition of a story<sup>2</sup> unless evidence shows that such words are in fact later interpolations.<sup>3</sup> Themes which are freely borrowed in tales of different stages might produce stories of doubtful origin. Oestrup regards 'Ali Shār as a story belonging to an intermediate layer because it contains themes which occur both in the old Persian layer and in the more recent Egyptian layer.<sup>4</sup>

We move now to discuss another point, namely, the Egyptian influence on the collection. The influence goes beyond the addition of a new layer of tales of local colour. In Egypt, cycle stories were expanded and older tales had either been relinquished, curtailed or merged into others to give way to the new additions.<sup>5</sup>

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- 1 Payne, IX, 312f, Law III, 740. Compare the detailed topography of Cairo, Nights, I, 100, 102, with the error made by the Egyptian narrator who mistakes the district of al-Karkh in Baghdad for a city, and places it near al-Kūfa, Ibid., IV, 309.
  - 2 Coffee overspread the East in 1550 A.D. and tobacco in 1650, Burton, X, 90, Lane, I, XIII., Nights, IV, 97, 214, 277, 306, Lane, III, 615.
  - 3 Payne, IX, 285, n.1, on the interpolation of such words by copyists even into older stories.
  - 4 Oestrup, 69-71, 107. Thus 'Ali Shār (II, 242) contains themes which occur in the old Persian story Qamar and Budur, II, 79, and in the younger Egyptian story 'Ali Nuraddin and the Girdle-maker, IV, 94.
  - 5 This important period probably dates back to the time of the Mongol invasion of Baghdad (656/1258), when the Baghdadi collection was carried to Egypt and was already known in some form in all the Arabic speaking countries. (Abbott, 1949, 155, 164).

Thus one notices that stories such as 'Ali Bābā and Aladdin and the marvellous Lamp<sup>1</sup> are replaced by similar Egyptian treasure tales, namely, Jawder and Ma'rūf.<sup>2</sup>

Signs of curtailment are shown for example in King Yūnān, where the sage tells the King "Let not your recompense to me be like the recompense of the crocodile," and when the King asks what this story is, the sage replies "This is not the time to recount it," where the obvious thing for the sage to have done would have been to go on stringing stories together to delay his own death.<sup>3</sup>

Although we do not have proofs to indicate that this was done by the Egyptian narrator, other parallel evidence of clearer nature supports our theory. In the Baghdadi story of The Porter, for instance, the story related by the second mendicant appears in Galland MS. but is absent from the Būlāq and Cairo editions.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the story of The Third Mendicant is compressed by the Egyptian narrator into a few lines whereas the Calcutta edition II gives it in full.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, certain incidents of Egyptian composition seem to be inserted into older Iraqi stories.

The sub-story of the Christian Broker shows precise topographical allusions to Cairo,<sup>6</sup> and the study of the historical accounts of the localities mentioned therein would place the date of its composition in the

1 The two stories do not appear in the recensions originating in Egypt. They have been found in separate MSS. and in isolated forms, see Macdonald, 'Ali Bābā and the forty thieves, in Arabic from a Bodleian MS. JRAS, 1910, 327-86; and also H. Zotenberg, Histoire d'Alā' al-Dīn ou la lampe merveilleuse text Arabe, avec une Notice sur quelques manuscrits des 1001 Nuits (Paris, 1888). Though the MS. is of Syrian origin and was in the possession of a Baghdadi man in 1150/1703 (see Burton, Supplemental Nights, III, Forward, X), scholars suppose that Aladdin is an Egyptian story because of the power of the talisman. If the story was Egyptian why was it omitted by the Egyptian compiler, and replaced by other treasure stories which seem inferior to Aladdin?

2 Nights, III, 199, IV, 329.

3 Ibid., I, 21-3.

4 Ibid., I, 89, Cal.ed.

5 Ibid., I, 113-36.

6 Ibid., I, 97-102.

14th c.A.D.<sup>1</sup> But in the same cycle-story, the Barber's tale refers to a date earlier than this i.e. to the 13th c.A.D. Otherwise, the tone of the cycle-story and the treatment as a whole indicate an even older date because of the Baghdadi character evident in the story.<sup>2</sup>

The Egyptian narrators abandoned the cycle type of stories. Duplication of themes and stories which are replicas of those preceding them are remarkable features of the Egyptian section of the collection.

'Ali Nuraddin and Maryam the Girdle-maker is the counterpart of Abu al-Shāmāt,<sup>3</sup> 'Ali Shār is the replica of the Persian story Qamar al-Zamān,<sup>4</sup> and several other stories consist of borrowed motifs.

In fact some of the Egyptian stories and insertions seem like patchwork, made up of bits and shreds lifted up from earlier stories. Such unimaginative or spurious pieces seem to detract from the reader's enjoyment and incur the risk of tedious repetitions.<sup>5</sup>

Even some of the interesting stories lack originality because of the transmission and recasting of the same plots and ideas as in 'Ali of Cairo which is the counterpart of Ma'rūf the Cobbler.<sup>6</sup>

The Egyptian period gave rise to the picaresque tales of roguery and theft.<sup>7</sup> The story of Dalīla which is most probably Baghdadi in

1 Macdonald, 1924, 383-385.

2 Cf. Payne IX, 291-95. Burton X, 83-85, esp. 85. Inconsistencies and interpolations such as these prove that much attention given to specific words in order to find the age and the origin of a story is a waste of effort (cf. Athenaeum, 1838, 737).

3 Nights, IV, 94, II, 168.

4 Ibid., II, 242, 79.

5 Such as the repetition of Damra -- in Nights, III, 233 and in II, 263. See also spurious stories, Ibid., III, 193, IV, 163, 166.

6 Nights, II, 467-486, Cal.ed. and IV, 329, Cairo ed.

7 Macdonald, 1924, 358. Noldeke, ZDMG, 1888, op.cit.

origin,<sup>1</sup> is expanded, and her tricks are amalgamated and associated with other popular stories of thieves and sharpers of Egyptian composition.<sup>2</sup>

It is noteworthy in connection with the Egyptian phase of development, to bring the attention to the words with which the Egyptian transcriber closes up an older Iraqi story, e.g. "The Caliph or the King ordered the story to be recorded, commemorated, enrolled in chronicles or committed to history."<sup>3</sup> This ending also appears in the stories incorporated into the collection as in the case of 'Umar al-Nu'mān, and the popular stories of Egyptian rogues.<sup>4</sup> However, the modern Egyptian stories added to the collection do not seem to end in the same manner, even though they are at times as good and interesting as the earlier tales.

Chauvin, who studied the Egyptian layer, suggests that it consists of two parts; the interesting stories written by a talented narrator,<sup>5</sup> and

- 1 Mas'ūdi mentions a shaikh who outrivalled, in his rogueries, the wiles of Dalīla (VIII, 175, see below, ch. IV). Another reason to believe that it is a Baghdadi story is that the story appears in a MS. of Baghdadi origin containing tales unknown to the Egyptian "Nights". Dalīla in this MS. of the "Nights" is not associated with other thieves as the Egyptian version shows, see B. M. MS. No. 7407, fol. 99<sup>a</sup>.
- 2 Besides Dalīla, the other amalgamated stories are Ahmad al-Danaf and 'Ali al-Zaybaq. Manuscripts of these stories have been found in European libraries in which they seem to be much fuller than the form in the "Nights". Macdonald, op. cit. However Ahmad may be based on the character of the Baghdadi thief Ibn Hamdi who was executed in 332 A. H. See Athir, al-Kamil --- (14 Vols; Leyden, 1851-76) VIII, 148. It has been stated that the origin of these stories is ancient Egyptian; see Herodotus, The Egypt of Herodotus, tr. G. Rawlinson (London, 1924), 65-9.
- 3 See The Porter, Nights, I, 32 and The Hunchback, I, 93, see also, IV, 227, 358.
- 4 Ibid., II, 30, III, 273.
- 5 'Abdallah of the Land and 'Abdallah of the Sea, IV, 227, Jawder, III, 199, Ma'rūf, IV, 329.

the uninteresting tales and spurious extracts and insertions.<sup>1</sup> He attempts to demonstrate that part of the Egyptian layer, both the complete stories and the postscripts attached to those existing earlier, are of Jewish origin, and are the childhood reminiscences of a converted Jew;<sup>2</sup> first, because of the recurrent theme of conversion in these stories, and second, because some episodes are strongly imbued with Jewish ideas.<sup>3</sup> He names the converted Jew as Ibrāhīm al-Maymūndi (d. before 924/1518),<sup>4</sup> who was also the author of the section on the pious Israelites.

Horovitz, however, argues that stories denoting Jewish origin occur in much earlier times in authors of pure Islamic origin.<sup>5</sup> The story of Bulūqiya, for instance, is transmitted in Tha'labi's annals, where 'Affān and Bulūqiya are reported to have been the only two persons who succeeded in seeing the tomb of Solomon as the "Nights" attempts to show.<sup>5</sup>

Anecdotes on pious Israelites have found their way into Muslim works and tradition long before the time of al-Maymūndi, not only on the literary level but on the popular level as well.<sup>7</sup>

In conclusion, most of the Baghdadi stories, more than fifty in all, are associated with Hārūn al-Rashīd who acts either as the central figure in the story, or as the listener to whom the protagonists and reporters relate various stories. A number of the shorter stories are connected with his sons, companions, relatives and others of his Baghdadi subjects.

1 Chauvin, Ibid., 7-43, Elissēeff, 52f.

2 Chauvin, 30-49.

3 Nights, IV, 66, III, 26, 31.

4 Chauvin, 16, 30-48. Qalamāwi, 17.

5 Horovitz, 48, 52f.

6 Tha'labi, 381-89, told on the authority of 'Abdallah b. Salēm al-Isrā'īli, a converted Jew.

7 See below, Ch. V.

The division of the collection into layers has helped in guiding us to distinguish between the varying attitudes, in the Baghdadi and Egyptian stories, towards various social questions.

### Stories Outside the Egyptian Recension

The Egyptian recension and its descendants have universally been considered the standard representative of the "Nights".<sup>1</sup>

There are however several independent MSS. which do not seem to belong to the Egyptian family of MSS., containing stories of doubtful or rather unverified provenances. These MSS. are neither edited nor as yet sufficiently described or catalogued.<sup>2</sup>

Examples of such MSS. are the Wortley-Montague MS. of the Bodleian Library,<sup>3</sup> and a British Museum MS. which varies considerably from the Egyptian recension.<sup>4</sup>

Burton justly comments that the printing of the MSS. preserved in Europe "would add sundry volumes, full of tales, to those hitherto translated; and here the Wortley-Montague copy can be taken as a test."<sup>5</sup> Not only the MSS., but also the printed texts show divergences in the tales and their arrangement. The following are the first Arabic editions:

1 Macdonald, 1924, 353.

2 For details on these MSS. see Macdonald, Classification, 1922, 305-21, JRAS, 1924, 391f.

3 Bodl. 633 and Bodl. 551-557 (6 Vols), Macdonald, 1922, 318.

4 B.M. MS., Add. 7404-7406.

5 Burton, X, 93. Later Burton translated the MS. in Vols IV and V of Supplemental Nights (6 Vols; Benares, 1888). For the date and description of the MS., see Ibid., V, forward, IX-XVII.



Calcutta I, 1814/1818	2 Vols
Bulāq	1855      2 Vols (also called the Cairo ed.)
Calcutta II 1839-42	4 Vols (ed. Macnaghten)
Breslau	1825-38      8 Vols, ed. by M. Habicht and another 4 Vols, 1842-43, ed. by H. Fleischer.

A comparison between these editions would clearly show the differences.<sup>1</sup> The first Calcutta edition is small and contains only 200 Nights. The second Calcutta edition is fuller than the Bulāq edition.<sup>2</sup> The Breslau edition is more like a compilation of stories of all sources, and is claimed to be based on a Tunisian MS. which in reality did not exist.<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to decide which stories must be called spurious, firstly, because the slowly growing collection has probably absorbed different stories in different countries, and secondly, because local popular stories or more up-to-date stories, might have replaced the older stories. It is likely that these ousted stories such as the Hazār Afsāna type of stories, older Iraqi and Syrian stories were preserved, either in the oral tradition or in isolated MSS., and when European compilers became interested in compiling them, narrators reproduced them from their sundry sources and countries and thus new recensions and editions such as the Breslau recension and the Chavis and Gauttier edition emerged.<sup>4</sup> Because these stories, which are not common to all editions, have in themselves features in common with the authentic stories of the "Nights", European translators chose their stories from the various

1 For lists of stories in various editions see, Burton X, 450-63, Elissēeff's tables of contents, 190-205.

2 Macdonald, 1922, 305.

3 Macdonald, M. Habicht and his Recension of 1001 Nights, JRAS, 1909, 685-704.

4 Macdonald, op. cit. Burton, X, 470-74.

editions, and none of them relied exclusively on one standard and most authentic edition.<sup>1</sup>

Galland himself relied partly on oral sources. At first he was supposed to have interpolated eleven stories; but MSS. of three of the stories have been since found, namely, Aladdin, 'Ali Bābā and The Sleeper Awakened.<sup>2</sup> The other eight stories are as follows:-

- 1 Prince Zayn al-Aṣṣnām and the King of Jinn.
- 2 Khudādād.
- 3 The Blind man Bābā 'Abdallah.
- 4 Sīdi Nu'mān
- 5 Khūja Hasan al-Habbāl (ropemaker).
- 6 'Ali Khūja the merchant of Baghdad.
- 7 Prince Aḥmad and the Fairy Pari Bānū.
- 8 The Envious sisters.<sup>3</sup>

The first two stories were denounced by Galland as alien to the "Nights" and had been published without his authority.<sup>4</sup>

As to the origins of the other four stories, opinions differ, and it has been conjectured that Galland had either heard them from a storyteller or copied them from MSS. in the libraries of Paris.<sup>5</sup> It is evident

1 Burton translated from the Būlāq and Calcutta II the work called Arabian Nights Proper; he called the stories from divergent MSS. Supplemental Nights and the New Arabian Nights, see Supplemental Nights, Vols. I-VI.

2 Zotenberg, Histoire ..., 1888, Macdonald, JRAS, 1910, I, 327-86, and Bibliographical and Literary Study of the First appearance of the Arabian Nights in Europe, in the Library Quarterly, Chicago, Oct. 1932, II, 387-98.

3 Payne, IX, 263-69. Burton, X, 104-106.

4 Macdonald, Ibid., 394. Payne, IX, 264.

5 Burton, X, 104f. These are called Galland's Orphan Stories, translated by Burton in Supplemental Nights, Vol. III, and by J. Scott, The Arabian Nights Entertainments, London, ed. n.d. 169-264, 319-24.

from the stories themselves that they are of Arabic composition, and the last two of Persian derivation.<sup>1</sup>

However, the popularity of these stories had made them an inseparable part of all the translations of the "Nights" although they do not appear in the Arabic editions.

Stories included in isolated MSS. have not been fully studied. A few of the important stories such as Abiqār and The Book of the Ten Viziers,<sup>2</sup> have been briefly discussed.<sup>3</sup> But the study and analysis of the numerous tales, compiled in these MSS. under the title of the "Nights", can neither be complete nor decisive because of the imperfections of the MSS. themselves. There are no titles to the tales; their division into Nights is not always consistent, and the MSS. are written hurriedly and carelessly.<sup>4</sup>

Only through the study of the internal evidence of these stories can one decide whether they should be regarded as authentic or spurious. The general tone of the tales, and special incidents indicate that many of the stories are of non-Egyptian origin and older than the tales of our "Nights".

Oestrup rightly comments that "the number of redactors and professional narrators who in consecutive periods had a share in remodelling the Alf Layla Wa-Layla was probably so great, that from

1 The Story No. 6 and Al-Rashīd Nocturnal adventures (Nos. 3, 4 and 5) are, however, supposed to be composed at a comparatively recent date in imitation of the legends of al-Rashīd. Relying on words such as Khūja and Bābā, Payne assumes that they could be of Turkish origin (Payne, IX, 268f). However, names such as these only indicate that the stories might have been shaped in Turkey.

2 Burton, Supplemental, VI, 1-39, I, 55-151.

3 Macdonald, 1922, 306f. Horovitz, 53f. Oestrup, 38-41. El., I, 255.

4 Burton, Ibid., Forward, V, XIII. Macdonald, 1922, 317-21.

this entanglement to unravel the work of each individual reviser would be a task no one will dare to undertake."<sup>1</sup>

In the study of the social background to the "Nights", the stories are selected from the official editions of the collection and from Galland's work. Foreign themes and elements are no obstacles to studying the social life depicted in these stories, since our main concern is not with the essential motifs, but with their treatment in an Arab atmosphere and environment. The "Nights" is considered here as a collection of folk tales. A folk tale, it is said, reflects the mind and customs of the people to whom it belongs, despite the fact that the plot of the tale itself may be widely borrowed by different nations. This is due to the readiness of folk tales, while remaining essentially the same, to adapt themselves to social environment.<sup>2</sup>

### The Significance of Ritter's MS. or al-Hikāyat al-'Ajība.<sup>3</sup>

The importance of this MS. lies in its resemblance to the "Nights" and the inclusion of stories common between it and our collection.

The purpose of examining this work in detail is to show the similarities and differences between it and our "Nights" on the one hand, and the 4th/10th c. narrative literature on the other; this might

1 El., op.cit., Studien, 101.

2 R.M. Dawkins, Greek Folk Tales, in Folklore (a Quarterly Review of Myth, Tradition, Institution and Customs; the translation of Folklore Society, London, 1948), LIX, 50.

3 The MS. was found by Ritter in the Aya Sofia library in Istanbul in 1933, number 3397. It has no title, and the heading is apparently derived from the preface which describes the stories as strange and wonderful. Although the preface lists the titles of 42 ḥadīths (stories), the MS. contains only 18 stories. It was edited by H. Wehr under the title Al-Hikāyat al-'Ajība Wa'l-Akhbār al-Gharība (Damascus, 1956). From now on it will be called the Ritter MS.

help to cast a light on the relationship between this MS. and the non-extant Iraqi form of the "Nights".

Though the MS. is not dated, the script places it in the 8th/14th c., but internal evidence indicates an even earlier date.<sup>1</sup> This makes it about two centuries older than Galland's MS. dated (1548).<sup>2</sup>

The connection between Ritter's MS. and the "Nights" is manifested in the presence of four stories which are almost exactly the same as their corresponding parts in the "Nights":-

- 1 The story of The Barber entitled in Ritter The Story of the six Deformities.<sup>3</sup>
- 2 Jalnār of the Sea.<sup>4</sup>
- 3 Abu Muhammad the Lazy.<sup>5</sup>
- 4 Jubayr b. 'Umayr and Budūr.<sup>6</sup>

A fifth story, al-Sūl and al-Shumūl,<sup>7</sup> appears only in the Tübingen MS. of the "Nights".<sup>8</sup>

The rest of the stories resemble the stories of the "Nights" in style, themes and general background, and differ from it in the sequence of incidents and the presentation of the themes.

Like the "Nights", love stories often deal with separation,

- 1 Wehr, Introduction, V.
- 2 Macdonald, Classification, 307, IRAS, 1924, 382.
- 3 Ritter, 45-76, Nights, I, 121.
- 4 Ritter, 122-146. Nights, III, 273.
- 5 Ritter, 291-305. Nights, II, 232.
- 6 Ritter, 303-34. Nights, II, 263, III, 233.
- 7 Ritter, 256-90.
- 8 Sūl and Shumūl, ed. C. F. Seybold (Leipzig, 1902), Macdonald, 1924, 359. See above, 61-3.

prolonged suffering and happy reunion.<sup>1</sup> Travels, adventures and voyages, both on land and sea, are popular themes in the stories of both collections. The story of The Four Quests (Al-Arba' Matālib)<sup>2</sup>, contains legendary accounts of the Arab conquests in North Africa, in the form of dangerous travels into the dead rich cities of this country, and also stories on the wonders of the sea. Hence the two kinds of adventures which occur in the City of Brass<sup>3</sup> and the voyages of Sindbad<sup>4</sup>, are combined in one story in the Ritter MS.

The story of 'Arūs al-'Arā'is presents an original version of the theme of an 'ifrit carrying away girls against their will.<sup>5</sup>

The humour in the story of 'Uṣfur is of the Iraqi kind and resembles that of the famous Baghdadi stories of the "Nights" in the fine development of a humorous character and in the genuine sense for the comical.<sup>6</sup>

Abu Muḥammad al-Mawjūd has an Iraqi background, and abounds in Iraqi colloquial expressions slightly altered to make them intelligible to a Syrian audience.<sup>7</sup>

1 Ritter, 25-44. Nights, I, 138, IV, 150.

2 Ritter, 77-104.

3 Nights, III, 145. This adventure is described much in the same way by al-Mas'ūdī, I, 369, IV, 92f. The city is also called al-Baht, see Ibn al-Faḥīh, Mukhtaṣar Kitāb al-Buldān, ed. De Goeje (Leyden, 1885), I, 88-91, Ṭabarī, II, 1250.

4 Nights, III, 94.

5 Ritter, 147-202, Nights, I, 4f, IV, 154.

6 See Ritter, 253-55, and The Hunchback and The Barber, Nights, I, 93, 113.

7 Ritter, 291-305.

As for the dissimilarities between our "Nights" and this collection, one notices the disappearance of the prologue (the framework story), the division of the tales into Nights, and the lack of Fable literature, short Arabic anecdotes and cycle-stories. There is, however, only one attempt in Ritter to construct a cycle-story<sup>1</sup> which does not seem as successful as the cycle-stories of the "Nights".

Further, our "Nights" shows a great depth of faith and an intense zeal for Islam but the Ritter MS. draws its material from Pre-Islamic and sometimes ancient pagan periods as well as from the 'Abbāsīd period.<sup>2</sup> For example, the clothes and statues of the pagan cult of Baalbek are described,<sup>3</sup> the ancient Egyptian rite of offering sacrifices to the Nile is mentioned,<sup>4</sup> and details of the Christian ceremonies of Baptism and pilgrimage are given.<sup>5</sup>

The evidence detailed above shows that the author or compiler of this collection tried to preserve some popular stories of the "Nights" along with stories of early Islamic or 'Abbāsīd character. The absence of stories of distinct Egyptian characteristics,<sup>6</sup> is due perhaps to the fact that such stories had not yet been composed, or because they were confined only to Egypt during the 14th c. A.D. This brings Ritter nearer to an early Iraqi form of "Nights", lacking in Egyptian elements and characteristics.

1 Ritter, 449-505.

2 Ibid., 306, 340, 235, 291, 383.

3 Ibid., 455-57.

4 Ibid., 503.

5 Ibid., 494, 256.

6 Wehr. Introduction, V-XIV.

The question to be asked here is how did a collection so similar to the "Nights" come into existence, and what is the significance of Ritter MS. in the narrative literature of the 10th C.A.D. i. e. before the onset of the period of Egyptian influence on the "Nights"? The answer to this can be found in the Fihrist which enumerates the kinds of popular stories and their titles, the favourite subjects of narrative literature and the names of some reputed narrators. The author al-N adīm, puts special emphasis on two important collections of this period: Alf Layla and al-Jahshiyāri's Alf Samar.<sup>1</sup>

A comparison between the Fihrist's lists of stories, Ritter's MS. and parts of our recent "Nights" shows a close relationship in the themes common to all these works. Hence Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid maintains that Ritter's MS. is an extract of al-Jahshiyāri's work by virtue of the historic personages of the 10th c.A.D. who appear in it.<sup>2</sup> The great length of the stories and the lack of short anecdotes and divisions into Nights also correspond to the description given in the Fihrist of al-Jahshiyāri's work.<sup>3</sup>

The subscriber of Ritter's MS. states "This is a book which consists of wonderful and strange stories, it is the well-known book and contains forty two stories." In our limited knowledge of narrative literature, we can only speculate that the well-known book could be either the 1001 Nights or part of al-Jahshiyāri's work.

1 Fihrist, 302-9.

2 Wehr, X.

3 Fihrist, 302. Wehr (XI-XII) argues that Ritter's MS. in its full and present form, cannot be an extract from Alf Samar, but he concludes that the core of these stories had been taken from his work and had been later augmented and modified and that the vulgarisation of the language had been the result of successive oral recitations.



Before the discovery and publication of Ritter's MS., one had no clear idea of the form which the Alf Samar assumed, or of its subject matter. The appearance of such a rich and old collection in the style of the "Nights" (which so far has unknown parts),<sup>1</sup> but without the framework story and division into Nights, and with five stories actually present in the "Nights", and others of modified plots and titles, raises the question whether al-Jahshiyārī's work had influenced the presentation and the subject matter of the early Iraqi "Nights".

The contents and the background of Ritter's MS. suggests a few remarks as regards the development of the early "Nights". It is possible that al-Jahshiyārī's Alf Samar had influenced the Iraqi collection which had disintegrated into a collection free from a framework story. This influence is evident in existing MSS. of the "Nights" such as the Wortley-Montague, the Tübingen and other isolated MSS., which usually contain one story or a core of stories of our collection, followed by totally different stories which, however, have the same background and style as the stories of our "Nights". Sometimes, these MSS. divide the story into Nights in order to show that it is a part of the well-known collection, but more often than not, the narrators either give up the division half-way through or disregard it altogether.<sup>2</sup> We can therefore assume that before there had been any conscious editing of the "Nights", a proper division into Nights seemed to have been of little importance to the narrators.

Another link between the Ritter MS. and the Wortley-Montague MS. which contains early Iraqi stories<sup>3</sup> is that the word ḥadīth occurs in place of the word Layla. Thus the Wortley-Montague MS., like the

1 See above, 79, n.3.

2 Macdonald, 1922, 304-17, IRAS, 1924, 391f.

3 Burton, Suppl. Forward, V. XIII.

Ritter's, has the title The Thousand and One Hadīths.<sup>1</sup>

The colossal number of tales circulating in the 10th c.A.D. seems to have served in supplying the narrators of the early "Nights" with the stories they required.

The remark made by al-Qurṭī with regard to the numerous stories which were woven around the Caliph of Egypt, his wife and her cousin, reveals the manner in which the "Nights" was continuously growing and multiplying,<sup>2</sup> and suggests that there had been some irregularity and haphazardness as regards the growth and development of the contents, and in all probability, up till the 14th c.A.D. or later, the "Nights" was a mere title just as al-Battāl was the title for any story concerning tricks and roguery, and Juḥa's stories as a heading for any jest or drollery.

As the multiplication of stories was a familiar process in the development, the Egyptian compilers did not deem it improper to add the Egyptian section of local and modern stories.

In this manner, the recent "Nights" had been reshaped and organised, and the operation served both to preserve part of the old work and modify it by replacing the tribal wars and the heathen historical tales with Islamic tales of chivalry and heroic religious feats; and hence stories like 'Umar al-Nu'mān and 'Ajīb and Gharīb,<sup>3</sup> have taken their place in the collection as more important topics of the age.

1 Burton comments that the title is due to an error made by the narrator, Ibid., V, IX. But see Macdonald, art. Hikāya, II, 303, where it is shown that the words used for a narrative in the 10th c. A.D. were ḥadīth, samar and khurāfa; ḥadīth being the broadest word of all. Hikāya never meant a story until the time of al-Ḥarīri (12th c. A.D.). This shows the old date of the Wortley-Montague MS., and indicates its close link with Ritter's 42 Hadīths on the one hand, and with Alf Samar on the other.

2 See above, 30.

3 Nights, III, 236. These are not found in Ritter and in the isolated MSS.

As a result of incorporation, augmentation and absorption of various stories, the "Nights" eventually became, as Horovitz puts it, "a mirror of the Arabic-Islamic world of the first six centuries, it resembles a kaleidoscope in which the plots of the popular storyteller's art of all peoples and times pass before us in their motley variety."<sup>1</sup>

The selection of stories either for recitation or for certain recensions, depended to a great extent on the narrator's taste and his nationality. Although the 9th c.A.D. fragment, discussed by Abbott,<sup>2</sup> is only a fraction of the complete MS., it seems rather curious to have come across two folios out of the whole MS. which preserve for us the opening sentence: "This is a selection from the stories of The Thousand and one Nights", and the commencing sentence in which Dīnāzād asks Sheherazade to recount to her some stories, while another page of the MS. bears the testimonial sentence concerning the transcription of the work and its date. One may hazard the presumption that the man who carried it from Antioch to Egypt<sup>3</sup> had the idea that this framework story is capable of receiving and incorporating all kinds of tales whether Syrian, Bedouin or Egyptian. If he had actually carried the whole collection, then it has been so much altered that it sufficed him to preserve only these few pages. The Galland MS., might have been a late step towards the establishment of a definite shape for the collection.<sup>4</sup>

Abbott rightly points out that the history of the "Nights" in its "European domicile offers in several respects a subtle yet instructive

1 Horovitz, 57.

2 INES, 1949, 143-164.

3 Ibid., 143-146.

4 Cf. Gibb, Introduction, 107.

parallel to the early history of the "Nights".<sup>1</sup> The various MSS. in Europe, like the Hazār Afsāna in Baghdad, have been translated either literally or with paraphrasing, expurgation, abridgment and omission, and up to a point, Europeanised as the Hazār Afsāna has been Islamised.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the initial edition represented by the Galland MS. has grown and multiplied from generation to generation as did the original Hazār Afsāna from century to century.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, just as the Persian work was imitated by the Arabs, so was the "Nights" imitated in the West.<sup>4</sup> But unlike their Arabic counterparts which were united with the Hazār Afsāna, the European imitations remained separate from the Arabic collection.<sup>5</sup>

However, the manner in which these European editions multiplied depended, to a great extent, on the way it had previously developed in its oriental home, for many of the stories were provided orally to the editors by narrators of different Arab countries.<sup>6</sup>

1 INES, 1949, 164.

2 Op. cit., El., I, 359. Burton, X, 106. Payne, IX, 270-77. Chauvin, Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes, publiés dans L'Europe Chrétienne de 1810 a 1885 (Liege, 1893), IV, 87-120.;

3 Op. cit., Burton, Appendix, X, 465-506, on the enlarged edition called Chavis-Cazotte, Caussin de Perceval, E. Gauttier and Habicht's editions.

4 Chauvin, Ibid., IV, 121-35. Burton, X, 507-13, on European imitations.

5 INES., op. cit.

6 For details on the Habicht compilation called the Breslau recension, see Macdonald, IRAS., 1909, 685.

Horovitz maintains that since the contents of the "Nights" have not always in different countries and times been exactly the same, "nothing else is left for us but to reckon as included in it everything which in any of the texts which have come to us is produced as belonging to The 1001 Nights." <sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, though this study has mainly relied on the Egyptian recension, references to stories outside this recension have been made whenever necessary and as long as these stories have a bearing on the structure of Muslim society, and that they are classified under the title of the "Nights".

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1 Horovitz, 56.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ARISTOCRACY

#### Introductory

The idea of status constituent in the social structure of Arabia was of great significance to the tribal aristocracy who ruled Northern Arabia at the time of the advent of Islam.

A glance at Jāhili poetry indicates that the intense pre-occupation with nasab is a manifestation of the age-old idea of blue blood and that rank and station were determined by birth and tribal law.<sup>1</sup>

Democracy, in the tribal system, was strictly limited to those accepted as full members, and only limited privileges were extended to those adopted into a tribe.

Among tribes too some were "more equal than others" and some had the low status of outcast.<sup>2</sup> Since the Quraysh was considered the noblest tribe of Arabia, it was entitled to hold the post of the Custodian of the Temple in Mecca, and supervised the pilgrimages. Hence after the advent of Islam, it had the right of sovereignty over all the Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

Islam made an attempt to make social equality a reality by declaring that all believers were equal brothers and that intensity of faith was the only criterion of honour.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ibn 'Abd Rabbih, Al-'Iqd al-Farīd (3 Vols, Cairo, 1293A), II, 30-60, R. Levy, The Social Structure of Islam, (London, 1957) 53-5. Blunt, The Bedouin Tribes of the Euphrates, 2 vols, II, 234f, 231.

2 Aghāni, XVIII, 198, XIV, 110, 'Iqd, II, 33.

3 Mas'ūdi, VI, 26f. Kremer, The Orient under the Caliphs, Eng. tr. by Khuda Bakhsh (London, 1922), 28f.

4 Quran, 49<sup>10-13</sup>. Baydāwi, II, 453f.

However, the concept of tribal aristocracy as one of descent persisted; and the weakness of the Umayyad Caliphate was that it tried to extend indefinitely a social system suited to pre-Islamic conditions by accepting all non-tribal elements as mawālī.<sup>1</sup> This system rapidly became unstable as the number of the underprivileged grew, and there was no proper economic basis for their lack of privilege.<sup>2</sup>

Although the social system under the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate was better suited to economic and social realities, and appeared less discriminatory, the battle between the claimants to Arab supremacy and their opponents the Shu'ūbīs went on for a much longer time.

The new social system based its concepts on the more intricate social organisation of the conquered people. In the society described in the "Nights" which represents the urban society of the 'Abbāsīd time, social differentiation is accepted as part of the natural order.

This acceptance of class and privilege is regarded by al-Jāhīz as an advantage and an important element in the stability of the state and a safeguard against social disorder. What would happen if all people would choose to be Kings and rulers?<sup>3</sup> Al-Jāhīz quotes King Ardashīr as saying that the ruin of kingdoms will be brought about if people do not keep within the boundaries of social gradation, and the humble are elevated to the status of the honourable or vice versa.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Levy, 57-60. Zaydān, The Umayyads and the 'Abbāsīds. Eng. tr. D.S. Margoliouth (London, 1907), 15f.

2 Cf. Ibn Tīqṭāqa, Kitāb al-Fakhri (Cairo, 1317), 127.

3 Jāhīz, Rasā'il al-Jāhīz, ed. H. Sandūbi (Cairo, 1352/1933), 126

4 Jāhīz, Kitāb al-Tājfi Akhlāq al-Mulūk (Cairo, 1914), 25.

The ancient analogy which likens the body politic to the human body "in which there was obviously a higher degree of specialisation among the constituent members",<sup>1</sup> is echoed in the Kitāb al-Buldān in which it is reported that al-Abnāf b. Qays (d. after 687 A.D.) said to Mu'āwiyā that the classes of people were like the human body, the head representing the upper classes, the shoulders the ruling officials, the middle-part those who earned fame and position by their achievements or wealth, and finally the lower parts representing the mass of the people who, like beasts, foraged for food when hungry and went to sleep when they were satisfied.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand transition from one social group to another was not impossible<sup>3</sup> for individuals who exhibited personal merits such as excellence in work, eloquence or good administration. Marriage too changed the status of the individual, and the development of trade and industry created chances for promotion of status and a limited social mobility.<sup>4</sup>

In studying the relationships between the aristocracy and other classes as depicted in the "Nights" one should consider that transition from one class to another by promotion or demotion was not impossible in individual cases.

In medieval times kings and powerful men seemed able to choose as their ministers, governors or aides their personal favourites.<sup>5</sup> To cite a few examples, al-Rashīd, to reward a

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1 ESS., (15 Vols; New York, 1931-35) art. Status, XIV, 374.

2 Faqīh, B.G.A., V, 1.

3 ESS., art. class, III, 532, Grunebaum, 1953, 173.

4 G. Landtman, The Origin of Inequality of the Social Classes, London, 1938, 293, 308.

5 'Arīb, Şilat Tarīkh al-Tabarī (Leyden, 1897), 49, Athīr, X, 444. For conditions in Europe see Landtman, Ibid., 307f.



singing slave-girl once promised to appoint her husband, who was a waṣīf, as a governor in Persia.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn al-Athīr reports that an energetic porter attracted the attention of the Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākīm who appointed him to the court service. The porter eventually ascended to the position of a vizier.<sup>2</sup> In the time of al-Musta'sim, the last 'Abbāsīd caliph, a pigeon-tower keeper, who looked after al-Musta'sim during his imprisonment was rewarded by being appointed as the Caliph's chamberlain.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly the vizier Ibn al-Furāt (d. 924 A.D.) once promised a judgeship to a haberdasher who gave him a hiding place during a ministerial crisis.<sup>4</sup>

However exceptional incidents such as these were criticized by the historians who reported them.<sup>5</sup> One may wonder why social mobility, remote though it was in most instances for the people as a whole, is a theme of great importance in the "Nights". The reason for the elevation of people from the humblest station in society to the highest positions should be interpreted either as a device to achieve dramatic purposes<sup>6</sup> or as a manifestation of the important element of wish-fulfilment,<sup>7</sup> or else ascribed to incidental favouritism as shown in the examples given above.

1 Aghānī, XV, 80, Nuwayrī, Nihāyat al-Arab (18 Vols, Cairo, 1342/1925) V, 89.

2 Athīr, op. cit.

3 Fakhri, 33.

4 Al-Tanūkhī, The Table-Talks of a Mesopotamian Judge, Eng. tr. Margoliouth (London, 1922) 124f. Ṣābī, Preface, 11, n. 4.

5 Fakhri, op. cit.

6 In The Porter, Nights, I, 32, three princes are reduced to the status of mendicants.

7 When fishermen, cobblers and idle-boys become sons-in-law to kings and sultans.

### The Early Arab Aristocracy

In the early period of Islam the tribal Arabs and in particular Quraysh formed the nobility of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup> This early aristocracy is represented in the "Nights" by a few anecdotes about Muslim aristocrats such as the Rāshidūn and the Umayyad caliphs and governors, notable tribal figures and pious men.<sup>2</sup>

It is noticeable, however, that the anecdotes of the old Arabs notables constitute merely a historical background to the Muslim society represented in the "Nights", and are often used to illustrate to the audience the glorious examples shown by religious faith and ethical principles of their ancestors.

The anecdotes demonstrate the liberality of the Arabs,<sup>3</sup> their eloquence and love of rhetoric,<sup>4</sup> their chastity and faithfulness in love<sup>5</sup> and the justice and piety of the early caliphs and companions of the Prophet, and their sacrifices in the Holy wars and in the cause of Islam.<sup>6</sup>

It may be worthwhile, here, to throw a brief glance at social values in the early Islamic period in order to show the changes that took place in Muslim society and that are reflected in the "Nights".

1 Aghāni, IV, 103, XIV, 110, XVIII, 198, Levy, 1957, 56f, 63.

2 Nights, II, 205, 230, 320, III, 229, and see Cal. ed. II, 412.

3 Nights, II, 125, 127, and Cal. ed. II, 386.

4 Ibid., II, 131, Cal. ed.

5 Ibid., II, 382, 386, Cal. ed.

6 Ibid., II, 564, and Cairo ed. I, 227-331, II, 230, 320 ff.

The pre-eminence of the Arabs in the early period depended upon their position as the conquerors and military defenders and controllers of the subject countries on the one hand, and their dominance as Arabs of pure blood over the non-Arab races on the other.<sup>1</sup>

The non-Arab mawālī of aristocratic origin were denied, as subject peoples, their former elevated social roles and high positions as judges, ministers and governors.<sup>2</sup>

Under the 'Abbāsīd caliphate the social structure re-established itself according to the new values which developed as a result of the assimilation of the cultures of the conquered subjects and the conquerors.

Purity of Arab descent ceased to be a matter of great importance since intermarriage with foreign slave-girls became a frequent practice.<sup>3</sup>

The children of these intermarriages who were called hajīns or abnā'<sup>4</sup> to differentiate them from pure Arabs, were now distinguishing themselves as first-class citizens,<sup>5</sup> and most of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs were descendents of non-Arab slave-girls.<sup>6</sup> Besides, more and more non-Arabs became eminent in the fields of philosophy and jurisprudence.<sup>7</sup>

1 Iqd, II, 63.

2 Cf. Maqrīzi, Khitāṭ, II, 332, 'Umar II was criticised for appointing the mawālī as qādis in Egypt. Zaydān, tr., 71, 211.

3 Jāhīz, Rasā'il, 16 (ed. 1344), al-Maḥāsin wa'l-Aḍḍād, XXI, Zaydān, Tarīkh al-Tamaddun al-Islāmī (5 vols, Cairo, 1902-5) V, 29-31.

4 Iqd II, 65, Zaydān, 20, 73.

5 Grunebaum, 1953, 202.

6 Jāhīz, Maḥāsin, op. cit., Tabari, III, 937, Tha'ālībī, Lajā'if al-Ma'ārif (Lugduni Batavorum, 1867), 75.

7 Ibn Khaldūn, An Introduction to History, (The Muqaddima) Eng. tr. I, Rosenthal (3 Vols, London, 1958) III, 311.

Clientship, in this period, did not diminish social status, and the fact that the Barmaki family were the clients of the 'Abbāsīd caliphs<sup>1</sup> did not detract from their status as an aristocratic family.

Thus by the time the "Nights" became popular, that is from the 9th c. A.D. onwards, the Arab lords were either economically impoverished or socially overshadowed by the new nobility of mixed blood and by the class of government officials who, in time, came to replace them.<sup>2</sup>

The effects of these changes are evident in the "Nights", in that the heroes of the stories whether khurāsānis, Baghdadis, 'Umānis, or Egyptians are all treated as equal citizens, and the Persian language is referred to as the language of the upper classes.<sup>3</sup>

The garrison cities like Baṣra, Kūfa, Cairo and Damascus, which were used as military bases for the purpose of maintaining control over the newly formed Arab Empire, are represented in the "Nights" as the big commercial cities of the 'Abbāsīd, Fāṭimid and Mamlūk periods, crowded with urban population of sedentary Arabs as well as Khurāsānians, Kurds, Turks and Dailamīs, whether merchants or soldiers.<sup>4</sup>

The Bedouin nomads or tribes who inhabited the area around these cities and in the vicinity of the countries of Northern Arabia and Egypt are indiscriminately called A'rāb, and constituted a constant factor of disturbance by making regular raids against the trade caravans.

1 Ibid., I, 277, 136. Zaydān, 164, 190.

2 W. Muir, The Caliphate, Rise, Decline and Fall (Edinburgh, 1915), 434.

3 Nights, II, 157.

4 F. al-Bustāni, Tamāzuḡ al-'Anāṣir al-Bashariyya, in al-Mashriq, 1949, XXXII, 410.

It becomes clear in the "Nights" that the trade caravans travelling between Egypt, Syria and Baghdad were incessantly exposed to the dangers of these raids, and thus the word A'rab had come to be associated with plunder and violence.<sup>1</sup> The Mamlūk chronicle of Ibn Iyās reports numerous and periodical A'rāb attacks on Cairo.<sup>2</sup>

As early as the 10th c. A.D., the Arabs of the desert who had formed part of the army which supported the caliphate, reverted to their older Bedouin life and raided trade-caravans.<sup>3</sup> Later on, the distrust and estrangement between the town dwellers and the desert Arabs became so serious that Ibn Khaldūn expresses the view that the Bedouins or 'A'rāb are lacking in restraint and discipline, a characteristic which makes them hostile to civilisation, and thus they would ruin the settled population economically, break up their social system and bring about their downfall.<sup>4</sup>

He believes that when the tribal Arabs were cut off from the ruling dynasty (the 'Abbāsīd) for generations, they neglected

1 Nights, I, 215, 217, II, 24, 176.

2 Badā'i'al-Zuhūr (3 Vols; Būlaq 1311/1894), I, 200, 249. II, 154, 231, 241 and passim.

3 The poet al-Mutanabbi (4th/10thc) is said to have been killed in a raid on his caravan. At one of these raids, a caravan between Damascus and Baghdad is reported to have lost 120,000 dinārs and 34,000 loads of merchandise, see Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Muntazam fi Tārīkh al-Mulūk Wā'l-Umam (10 vols; Hyderabad, 1938-43) VII, 27, 33.

4 Muqaddima, I, 304, Eng. tr.

their religion and hence forgot their political leadership and returned to their desert origin and former life. They did not even know that they once possessed royal authority and power because the caliphate had been long wiped out and power had passed from their hands altogether.<sup>1</sup>

The early Arab aristocracy consisted of the Muhājirūn, the Anṣār, <sup>and</sup> their descendants and freedmen on the one hand, and the Ashrāf or members and descendants of the Prophet's family on the other hand.<sup>2</sup>

The Ashrāf gained increasing respect and prestige as time went on,<sup>3</sup> though this was not always allied with political power, especially after the decline of the 'Abbāsīd power.

In the 'Abbāsīd period, the Ashrāf were divided into two rival sections, the Hashimites and the 'Alids. The first claimed their right to lofty status as descendants from Hāshim the Prophet's great-grandfather, and the second based their claim to nobility on a direct blood relationship with the Prophet through his daughter Fāṭima.<sup>4</sup>

The Ashrāf were entitled to stipends from the 'Abbāsīd state.<sup>5</sup>

1 Ibid., I, 307f.

2 Grunebaum, 199, Levy, 65f. 'Umar, in his death bed injunctions, commended the people to his successor according to their importance - the Muhājirūn, the Anṣār, the inhabitants of the cities, the desert Arab and the Dhimmīs; 'Umar however does not seem to have put special emphasis on the Ashrāf except perhaps insofar as they formed a part of the dominant stratum of the Muslim community, viz. the Muhājirūn and the Anṣār class. See Jāhīz, Al-Bayān Wa'l-Tabyīn, selections by J. Jabr (Beirut, 1959) 35.

3 Grunebaum, op. cit.

4 Levy, op. cit.

5 Māwardī, Al-Aḥkām al-Sultāniyya (Cairo 1298, A.H.) 93. Al-Ṣābi, Kitāb al-Wuzarā' (Beirut, 1904) 20.

Thus the "Nights" mentions a Hashimite dignitary who travels from Baṣra to Baghdad to receive his annual pension.<sup>1</sup> They were exempted from the alms-tax,<sup>2</sup> and had their own representative specially appointed by the caliph and called naqīb al-aṣhrāf.<sup>3</sup>

Because of the 'Alids involvement in the rebellions against the 'Abbāsīd power, they occupied a humble station economically and were frequently deprived of their allotted stipends.<sup>4</sup> The plight of the 'Alids is evident in a comment made by al-Khwārizmī (10th c. A.D.) on the treatment of the 'Alids by the 'Abbāsīd caliphs. While the Prophet's descendants, he says, were starving, al-Mutawakkil lavished enormous rewards on his singers and boon-companions, and while he owned thousands of slave-girls, an 'Alid Sharīf was content with one.<sup>5</sup> Ibn Jubayr (12th c.A.D.) finds the 'Alid Sharīfs in Jadda in desperate poverty taking up menial jobs and working as camel attendants and water-carriers.<sup>6</sup>

The position of the 'Alids as the rivals of the ruling 'Abbāsīd dynasty is shown in the story of Tawaddud. The philosopher

1 Nights, IV, 152.

2 Māwardī, op. cit.

3 Māwardī, 92-96, on the duties of a naqīb.

4 Khwarizmi, Rasā'il (Constantinople 1297 A.H.) 137f.

5 Khwarizmi, op. cit.

6 Ibn Jubayr, op. cit.

al-Nazzām is supposed to have asked the slave-girl Tawaddud in front of al-Rashīd, during a test set for her, as to who was better, 'Ali or al-'Abbās . "She knew that this was a trap to defeat her in the test", and she was extremely embarrassed and after some hesitation she replied, "You are asking about two honourable men and I think that each of them has his own merits", al-Rashīd was pleased with her answer and warmly applauded her.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Alid Sharīfs have the right to the title of Sayyids, and wearing of green turbans. In 8th/14th c. it was announced in Egypt as a gesture of respect, that all the Ashrāf should place a green patch on their white turbans to distinguish them from the rest of the Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

It is evident, therefore, that though Arab aristocracy as such disintegrated, nobility by descent from distinguished tribes, especially the Quraysh, and from the family of the Prophet in particular, still retained some significance in later ages, whatever the social or economic position of the persons concerned may have been.<sup>3</sup>

Due reverence is, accordingly, paid to the Ashrāf in the "Nights". They are respected and called dignitaries; and wealthy merchants are proud to win the honour of marrying Sharīfs' daughters.<sup>4</sup>

In the story of Damra, an Arab aristocrat is described as the amīr of Shaybān, and when his girl friend is asked whether the man she loved is among the aristocrats of the Arabs or the Persians, she replies "Woe to you he is of the Kings (nobility) of Baṣra."<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, III, 12.

2 Ibn Iyās, I, 227.

3 Levy, 1957, 67f., Grünebaum, 1953, 202.

4 Nights, II, 237f, 266.

5 Ibid., III. 234.



### The New Aristocracy

In the 'Abbāsīd period, alongside the Arab aristocracy there appeared a 'new' Persian nobility which owned land and positions and maintained a high standard of living.<sup>1</sup>

The biracial system came into being not only at the top but in the society at large. One of the most revealing features of this biracial society is shown in the rise of the Shu'ūbiyya movement which launched an organised attack on the idea of Arab superiority.<sup>2</sup> With the dwindling of Arab privileges the movement, which began during the Umayyad rule, was continued on a far greater scale than that of the early Islamic period.

The hierarchy of Persian society was adopted by the 'Abbāsīds. In the 9th c. A.D. the geographer Ibn al-Faḳīh (writing about 290/903) quotes the 'Abbāsīd Vizier al-Faḍl b. Yaḥya as having divided mankind into four classes:-<sup>3</sup>

- 1 Rulers who were elevated to high office by their merits.
- 2 Viziers who were distinguished by wisdom and understanding.
- 3 The upper class which had been elevated by wealth.
- 4 The middle class which is attached to the latter because of their culture.

The remainder of society is dismissed as of no account.<sup>4</sup>

1 Mas'ūdi, VI, 407. A. Jūmard, Hārūn al-Rashīd (2 Vols, Beirut, 1956), Zaydan, IV, 119f.

2 Iqd, II, 60-3. Grunebaum, 202-5, Zaydan, IV, 135, Kremer, 1920, 80, 91.

3 Buldān, B.G.A., V, 1.

4 Op.cit.

Except in regard to the increasing power of mercenaries in later 'Abbāsīd times, the above mentioned stratification of society remained basically the same throughout the ages, and is constantly reflected in the "Nights".

Thus our source presents us with three types of aristocracy: rulers by descent such as kings and caliphs; the military nobility which supported and defended the rulers, and lastly the governing aristocracy which constituted the kings' advisers, the good and bad viziers and the tyrannical or just governors.

An important additional category in the "Nights" which was perhaps less important in reality, were the freemen and slave-girls who became ennobled by having acquired riches or by their close contact with rulers and marriage alliances with courtiers.

The class of high government officials and the land-owning class often overlapped.<sup>1</sup> The office of the vizierate tended to be confined to certain families, e.g. the Barmakis, the Sahl and the Wahb families.<sup>2</sup> Indeed all administrative appointments which needed skill and training tended to be retained within certain families or groups of families for generations.<sup>3</sup> In the "Nights", the office of the vizierate is depicted as being inherited from the father or father-in-law.<sup>4</sup>

The "Nights" also recurrently mentions that several viziers acted at a time for the same king.<sup>5</sup>

1 Ṣābi, 133, 173, 306.

2 Tha'alibi, Laṭā'if, 86, Ṣābi, 8, Grunebaum, 1953, 213, Fakhri, 223, 228.

3 Op. cit.

4 Nights, I, 69, 73.

5 Ibid, I, 155. Kremer, Islamic Civilization (Calcutta, 1905), 247, 253.

The two brothers Shams al-Dīn and Nūr al-Dīn act as viziers to the Sultān of Egypt<sup>1</sup> just as the two brothers Ja'far and al-Faḍl the Bamakis served al-Rashīd at the same time until the latter fell from favour with al-Rashīd.<sup>2</sup> Sometimes the two viziers may not be brothers but one of them is called the good and the other the bad vizier.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from this, the "Nights" does not illustrate the system of the vizierate. The seniority of one vizier over the other as shown in the "Nights" is due to the system of the Islamic vizierate itself. The wizāra was divided into unlimited (wizārat tafwīd) and limited vizierate (wizārat tanfīdh). The duties of a vizier with limited power are to give effect to the decisions of the caliph, announce appointments and report to the caliph on state matters. The Grand Vizier, on the other hand, was a representative of the caliph and wielded all the power vested in the sovereign and sometimes overshadowed him.<sup>4</sup>

Although privileges thus tended to be retained within a family, this was not by right, and the son of a distinguished man or landowner was entitled to retain the property but not the office or the title of his father. The aristocracy of medieval Islam did not therefore share the hereditary features characteristic of Western feudalism.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 69.

2 Jahshiyāri, Kitāb al-Wuzarā' wa'l-Kuttāb (Cairo, 1938) 189f, 207, Fakhri, 186.

3 Nights, I, 138.

4 Māwardī, 21-27, Kremer, 1920, 221-26, 271.

5 Grunbaum, 173. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (Cambridge, 1938) 45.

It is thus possible for the heroes in the "Nights" to acquire estates as soon as they become rich enough to afford to purchase them.<sup>1</sup>

The decline of 'Abbāsīd power and the appearance of several ruling dynasties brought with it a further modification in the conception of class referred to briefly above.<sup>2</sup> The caliphs had begun to rely on armed slaves for their personal protection, and hence men of the humblest birth or status such as eunuchs, might attain elevated position, either by swift promotion or by employing force to overpower the weak caliphs.<sup>3</sup>

This rule applied equally to the Mamlūk period. The theme of power being usurped by soldiers or viziers from the legitimate rulers recurs frequently in the "Nights".<sup>4</sup> The rise and the fall of this type of usurper whether a vizier or military man were equally swift.<sup>5</sup>

#### Aspects of Change

Persian influence in the 'Abbāsīd period brought about changes which showed themselves mainly in three spheres: political, in the control of power by the Barmakis and later Buwayhids in their different ways;<sup>6</sup> literary, in many Persian

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1 Nights, II, 232, III, 94, Cf. Tanūkhī, Faraj, I, 91, II, 41-3, 148.

2 See above, 100f.

3 'Arib, 112, 177f.

4 Nights, I, 41, 43, 346.

5 Grunebaum, op. cit., for the frequent rise and fall of viziers see H. Bowen, The Life and Times of 'Alī b. 'Īsa (Cambridge, 1928), 99, 108, 153, 196, 353.

6 Kremer, 1905, 83, 91-94, Muir, 434, 577, Grunebaum, 202.

scholars and 'ulamā' who contributed a great deal to Islamic culture;<sup>1</sup> and finally, social, since the Persian nobility ranked highest among the non-Arab Muslims and many of the social customs of the Persian aristocracy were copied at the 'Abbāsid court and in the community generally.<sup>2</sup>

This Persian influence had important social consequences tending to reinforce social stratification at all points, reflecting the Pre-Islamic condition of Persian society which had attempted to keep each class strictly self-contained and within the class-boundaries.<sup>3</sup>

The medieval Muslim therefore had that sensitivity about status, rank and social etiquette which was characteristic of the society of the period. An elaborate system of social conduct developed in aristocratic circles<sup>4</sup>, and included, among other things, precedence in seating at public and private gatherings,<sup>5</sup> careful regard for titles and the appropriate form of address for people both in conversation and correspondence.<sup>6</sup>

This is reflected in the "Nights" where the laws of propriety and deference are never neglected.

1 Op. cit., Kremer, Ibid., 269.

2 Jāhiz, Tāj, 22, Kremer, Ibid., 93f, Grunebaum, op. cit. & 206.

3 Al-Jāhiz, Ibid., 23.

4 Al-Washshā', al-Muwashshā' (Cairo, 1321/1903) 123-31. Ibshīhi Al-Mustatraf min kull Fann Mustazraf (2 Vols., Cairo, 1330-31), II, 33.

5 Fakhri, 279.

6 Ṣābi, 148-152. Qalqashandī, Ṣubh al-A'shā (14 Vols., Cairo, 1913-20) V, 493-502.

It is shown to be essential, for instance, to have regard to the position and ranks of people when seating them at parties. When the rank of the guests - under disguise - is unknown, a host would ask them to take their seats according to their precedence.<sup>1</sup> Since a private slave must usually stand to wait upon his master, Mas'rūr would not take a seat but stand behind al-Rashīd.<sup>2</sup>

Yet many of the details of this complex etiquette are lacking in our source. For example, al-Rashīd was said to be particular about seating guests of the court and the nudamā<sup>2</sup> according to strict rules.

In his presence courtiers sat in four rows, with ten dirā' (a measure less than a yard) between each row.<sup>3</sup>

The fourth grade usually consisted of jesters, story tellers and idlers.<sup>4</sup> Each row, in addition, consisted of two grades, the head and the tail of the row. The people at the tail of a row had to wait for those at the beginning to be seated before they themselves could sit.<sup>5</sup> Since this elaborate protocol was observed by most caliphs, though in varying degrees, Yazīd II and al-Amin are pointed out as exceptions and repudiated for their frivolity and extreme lack of formality.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, IV, 241.

2 Op. cit.

3 Tāj, 24.

4 Ibid., 37-42, Aghāni, V, 60, 64, Jumard, I, 307.

5 Tāj, 52.

6 Mas'ūdī, VIII, 100, Tāj, 118. Fakhri, 193.

In general such formality prevailed and it was only as a special favour that al-Ma'mūn allowed the singer Ishāq al-Mawṣili to present himself before the caliph amongst the men of letters and not as protocol required among the singers.<sup>1</sup> Later al-Ma'mūn even allowed him to appear in the rank of the judges.<sup>2</sup>

The adoption of new styles in clothing, ceremonial and etiquette brought about significant changes in the way of life among the upper classes.<sup>3</sup> This new ostentation seemed alien to the simplicity which had been characteristic of the Arab aristocracy and the Arab way of life.<sup>4</sup>

The following features have been discussed here because of their relevance to the social etiquette displayed in our source.

1. Amirs, viziers and dignitaries of high office arrogated to themselves illustrious titles as 'Adud-al Dawla (supporter of the dynasty) and Bahā' al-Dawla (beauty of the Kingdom).<sup>5</sup> Double and triple titles were also received and in 416/1025 a vizier at Baghdad received several titles simultaneously.<sup>6</sup>

It was the prerogative of the caliph to confer and confirm titles, and he used it as a source of personal income.<sup>7</sup>

1 Taj, 30, 42.

2 Aghāni, op. cit., Yāqūt, Irshād al-Arib (7 Vols; ed. Margoliouth, London, 1908-27), II, 199.

3 Zaydān, V, 131-51, Mez, 379, al-Jūmard, I, 190-95. A. Amīn, Duhā al-Islām (3 Vols., Cairo, 1938), I, 127-29.

4 Ibid., I, 104, Ibn Khaldūn, I, 145, Aghāni, XII, 36, Fakhri, 23.

5 Al-Bīrūni, al-Āthār al-Bāqiya, Eng. tr., E. Sachau, (London, 1879), 129, 131.

6 Op. cit., Ṣābi, op. cit.

7 Mez, 136.

The fashion of adopting titles is criticised by al-Bīrūnī who states that "when the 'Abbāsīd had decorated their assistants, friends and enemies indiscriminately with vain titles compounded with the word Dawla, their Empire perished."<sup>1</sup>

These titles are similar in tone to the names given to royal and aristocratic protagonists of certain stories in the "Nights", such as Tāj al-Mulūk, Sayf al-Mulūk and Qamar al-Zamān.<sup>2</sup> There is a difference however in the names which occur in the stories of different periods, and whereas in the earlier Baghdadī stories the titles are similar to the Persian 'Abbāsīd type of name or title, in the Egyptian stories or in stories shaped in Egypt, the titles seem to include the word al-Dīn affixed to each name as Nūr al-Dīn and Shams al-Dīn. Here again the "Nights" reflects the custom of the time. Al-Qalqashandī points out that titles varied in different times and different countries. With the domination of the Seljuk dynasty in the 'Abbāsīd time, names of viziers began to appear with the title al-Dīn,<sup>3</sup> and in the Mamlūk period in Egypt almost all the Turkish soldiers, eunuchs, qādis and other officials were distinguished by this same title.<sup>4</sup>

2 State ceremonies such as the investiture of Amīrs, the reception of foreign delegates and royal weddings were conducted in an atmosphere of grandeur and pageantry both in Baghdad and Egypt.<sup>5</sup> The exaggeration with which the "Nights" attempts to describe this pageantry has become proverbial.

1 Bīrūnī, op. cit., Ṣābi, op. cit., Qalqashandī, V. 492.

2 Nights, I. 297, II 79, III. 300. These names resemble the titles of two Seljuk Sultans given in al-Kāmil as Shams al-Mulūk and Shams al-Dawla, see Athīr X, 433, 444.

3 Subh, V, 486-91. Fakhri, 266, 282-89.

4 Ibn Iyās, I, 261f, 315 and passim., Khitat, II, 227, 516. See below, Ch.V.

5 Ṣūti, 98. Ibn al-Khaṭīb, Tārīkh Baghdad (14 vols., Cairo, 1931) I, 100-105, Tha'alibi, Latā'if, 73-5.



3 The custom developed of viziers and courtiers kissing the hands or feet of the caliphs and rulers.<sup>1</sup> People who were not as close as the vizier to the ruler merely kissed the ground in front of him and eventually in front of all superiors.<sup>2</sup>

Prostration as a gesture of obeisance is a common occurrence in the narratives of the "Nights".<sup>3</sup>

This was a custom which the older Arabs regarded as the practice of tyrants and a privilege due to God alone.<sup>4</sup>

### The Court

Since the court set the example for the rich aristocrats in the ways of pleasure-seeking and splendid styles of living, and since the plots of some of the Baghdadi stories have a connection with the court or actually take place there, it would be useful to study the setting and the personnel of the 'Abbāsīd court of Baghdad.

The members of the court consisted of the following:-<sup>5</sup>

1 The princes of the caliph's house constituting the sons and descendants, cousins and brothers of the former and the present caliphs. In the time of al-Ma'mūn, it was estimated that the number of the 'Abbāsīd offspring present at the court amounted to 33,000.<sup>6</sup>

1 Sūli, op.cit., Aghāni, V, 74, Subh, III, 500.

2 Tanūkhī, Nishwār al-Muhādāra (ed. Margoliouth, London, 1921), I, 261.

3 Nights, I, 73, 97, 295, III, 95.

4 Cf. Khatīb, I, 104. Since the verb kaffara means to prostrate, and also literally means to be impious, the inference is that the Arabs identified prostration with impiety.

5 Details on Al-Mu'tadid's court (892-901 A.D.) are given by al-Ṣābi 11-22. It is chosen here as an example for other courts. Al-Mu'tadid was the first caliph to return to Baghdad after al-Mu'tasim had transferred the court to Samarrā'; however references are made to the courts of other caliphs whenever necessary.

6 Kitāb al-'Uyūn Wa'l-Hadā'iq (ed. De Gorge, Leyden, 1871) III, 351.

2. The ḥarīm among whom there were the royal princesses as well as the free wives and bond slave-girls and concubines.<sup>1</sup>

It has been reported that at the extravagant ḥarīm of the ruler of Egypt Khumārawayh, food was so plentiful that the servants opened a market in front of the ḥarīm's gates where people used to go and buy the delicacies of the court.<sup>2</sup>

3. The Palace staff among whom were white and black slaves, servants<sup>3</sup> and freedmen who consisted mainly of the white slaves (mamlūks) of the former caliph. From among these slaves the Chamberlains and their deputies were recruited.<sup>4</sup> Al-Muqtadir (10th c.A.D.) acquired 11,000 eunuchs who worked in the caliph's private service. In Egypt Muḥammad ibn Qalāwūn (13th c.A.d.) had 12,000 mamlūks in his court.<sup>5</sup>

4 The Guards: These were of several kinds, first, the personal bodyguard of the caliph who acted as his attendant. Second, the military guards who performed their duties in campaigns and accompanied the caliph on journeys, and finally those soldiers whose duty it was to collect the government's revenues or act as prison warders or policemen.<sup>6</sup>

1 Ṣābi, 17, Mez, 142.

2 Taghribirdi, Al-Nujūm al-Zāhira (ed. Juynboll, 2 Vols; Lugduni, Batarorum, 1855-61) II, 63.

3 Ṣābi, op.cit., Khatīb, I, 100f.

4 Op.cit., Miskawayh, Tajārib al-Umam (ed. De Goeje, Leyden, 1871), VI, 539-42.

5 Khatīb, I, 99, Fakhri, 234, Ibn Iyās, I, 173.

6 Ṣābi, 13f. Taghribirdi, II, 65.

5 Other employees of the court consisted of private secretaries, messengers, mu'dhdhins, astronomers, postmen, standard bearers, drummers, trumpeters, jesters, story-tellers, porters, cooks, and craftsmen from goldsmiths to carpenters, saddlers, boat crews to physicians.<sup>1</sup>

The "Nights" shows the caliphs or monarchs marching in state usually surrounded by their bodyguard, soldiers, other princes and their supporters. When the ruler sat on his jewel-studded throne, his chamberlains stood around or near him. The princes and viziers sat on his right and left sides.<sup>2</sup> He despatched his important commands by his chamberlain or even his vizier.<sup>3</sup>

The court employees are usually distinguished from others by special titles such as the sultan's steward, the court cloth-merchant and the tailor of the court's harīm.<sup>4</sup>

The other aspects of court life emphasised in the "Nights" are the harīm quarters and the system of nudamā' (table-companions) who took part in each evening's entertainment.<sup>5</sup>

The number of the harīm varied with different caliphs. The "Nights" does not specify the number of slaves in the harīm but it does occasionally mention the number of concubines a King might have. King Nu'mān of the "Nights" had 360 concubines apart from their slave-girls attendants, and they lived in a group of 12 palaces each with several wings for the various concubines.<sup>6</sup> The number

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1 Sābi, 15-19.

2 Nights, I, 16f, 58, 294.

3 Ibid., I, 159.

4 Ibid., I, 94, 53, IV, 267.

5 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 102f.

6 Nights, I, 180. Cf. Taghribirdi, op.cit.

of the ḥarīm is indeed not accurately assessed even in the accounts of historians. Whereas al-Khwārizmi states that al-Mutawakkil's ḥarīm numbered up to 12,000 women, al Mas'ūdi earlier fixes the number at 4000.<sup>1</sup> In the 10th c. the ḥarīm was under the control of two stewardesses, one representing the caliph and the other his mother.<sup>2</sup>

The caliph's consorts in the ḥarīm were mostly Greek or Turkish slave-girls. Some of these favourites sought to bring into the caliph's favour their relatives and kinsmen and to gain good positions for them.<sup>3</sup> Examples of their influence on their masters are shown in an indirect way in the "Nights". Thus the favourite Qūt al-Qulūb uses her influence to persuade al-Rashīd to give her in marriage to the merchant Ghānim. Al-Mutawakkil's favourite singing slave-girl composes a song which pleases the caliph so much that he agrees to free her and give her in marriage to a jewel merchant.<sup>4</sup>

In close connection with the system of the ḥarīm was the acquisition of eunuchs who looked after the ḥarīm.<sup>5</sup>

Apart from the brief appearance of Queen Zubayda, in her relations with al-Rashīd and other slave-girls, no free women among the princesses of the court are represented in the "Nights".

1 Rasā'il, 137. Muruj, VII, 276.

2 'Arīb, 78, 130, 109, Sābi, 105.

3 Ya'qūbi, Kitāb al-Buldān, ed. De Goeje (Leyden, 1889), 304.

4 Nights, I, 176, IV, 270-72.

5 Ibid., I, 163-67, Cf. Aghāni, VI, 186. The same duty was assigned to eunuchs in the ḥarīms of the Ottoman times, see N. M. Penzer, The Ḥarīm (2 Vols., London, 1936), I, 133.

It was customary to list at each gathering the names of the nudamā' who kept company with the princes and rulers. These lists included literate, savants, courtiers and military men.<sup>1</sup> Permanent table companions drew regular salaries.<sup>2</sup> The court and rich families had their own private singers, poets and jesters.<sup>3</sup> In these sessions, story-telling would seem to have been as important as singing and poetry recitation.<sup>4</sup>

This is probably based on the fact that most rulers were fond of hearing about the histories of ancient Kings and nations and of Arab heroes.<sup>5</sup> This was done not merely for entertainment but was regarded as serious instruction in politics and government.<sup>6</sup> The book of al-Imtā' Wa'l Mu'anasa is a collection of stories and anecdotes told at the regular sessions of an 'Abbāsīd vizier of the 10th c. A.D.<sup>7</sup>

It is for this reason that we find among the nudamā' so many famous court wits, poets and rāwiyas whose presence before the caliph was continuously required.<sup>8</sup>

In the "Nights", famous names of the "Golden Age" have stories told about them as well as transmitted by them. Such are Ishāq al-Mawṣili, the poet al-Ḍaḥḥāk nicknamed al-Khalī',<sup>9</sup>

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1 Mas'ūdi, op. cit. A. Mez, The Renaissance of Islam, Eng. tr. Khuda Bakhsh and Margoliouth (Patna, 1937), 143.

2 Nadīm, 61, Ṣābi, 18, Aghāni, VI, 74.

3 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 110. al-Jāhīz, al-Bukhalā' (Cairo, 1959), 261.

4 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 162, Aghāni, XVI, 113.

5 Ibid., V, 67, Fakhri, 16.

6 Faqīh, B.G.A., V, 2,

7 Tawhīdi, Introduction, I, 2.

8 Nights, II, 212, 328.

9 Op. cit., II, 263, III, 233,

Abu Nuwās<sup>1</sup> and al-Asma'i.<sup>2</sup>

The Court's Expenditure

The daily expenses of the large court of al-Mu'taḍid were 7000 dinars.<sup>3</sup> However, he was praised for his moderation in expenditure, and for his attempts to restore the dignity of the caliphate. When he died he left thousands of dinars in the treasury which was wasted by his son al-Muqtadir.<sup>4</sup> In addition to wages paid to the staffs, great sums of money were consumed on the costs of the kitchen, bakery, perfumes, baths, candles and oils as well as on largesses and garments of honour.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Muqtadir's expenditure was about two million dinars a year.<sup>6</sup> A great deal of palace expenditure also went on furniture and costly decorations. For example al-Muqtadir's palaces were expensively decorated, and Qaṣr al-Shajara contained 830,000 curtains of pure silk embroidered with gold as well as 120,000 carpets.<sup>7</sup>

The splendour of the Ṭulūnīd, Fāṭimid and Mamlūk courts is similarly profusely described by the Egyptian historiographers.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, a great deal of money was consumed in buying mamlūks and slaves. Ibn Ṭulūn had 24000 Mamlūks and 40,000

1 Ibid., II, 316, Cal.ed. II, 376.

2 Ibid., III, 227.

3 Ṣābi, 21.

4 Fakhri, 231, Mas'ūdi, VIII, 112-14.

5 Ṣābi, 20-4.

6 Miskawayh, The Eclipse of the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate, (Tajārib), ed. Amedroz and Margoliouth (7 Vols., Oxford, 1920-21), I, 238-41.

7 Op.cit., Khatīb, I, 102f. Tha'ālīb, Lata'if, 72.

8 Maqrīzi, Khitāṭ, I, 316, 366, 385 and passim, Taghribirdi, II, 56.

black slaves, a factor which is thought to have enabled him to take over the rule in Egypt.<sup>1</sup> The Mamlūk sultan Muḥammad Qalāwūn had 6700 mamlūks, but his son al-Ashraf brought their number up to 10,000.<sup>2</sup>

These mamlūks were extravagantly treated. It is reported that a qādi, refused to give a fatwā allowing the collecting of new taxes to supply a military campaign, and suggested that the sultan should finance it by selling the golden belts of his Mamlūks and the jewellery of his slave-girls. Should this fail to make up the sum needed he would agree to give the fatwā.<sup>3</sup>

The "Nights" attempts to depict these courts with their pageantry and reckless prodigality. Narrators dwell on describing halls with gilded roofs,<sup>4</sup> furniture studded with jewels and robes and curtains embroidered with gems and gold.

Suffice it to cite one example of this recurrent type of description. Al-Rashīd's "Pleasure Palace" was built along the river banks; whenever he felt distressed he turned to this Palace and at once his anxiety vanished and his gloom lifted. At each of the eighty windows of the palace there was a suspended lamp and a golden candlestick, and when all the lamps and candles were lit up delightful columns of light were reflected on the river Tigris.<sup>5</sup>

1 Ibn Iyās, I, 37.

2 Magrīzi, II, 214 (Cairo, 1959).  
Sulūk, II, pt. 2, 524f, cf. Ibn Iyās, I, 173.

3 Ibn Iyās, II, 97. (Year 872 A.H.)

4 Nights, I, 72.

5 Ibid., I, 151.

"The Garden of Delight" was attached to the "Palace of Pleasure". The narrator follows the literary convention of the age and elaborately describes the garden. Thus he tells us that the arched gate of the garden is covered with vines, and on the bower, grapes of all colours and sizes grow. The leaves glitter with the tears of the clouds and the ground is carpeted with flowers of every kind. The nightingale pours out its melodious songs and the turtle-dove does not cease from cooing.<sup>1</sup>

This is as far as a narrator can go in describing the residence of al-Rashīd. It is evident from this example that the narrator can only see the palace from its outside windows and instead of giving an accurate and realistic description, resorts to imagination and gives the epithets of "pleasure" and "delight" to compensate for the lack of details and to impress his audience.

#### The Caliphs in the "Nights"

Although accounts of caliphs in the "Nights" are often historically and chronologically incorrect,<sup>2</sup> they have their significance in giving a general picture of life at the 'Abbāsīd court and conveying to an audience the most prominent traits which characterised every caliph thus mentioned. For example, stories about al-Rashīd and Zubayda are not presented according to historical facts but are the product of the narrator's free imagination. Yet the collection succeeds in casting a glow around al-Rashīd<sup>3</sup> so that both history and legend attribute to him a golden age of magnificence and prosperity.<sup>4</sup>

1 Nights, I, 153.

2 To cite one anachronism, the poet Jamīl of the tribe of 'Udhra (d. 701 A.D.) is shown relating his love story to al-Rashīd who ruled about eighty years later (786-809 A.D.). See Ibn Khallikān, Wafayāt al-A'vān (Biographical Dictionary), editor and trans. w. MacGuckin de Slane (4 Vols; Paris & London, 1842-71) I, 331-37.

3 Muir, 476, 486.

4 Levy, A Baghdad Chronicle (Cambridge, 1929) 44f, Athīr, VI, 149, Fakhri, 177f.



Seekers of fame and rewards flocked to his court, and he bestowed upon them, especially poets, bountiful largesses, robes of honour, steeds and slave-girls.<sup>1</sup>

In the "Nights" these bounties are made to extend to every person he meets, whether poor, distressed, rich or stranger. Above all, he is depicted as a just and pious and readily obeyed caliph. He often puts right a wrong done by his governors and administrators.<sup>2</sup> His time is exemplified as the most brilliant because people who lived in other times had experienced despotic but weak rule.<sup>3</sup> In all types of absolute rule the question of justice occupies people's minds. It was maintained, for example, that Kingdoms can endure with kufr (misbelief) but not with injustice, and that a just disbelieving ruler was better than an unjust believing ruler.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Rashīd is used, therefore, as a figure through which narrators can criticise indirectly the injustice of authority. Thus al-Rashīd goes around "to see the condition of his people and investigate whether officials were fair to his subjects".<sup>5</sup> He either has a major role in a story or appears at the beginning and end of a story just to listen to other stories, help the people involved,<sup>or</sup> remedy their misfortunes. According to the narrator his power extends even over the supernatural, and the Muslim Jinn

1 Op. cit., 132f, Muir, op. cit. Aghāni, XVI, 137. Jumard, I, 272.

2 Nights, I, 158.

3 Levy, 1929, op. cit.

4 Cf. Fakhri, 15.

5 Alf Layla Wa-Layla, Bodleian MS. (7 vols) No. Bod. 633, I, fol. 2.

obey his orders because they regard him as God's deputy on earth,<sup>1</sup> and because he is so assiduous in his prayers that God answers all his supplications willingly.<sup>2</sup>

Beside the purely imaginative stories about al-Rashīd, there are anecdotes or introductions to stories based mainly on certain well-known characteristics of a caliph. For example it was a well-known fact that al-Rashīd stayed awake for most of the night. He was once asked the reason for this and replied "It is for our subjects to sleep and for us to pass the night awake like shepherds guarding their sheep."<sup>3</sup> This character trait is employed by the narrator of the "Nights" as a pretext to bring before him amusing story-tellers, witty poets and rāwiyas who try their best to relieve the caliph of the distress he suffers as a result of sleeplessness.<sup>4</sup> It has been reported that during one of these sleepless nights, the poet al-Aṣma'ī had his first opportunity to be called into the presence of al-Rashīd to entertain him with anecdotes and verses.<sup>5</sup>

Similarly, because al-Ma'mūn was known to take a great interest in philosophy and learning and encouraged argument and discussion chiefly of a Mu'tazilite nature, the "Nights"

- 1 Cf. Aghāni, III, 185, Ṭabari, II, 1843, III, 1475, 1565, Tāj, 86. Margoliouth, The Sense of the Title Khalifah, Browne Vol., 1922. 322-28.
- 2 Nights, I, 65, IV, 324. It is reported that he performed one hundred prostrations (ruk'a) each day (Fakhri, 175, Athir, VI, 149).
- 3 Hamadāni, Takmilat Tārikh al-Ṭabari (Cairo, 1960), I, 2.
- 4 Nights, III, 299, 233. Payne, however, attributes al-Rashīd's sleeplessness to the troubled conscience of a despotic monarch, IX, 331.
- 5 'Iqd, III, 136.

relates an anecdote which shows the importance attached to discussions in his court.<sup>1</sup> It is reported by al-Mas'ūdī that al-Ma'mūn's discussions were held every Tuesday. Faqīhs, learned men and all those people who participated in discussions were gathered into a room and served with a meal. After they had been asked to take off their shoes and head-dress, so that they would be as comfortable as possible, they were taken into a hall where al-Ma'mūn presided over the meeting. The discussion was conducted with impartiality and liberalism.<sup>2</sup>

The story of the "Nights" shows al-Ma'mūn presiding over one of these sessions where a humble man distinguishes himself by his brains and is promoted a seat in the first row among the most learned men. After the 'Ulamā' departed, the remaining people usually held a session of drinking and song. Al-Ma'mūn asked this humble man to stay behind and attend this entertainment but he replied that wine deprived men of their senses and he would hate to see his brains, which were the reason why he was honoured and promoted, depart from him.

The story shows al-Ma'mūn both as a caliph who liked serious discussion and as one who liked light entertainment.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to al-Ma'mūn, al-Amīn had the reputation of being irresponsible, idle and pleasure loving,<sup>4</sup> and the anecdotes about him in the "Nights" accord with this reputation. As a prince he impetuously takes a fancy to a widow, marries her after sending

1 Nights, II, 210, Cal.ed.

2 Mas'ūdī, VII, 38f. Kremer, 1965, 276.

3 Fakhri, 197, Taj, 43. Jawzi, Akhbār al-Zirāf (Damascus, 1928), 42.

4 Fakhri, 41 al-Rāghib, Muhādarāt al-Udabā' (4 Vols., Beirut, 1961), II, 449, Athīr, VI, 205f.

an old woman to lure her to his house, later orders his slaves to beat her and finally divorces her. Al-Rashīd however puts everything right.<sup>1</sup>

Another anecdote deriving from literary sources<sup>2</sup> shows him procuring a slave-girl from his cousin by a trick and filling his relative's boat with gold and silver as the price of the kidnapped slave-girl.<sup>3</sup>

From the examples given above it is evident that there are three kinds of stories about the caliphs: first, the purely imaginative,<sup>4</sup> second, stories based on some well-known characteristics such as those of al-Ma'mūn and al-Amīn, and finally anecdotes deriving from literature.<sup>5</sup> The latter kind are either copied literally like the second story of al-Amīn mentioned above which is derived from sources like al-Nuwayri, al-Jāhiz and others, or drawn from certain anecdotes but much tampered with by the narrator.

By examining the two following stories of the "Nights" we can understand the nature of such alterations. The simplest kind of alteration is shown in the story of The Sultan's Steward.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, I, 62-4.

2 Nuwayri, V, 85, Jāhiz, Taj, op. cit., Aghāni, XV, 145.

3 Nights, II, 402f, Cal.ed.

4 Ibid., II, 168.

5 Ibid., Cal.ed.II, 308, 311, 388-92, 417-22.

6 Ibid., I, 105. Cairo ed.

Al-Tanūkhī and Ibn al-Jawzī<sup>1</sup> narrate an adventure of a merchant at the court of al-Muqtadir and tell how the mother of al-Muqtadir gave a slave-girl concerned in the tale in marriage to this merchant after asking her son the caliph for his consent. In the "Nights" the queen is Zubayda instead of Shaghab, al-Muqtadir's mother and permission to marry the girl is asked from her husband presumably al-Rashīd and not from the caliph al-Muqtadir.

But there are more complicated ways of transmitting anecdotes and transforming them into stories. The Khurāsāni and Shajarat al-Durr is a strange mixture of more than one anecdote connected with the caliphs and their slave-girls. The story is a combination of an anecdote found in literary sources, about al-Mutawakkil and his favourite singing slave-girl Maḥbūba,<sup>2</sup> and two other anecdotes about al-Rashīd,<sup>3</sup> all considerably adapted and attributed to the caliph al-Mutawakkil.

The original anecdote about this caliph relates that Maḥbūba who had a strong attachment to al-Mutawakkil, once extemporised admirable verses on al-Mutawakkil and his concubine Qabiḥa, the mother of his son the caliph al-Mu'tazz, which earned her a reward and great prestige.<sup>4</sup> The second anecdote used by the

1 Nishwār, I, 168. Muntazam, VI, 254-56.

2 Nuwayri, V, 108. Aghāni, XIX, 132f.

3 'Iqd, III, 421. Aghāni, XV, 81f. A separate version of al-Rashīd's anecdote appears in the Cal.ed. of the Nights, II, 392.

4 Aghāni, XIX, 133.

narrator relates how al-Rashīd was once reconciled with his concubine through hearing certain verses extemporized by his poet . The third is an anecdote about al-Rashīd and three slave-girls who so much captured his attention that he composed verses declaring his complete submission to them and regretting their disobedience to his love.

In the "Nights" Shajarat al-Durr plays Maḥbūba's role and is asked by al-Mutawakkil to extemporize verses on his love to her, to the mother of his son and to a third slave-girl whose name he doesn't mention.

Thus Shajarat al-Durr adapts the verses, composed by al-Rashīd for his three slave-girls, to the situation. The pleased Caliph asks Shajarat al-Durr to have her wish and she asks for her freedom to marry the merchant al-Khurāsāni.<sup>1</sup>

In actual fact the poetess and singer Maḥbūba remained faithful to her master the caliph even after he had been murdered by his servants. One account relates that she refused to sing in front of the eunuch Waṣīf who killed the caliph and held the power in his hand. When forced to do so she sang, to Waṣīf's great annoyance, the praises of her former master and lamented his murder.<sup>2</sup>

The combination of the three anecdotes mentioned above depicts the kind of attachment which existed between the caliphs and their favourite slave-girls, and shows that al-Mutawakkil, like al-Rashīd, favoured more than one slave-girl at a time and liked them equally.<sup>3</sup> The closing scene of the story of the

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1 Nights, IV, 270f. A less distorted anecdote on al-Mutawakkil and Maḥbūba appears in Cal.ed. II, 311f.

2 Aghāni, op. cit. Cf. Nights, Cal.ed. II, 312.

3 The combination of anecdotes about caliphs of different periods points to the fact that the "Nights", like the Aghāni, was written long after their reigns.

"Nights" when the murderers interrupted the singing party, conducted by the freed slave-girl, who after her marriage sung regularly for the caliph, bears a resemblance to the historical account of al-Mutawakkil's murder.<sup>1</sup>

Finally the theme of the caliphs disguising themselves in the "Nights" and its relation to reality must be discussed. It is evident from historical accounts that quite a few caliphs did in fact move about among their people in disguise in order to investigate their condition, to establish justice, or merely to amuse themselves. Among these caliphs al-Rashīd, al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taḍid and al-Nāṣir (12th c.) can be cited in the 'Abbāsīd period.<sup>2</sup>

It has been reported that in the year 881/1476, the Mamlūk Sultan used to disguise himself as a Maghribi and go to the Azhar mosque asking people's opinion on their Sultan and hearing their criticisms of his acts.<sup>3</sup> Sultan al-Nāṣir also used to mix with the population, and Ibn Iyās sounds indignant as he reports that the impetuous Sultan went as far as to sell sweetmeats, fruits and fried cheese in the market.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Place of the Aristocracy and their General Qualities

The ruling class are represented in the "Nights" as wielding absolute power over all other classes. They can threaten,

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1 Cf. Miskawayh, VI, 566, ed. De Goeje Athīr, VII, 62f.

2 Jāhīz, Tāj, 170f. Ṣābi, 186, Ibn Jubayr, 237.

3 Ibn Iyās, II, 318.

4 Ibn Iyās, II, 167 (year 902/1496).

bestow, confiscate, forgive, reward or punish by death, and seem to have had black slaves standing with unsheathed swords ready to punish culprits when commanded to do so.<sup>1</sup>

Princes slay their slaves<sup>2</sup> and beat their father's viziers.<sup>3</sup> Viziers and high officials in their turn are not questioned if they maltreat commoners.<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the narrator frequently makes a sharp distinction between just rulers on the one hand and their despotic and pompous nobility on the other.<sup>5</sup>

The enormous power possessed by the aristocracy led the people to say that if the monarch was just, good times would follow since he would check all those who abused their power.<sup>6</sup>

Rivalry seems to have been the worse vice among the ruling class. Quarrels and intrigues caused the dismissal and imprisonment of viziers and government officials, and resulted in revolts against the rulers and princes of the ruling house who were either killed or mutilated and driven into vagrancy.<sup>7</sup>

Chamberlains and door keepers often stood between the men of power and the people<sup>8</sup> who had few chances to come

1 Nights, I, 39, 63.

2 Ibid., II, 131, and Cal.ed. II, 203. Burton, I, 182, n.1.

3 Ibid., II, 97.

4 Ibid., I, 90.

5 Ibid., I, 179.

6 Ibid., I, 224.

7 Cf. Ibid., I, 41.

8 Ibid., Cal.ed. II, 329. Maqrīzi, I, 402f. Cf. Ṣābi, 231.



anywhere near the aristocracy. This was possible only at certain royal banquets,<sup>1</sup> or when the Board of Justice (dār al-mazālim) was in session.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, history reports many instances in which the absoluteness of power and rivalries are illustrated. Viziers, officials and governors were flogged, blinded, had their hands chopped off or their tongues cut off.<sup>3</sup> Miskawayh comments that the rulers and the people around them had such a power that "enabled them to make sport of men and to do as they liked with lives and goods".<sup>4</sup> Those people who wished to avoid authority used to say that the Sultan either gives in thousands for no reason or throws a person over the city walls for no obvious crime.<sup>5</sup>

Both in the 'Abbāsīd and the Mamlūk periods, the aristocrats lived in extraordinary affluence. Detailed accounts of the luxurious living and splendour of the aristocrats can be found in the pages of historians and biographers.<sup>6</sup> The legendary wealth and largesse

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1 Nights, II, 255.

2 Scott, tr., 211f. Taghribirdī, VI, 204f.

3 Athīr, VIII, 258, 497, 375. Fakhri, 246. Mez, 94f. On rivalries and intrigues among viziers see Sābi, Preface, 18-20 and Bowen, 'Alī b. 'Isā, passim.

4 Tajārib, tr. Marg. VI, 190f.

5 Ibshīhi, I, 85.

6 Sābi, 195, Tanūkhī, Nishwār, VIII, 145-51. The Table-Talk of a Mesopotamian Judge, Eng. tr. Margoliouth, London, 1922, 157-61. Maqrīzī, I, 383-85, 408-17, H.I.H. Tarīkh al-Islām al-Siyāsī Wa'l Thaqafī ... (3 Vols. Cairo, 1935-46), I, 627.

of the Barmaki family surpassed even that of al-Rashīd.<sup>1</sup> The wedding party given by the vizier Ḥasan b. Sahl for his daughter Būrān became a memorable event in the 'Abbāsīd annals.<sup>2</sup>

Ibn al-Furāt, al-Muqtadir's vizier, is reported to have received the Byzantine envoys at his residence. On this occasion, the additional curtains and carpets of his reception hall cost the vizier 30,000 dinars.<sup>3</sup>

Whenever he was appointed to the vizierate the prices of ambergris, musk, ice and sugar rose since great amounts of these commodities were consumed or given away by him.<sup>4</sup>

Ibn 'Isā's income was 80,000 dinars a year, and as a pious vizier he spent most of it for charity and the relief of the needy.<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-'Abbās set about forty dinner-tables each day for all those who entered his house.<sup>6</sup>

However, from the panoramic and general description given in the "Nights", one can form an impressionistic picture of the life of the aristocracy.

They, like the caliphs and the princes whom they imitated, had a galaxy of singers, musicians and poets.<sup>7</sup> Their pleasure boats sailed across the river, and private ships transported them

- 1 Fakhri, 179-90.
- 2 Ibid., 203, Athīr, VI, 279, Muir, 503f.
- 3 Miskawayh, I, 53f.
- 4 Op.cit., Athīr, VIII, 113. Ṣābi, 20.
- 5 Ṣābi, 322f.
- 6 Tanūkhī, Nishwār, I, 14.
- 7 Nights, II, 329.

between Baghdad and Basra.<sup>1</sup>

The "Nights" does point out virtues in the aristocracy, and the people of power and wealth never cease to perform acts of chivalry or to help the less fortunate.<sup>2</sup> They are tolerant and often forgiving and possess much murū'a and generosity.<sup>3</sup> They take pride in their patronage of the arts and especially music, poetry and literature.<sup>4</sup> The favourite pursuits of the nobility were: sports such as hunting, falconry, polo, knight-errantry<sup>5</sup>, and chess which was a popular indoor game.<sup>6</sup>

It was not regarded as correct for nobles to eat in the market<sup>7</sup>, or to drink water obtained from water-carriers<sup>8</sup>, or to attend public baths. This is confirmed by the fact that ordering a private bath for the guest was the first and most distinguished gesture of hospitality.<sup>9</sup>

The dual morality of those times was more evident among the ruling class than elsewhere. 'Ali Nuraddin for instance knows that the Prophet cursed the makers, the drinkers and the sellers of wine,<sup>10</sup> yet he instructs an old man, who abstains

1 Nights, II, 216, IV, 151.

2 Ibid., II, 186, 204-7, 281, 287, ed. Cal.

3 Ibid., II, 263. Cf. Fakhri, 20.

4 Ibid., II, 210. Cf. Aghāni, V, 19, IX, 95, 104, 140.

5 Ibid., I, 49, 298, 345, II, 298, see also Ṣābi, 75; Fakhri, 47-9.

6 Nights, I, 49, 192. Fakhri, 41. Suyūti, Tārīkh, al-Khulafā' (Cairo, 1960), 295.

7 Nights, I, 88.

8 Ibid., MS. Bodl. 633, fol. 11a.

9 Nights, I, 138. For details on etiquette and manners see al-Washshā', al-Muwashshā' (Cairo, 1324) 119-123.

10 al-Rāghib, Muḥādarāt . . ., II, 668.

from drinking, to escape this curse by handing the money to another man who would buy the wine and load it on a donkey and in this way the old man would not be considered either as the buyer or as the carrier.<sup>1</sup> Similarly it is reported that Khumārawayh Ibn Ṭulūn used to stop singing at the time of the adhān, and that revellers or singing slave-girls would interrupt their party in order to perform the duty of prayers.<sup>2</sup>

At the beginning of the period of al-malāhi (pleasure parties), the aristocrats surrounded their parties with great privacy and secrecy<sup>3</sup> so that al-Jāhiz comments that Kings chose the evenings for their merriments in order to avoid public criticism and disapproval.<sup>4</sup> Yet other accounts show that the morning party, ṣabūh, took place from the "Golden Age" up till the late Mamlūk period,<sup>5</sup> though they were not held as regularly as the ghabūqs (evening bouts).

These singing and drinking parties of the upper classes went on even in the times of plagues and famine which struck medieval cities periodically.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 151. Rāghib, op. cit.

2 Maqrīzi, I, 317. Aghāni, VII, 35, XII, 105. Nights, II, 329.

3 Jahshiyāri, 212f. Fakhri, 187. Cf. Aghāni, V, 19.

4 Jāhiz, Kitāb al-Hayawān (7 vols; Cairo 1938/1356), I, 285. Rāghib, II, 694.

5 Aghāni, VI, 178 and passim. Ṣābi, 107. Athīr, VII, 497. Ibn Iyās, I, 212.

6 Athīr, IX, 158, 434, X, 62, 64, 67, 272. Ibn Iyās, I, 60, 133, 141, 229. Maqrīzi, Sulūk, I pt. 3, 813f.

It is worth noting in this respect that drinking and singing parties became so important a part of the life of aristocracy that al-Jāhiz maintains that al-lahū (pleasure parties) was a character trait of Kings (viz. the ruling class) since it was a kind of "catharsis" by which kings, burdened by the responsibilities of ruling, found relief.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear however that fairly soon there was a tacit acceptance of indulgence in a life of pleasure and enjoyment for the aristocracy and the wealthy middle-class. This view finds support in al-Washshā's statement when he describes the character of the elegant and refined. Love and eroticism, he states, are acceptable only in the rich since money is essential for offering expensive gifts and clothes and for holding parties. Love, besides, requires plenty of leisure time, so it would be foolish for the poor to try and indulge in it, and ignorant is he who exceeds his limitations.<sup>2</sup>

There is little questioning in the "Nights" of the fact that the aristocracy has a natural right to their position. People of noble descent were indiscriminately called "the sons of kings",<sup>3</sup> and were thought to be distinguished by their noble features, and who, despite present adversity, would continue to bear the signs of their past prosperity;<sup>4</sup> and who in clothes and bearing were easily to be differentiated from common people.<sup>5</sup>

1 Hayawān, I, 287f. Tāj, 150.

2 al-Muwashshā, II, 89.

3 Nights, II, 53, III, 234.

4 Ibid., I, 102, 177, II, 330.

5 Ibid., II, 75.

It is apparent from Egyptian stories in the "Nights" that the pomp and arrogance of the aristocracy in Egypt exceeded that of the aristocracy in Iraq. Whereas in the Egyptian stories people are mishandled or driven with sticks to make way for processions of aristocrats, this does not arise in the Iraqi stories.<sup>1</sup>

This is supported by historical evidence. When the Turks began to harrass the Baghdadis in this way in the markets they were driven out to Sāmarrā'. It is reported that al-Mu'taṣim moved his palace and Turkish soldiers out of Baghdad after a man had interrupted the procession of the caliph and publicly blamed al-Mu'taṣim for bringing the Turks to bully the people of Baghdad.<sup>2</sup>

To conclude, the "Nights" in depicting the caliphs and wealthy nobility presents some of the most significant aspects of the Islamic civilisation both in the 'Abbāsīd time and the "Golden Age" of the Mamlūk period. The picture obtained from the accounts of historians and the stories of the "Nights" is summed up by Farmer in the following statement: "Baghdad was a city of great populousness and magnificence. The wealth of the caliphs, nobility and merchants was almost fabulous... The magnificence of the palaces, mosques, colleges and official residences, the luxurious appointments and furnishings of the interiors, the gorgeous retinues... banquets ... together with the splendour of social life, not only in the capital, but in all the great cities from Cordova to Samarqand, surpasses anything of its kind in history."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Nights, II, 213, IV, 277, 279. See Prescott, Once to Sinai, (London, 1957), 127. Burton, IV, 126, n.1.

2 Athīr, VI, 319, Fakhri, 211.

3 H. G. Farmer, A. History of Arabic Music, (London, 1929) 99f.

## CHAPTER III

### The Middle Class

#### The Educated Middle Class

This class consisted of the savants, religious men 'ulamā', men of letters and professional men such as physicians, astronomers and mathematicians.<sup>1</sup> These were, as is stated by the vizier Ibn al-Faḍl, attached to the rulers and the wealthy class by virtue of their culture.<sup>2</sup>

In the prime of the 'Abbāsids and up till the medieval ages of Islam the intellectuals and contributors to culture were respected, encouraged and patronised by the courts, regardless of their race or religion.<sup>3</sup>

There were two opposite currents both of which worked to the advantage of the members of this class; on the one hand the court encouraged music and poetry and promoted scientific studies and philosophy, and on the other, the caliphs honoured and respected theologians since their theocratic rule was basically dependent on the sharī'a for the consolidation of their political power.<sup>4</sup>

1 Though musicians, singers and ascetics formed different categories, they can, according to their place in the "Nights", be included with the educated middle-class, the former for their artistic abilities and the latter for their religious philosophy.

2 See above, 100.

3 ESS., V, 409, art. Education. Fakhri, 175, Muir, 508.

4 Zaydān, IV, 184.

However, it should be pointed out in this connection that the educated class itself was divided into two groups; those who lived on the fringes of poverty either because they were not fortunate enough to make contact with patrons of literature and culture,<sup>1</sup> or because they chose to abstain from worldly pursuits and lived in piety.<sup>2</sup> The latter were headed by poets such as Abu al-'Atāhiya and al-Ma'arri. Their representatives in the "Nights" figure as saints endowed with supernatural powers. The representatives of the opposite group were headed by Abu Nuwās, al-Aşma'i and al-Daḥḥāk<sup>3</sup> who attached themselves to the court and eulogised the rulers. They would be rewarded for their success in composing verses which pleased the caliph and could thus maintain themselves on the fringes of luxurious living.<sup>4</sup>

Information about the amount and value of the rewards given to poets or singers is lacking in the "Nights" where it simply states that the caliph rewarded them amply. Other Arabic sources state how munificent the poets' rewards were and give more details.<sup>5</sup>

In the "Nights" al-Aşma'i acts as a literary judge who distinguishes the poetic merits of three slave-girls.<sup>6</sup> Abu.

1 Grunebaum, 214.

2 A. Amīn, Duḥā, I, 137. Iqd. II, 9-11, III, 163.

3 Nights, II, 263, III, 227; and Cal. ed., II, 283-87, 376, 387f.

4 Fakhri, 16. Grunebaum, op. cit.

5 Iqd. III, 380, 446, Aghāni, VI, 77 and passim.

6 Nights, III, 227f.



Nuwās always appears as a witty poet who succeeds in guessing the emotional state of the caliph and accordingly composes verses suitable for the situation.<sup>1</sup> Al-Daḥḥāk appears as a transmitter of anecdotes.<sup>2</sup> They all, however, share in the task of relieving the caliph's boredom or distress.

In the 'Abbāsīd period, poets served as semi-official spokesmen for the government by praising the character and the good acts of the sovereign.<sup>3</sup> Although verses in the "Nights" are used as a means for expressing personal grievances or public opinion, the role of the famous poet as a spokesman for his sovereign is lacking since the theme is confined to love-songs, and story-telling.

Similarly, stories about Ṣūfī saints are not so much concerned with Ṣūfī teachings and philosophy as with depicting Ṣūfīs as martyrs of virtuous love upon whom miracles are bestowed by God to reward them for their pure faith and exemplary conduct.

In assessing the position of the educated class in society, one fact to be emphasised is that despite the high esteem in which men of culture were held, money seemed more important than the mere possessing of knowledge.<sup>4</sup> A Baghdadi proverb says "A handful of luck is better than a load of knowledge."<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, II, 286, 380, 388f. Cal.ed.

2 Ibid., II, 263.

3 Grunebaum, op. cit.

4 Bayān, III, 227. Rasā'il, ed. 1933, 310f.

5 Tha'ālibī, Lata'if, 29.

Students training to be scholars often had hard economic life. Some were even driven to begging until a ruler or a vizier would subsidise their schools or provide them with financial gifts. It has been reported that the vizier Ibn al-Furāt, on hearing about the plight of scholars, donated 80,000 dinars to scribes, poets jurists and mystics.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Aṣma'i and Abu Yūsuf had suffered the pangs of poverty before they had reached the positions they earned at the court. A neighbouring grocer is reported to have advised al-'Aṣma'i to throw away all his books.<sup>2</sup> Similar remarks are made in the "Nights" to an educated prince who lost his kingdom and the young man of Baghdad who lost his fortune. The prince becomes a woodcutter and the young man a grocer's book-keeper.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that there were few people of learning did little to help the scholars against poverty;<sup>4</sup> thus 'Ali Bābā, a poor but learned man, laments the fact that if he were to pawn his knowledge, books and inkpot for the provision of a single day the pawners would decline his offer. His problem was solved when he took up woodcutting and came across the treasure cave.<sup>5</sup>

Members of the educated class and the learned are not given in the "Nights" as significant a role as that of poets, musicians, merchants and aristocrats. Most of what the "Nights"

1 Athīr, VIII, 113. Tritton, Muslim Education (London, 1957), 78, Suyūṭi, Husn al-Muḥadra, II, 12f.

2 Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 19f, 17.

3 Nights, I, 44, IV, 153. Bayān, op. cit.

4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, Muqaddima, Eng. tr. II, 334.

5 JRAS, 'Ali Bābā and the Forty Thieves, 1910, I, 333.

says of knowledge is put into the mouths of learned slave-girls.<sup>1</sup>

Exceptions must however be made in two cases: the great respect shown to ascetics and their miraculous acts,<sup>2</sup> and the exaltation of learning and learned men in the stories copied from literary sources or transmitted from Indian sources as in the story of al-Ma'mūn and the Learned man and the story of al-Ziyādi, a jurist who was abu Yūsuf's co-religionist.<sup>3</sup>

In the Indian story of Ialī'ād, Prince Wirdkhān undergoes a test set for him by the learned vizier Shimās.<sup>4</sup> But when the story is of the narrator's own composition, real learned men are shown to be discomfited by slave-girls even including the philosopher al-Nazzām.<sup>5</sup>

This is most probably due to the estrangement which existed between the 'ulamā' and the story-tellers, arising from the hostile attitude of the cultured class towards narrative literature as a whole and popular narratives in particular.<sup>6</sup>

In the 11th c. A.D., a fatwā prohibited anyone to possess this kind of 'frivolous' writings. Books of such character were thought fit to be destroyed by fire and water.<sup>7</sup>

1 Nights, I, 246-53, 270, II, 337.

2 Ibid., II, 322-25, 331-33.

3 Ibid., II, 210, 305, Cal.ed., IV, 154. Al-Ziyādi, is copied from Faraj, I, 153-57.

4 Nights, IV. 160-83.

5 Ibid., III, 10.

6 See above, 44.

7 ERE., V, 201, art. Education.

It was suggested that paper merchants should not sell their wares to anyone who would use them for reproducing such stories, as 'Antar and Sīdi Battāl and the like, since the diffusion of such writings falls under the category of makrūhāt (reprehensible things).<sup>1</sup>

Those members of the educated class who often come into contact with the common people, are also given minor roles in certain stories; among these are qādīs, teachers and physicians.

Qādīs and elementary school teachers require special comment here because of the ridicule with which they are treated in the "Nights". Funny stories about qādīs have been attributed to the tendency of people to try and make serious situations look foolish or ridiculous.<sup>2</sup> But the reasons for the qādīs<sup>?</sup> position in society may be more complicated than that. Absolute integrity, freedom from corruption, worldly prejudices and greed are essential requisites in a qādi,<sup>3</sup> and this was indeed difficult to achieve in an atmosphere where autocrats controlled the state power.

The narrator, for example, states that it is an essential requisite in a qādi that he treats all classes of people equally and passes equal judgments on all, for integrity will surely check the tyranny of sharīfs on the one hand, and encourage the hopes of the weak in the power of justice on the other.<sup>4</sup>

1 Op. cit. ,

2 A. Furayha, al-Fukāha 'Ind al-'Arab, (Beirut 1962), 152.

3 Cf. Suyūṭī, II, 129-134.

4 Nights, I, 247.

Anecdotes show that qādis were often exposed to the influence of those in authority, and they needed a great deal of courage and integrity to oppose this influence and speak their minds.<sup>1</sup>

Abu Ḥanīfa maintained a position highly esteemed by the people because he declined the caliph's offer to become a qādi.<sup>2</sup> The narrator explains that Abu Ḥanīfa refused the post because he wished to avoid having any contact with authority, since this would inevitably lead him to worldly pursuits.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, because the Qādi Abu Yūsuf passed judgments based on clever juristic opinions in order to please al-Rashīd and the courtiers he earned nothing but the indifference if not the disapproval of the public.<sup>4</sup>

In the "Nights" he is made to criticise himself in the following comment, "There is no easier way to compromise

1 Al-Tanūkhī reports that a qādi ventured to resist the persistent efforts of al-Muqtadir's mother to obtain and destroy a land deed because she had illegally purchased it. He thwarted her efforts despite the interference of al-Muqtadir and his vizier and miraculously escaped the sack. (Nishwār, I, 119f). In the Mamlūk period a qādi was exposed to the anger of the Sultan and was banished because he refused to issue a fatwā to collect taxes for the Sultan. (Suyūṭī, II, 94, Ibn Iyās, II, 96f.)

2 EL, I, 123, art. Abu Ḥanīfa.

3 Nights, I, 253. Suyūṭī, Tarīkh, 291.

4 Jawzi, Sayd al-khatīr (3 Vols, Damascus, 1960), II, 401.

between worldly and religious problems than by using knowledge and learning. I have been given a great sum of money for solving a trivial problem. "<sup>1</sup>

The secularism of the rich society affected even the qādis, some of whom occupied themselves in worldly gains and pursuits.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, corruption and bribery seem to have been a matter of frequent occurrence.<sup>3</sup> This is revealed in the following incident reported by al-Tanūkhī. A man thanked the chief Qādi Abu Ḥāzim for appointing an honest qādi. Abu Ḥāzim shouted at him "Do you talk of a qādi being honest? This epithet might be used of a police officer, but a qādi is above it." Then he commented that the times were wrong and that the profession of judges spoilt."<sup>4</sup>

The idea that qādis were a scourge imposed over heirs and their inheritances prevailed among the members of the rich classes. It was always wise to avoid entanglements with courts and qādis,<sup>5</sup> for the worst qādis were those who encroached upon the inheritances of orphans.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, II, 230.

2 Tawhīdī, Imtā', II, 171f. Ibn Iyās, II, 376. Nawāji, Halbat al-Kumayt (Cairo, 1276 A.H.) 80.

3 Ibn Iyās, II, 262.

4 Table-Talk, 128.

5 Nights, III, 200, Cf. al-Jāhīz, Bukhalā', 48f.

6 Māghib, III, 191, Ḥayawān, II, 410.

Qādīs are especially ridiculed in the "Nights" for having an eye for pretty women.<sup>1</sup> Although Abu Ḥāzim, the qādi mentioned above, was known for his chastity, integrity and self-restraint, it was revealed to his friends that even he had once composed love verses to a slave-girl who was his concubine.<sup>2</sup>

The qādi's association with domestic affairs and marriage laws brought him into constant contact with women and if he did not show much restraint he would be exposed to banter.

The ridicule of teachers in the "Nights" reflects the low social status which elementary school teachers held in Muslim society, but it is interesting that these anecdotes about teachers are mainly copied rather than composed.<sup>3</sup> These anecdotes show that teachers are fools and that their conduct consistently betrays a feeble mind.<sup>4</sup>

In literature the position of teachers was as low as that of weavers, spinners, blood-letters and other despised trades.<sup>5</sup>

Several reasons have been given for the low status of elementary school teachers.<sup>6</sup> Mez ascribes it to the influence of Greek comedies which made fun of teachers.<sup>6</sup> Goldziher regards

1 Nights, IV, 69, 87, III, 179, Cf. Maqrīzi, Sulūk, II, pt. 2, 442.

2 Tanūkhi, Table-Talk, 55.

3 Nights, II, 325 f; for the source of the story see Jāḥiẓ, Bayān, ed. Jabr. 193.

4 Goldziher, ERE, op.cit. Jāḥiẓ, Ibid., 31.

5 Tritton, 1957, 8f.

6 ERE, V, 202.

it as a sign of the haughtiness of Arabs, but qualifies his statement by saying that the same contempt existed in Greek society.<sup>1</sup> al-Jāhiz, believes that there exist lower and upper grades in each social group and whereas the caliph's tutors are honoured and respected, their lower colleagues, the village schoolmasters, are disdained.<sup>2</sup> Shalabi attributes this social contempt to the low economic status of teachers.<sup>3</sup>

There may be justification for all the reasons given above but what draws our attention is the fact that both weavers and teachers of children are placed on the same low level in the social scale, and that weaving and looking after children are, on the other hand, closely connected with women. The contempt of weavers and elementary school-teachers can therefore be attributed to the fixed conviction of the pre-eminence of men over women, so that the male members of society who take up women's jobs must certainly be placed in the lowest position possible. Whereas women are praised for their skills in weaving and tutoring children, men who do the same work earn nothing but contempt.

The connection between these three categories in society is shown in the following comment: the rationality of women equals that of seventy weavers, and that of a weaver equals that of seventy teachers.<sup>4</sup>

1 Op. cit.

2 Bayān, I, 250.

3 Shalabi, A History of Muslim Education (Beirut, 1954), 75.

4 ERE, V, 201.



It remains for us to consider briefly the quality of learning and sciences transmitted through the "Nights". Despite the fact that people of intellectual attainments are overshadowed by aristocrats and merchants as protagonists of the stories of the "Nights", the presence of the men of letters is often made tangible through extracts and quotations representing several branches of literature, ethical and religious teachings and sciences.

Apart from the story of Tawadudd which is mainly concerned with various branches of learning, erudition in the "Nights" is shown in passages and selections derived from various works, probably piecemeal,<sup>1</sup> and inserted in the stories without having any effect on the course of the main narrative. Such insertions can be lengthened or shortened as the transmitters wish.<sup>2</sup>

Whatever the quality and standard of learning in the "Nights" may be, poetry and rhetoric never cease to exercise a magical effect throughout the collection. In some stories poetic ability and the recitation of verses seems even more important than the development of the plot.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Qalamāwī, 286f., M. Gerhardt, 1963, 341.

2 This can be confirmed by the evidence that a narrator often borrows views and ethics which seem alien to the "Nights", e.g.: the discussion of the Mu'tazilite doctrine that man's moral action is decided by his ability and will to choose between good and evil. In contrast, the trend of morals throughout the "Nights" follows the doctrine of absolute determinism set out by the Jabri group who believes in predestination, viz. "Man triumphs or suffers for works done, not by him, but in him, through him, despite of him." See Donaldson, Studies in Muslim Ethics, (London, 1953,) 99.

3 Nights, II, 298-316.

Rhetoric, principally expressed in verses and witty sayings or quotations, had great significance in the literature of the Arab nation. In the court and among the upper classes a poet, singer, or slave-girl might well have the chance to rise and gain ample rewards because of the success in composing excellent verses, transmitting worthy anecdotes, correcting a grammatical error or singing a lovely song.<sup>1</sup>

Poets might have their mouths filled with jewels in appreciation of their verses;<sup>2</sup> the rewards given by al-Rashīd to the singer Ibrāhīm are said to have amounted to 200,000 dinars.<sup>3</sup>

Even among the unlettered, poetry and eloquence had great appeal whether in assemblies at the mosques,<sup>4</sup> or narrating the stories of the "Nights".<sup>5</sup>

Before proceeding to discuss the subjects of learning transmitted by narrators, reference must be made to the methods of approach. Knowledge is presented by the methods used in the lettered circles of the day, namely, disputation,<sup>6</sup> in the praise

1 Fakhri, 16.

2 Ibid., 280. Aghāni, I, 147, VII, 34.

3 Ibid., V, 20.

4 At a disputation about linguistic questions between al-Aṣma'i and the Persian Sībawayh at a mosque assembly, the former used the power of his pure accent and eloquence to impress the common people though he was in the wrong, and they sided with him in the dispute. See Yaḡūt, Udabā', VI, 87.

5 Horovitz states that some 350 poets can be pointed out whose suitable verses have been inserted into the stories by the narrator, see IC, 1927, No.1. 55.

6 Nights, II, 272, 333f, 337.

or the blame of a certain subject (Fī madh wa-dhamm...),<sup>1</sup> and the preference of one thing over the other (Fī tafdīl...).<sup>2</sup> Besides historical anecdotes, fables, parables and proverbs used by writers to inculcate morals, knowledge presented in puzzles and catechisms seems to have been the most attractive method to the audience of the "Nights".<sup>3</sup>

The material in our source includes religious duties, Fiqh, Ḥadīth, Quran, humane and scientific studies.

Humane studies comprise history, politics and brief discussions in philosophy.<sup>4</sup>

Anecdotes and poetry applied for moral purposes resemble the material which <sup>one</sup> finds in serious Arabic books.

The virtues required of kings remind us of Ibn Ṭīqīqa's writings on statecraft and government, for example, such as the relationship between rulers and their subjects and the virtues of kings as shown in strong character, piety, justice chivalry, toleration and generosity.<sup>5</sup>

The qualities which make a man of good manners and disposition are to be found in books like Tahdhīb al-Akhlāq<sup>6</sup> and the teachings of the religious reformer, al-Ghazālī,<sup>7</sup> and

1 Tha'ālibi, Zarā'if, 126, 4-13, 71f. Nights, II, 333-35.

2 Makki, Qūt al-Qulūb (2 Vols, Cairo, 1310), I, 200, II, 29, 106, 237.

3 Nights, II, 340-50, III, 5-9.

4 Ibid., I, 224f, 246-54, VI, 178-182.

5 Fakhri, 14-65. Nights, op. cit.

6 Miskawayh (Cairo, 1303), 60-96, 109-24; for a summary and analysis of this book see Donaldson, 127-33. Nights, I, 246-48.

7 Ihyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn (4 Vols., Cairo, 1346-47 A.H.) II, 66, 119-25, 138-95, III, 43-63, Donaldson, 134-59.

many other books whose subjects deal with religions and moral instructions.<sup>1</sup>

These include abstinence, courage, wisdom, justice, liberality, helpfulness, fortitude, tolerance (hilm) and bravery.<sup>2</sup> The narrator echoes al-Ghazālī when he states that falsehood is sometimes better than truth, as when it helps to avoid shedding blood.<sup>3</sup>

A collection of 'Alī's speeches and proverbs deals mostly with general subjects such as the creation of Heaven, Hell and the angels; reproof of the followers of Satan, and those who are unworthy to be judges, and the discussion of the differences in human dispositions, death and the fear of death, etc.<sup>4</sup>

One finds the same multiplicity of subjects when slave-girls preach their moral lessons.<sup>5</sup>

In scientific subjects such as medicine and astrology the information given in the "Nights" is inadequate and does not rise above the popular level of beliefs and methods of treatment by experimental medicine.<sup>6</sup> Reference is however made to the

1 Tabarsi, Makārim al-Akhlāq, (Cairo, 1303 A.H.) 5-15, 100-12, 152-65.

2 Nights, op.cit., Donaldson, 126.

3 Ibid., 142, Nights, IV, 183.

4 'Alī b. Abi Tālib, Nahj al-Balāgha (Beuzut, 1889), 183, 205, 228, 236. Donaldson, 94f.

5 Nights, I, 223, 226, 247, 248, which successively deals with statecraft, good disposition, requisites of judges, and the virtues of ascetics.

6 Ibid., II, 350-52, III, 2-5. Cf. Scott's tr. The Arabian Nights Entertainments (4 Vols, London, 1883), Introduction, I, 42.

four hereditary qualities of moist, dry, cold and hot and the four created humours related to the spleen (Sawdā'), bile (Safra'), blood (Ḍamm) and phlegm (Balgham).<sup>1</sup>

Astronomy in the "Nights" is confined to the references made by the Quran to the wonderful creation of God displayed in the solar system and the alternation of day and night.<sup>2</sup>

Since narrative literature has nothing to do with subjects such as logic, philosophy and mathematics, the narrator in his education courses is satisfied with stating the subjects and listing the names of men and philosophers related to these studies such as Ibn Sīnā, Ibn Bayṭār, Hippocrates and Galen.<sup>3</sup>

To sum up, learning, wisdom and moral teaching in the "Nights" are presented either as extracts or anecdotes and parables. The extracts culled from erudite books, though similar to them in subject-matter and tone, are far from the high standard reached by the learned men of Muslim civilisation in their voluminous writings. Having been crammed into the stories by the narrators, perhaps in an attempt to please the 'ulamā' and educated people, these extracts seem tedious, compressed and sometimes quite pointless.

However, stories and anecdotes about Ṣūfis and virtuous men, and the knowledge presented in the form of catechism, do succeed in communicating to the audience the moral lessons they try to impart, and these reflect, in however limited a way, the considerable deference and honour rendered to learning and education and indirectly to the learned men of the community.

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1 Nights, II, 350, III, 9.

2 Ibid., III, 5-9.

3 Ibid., I, 220. Ibn Sīnā wrote books in theology, philosophy and medicine. Hippocrates enjoyed a great reputation in the Arab world. See El, II, 419, art. Ibn Sīnā, and I, 784 art. Bukrāt.

### The Merchants

Among the various groups and classes represented in the "Nights", the class of merchants stands out distinctly, showing the importance attached to trade throughout the ages of Islam.

The mercantile society is delineated in detail in the "Nights" from the time of the rise of the middle class, when tradesmen were also overseas adventurers,<sup>1</sup> up to the late Mamlūk period when an established class of merchants traded mainly overland on the routes between Egypt, Syria, and Iraq, and when sea voyages were, on the whole, across the Mediterranean Sea rather than with the Indian Ocean.<sup>2</sup>

From the historical point of view, the Arabian Peninsula had always been significant as a trade route, and before the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope in 1497, the Arab countries acted as a bridge connecting the East and West.<sup>3</sup>

In pre-Islamic time, trade caravans were the main source of wealth for the ruling class of Mecca. The Prophet himself and the first three caliphs added to the prestige of merchants by their trading activities.<sup>4</sup> It was only later that sayings which viewed business as inferior to Jihād were quoted. So 'Umar I reportedly said "No Muslim should be a salesman, as chattering in the bazaar draws men away from Islam."<sup>5</sup> Although there was no explicit contempt for business, it was inevitable that in the

1 Nights, III, 96, Cf. Mez, 471.

2 Nights, IV, 94, Cf. Mez, 505.

3 EI., art. Tidjāra, IV, 747. Quran, Sūra, 106, on Quraysh as traders.

4 Jāhiz, Bukhalā', 193, EI, op.cit.

5 Mez, 470, Bukhāri, III, 7, ed. 1296 A.H.

period of wars and expansion, the merchants, being incapable of military exploits, should stay in the background.<sup>1</sup>

The 'Umayyads had no sympathy with merchants, not out of religious zeal as in the case of 'Umar I, but partly because they considered themselves the aristocrats and the flower of Arab chivalry, and partly because the tribal ideals still prevailed in the Muslim society of this period of Islam. In this matter again, remarks Mez, the 3rd/9th century brought about a revolution, by the 4th/10th century "wealthy tradesmen had become the carriers of Muhammedan civilisation."<sup>2</sup>

The expansion of the Muslim Empire widened the scope of its commercial activities and with the increasing significance of trade and money economy, the merchant-class began to come to the fore. Its emergence resulted in striking social changes and a slow but sure intermingling process began between the nobility and the emerging middle class. The bourgeoisie class "developed slowly during the first hundred and fifty years of the Muslim era, emerged into the full light of history at the end of the second century, became socially admitted during the third and asserted itself as a most powerful socio-economic factor during the fourth."<sup>3</sup>

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1 Goitein, The Rise of the Near Eastern Bourgeoisie, Cahiers d'Histoire Mondiale, (Paris, 1956-57), III, 598.

2 Mez, 471. It is interesting to note that Sindbad, an early Muslim trader of the "Nights", residing in a remote part of India, shows the King and the nobility how to use horse-saddles and stirrups by introducing the craft of saddle-making, and hence acts both as a trader and a bearer of Muslim craftsmanship to other parts of the world (Nights, III, 116).

3 Goitein, Ibid., 584, 599.

The new emerging society however showed the contradictions of a transitional period and conflicting tendencies exhibited themselves in the same age. Thus, whereas Mez asserts that the Arabs, like other martial people, looked with contempt upon business,<sup>1</sup> Goitein believes that, although this statement is repeated by various authors, it cannot be accepted, since the majority of Muslims remained in business like their forefathers, especially the sedentary Arabs who had no social prejudice against business.<sup>2</sup> Goitein, however, illustrates that both the Bedouins and Persian aristocracy had contempt and even hatred for merchants, and believed that business was incompatible with the standing of a nobleman.<sup>3</sup> Al-Makki reports that among the early Arabs craftsmen were considered better than merchants but that merchants were preferred to idle men.<sup>4</sup>

The establishment of the merchant-class was preceded by writings on trade written by eminent readers and exegesists of the Quran who were also merchants such as al-Shaybāni (d. 804 A.D.) the co-founder of the Ḥanafite school.<sup>5</sup> The aim was to prove that the new merchant-class and their activities were not opposed by Islam, and that money-earning was a religious duty.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Mez, 470.

2 Goitein, Ibid., 595f.

3 Op. cit., 596f, Jahshiyāri, 186.

4 Al-Makki, Qūt al-Qulūb, II, 261, Cf. also Goitein, 597, on the conflict between merchants and Bedouins in the 1st century of the Islamic era.

5 Goitein, 584, 586-89, q. Ibn Samā'a, Kitāb al-Iktisāb fi al-Rizq al-Mustatāb (Cairo, 1938) 25-7.

6 Goitein, 587f. Jawzi, Sayd, I, 54, 97.



Quranic verses supporting trading activities were pointed out,<sup>1</sup> and traditions were collected and sometimes even fabricated to support this view.<sup>2</sup> The luxurious life led by the aristocrats and merchants, for instance, was justified by such traditions as "when God gives riches to a man, He wants it to be seen on him."<sup>3</sup> The high rank of honest merchants and the praise of honest gain were supported from Tradition.<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, controversial sayings in praise or blame of merchants, markets and business appear in various books, and each group, supporters and opponents, tries to justify its point of view.<sup>5</sup>

From the perusal of the relevant Arabic literature on the mercantile class, and from the treatment of this class in the "Nights", one gathers that unless a merchant managed to have himself attached to the court, upper classes and state officials, or actually took office,<sup>6</sup> or equipped himself with culture as well as wealth,<sup>7</sup> he would still be considered a sūqi.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Quran, 2<sup>198, 275, 283</sup>, 62<sup>10</sup>, 73<sup>20</sup>.

2 Cf. Abu Dāwūd, Ṣaḥīḥ Sunan .. II, 112-23, and Tirmidhi, Ṣaḥīḥ, I, 321.

3 Ibn Sa'd, Kitāb al-Ṭabaqāt.. (9 vols; Leyden, 1904-40), IV, pt. 2, 29.

4 Tirmidhi, art. Buyū', I, 227, Bukhārī, III, 2-9. Al-Muttaqī, Kanz al-'Ummāl (8 Vols, Hyderabad, 1312) II, 217-20.

5 Tha'ālibī, Zarā'if .. (Cairo, 1900) 30f. Makki, II, 262-72.

6 Tanukhī, Nishwār, I, 261, Ibn Sa'd, V, 93, 97, 99.

7 Dimashqī, al-Ishāra ilā Maḥāsin al-Tijāra (Cairo, 1318 A.H.) 61.

8 Nights, II, 210. Makki, II, 272f.

Thus it has been reported that a wealthy merchant took up a clerk's profession merely, as he put it, to increase his dignity and to continue in an influential position.<sup>1</sup>

The "Nights" repeatedly tries to show that when wealth and influence combine, the merchant's business becomes extremely prosperous. When Nuraddin 'Ali married the daughter of the vizier of Basra, he himself became vizier after his aged father in law had retired. The King, witnessing Nuraddin's devotion to his office, rewarded him with "salaries and supplies until his circumstances became ample, and he came to own ships which made voyages under his orders with merchandise. He founded numerous estates and made water-wheels and gardens."<sup>2</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn maintains that ranks are useful in securing property and states, and that a person who has no rank, like most merchants, can only acquire a fortune in proportion to the property he owns and in accordance with the efforts he himself makes; whereas a person of rank can increase his fortune through his influence on people who try to approach him and flatter him. These people strive to help him in all his needs without receiving anything in return because all they want is to be as close as possible to him since they are always in need of the protection his rank affords.<sup>3</sup>

1 Tanūkhi, Ibid., Eng. tr. 28.

2 Nights, I, 73.

3 Maqaddima, 389, 399.

Rich merchants soon began to acquire estates and to be able to marry women of higher classes. Apart from considerations of status and rank, the fact remains that the merchant-class became a significant economic force in Muslim society and that the "Nights" is an exposition of this. The transitional period from austerity to affluence seems to have already passed and the "Nights" shows palaces, the wearing of silk and brocade, and the keeping of concubines, as normal aspects of a prosperous and advanced social group.

The spread of Empire resulted in money pouring into the court from the subject countries and into the hands of the upper classes. The merchants' job was to supply the aristocrats with dress, furniture, jewels, and every rare commodity.<sup>1</sup> Hence, by their very magnificence and expenditure, the courtiers and upper classes were bringing about the rise of a bourgeoisie which was soon able to compete with them in lavish and splendid living.

An example of this is shown in the story of the False Caliph, where the heir of a wealthy jewel merchant impersonates al-Rashid and sails on the Tigris each evening on a pleasure boat lighted with torches.<sup>2</sup> The merchant adventurer al-Kaslan has amassed so much wealth that he is the only person able to provide Queen Zubayda's crown with a rare jewel. When al-Rashid hears that such a jewel cannot be found in his treasury he shouts at his attendants "Woe to you, shall I be a caliph or a king of Kings and yet unable to supply such a jewel. Go and

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1 Burton, X, 76.

2 Nights, II, 216.

ask the merchants." Al-Kaslān not only provides the required jewel but offers the caliph a number of rare objects, among them a tree of gold with fruits made of jewels, a brocade tent adorned with pearls and other precious stones.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn al-Jaṣṣāṣ, the famous jewel merchant,<sup>2</sup> is reported to have provided al-Muktafi (902-908 A.D.) with a splendid necklace that was proverbially called Zaydān's rosary, costing 30,000 dinars and made of pearls each one of which was as big as a sparrow's egg.<sup>3</sup>

The trading spirit and desire for money seized upon all classes of society.<sup>4</sup> Officials combined their offices with business and great importance was set upon money because of its purchasing power. Money helped to remove barriers between classes, and people were no longer satisfied to stay in their own class. Thus in the 3rd/9th c. a poet says to a vizier "Money and intelligence enable a man to stand in the courts of the princes. As you see I possess neither."<sup>5</sup>

Some stories in the "Nights" make references to merchants or enriched commoners who, by the aid of their possessions, get access to princes' courts and even make marriage alliances in court circles.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, II, 233f.

2 Mas'ūdī, VIII, 117-20.

3 Th'alibi, Thimār al-Qulūb (Cairo 1908) 154f. Tanūkhī, Nishwār, I, 263.

4 Sharīshī, Sharḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī (2 Vols; Būlāq, 1300/1883) II. 208.

5 Goitein, 599, Fakhri, 198.

6 Nights, II, 53, 223, IV, 267.

This imaginative theme of wealthy heroes marrying daughters of sultans and enriching the state treasury,<sup>1</sup> though perhaps unduly emphasised as explained above,<sup>2</sup> gives an indication of the importance of the riches of merchants to the state economy.

Historical evidence indicates the dependence of states, both in the 'Abbāsīd and the Mamlūk periods, on the riches of the mercantile class.<sup>3</sup> The rulers borrowed loans from their own subjects through the viziers to pay the soldiers.<sup>4</sup> In such cases bills of exchange were given to merchants and paid when the time of revenues arrived.<sup>5</sup>

The relation between these creditors and the state was full of difficulty since either the merchants themselves refused to help and went into hiding or emigrated,<sup>6</sup> or else they were bullied and taxed, in order to provide money for authorities.<sup>7</sup>

Both the chronicles and the "Nights" show significant connection between power politics and commerce.<sup>8</sup> In the golden age of al-Rashīd and his successors, merchants such as the 'Umānī the Khurāsānī and al-Kaslān of the "Nights", receive personal encouragement and favours from al-Rashīd, a fact

1 Nights, IV, 233, 339, Scott's tr. 213.

2 See above, 92.

3 Ṣūli, 76, Maqrīzi, Sulūk, II, pt. 2, 393.

4 Ṣūli, 16, Fakhri, 185.

5 Tanūkhī, Ibid., VIII, 26.

6 Ṣūli, op. cit., 250f, 264, 193.

7 Maqrīzi, Ibid., II, pt. 2, 412, 439, 473, Ibn Iyās, II, 245.

8 Sābi, 110-12.

which indicates the good relationship between merchants and authority.<sup>1</sup> It has been reported that the vizier Ja'far al-Barmaki once told al-Rashid that no pressure of any kind was exerted on Baghdadi merchants, whereas governors of other countries extracted commodities from their merchant subjects in order to send them as gifts to the caliph.<sup>2</sup>

However at the time of the decline of the caliphate and in the Mamlūk period, merchants were put under pressure, maltreated by viziers and amirs, forced to give loans and had their property confiscated as will be shown presently.<sup>3</sup>

Rich and influential merchants were called 'A'yān al-Tujjār or leading merchants.<sup>4</sup> In the "Nights" Muḥammad 'Ali's father was a jewel merchant, and was considered as one of the a'yān. When he died, he left his son a great fortune "in gold and silver, pearls and coral and rubies and chrysolites and other jewels, as well as landed property, public baths, fields, gardens, shops, ovens, male black slaves and female slaves and pages."<sup>5</sup>

To well-off middle-class people, wealth meant the acquisition of luxuries, among which were slaves, eunuchs and horses, living in houses with gardens and fine furniture, possessing

1 Nights, I, 232, IV, 240, 263.

2 Tabari, III. pt. 2, 702f. Cf. Jāhiz, Rasā'il, 105, ed. 1324.

3 'Arīb, 186, Ṣūli, 84, 101, 148, Ibn Iyās, II, 96f, 257, 268, 214, 341.

4 Jāhiz, Bukhālā', 137, Ibn Khaldūn, op. cit.

5 Nights, II, 221.

jewels and fine clothes and maintaining a busy kitchen where meals are provided and served in ample amounts.<sup>1</sup> In the street, a string of servants would accompany the merchant who usually rode a mule, but a simple merchant had no more than one or two servants attending him on the road.<sup>2</sup>

The life of the merchant class did not vary greatly during the various centuries of Muslim civilisation. A merchant who lived in the time of al-Rashīd led almost the same kind of life and had the same expenditures as his brother who lived in the Mamlūk period in Egypt.<sup>3</sup>

There is no precise indication in the "Nights" as to how much merchants really owned. Specific figures estimating their wealth are not reliable because of exaggeration and the long process of transmission by narrators. The 'Umāni merchant is said to have inherited 1,000,000 dinars in cash apart from jewels. 'Abdallah b. Faḍīl and his two brothers inherited 60,000 dinars, a house and a shop full of cloth from India, Greece and Persia. Although the figures cannot be accurate, one notices the difference between the 'Umāni's inheritance, who lived in the time of al-Rashīd and of Ibn Faḍīl's inheritance (which is an Iraqi story composed in Egypt in the later period).<sup>4</sup>

Al-Jāhīz mentions two brothers in Baṣra who inherited over 2 million dirhams from their merchant father.<sup>5</sup> Ibn al-Jaṣṣā ṣ'

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1 Tanukhi, Table-Talk, 216, Khaldūn, tr. I, 338. Mez, 459.

2 Nights, IV, 333.

3 Qalamāwi, 230.

4 Nights, IV, 243, 308.

5 Bukhalā', 41.

fortune even after the confiscation of part of his wealth was estimated at 1,200,000 dinars. Records vary in reporting the amount confiscated to be between 16 million to 20 million dinars.<sup>1</sup>

In the "Nights" the estimation of merchants' wealth is generally made figuratively, for example, "His wealth cannot be consumed even by fire"<sup>2</sup>. In this connection one may cite an anecdote reported by al-Tanūkhī of a merchant in Karkh who lost 200,000 dirhams of cloth and a building which was burnt down by fire, but in a few years he restored both the building and his capital and in fact became more well-off than before.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore statements in the "Nights" on merchants who lived like kings and fed their dogs from golden dishes can be confirmed by reports in Arab sources about the wealth of merchants, especially in 'Abbāsīd period.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Tanūkhī states that a man of Baghdad imitated al-Muqtadir in the way of pleasure and amusement. The food for his establishment cost him 200 dirhams daily. Frequently he distributed 5,000 or 10,000 dirhams to the singing women, robes of honour worth 2,000 or 3,000 dirhams or pieces of cloth from his father's shop.<sup>5</sup>

In Egypt al-Maqrīzī states that the sultan borrowed 30,000 dinars from merchants to provide a dowry and presents for his bride

1 Tanūkhī, Ibid., 16-18. Mas'ūdī, VIII, 283, Sābi, 223, III, Al-Kutubī, Fawā'it al-Wafayāt (2 Vols, Būlaq, 1283), I, 177.

2 Nights, IV, 280, 336.

3 Tanūkhī, Ibid., 176.

4 Nights, II, 287, Cal.ed. Ibn Hawqal, Kitāb al-Masālik Wa'l-Mamālik (Leyden, 1872) 207. Fakhri, 50.

5 Tanūkhī, Ibid., 101.



the princess of Uzbekistan.<sup>1</sup>

It was the merchant's custom, when they became wealthy, to secure their future by purchasing an estate, since it was not difficult for a rich man, whatever his origin, to acquire landed property and get its annual revenue.<sup>2</sup> In addition to an estate, merchants may buy houses, baths, ovens and magazines.<sup>3</sup>

### The Effects of Wealth on Society

The prosperous life led by the upper and middle classes gave rise to the medieval idea that a man's rank and wealth should determine the amount of his expenditure. The household, the banquets and a man's public procession varied according to his rank and income. Hence the theme of riches being consumed by extravagance is prevalent in the "Nights". Many rich men lived beyond their means and income in order to show off their generosity and riches. Since there are no limits for ostentatious expenditure only the most wealthy may stand up to the demands of splendour and magnificence.

Merchants in the "Nights" lost their riches in a short time.<sup>4</sup> In this respect al-Tanūkhī, reporting several anecdotes on wealthy people being ruined by their extravagances, quotes a bankrupt man who says to his friend: "For this business (of magnificence) some miles of golden dust should be the capital."<sup>5</sup>

1 Maqrīzi, Sulūk, II, pt.1, 204.

2 Tanūkhī, Faraj, II, 17, 148, Table-Talk, 100, Jāhīz, Bukhalā' 103.

3 Nights, I, 73, II, 237. Dimashqi, 61.

4 Nights, II, 228, 224, IV, 150, 243.

5 Tanūkhī, Table-Talk, 102.

In the "Nights", Tawuddud's master lost his money because he ate, drank, enjoyed himself, gave largesses and gifts and was generous with gold and fond of women, cups and songs. Sometimes bankruptcy takes place in stages. After his father's death, 'All Shār lived a serious and righteous life. Then he was invited to parties by his friends. When he invited them back, he got accustomed to parties and spent a great deal on food, drinks, decorations, perfumes and fees of singing girls.<sup>1</sup> The "Nights" shows that an heir first consumes his capital of cash and jewels. Then he starts selling his property of lands, orchards, houses, slaves, furniture and finally, his favourite concubine.<sup>2</sup>

Bankruptcy is usually followed by friends and associates deserting the ruined man, and when he tries to ask for help or a loan, doors are shut in his face.<sup>3</sup> If luck smiles upon these merchants again, as it often does in the "Nights", they make vows to restrict their expenditure and above all to avoid bad associates.

Abu-al-Ḥasan the Wag divides his property into two parts and puts one aside and expends from the other. When his money is consumed his fellows and boon companions forsake him. His mother tells him that thus are the sons of the age, as long as one has money they flock round him and when one has nothing they cast him away. Abu al-Ḥasan takes an oath that he will never dine and drink but with strangers, and never associate with any person but for one night. Accordingly, every night he went to the bridge and waited there for a stranger whom he would invite for the night and dismiss in the morning.

1 Nights, II, 338, 220.

2 Nights, II, 466-69, and Cal.ed., II, 244. Cf. Hamadhāni Maqāmāt, (Beirut, 1908), 215-24.

3 Nights, II, 144, 244.

4 Lane, II, 352f.

Al-Tanūkhī reports a similar anecdote of a bankrupt man who restores some capital by inheritance and resolves to live moderately.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Hamadhānī, in one of his maqāmas, relates the story of a bankrupt man who goes further in his revenge. When he restores some riches, he invites all his former associates and deceitful friends to a dinner and drinking party. When they are drunk and half asleep he orders that half the beard of each guest shall be shaved off. Then he puts them on their mules and sends them home. He is delighted to hear the next morning that none of them has been able to attend his shop or office because of the ludicrous state in which they have found themselves.<sup>2</sup>

Since squandering money and bankruptcy were common features of mercantile society, the theme of homilies and advices to heirs recurs in the "Nights".<sup>3</sup> Al-Dimashqī advises merchants to spend less than they earn and save a portion for a rainy day. He, likewise, warns merchants not to squander their money by indulgence in pleasures, and urges them to guard against associates who gather round a man because of his money and abandon him when he is in need.<sup>4</sup>

1 Table-Talk, 100f.

2 Maqāmāt, 222.

3 Nights, I, 142, II, 242f, and Cal.ed. II, 467.

4 Dimashqī, 57, 59, 63.

It is to be noted, however, that the unbelievable and quickly acquired wealth made some merchants lose their balance and they were either extremely extravagant or miserly. Al-Jāhīz criticises the Basrite merchants who possessed thousands of dinars and yet lived in extreme miserliness.<sup>1</sup> This perhaps was a reaction against the custom of squandering money.

The geographer al-Iṣṭakhri (9th c.A.D.), comparing the rich people of India with wealthy Muslims, comments that the latter, with the exception of a few, squander their money on pleasures and indulge in whatever displeases God whereas the rich of India or Samargand spend a lot of money on the building of roads, religious centres and on charity. One house, he states, has never closed its door to the poor in a hundred years.<sup>2</sup> From this statement one can infer that the geographer is really comparing the rich Indian nobility of the upper caste with the rising bourgeoisie of the Muslim world. Muslim nobility on the other hand, whether calīphs, princes, viziers or sharīfs, were well known for their generosity and charity. Al-Rashīd was famous for his enormous rewards and largesses,<sup>3</sup> Zubayda, his wife, for her public and religious charities,<sup>4</sup> and the Barmaki family for their legendary generosity.<sup>5</sup> The contrast between the wealthy

1 Bukhalā', 41, 137 and passim.

2 Al-Masālik, ed. De Goeje (Leyden, 1885) 289f.

3 Fakhri, 175. Jāhīz, Hayawān, IV, 382.

4 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 298, Sharīshi, II, 244f.

5 Fakhri, 178-92.

nobility and the newly emergent middle-class is shown in the story of the young Baghdadi who squanders his wealth and is forced to sell his slave-girl. The girl is purchased by a Hashimite dignitary who later shows his benevolence by freeing the girl and returning her to her distracted master.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting to note that Ibn Khaldūn ascribes excessive expenditure, indigence and low morality among one's associates to the nature of sedentary culture which, by its excessive demands, brings the inevitable destruction of civilisation.

He believes that in the last stage of civilisation, when luxury and tranquility have been firmly established, the dynasty approaches old age.

In a prosperous society people tend to luxury in dwellings, clothings, buildings, food and furnishings. Their expenses are higher than their allowances, and their income is not sufficient to pay for their expenditures. The pressure of extravagant customs is so great that all their profits are consumed. Since the later generations become accustomed to luxury they, unlike their working ancestors, prefer rest and quiet to toughness and work, so they squander their capital rather than earn money by hard work, and one person after another ends up in poverty and bankruptcy.

As for the theme of friends forsaking their impoverished friends, Ibn Khaldūn has this to say: corruption of character is due, first to indulgence in pleasures, and second, to man's efforts to satisfy the needs created by luxurious customs. As a result, immorality, insincerity, wrong-doing and trickery increase, and the city will be teemed with low people of blameworthy characters. No man, despite his good ancestry, can escape the bad influence of these associates by whom he is constantly surrounded.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Nights, IV, 154, and Cal.ed. II, 381.

2 Maqaddima, tr. I, 241, 250, 338f. II, 293-5.

To continue the effects of wealth on society, the principle of hospitality, venerated by the Bedouins, Arab aristocracy as well as the Persian aristocracy, became a universal social cult among the various well-to-do classes.<sup>1</sup>

There were two kinds of hospitality; first the injunction that a guest should be entertained for three days, which is carefully followed in the "Nights";<sup>2</sup> and second, the daily hospitality to guests and friends who frequented the dinners and the entertainment parties of the rich.<sup>3</sup> The principle of hospitality is thoroughly exploited by the narrators for dramatic and narrative purposes.

Guests like the disguised al-Rashīd and his attendants, mendicants and porters can invite themselves, according to this principle to any party by one pretext or the other. Sometimes, it is the host who hates to dine and spend the evening without company, and hence the Khurāsāni merchant sends his servant out to invite any passer-by to join him for a dinner and a singing party.<sup>4</sup>

At these parties people were expected to entertain most lavishly, especially on big occasions such as weddings, births and circumcisions,<sup>5</sup> otherwise they would be exposed to harsh criticism.<sup>6</sup> The wedding banquet of the son of the Caliph

1 Bukhālā', 24f.

2 Bukhārī, VII, 97. Nights, II, 211, III, 134, 231, IV, 286, 304.

3 Tanukhi, Table-Talk, 211-16. Nights, I, 36, IV, 263.

4 Nights, IV, 263. Cf. Al-Azdi, Hikāyat Abu al-Qāsim, ed. Mez (Heidelberg, 1902). Levy, 1929, 178-80.

5 Nights, IV, 339, I, 73, 77, II, 172.

6 Ibid., I, 144, II, 244.

al-Muttaqi, for example, is criticised by al-Ṣūli for the deficiency of the food in quantity, quality and presentation.<sup>1</sup>

The practice of hospitality gave rise to the custom of accepting guests who impose themselves as spongers, or the so-called ṭufaylis. The ṭufaylis are usually smart and humorous characters who would enter any house where a party is held by showing the host charm, wit, humour<sup>2</sup>, or poetic or singing talent. The Porter imposes himself upon the Ladies of Baghdad by his wit. Prince Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi, takes advantage of the practice and enters the house with other guests because he wants to meet the women whose hand and wrists he beholds at a lattice-window. The singer Iṣḥāq also enters a merchant's house as a ṭufayli because he admires a slave-girl who passes by him and enters the house.<sup>3</sup>

However, a sponger, when discovered, must keep in the background during the assembly or he will be regarded as an intruder. When Prince Ibrāhīm objects to the singing of a slave-girl, she gets angry because of his impertinence. When the singer Iṣḥāq corrects a tune, he is rebuffed not only for being a sponger, but also as an intruder. But both Ibrāhīm and Iṣḥāq use their musical talents and voices to win the hosts to their sides. Thus Prince Ibrāhīm marries the merchant's sister and Iṣḥāq is offered the singing slave-girl he admires.

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1 Ṣūli, 234.

2 Furayḥa, al-Fukāḥa, 206. See below, Ch. IV.

3 Nights. I, 33, II, 328, and Cal. ed. II, 298. The story of Prince Ibrāhīm is related in Mas'ūdi, VII, 17-25. The story of Iṣḥāq is related in Aghāni, V, 126f and Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 165.

The question of good food seems to have occupied the minds not only of the rich but all classes.<sup>1</sup> Both the narrators of the "Nights" and the chroniclers show evident pleasure in describing the menus which reveal the elaborate dinners enjoyed by the rich.<sup>2</sup> Al-Qalqashandi counts the kinds of food and the number of dishes, and estimates the weight of the sweetmeats offered in banquets given at the "Golden Hall" in the Cairo of Fāṭimid times.<sup>3</sup>

He reports that on a silver table there were twenty-one vessels each containing twenty one roast kids, and other vessels each containing three hundred roast birds of all sorts and forming a pile as high as a man. Dishes of sweetmeats and other kinds of food surrounded these huge vessels. Another account estimates the amount of sweetmeats distributed to the poor as equal to seventeen qintārs (quintals).<sup>4</sup>

In the "Nights" also there are numerous references to the simāt (banquet table). The following verses describe a simāt:<sup>5</sup>

Pans of roast kids are protection against illnesses,  
Dishes of sweetmeats are my utmost wishes,  
Oh my heart's delight when the simāt is laid,  
And its kunāfa is saturated with butter and honey.

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1 A. Zaki, al-Ḥayāt al-Adabiyya Fi'l-Basra (Baghdad, 1961), 444.

2 H. Hasan, Tārīkh, III, 633-41.

3 Subh, III, 527-29.

4 Op. cit.

5 Nights, I, 49.



When the narrator wants to summarise the dishes presented, he refers to a formula which states that the simāt contains all that walks on ground, flies in the air or swims in the sea, alluding to meat, fowls and fish.<sup>1</sup> Even God may order a banquet for his saints as Bulūqiya finds out on his travels.<sup>2</sup>

The rising middle-class had to adapt itself to the way of life and the manners of the ruling class, otherwise they would not have been admitted by the aristocrats.<sup>3</sup> Their friendly and business relations with the upper classes made the bourgeoisie conscious of social etiquette, and a great deal of attention was given to the cultivation of manners.<sup>4</sup>

Although historians deal exclusively with the caliphs and officials, biographers and authors of textbooks and story-tellers give us glimpses into the public life of ordinary people, Kitāb al-Muwashshā is a book of etiquette describing, among other things, laws of polite conduct, dressing up and exchanging gifts, with a section devoted to table-manners.<sup>5</sup>

In the "Nights", the significant features of this life are shown in the iteration and reiteration of descriptive pieces concerning:-

- (a) Accounts of fine clothes, the number and kinds of dresses and jewels worn by men and women of the wealthy classes.

1 Nights, IV, 97, 241.

2 Ibid., III, 85. Tha'labi, Qisas, 381-88. Nuwayri, XIV, 182-95.

3 Goitein, 602.

4 Levy, 1929, 122- 25.

5 Washshā', 119-23., 105-10. See also, Iqd, I, 286f, Ghazāli, II, 2-19.

- (b) the description of palaces, their columns, huge halls and fine furniture which consisted mainly of carpets, curtains, tapestry, drapery, cushions and other fine pieces.
- (c) The description of the spacious gardens with their pools and rivulets, flowers and fruit trees.

A merchant was proud to possess three or four houses situated on the same road.<sup>1</sup> The other effect of wealth is the development of the custom of gratuities and largesses, which almost replaced the appointed duty of Zakāt as stated by Islam.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the numerous gifts made by the wealthy to their guests and attendants, alms were sent to mosques continuously.<sup>3</sup>

It became an essential principle of morality to bestow garments, gifts and money on the public on every possible occasion. Historians report various devices by the caliphs to show their splendour during the parties, but the ultimate aim of extravagant decoration and expenditure was to give orders at the end of each party, that the enormous amounts of roses, flowers, saffron, perfumes and aloes used on these occasions be ransacked by the guests and servants.<sup>4</sup>

"The rule of largesse", states Tupper, "extolled as the queen of medieval virtue, often degenerated into tyranny..." Thus, esteem in medieval Europe was also won by lavishing jewels, cloaks, arms and horses upon people.<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, II, 472, Cal.ed. Goitein, 591.

2 Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 106. Maqrīzi, Sulūk, II, pt.2, 510, n.4. Hariri, 309.

3 Maqrīzi, Khitāṭ, II, 276. Ṣābi, 19, Fakhri, 213.

4 Tanūkhi, Nishwār, I, 144, Table-Talk, 158-61.

5 F.Tupper, Types of Society in Medieval Literature, (London, 1926), 39.

In Muslim countries, it was believed that the income of the rich must be used for consumption. In the "Nights" the false caliph Muḥammad 'Alī intentionally tears several expensive garments every evening while listening to songs, and makes it a custom to offer them to his servants with 500 dinars to go with each garment.<sup>1</sup> A rich woman passes by the Barber's fifth brother who has broken all his glass, from which he earns his daily provision, and gives him a purse of 500 dinars just on perceiving him crying over the broken glass.<sup>2</sup> Rewards and largesses ranged from robes of honour and gold pieces to something like offering a house or lands.<sup>3</sup>

It was the custom of these donors to avoid embarrassing the people they assisted, particularly if they were bankrupt merchants, by concealing the source of the donation until circumstances arose for telling them the truth.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Dimashqī in his advice to merchants, emphasises the need to help people; showering favours on friends, looking after widows and giving alms to the needy.<sup>5</sup> Serving God with one's money means spending in charity, religious purposes and work of public utility.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, II, 220.

2 Ibid., I, 131.

3 Ibid., II, 466. Cal.ed.

4 Ibid., II, 308 and Cairo ed. II, 182.

5 Ishāra, 58.

6 Al-Makki, Qūt, II, 272, Goitein, 592.

Accordingly, the haughty and selfish rich who merely march in the street in pompous procession and do not help the poor, are thought to deserve nothing but death.<sup>1</sup> One such rich man is visited by the angel of death. The angel, disguised as a beggar, tears his way by force through the closed doors, despite the orders of the master and the protests of the servants. He tells the rich man that he has come to part him from his luxuries. The man showers curses upon the hoarded money which he regrets having to leave to his foes. The money replies to the dying man, "Why do you curse me? Curse yourself. God created me as He created you of dust, and put me into your hand so that you would employ me as a means for your after-life. You should have given me as charity to the poor or destitute. You should have used me to build religious centres and bridges, which would have helped you after death, but you hoarded me up for your pleasure and were not thankful..."<sup>2</sup>

It was Sindbad's practice to give alms and gratuities to his relatives, friends and the poor after each of his voyages. Further, he used to live well, eat well, dress well, and lead a full social life.<sup>3</sup>

A popular way of bestowing money was scattering it over the heads of the assembled people.<sup>4</sup> A merchant, seeking escape from a house of a q̄adi, employs this custom to save his life.<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, III, 150.

2 Ibid., II, 530, Cal.ed.

3 Ibid., III, 106.

4 Ibid., I, 77, 222, IV, 340.

5 Ibid., I, 119.

Begging became an acknowledged right. Al-Maqrīzi criticises an Amīr because he closed the Mosque of al-Azhar in the face of the poor who used to wait there for the regular arrival of alms.<sup>1</sup>

Beggary and theft were aspects of an era in which the gulf between the rich and poor was quite wide, and in which prosperity, brought by the expansion of commerce and the growth of industry, did very little to alleviate poverty. Al-Dimashqi, enumerating the ways of obtaining money, considers raids and theft as violent means of earning money (kasb) as in the case with imposed taxation which also obtains money by force.<sup>2</sup>

The great gap between the rich and the poor explains the phenomenon of turning vagrant overnight. Once Ghānim, the rich merchant, lost his money and property because of the soldiers' raid on his house, he turned to a vagabond like any other pauper, and his girl Qūt al-Qulūb set out to search for him in the bazaars and mosques. She lavishes charity on the poor, in the hope that he might perhaps get his share along with other vagrants.<sup>3</sup>

The other effect of wealth on society is that the rise of the merchant class was accompanied by the simultaneous rise of an ascetic movement.<sup>4</sup> Mysticism was, in part, a reaction against luxury, and irreligious practices. After a long life of pleasure and greed, rich men suddenly turned pious and abstained from their former way of life.<sup>5</sup>

1 Khitat, op. cit.

2 Ishāra, 39.

3 Nights, I, 176.

4 Goitein, 585f, 591-93.

5 Aghāni, III, 136, 140.

The two opposing groups, however, lived side by side peacefully.<sup>1</sup> Accordingly, one finds writers discussing the two modes of life in separate sections of their books, as does the "Nights".<sup>2</sup> But the contrast is brought out most effectively in the story of the ascetic son of al-Rashīd. When al-Rashīd proceeds in state, surrounded by viziers and great men and officials of the state, he meets his son wearing a woollen garment with woollen cap. The men comment that the youth has disgraced the Prince of the Faithful among the Kings and that if the caliph reproves him, he will abandon his present course. Later, when al-Rashīd tells him that he has disgraced him, the son does not reply but merely calls a bird from the balcony of the palace to perch on his hand. The bird does so, but refuses to perch on the caliph's hand, upon which the son tells the father, "It is you who have disgraced me among the saints by your love of the world and I have decided to leave you for good." Despite the fact that the "Nights" shows great respect for al-Rashīd's justice, generosity and piety, it shows more sympathy here for the ascetic son than for the worldly father.<sup>3</sup>

#### Travel and Commerce

Beghada, Başra, Damascus, Alexandria and Cairo were busy trade centres, and here most of the events and adventures of the tales take place. The prices of luxuries in the contemporary world were fixed at these Muslim cities.<sup>4</sup> Baghdad was the

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1 Goitein, op. cit.

2 Makki, Qūt, II, 15, 29, 192. 'Iqd, I, 354, III, 229, 400. Nights, II, 331, III, 16-25, and Cal. ed. II, 556-64.

3 Ibid., II, 322.

4 Mez, 471.

commercial capital of Iraq importing goods from East and West.<sup>1</sup> Damascus was a station for the caravans moving to and fro between Cairo and Baghdad.<sup>2</sup> Baṣra was the port whence sea voyages commenced, a door which opened on the wealth beyond the Indian Ocean. The Baṣrites were known for their extensive travels to distant lands and their sojourn in various countries.<sup>4</sup> As a coastal trade-centre, Baṣra was connected with the dreams of wealth and sea fables as several stories of the "Nights" demonstrate.<sup>5</sup>

Cairo was a second capital of the Muslim world, especially after the fall of Baghdad (13th c. A.D.). Alexandria had continuous relations with the western trade. European traders were represented by a consul,<sup>6</sup> according to a trade agreement made in the year 1184. He looked after the welfare of the western traders and carried out his job even during the thick of the Crusades. Since commercial relations were always respected, even war material was sold to Muslims from Venice and Genoa.<sup>7</sup>

The main commodities received from the west were brocade, skin of beaver and martens, other furs, swords and slaves, males,

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1 Ya'qūbi, Bulḍān, 234, Levy, 1929, 45.

2 Nights, op. cit., Muqaddasi, Aḥsan al-Taḡāsim . . . ed. De Goeje 120.

3 Hawqal, 161, Bukhalā', Introd. 36.

4 Ibid., 191, Faḡih, 51.

5 Nights, III, 96, 337, IV, 309.

6 Ibid., II, 199.

7 G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (Cambridge, 1938), 321f.

females, and eunuchs. To Europe musk, aloes spices and other Oriental luxuries were sent.<sup>1</sup> Baghdad and Baṣra exported to India or the Far East dates, and industrial products,<sup>2</sup> and imported spices, precious stones, aloes and silks and perfumes such as musk, ambergris, and frankincense.<sup>3</sup> Mosul and Kūfa are also occasionally mentioned in the "Nights", Kūfa as a city on the route to Baghdad and the Arabian Peninsula,<sup>4</sup> and Mosul as a city from where rich merchants travel all over the Muslim trading centres.<sup>5</sup>

The first and most important means of gaining wealth in the "Nights" is by embarking on travels and adventures both on land and sea.

Society was well aware of the profits derived from travels and trading, and merchants invariably moved between countries in pursuit of riches and wonders of the world. Sindbad the Sailor is one of the earliest pioneers on this line, who displays a spirit of enterprise and courage in the face of difficulty.

Some of those who lived at sea-shores might spend most of their lives travelling on sea. It has been reported that one such merchant became so much accustomed to the sea that for forty years he never stepped out of a ship. He used to ask his friends to buy for him whatever he needed, and whenever his ship

1 Mez, op. cit., Muqaddasi, 324-26.

2 Ibid., 128, 145, Mez, 434, Faqih, 252.

3 Jāhīz, al-Tabaṣṣur bil Tijāra (Cairo, 1935) 16, 25f, Faqih, 251f.

4 Ibn Rusta, al-A'lāq al-Nafīsa, 174f. Iṣṭakhri, 13, Nights, IV, 309.

5 Ḥawqal, 144, 148, 158, 162. Nights, I, 109f.



was broken or damaged he would move into another one.<sup>1</sup>

The sea was perilous<sup>2</sup> and ships were not strong enough to resist storms.<sup>3</sup> The lure of strange lands attracted curious and resourceful merchants. The result of their voyages was the wondrous accounts of the places they had seen.<sup>4</sup>

The merchant's exploits were sources of pride to him.<sup>5</sup> Al-Makki (10th c. A.D.) states that travels bring security to the insignificant, and hence merchants travel to gain both riches and renown.<sup>6</sup> Travel was so much associated with profit that even when merchants' sons decided to visit a city for pleasure or in search of love, they took with them goods and merchandise.<sup>7</sup> Perhaps it is to enhance the propaganda for commerce that travel is often associated also with the gain of beautiful women.<sup>8</sup>

The great sea highways used by the Arabs were the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean. Small ships were used for coastal navigation and large ones for distant seas. Though grave dangers of seafaring and the loss of merchandise through shipwrecks are overstated in the "Nights", voyages are

1 Iṣṭakhri, Masālik, 138.

2 Mas'ūdi, I, 233, Ibn Jubayr, 33, 316-26. Nights, I, 48.

3 Mez, 506.

4 Hole, Remarks, a study of the fantasy element of Sindbad and how it corresponds with accounts given by European travellers, 48f, 57, 62, 101f, 105, 126, 138f.

5 Nights, II, 173, IV, 278.

6 Qūt, II, 205.

7 Nights, II, 176, I, 326, III, 313.

8 Ibid., I, 161, II, 240, 273.

shown to be ultimately quite rewarding.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn maintains that the more perils involved in trade the better are the gains and profit.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding these hazards, trading went on. After shipwrecks and raids on caravans the narrator repeats a proverb stating that loss of money is the ransom of the body and safety in itself is a profit.<sup>3</sup>

On the Egyptian coast the danger of European attacks on Muslim ships was imminent.<sup>4</sup> In the Indian Ocean danger came from the merciless sea, desert islands and the meeting of strange nations or different customs.<sup>5</sup> Merchants abroad had the opportunity to make money during their exile and lengthy absence from home.

There were colonies of Muslim and Iraqi merchants in India and China.<sup>6</sup> Travellers had the chance of meeting foreign kings and merchants who were sympathetic. Thus Sindbad during his travels, made friends from among kings and notable merchants.<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Baṭṭūta informs us that an Indian Muslim king called Shihāb al-Dīn was very generous and attentive to strangers. He

1 Nights, III, 96.

2 Khaldūn, 396, Muqaddsi, 97f.

3 Nights, II, 177, IV, 310.

4 Ibn Jubayr, 32, Ibn Iyās, II, 166, Nights, II, 199, IV, 131.

5 Mas'ūdi, Akhbār al-Zamān (Cairo, 1938) 16-45.

6 Ibn Khurdādhbih, Kitāb al-Masālik, ed. De Goeje 70.

7 Nights, III, 112, 116, 125, 130, 135.

bestowed gifts bountifully on Muslim tradesmen and appointed them to high positions. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa himself was appointed a qādi in some Muslim part of India.<sup>1</sup>

The hardship which merchants faced in these remote lands arose partly from the difficulty of means of communication. Distant lands were not visited by ships regularly and the journey back usually took a long time.<sup>2</sup>

Travels on land were equally dangerous and difficult as travels at sea. The overland trade was carried either within the Arab countries or with Persia, India, Transoxania, Africa and East Europe.<sup>3</sup> Camels and mules were the principal means of transport.<sup>4</sup> The overland routes to India were long and difficult.<sup>5</sup> The "Nights" usually shortens such long and dangerous journeys. Difficulties are overcome, and broken land and high mountains are passed over with the aid of Jinn, a huge bird or some such magical device. If the journey had a religious involvement, the popular al-Khidr might appear to transport the protagonist. The length of the journey is usually indicated by noting the speed of the Jinn who can make a journey which takes years and months in a few days or hours.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, Rihla (2 Vols. Cairo, 1904), II, 49f, 151, 159, 196.

2 Nights, III, 55, 81, 99, 126. For details see Mez, 492-517.

3 Mez, op. cit.

4 Miskawayh, Tajarib, III, 62. Athīr, VIII, 363, Nights, II, 174, Muqddasi, 469.

5 Ibid., 488f, Mez, 498-500.

6 Nights, III, 55, 78, 85, IV, 11.

The internal overland routes were threatened by frequent raids on caravans which endangered lives and commodities.<sup>1</sup> Travel to distant and ruined cities of the ancient world gave rise to legendary accounts of cities such as The City of Labṭa, the City of Brass and Iram Dhāt al-'Imād.<sup>2</sup> In such imaginary cities the danger is supposed to be caused by the Jinn inhabitants, or the magic curses cast upon them. The existence of some of these ancient cities were thought to be true, that each chronicler gives his own version of the account of these cities as he heard it.<sup>3</sup> Ancient wonders, and magical mysteries, snakes and fabulous creatures characterise this kind of journey in the "Nights".

The export and import of the goods of a country necessitated travel, and to several merchants in the "Nights" the mere transport of their merchandise brings five times the gain within the Arab countries and ten times the profit if the merchandise is carried abroad by ship.<sup>4</sup>

Ibn Khaldūn considers the export of commodities to distant countries and new markets a sure and reliable way of gaining profit.<sup>5</sup>

Trade in the country is said to need merely a capital but trade with other countries necessitates, in addition, the supply of caravans and ships.<sup>6</sup>

1 Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 38f, 108. Ibn Iyās, I, 200, II, 156. Prescott, Once to Sinai, 45.

2 Nights, II, 207, III, 145 and Cal.ed. II, 143, see also Mas'ūdi, IV, 99, 113.

3 For details on the origin of these stories see Gerhardt, 193.

4 Nights, I, 110, II, 173, IV, 309. See also Muqaddasi 97f, Mez, 512.

5 Muqaddima, 394, 396.

6 'Abd al-Hādī, Kitāb al-Hisba in al-Mashriq, 1937 XXXV, 385.

The "Nights" also shows that the three important ways of communication were: the sea, caravans and waterways. The Tigris and the Euphrates in Iraq, and the Nile in Egypt, were often convenient and fast means of transport.<sup>1</sup>

Continuous travel gave rise to the system of khāns or accommodation. Khāns were founded everywhere in the cities and centres of trade. In these khāns merchants could lodge and keep their goods in the storerooms provided in the basements or nearby.<sup>2</sup> European traders had special quarters where they used to lodge and store up their merchandise. They could also obtain their own kind of bread provided for them by the khāns' bakery.<sup>3</sup> The book of al-Hisba instructs the owners of khāns to be pious and avoid unpleasant events in their hotels.<sup>4</sup> Leading merchants however, owned private houses in the main trade centres which they frequently visited. Other merchants may hire furnished houses in the cities where they intend to stay and trade.<sup>5</sup>

Travel was so much a part of every tradesman's life that another domestic aspect of its consequence is brought out in the "Nights" and which might not be amiss to consider here. Merchants during their long travels seem to worry about the conduct of their wives, and stories show that wives can be unfaithful.<sup>6</sup> But the same thing seems to worry the wives too, at

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1 Nights, IV, 152, 243, 253, 260, II, 194, IV, 105. For details on internal waterways, see Mez, 485-91.

2 Muqaddasi, 31, 425.

3 Prescott, Ibid., 195f. Mez, op. cit.

4 'Abd al-Hādi, Ibid., 389.

5 Nights, II, 175, I, 162, IV, 191.

6 Nights, III, 156, 168, 176, IV, 76.

least in real life, though in the "Nights" men are free to do what they like, and unfaithfulness is attributed to women alone. In the book of Al-Makhārij Wa'l-Hiyal, it is shown that wives sometimes press their husbands to vow neither to marry nor to take a concubine on their travels away from home.<sup>1</sup>

On account of their long stay in foreign countries, merchants might marry and spend part of the money gained by trade on their new families, but in most cases they leave their wives behind when they return to their homelands. In parts of China, it was the custom to make the foreign merchant marry a native woman. It was stipulated that he should not take his wife with him on leaving the country.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Battūṭa mentions another kind of marriage, similar to mut'a marriage, which takes place as soon as a merchant reaches an Indian island.<sup>3</sup>

On his fourth voyage, Sindbad marries a native woman and according to the popular belief, he must be buried with her when she dies, but he ultimately manages to survive and escape from the sepulchre. On his seventh voyage he, however, brings back his wife with him.<sup>4</sup>

Ibn Battūṭa himself married four wives during his stay in India and divorced them all just before his return.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Al-Shaybānī, al-Makhārij Wa'l-Hiyal, (Leipzig, 1930), 44-8.

2 Ibn Battūṭa, II, 197.

3 Ibid., II, 151.

4 Nights, III, 117, 137.

5 Ibn Battūṭa, II, 159-62.

Kinds of merchants and Business in the Bazaars

Al-Dimashqī distinguishes three categories of merchants:<sup>1</sup>

1 Al-Khazzān (literally 'the storer'), who buys a commodity when it is abundant and its price is low, and stores it up until it sells at a better price.<sup>2</sup> Ibn Khaldūn defines trade as, "buying cheaply and selling dearly", and states that trading means gain by buying a commodity at low price, storing it up and then selling it at a higher price.<sup>3</sup> Most leading merchants in the "Nights" are storers because, unlike ih̄tikār, storing up was a legal kind of business.<sup>4</sup> An Indian merchant buys Sandalwood from Sindbad and keeps it in his storehouse.<sup>5</sup> Al-Dimashqī instructs merchants to keep their commodities in dry, safe and suitable storehouses.<sup>6</sup> Abu al-Shāmāt's father, the chief of merchants, seems to be a Khazzān. "No merchandise is packed up and exported but from his storehouse."<sup>7</sup> However, not all merchant storers are so lucky; a cloth merchant may store a piece of cloth for years and is unable to sell it but for a slight profit.<sup>8</sup>

1 Ishāra, 40, Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, 394.

2 Nights, III, 135.

3 Muqaddima, op.cit. Ishāra, 50. Sometimes this aim is achieved merely by transporting commodities to another country where it can sell dearer. (See above 175).

4 Ihtikār (monopoly) means buying up all the stores of a commodity and selling them in the black market for a very high price. Cf. Tanūkhī, Table-Talk, 68, 175. Ibn Iyās, I, 307, II, 243.

5 Nights, III, 135.

6 Ishāra, 29-33.

7 Nights, II, 170f.

8 Ibid., IV, 350.

2 Another kind of merchant is called al-Rakkād (literally the courier). He is like a travelling salesman and trades in various countries.<sup>1</sup>

3 The supplier (al Mujahhiz) is the kind of merchant who does not travel but has shops and agents who sell his merchandise against a share in the profit. Agents are also commissioned to postpone selling goods, or to buy some more goods for him.<sup>2</sup> Shams Al-Dīn's agents and partners, for example, do not consult him except when purchases exceed 1,000 dinars.<sup>3</sup>

The "Nights" indicates that some of these merchants deal with a number of trades at a time, and so invest their capital in the cloth bazaar, the perfumers' ('attārīn) bazaar and the bankers' (sarrāfīn) bazaar. Al-Dimashqi points to the benefits of this kind of investment and urges merchants to invest in different kinds of merchandise.<sup>4</sup>

The class called brokers was commissioned to buy and sell goods. Brokers were very well paid,<sup>5</sup> and notorious for cheating and making extra profits for themselves. A Christian broker in the "Nights" tells a grain merchant that he has sold each ardabb (certain measurement) of grain for 100 dinars, he gets his commission but actually makes an extra profit because he sells every ardabb for 110 dinars instead of 100 dinars.<sup>6</sup>

1 Ishāra, 51, Nights, I, 11, II, 57, 161, IV, 309.

2 Ishāra, 52. Nights, I, 73, IV, 278, 264.

3 Ibid., II, 171.

4 Ishāra, 66. Nights, IV, 264.

5 Tanūkhī, Faraj, II, 11, Nights, I, 97.

6 Dimashqi, Ishāra, 44f. Nights, op. cit.



Good conduct and integrity are especially demanded from slave dealers because they are responsible for young women and men slaves.<sup>1</sup> One slave dealer in the "Nights" is honest enough to give advice to his customers. Yet a dealer can easily be bribed by a slave-girl to conduct the sale in her favour if she chooses a particular purchaser.<sup>2</sup>

Most wealthy merchants in the "Nights" trade in articles of luxury such as jewels and silks.<sup>3</sup> There are also bankers among them and grain merchants.<sup>4</sup>

Ma'rūf, who claims to be a chief merchant, is cross-examined by other merchants on the subjects of precious jewels and fine cloths such as silk, brocade, satin and wool.<sup>5</sup> When Aladdin is enriched through the possession of the lamp, the first thing he does is to learn from worthy merchants about commercial conditions, prices and wares. He also begins to frequent the bazaars of the goldsmiths and jewellers to acquire knowledge of precious stones and observe the methods of trading in jewels.<sup>6</sup>

Merchants sometimes form partnerships and share the profits and losses. Partnership can be formed between brothers, or between father and son.<sup>7</sup> Sometimes the partnership is merely

1 Al-Shayzari, Kitāb al-Hisba fi Ṭalab al-Rutba, (Cairo, 1900), 84, Nights, I, 146.

2 Ibid., IV, 110.

3 Ibid., I, 99, II, 222. Cf. Dūri, Tārīkh, 114. Mez, 481.

4 Nights, IV, 264, I, 94, 106, 264.

5 Ibid., IV, 336, 338.

6 Ibid., tr. Scott, 210, ed. n.d.

7 Ghazālī, Ihya', II, 65f. Nights, IV, 87, 310, 335, I, 11, II, 174.

a company in which one partner lends his prestige or capital and the other does the work for a share in the profits.<sup>1</sup> A Baghdadi merchant visiting Egypt is advised to sell his merchandise for a certain period on credit to other merchants and to receive a portion of the profit twice a week. He has to employ a scrivener and a witness to draw up the contract as well as a money-changer to collect the profits for the merchant regularly. In this way the Baghdadi merchant gets the opportunity to enjoy the amusements afforded by Egypt and the Nile.<sup>2</sup>

To owe money was a shame in the merchants' code except by way of credit and loans to provide capital for other merchants or merchandising.<sup>3</sup> The necessity and advantage of credit were fully appreciated by merchant lenders. Merchants repaid by instalments and borrowed money from bankers and money lenders.<sup>4</sup> In the "Nights" merchants lend money on trust either because the borrower works with them in the same bazaar or on the expectation that the borrower's merchandise will soon arrive.<sup>5</sup> The jewel merchant Abu al-Ḥasan goes to Baṣra to obtain his repayments from the debtors.<sup>6</sup>

Sometimes merchants and shopkeepers dealt with customers on a credit basis and accepted delayed payments for goods sold.

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1 Ibid., II, 170, 183, IV, 77. Cf. Dimashqi, 40, 46, and Ghazali, op. cit.

2 Nights, I, 98f. Dimashqi, op. cit. See Tarūkhi, Faraj, II, 112, on a money-changer acting as a profit collector for a big merchant.

3 Tanukhi, Ibid., II, 5, 28, 148. Jāhiz, Bukhalā', 206-12.

4 Tanukhi, Nishwār, I, 204, 272. Sūli, 231, 'Arīb, 135.

5 Nights, I, 75, 106f. II, 65, 173, and Calcutta ed. II, 465.

6 Ibid., II, 65.

Al-Makki mentions that shopkeepers had lists of the names of the customers whether rich or poor who bought on credit.<sup>1</sup> The baker who offered Abdullah of the Land his daily bread on credit, was good enough to delay the payment until the poor fisherman could afford to repay him.<sup>2</sup>

The law against usury could not be enforced in the bazaar, but it was never openly indulged in by Muslim merchants. Bankers and money lenders were mainly non-Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Selling on credit, loans and circulating money were done on the basis of interest. However the question of usury is not discussed explicitly in the "Nights". The following verses, quoted to show the disadvantages of extravagance, point to the practice of increment on money loans; "I guard my dirham from everybody ... for this is better than having to ask a villain to lend me one dirham which by tomorrow will become five dirhams to repay."<sup>4</sup>

Some kind of selling with extra profit paid willingly by the purchaser is passed as lawful and called murābaha (payment of a premium).<sup>5</sup> This is often mentioned in the "Nights" especially when the buyer is keen to get the article. A silk embroidered handkerchief worth 50 dinars is purchased for 1000 dinars by a Christian consul. Duniyā pays 5,000 dinars more for a jewel necklace worth 100,000 dinars. A piece of cloth which

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1 Nights, I, 106. Qūt, II, 272.

2 Nights, IV, 228. Cf. Tanūkhī, Faraj, II, 28.

3 Mez, 483. Sūli, op. cit.

4 Nights, I, 144.

5 Shayzari, Ibid., 62f. Nights, I, 99, 106.

cost 1,100 dirhams is bought by a man who suggests paying 1,200 dirhams because of his delayed payment.<sup>1</sup>

Bills of exchange were in common use from the 9th c.A.D. onwards, and are mentioned in the "Nights" when a slave-girl pays for a necklace by a draft.<sup>2</sup>

Sale by auction was especially popular in slave markets where the price of a slave-girl might open, for instance, with 100 or 500 dinars and reach 1,000 dinars or more.<sup>3</sup>

Members of the same kind of trade or industry grouped together in the bazaar. There were cloth bazaars and bankers, jewellers and perfumers bazaars.<sup>4</sup> Bazaars are vividly delineated in the "Nights". They were the most vigorous aspect of city life for many centuries. European pilgrims have recorded detailed descriptions of the Eastern bazaars with their vaults and windows to keep off rain and sun and allow in the light. They were full of exotic products from India, Persia and the Far East.<sup>5</sup>

In the "Nights", even in the dead city of Brass, each trade kept to itself, as in all Muslim countries. The expedition to the city describes the precious products found in the separate bazaars of the jewellers, goldsmiths, silk and perfume merchants.<sup>6</sup>

1 Op.cit., II, 222, IV, 116.

2 Nights, IV, 267, Dūri, Tarīkh .., 176-78.

3 Nights, II, 245, IV, 107. Prescott, Once to Sinai, 168.

4 Nights, I, 162, 326, IV, 264. Ya'qūbi, 245f. Prescott, Jerusalem Journey (London, 1954), 174f.

5 Op.cit., Once to Sinai, 165-68, Muqaddasi, 413-425.

6 Nights, III, 150.

Merchants had certain code of behaviour and obligations to one another. They organised themselves in guilds and co-operated in looking after the welfare of each group of merchants. They, unlike craft guilds, welcomed foreign tradesmen,<sup>1</sup> first because commercial transactions with other countries invigorated trade, and second, because foreign merchants, beside bringing goods and profits to the bazaars, stayed only for a limited period, bought local commodities and departed.<sup>2</sup>

The chief of merchants, or the general Syndic in Egypt was called the Shah Bandar of merchants. He was elected by the merchants as their organiser. However, in connection with merchants guilds the "Nights" only points to the co-operation of merchants in the bazaar and the manners and etiquette of the mercantile society, but does not show how the guild carries out its functions.<sup>3</sup>

For instance, when an occasion of joy or sorrow arises such as the birth of a son or the death of a merchant,<sup>4</sup> it is the duty of the merchants to rally together and celebrate or mourn. It is the custom to close up the shops when a colleague dies in order to attend the funeral.

Newcomers are welcomed in the bazaar and introduced to other merchants.<sup>5</sup> Courtesy and advice to foreign merchants are

1 CE. VI, 633, art. Guilds.

2 Qalamāwi, 232.

3 Lane, II, 316. Nights, II, 170f.

4 Ibid., II, 171, 162.

5 Ibid., II, 172, IV, 273.

essential principles and strangers should be guided to the bazaar of their particular trade. They are helped to find lodgings and to hire shops. They are invited for dinners and entertainments at merchants' houses. Those who get into debt or are bankrupt are provided with money or capital.<sup>1</sup>

Honesty and co-operation prevailed among merchants.<sup>2</sup> If a tradesman was left behind by his ship or counted as a lost person after a shipwreck, one of his colleagues, or the captain of the ship would take the responsibility of returning the merchandise augmented, if possible, to the merchant's family or relatives.<sup>3</sup> When merchants return from a long journey they announce their arrival by visiting some of their colleagues. They usually open their houses, afterwards, to receive the well wishers among merchants who come to greet them.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Conditions and Morality of the Merchant Class

The instability of the merchant class is shown in the fluctuations in their wealth. The ups and downs of the members of this class, repeatedly demonstrated in the "Nights", can be attributed to travel hazards, such as shipwrecks,<sup>and</sup> highway robbery, and the consumption of riches by extravagance, as has been mentioned above.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Ibid., I, 162, 325f. IV, 247, 251, 254, 334. Cf. Jawzi, Muntazam, VII, 11-13.

2 Mas'ūdi, IV, 93, Mez, 483. Nights, IV, 106.

3 Nights, III, 112.

4 Ibid., III, 127, 106.

5 See above, 156f. Tanūkhi, Table-Talk, 96-105. Dimashqi, 59.

However, the real dangers which threatened the security of the rich were caused by political oppression, jealous rivalry, persecution and confiscation.<sup>1</sup> In this respect, al-Dimashqi advises merchants to consider the kind of rulers under whom they lived. It is most rewarding, he states, to live under a ruler who is just and strong and whose treasury is full because of his abundant revenues. If a ruler is just but weak, merchants ought to concentrate on trading with light goods which could be hidden or transferred when the need arises. The worst conditions, maintains al-Dimashqi, develop when the sultan is simultaneously weak, poor and unjust, therefore merchants must leave the country immediately.<sup>2</sup>

It has already been pointed out that confiscation became a common practice and calamities befell rich people and viziers who did not contribute to the caliph's treasury.<sup>3</sup> The precarious future of the viziers in the 'Abbāsid period led them to amass wealth. The caliphs, perceiving their greed, decreed confiscation which followed the fall of each vizier and the practice was then extended to wealthy citizens as well.<sup>4</sup>

In the "Nights", allusion to the persecution of the people by the government is made indirectly by giving personal motives to oppression. There are references to the raids of the Sultan and the caliph's soldiers on the shops and the houses of merchants which were ransacked on the instigation of a jealous rival and for small offences, like hiding of a slave-girl in the house, or because

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1     Ṣābi, 306. Dimashqi, 3. Khaldūn, 368, Jāhīz, Bukhalā', 191.

2     Ishāra, 50f.

3     Ṣābi, 102-105, 306. Tanūkhi, Faraj, I, 119-22.

4     Zaydān, Tārīkh, IV, 167-71.

of an alleged theft.<sup>1</sup>

In the Mamlūk period the relations between merchants and the authority were even less happy. The Sultan's soldiers, like an army of occupation, treated people with arrogance, bullying and flogging them, and plundering their shops.<sup>2</sup> When they fought among themselves, the Mamlūk soldiers caused harm to people too, and threatened merchants and shopkeepers that they would be hanged if they dared to shut their shops to avoid plunder. After each of these fights and troubles, goods and foods disappeared from markets and prices soared up.<sup>3</sup> One account reports that an amīr once gained 14,000 dinars in an attack on the property of merchants. In his time, merchants ceased importing goods and lost most of their possessions.<sup>4</sup>

Thus al-Dimashqi points to the harm which may ensue if the sultan or influential people shared with merchants their business activities and interfered with the bazaars.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, when in the "Nights" the bad vizier al-Mu'īn wishes to buy his rival's slave-girl, no one can increase a dirham or a dinar in the auction. Buyers withdraw and the girl is sold for the cheapest price. The vizier then misuses his influence and, though he gives the slave owner a cheque, he orders his bankers not to change it.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, I, 149, 175, II, 192.

2 Prescott, Once to Sinai, 33, 127f.

3 Ibn Iyās, II, 151, 208, 328-31, 341.

4 Maqrīzi, Sulūk, II, pt.2, 461, 473-86.

5 Ishāra, 41. Ibn Khaldūn, II, 95, Eng. tr.

6 Nights, I, 146f.



In the story of The Pilgrim and the Old Woman<sup>1</sup>, there is direct allusion to the tyranny of the Sultan and its effect on the merchants and society in general. A pilgrim loses his way and meets an old woman who lives with her dog in the desert, and eats roast snakes which she catches in the valley. The pilgrim is forced to eat what she offers him and drink bitter water from a nearby spring. He asks in amazement why she leads this miserable life whereas in cities people live in large houses, have delicious fruits, plenty of food and water. The old woman agrees but says, "Do you not have sometimes a sultan who may act unjustly? When one of you commits a mistake, the sultan will take away his property and destroy him. If he wishes he can kick you out of your houses and extract you from the roots. . . . So with injustice and tyranny, nice food, elegant life and luxuries will turn to nothing but poison. Have you not heard that religion, good health and security are the outcome of the justice and godly behaviour of the Sultan? "

The old woman refers to the weak sultan who has no power over those in his service, and as a result, cruel, irresponsible and spiteful people will bring the country to ruin. This story points, in particular, to the way the Mamlūk soldiery acted, and to the conditions of Egyptian merchants under the Mamlūk overlords.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the dangers which threatened their wealth, it was the custom of cautious merchants to use half of their capital in business and bury the other half to guard against loss of wealth

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1 Nights, II, 488, Cal. ed.

2 Ibn Iyās, op. cit., Maqrīzi, Ibid., II, pt.2, 412-14, 439, 473, 509f, 524.

through shipwrecks or extravagance.<sup>1</sup>

Chronicles show that rich merchants, officials and concubines devised various ways to hide away their money, either in houses or in gardens, since property was liable for confiscation.<sup>2</sup> A European pilgrim (15th c.) remarks: "There is more gold hidden in this country (Egypt) than anywhere in the world because people put it under earth."<sup>3</sup>

Besides money, merchants armed themselves with education, and fathers enabled their sons to receive a certain degree of education. Hasan the jeweller is keen to see that his son learns the Quran, theology, rhetoric and literature in addition to his apprenticeship in business under his father's supervision.<sup>4</sup> A wise man instructs his son to seek both culture and money, since people are of two categories: the elite who respect a man for his knowledge and culture and the commons who respect him for his money.<sup>5</sup> Knowledge and religious learning are attributed to the early tradesmen of Islam.<sup>6</sup> Al-Jāhīz in his praise of merchants, states that they have achieved knowledge of various branches of learning such as geneology, the science of interpretation of dreams and enough grammar to guard against linguistic errors.<sup>7</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 11, 58. Lane, II, 352. Cf. Tanūkhī, Faraj, II, 17.

2 Ṣūlī, 197, Athīr, VII, 135. Ibn Iyās, I, 306. Dimashqī, 39. Tanukhī, Ibid., II, 148.

3 Prescott, Once to Sinai, 128.

4 Nights, II, 171, and Cal.ed., II, 466f.

5 Dimashqī, 61. Ibshīhī, II, 42.

6 See above, 147f.

7 Majmū'at al-Rasā'il, 155-60.

Apart from evening entertainments, merchants used to attend parties held in their orchards in the countryside where they have lunch and drinks, especially in the spring when the trees bloom.<sup>1</sup> Although one expects that the majority of merchants would work hard in the bazaars during the day, there were some who had agents or partners to do the daily business for them and hand them the profits. Ibn al-Jawzi comments that this sort of people who sit and watch others in the bazaars are lucky because God has given them so much possessions that they can dispense with daily work and earning.<sup>2</sup>

It was very important for merchants to have a son as an heir to their riches, to commemorate their names and carry on the business. A childless wife is a source of worry to a merchant, and he may acquire a concubine in order to have a son. If a merchant gets old and still has no heir he would seek the help of a druggist. If he succeeds and a son is born, he keeps him confined in a cellar to ward off illness and the envious eye.<sup>3</sup> Visits and prayers to certain saints are supposed to help a woman to produce a child.<sup>4</sup> Al-Tanūkhī reports a strange incident which indicates the importance of having heirs. A man remarks on the resemblance between a youth and his servant. The boy, on reaching home, asks his mother to explain this resemblance and she confesses that the servant is his father since an heir was essential at the time when his father was a

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1 Nights, op.cit., and I, 164, IV, 94. See also Jāhīz, Bukhala', 129.

2 Sayd al-Khāṭir, II, 319.

3 Nights, I, 8, II, 170f.

4 Ibid., III, 238.

dying man in order to preserve the inheritance.<sup>1</sup>

A father may divide his possessions among his sons and wife just before his death. The usual course, however, is to divide the inheritance after paying all debts. The division is done in the presence of witnesses sent from the qādi and in accordance with the legal law of inheritance.<sup>2</sup>

It was customary for a dying father to give his heir advice and instruct him as to how to conduct himself and take great care of his family and inheritance.

How to be a good merchant with reputable status is shown in homilies put in the mouth of merchants on their death bed.<sup>3</sup> 'Alī Shār's father bids him not to associate familiarly with men and to avoid things that will cause harm and ill, "Do good when you are able, and be constant in generous dealings with mankind; avail yourself of opportunities for dispensing kindness, ma'rūf. Be mindful of Allah; He will then be mindful of you. Guard also your wealth and do not expend it to excess. If you are extravagant you will come to have need of the lowest of men. Remember that the value of a man lies in what he possesses. Be compassionate to them that are below you, that he who is above may have compassion on you. Wrong no man, lest God put over you one who will wrong you. Take the advice of old people and do not be rash in your decisions".<sup>4</sup>

Homilies insist on piety, charity, associating with the good and learned, and treating the servants and family compassionately. They again emphasise avoiding miserliness and evil companions.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Ibshīhi, II, 75.

2 Nights, III, 199, IV, 308-10.

3 Ibid., II, 242f, and Cal. ed. II, 467.

4 Tr. Levy, 1957, 231f.

5 Nights, op.cit.

Merchants show resignation to the decrees of Fate and Fortune, but they never despair, since they have deep conviction in future compensation.<sup>1</sup> Although money was lost easily through hazards and insecure political conditions, there was always the hope of restoring it. If man suffered from his rivals and the decrees of Fate, he also had faith in God's mercy and trust in benevolent colleagues and patrons.

Indeed, Islamic principles constantly served as background to commercial morality for ethics in medieval ages were very much engrained with religion. The name of God, prayers and evocations are constantly uttered.<sup>2</sup> The idea that every act is rewarded or punished by God checked merchants' actions and guided them to good deeds. With all his prudence and audacity, Sindbad never ceases to remember God, hoping for his help and rendering praises to Him for His wonderful creation.

Though the "Nights" emphasises orthodox conformity and high ethics in theory, the practice of life takes almost the reverse course and the sons of merchants seem morally irresponsible and squander their money in pleasure and on bad company, and leave the family, children, or for that matter, their favourite concubines to suffer the consequences of their conduct.

Moralisation and admonition are done by the insertion of some edifying pieces, debates on religious and worldly matters, or injunctions transmitted from sages and righteous men.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Nights, III, 344, Burton, III, 123. Cf below, ch. IV.

2 Tanūkhī, Faraḥ, I, 23f.

3 Nights, IV, 174-6, I, 224f.

But the life therein depicted does not often comply with such principles and injunctions. The 'Umāni merchant, for example, comes out of the mosque after prayers, and walks straight into a slave-dealer's house to squander his money on slave-girls.<sup>1</sup>

'Ali Bābā, whose learning does not avail him to provide the necessities of life, becomes a woodcutter and discovers the treasure cave. When he sees it full of cash, silver and golden moulds, silk and velvet cloth, precious stones, incense and aloes, he is tempted to pick some of these precious things, and to justify himself he argues thus: The treasure is enormous so it must have been there before the thieves added to it. If it is stolen then it is not their possessions and it is not lawful for them to have it. If he takes a little of it, it will be no sin since it is so enormous it cannot be counted, and they will not even recognise that it has been diminished. So in his first attempt, 'Ali Bābā helps himself to golden pieces only, to spend for his necessities.<sup>2</sup>

If the "Nights" aims to reflect truthfully and without comment the picture of medieval life and conceptions, it cannot appear but lacking in poetic justice and showing a comparatively alien morality to our own, although the sense of fair play is not altogether absent. If lawlessness, greed of gain, transgression, are traits quite apparent in the stories, they must not be attributed to any inherent depravity of the people, as some commentators on the "Nights" remark,<sup>3</sup> but considered chiefly as the result of the phase and circumstances in a given society and age.

1 Nights, IV, 243.

2 IRAS, 1910, I, 338.

3 CE., I, 349, art. The Arabian Nights. Levy, 1957, 231f.

Since their difficulties were undoubtedly very great, both on land and sea, medieval travellers had leave to say whatever they wished of the dangers and the strange customs they had seen, and were invariably believed. Seamen tales were not rejected as yarns. It seems that these travel stories on legendary nations and people did not so much aim to give geographical or anthropological facts as they did attempt to enhance imagination and encourage the daring spirit of the age. Wonder tales show an unlimited capacity for admiring the creations of God.

However, geographical lore and sea wonders which formed travel literature in the medieval ages included facts as well as imaginings, and are transmitted by the most serious books of Arabic from the 9th c. A.D. onwards. Geography books were regarded as useful information of seamen experience,<sup>1</sup> and wonder stories were not too strange to believe whether among Eastern or Western people.

To cite an example, al-Mas'ūdi transmits information about a species of tree called Wāq Wāq which look like women with long hair, who keep shouting wāq wāq until they are cut off. Further, we are told that an island near China is inhabited only by women who bear female children in conjunction with the wind. From such stories the narrator seems to have developed the adventures of Ḥasan of Baṣra in the Island of Wāq Wāq where the nation, to which his wife belongs, are Amazonian Jinn.<sup>2</sup>

In his study of the voyages of Sindbad, Hole attempts to

1 Muqaddasi, 2.

2 Mas'ūdi, Akhbār al-Zamān, 16, 45.

show that the narrator is not always erring in his extravagance and that some of his fanciful tales and absurdities can be traced to classic origin or other sources.<sup>1</sup> For example, the whale which is mistaken for an island occurs in Pliny's Natural History described as a kind of sea beast.<sup>2</sup>

Thus descriptions of strange islands and their immense wealth, stories about the huge bird called Roc, apes which resemble men, pigmies, the sagacity of elephants, all corroborate with accounts given in the serious books of European voyagers of antiquity naturalists and historians, such as Pliny Ptolemy, Marco Polo, Father Martini and Benjamin of Tudela.<sup>3</sup>

Sindbad and other travel stories in the "Nights" reveal the attitude of medieval people to geographical lore. Merchants shared with other medieval people a childish credulity which made even serious writers and historians transmit fanciful accounts of travels, acts of the Jinn and magic in order to satisfy the crave for the unfamiliar, but this is outside the scope of this study.<sup>4</sup>

#### Status of Merchants

To estimate the status of this class as a whole, reference is to be made to their relationships with the nobility, the cultured middle class and the lower classes.

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1 Remarks, 2f, 16f.

2 Ibid., 25.

3 Ibid., 46, 63, and passim.

4 Nights, II, 232, III, 96. See also Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, Rasā'il (4 Vols., Bombay, 1305 A.H.) IV, 154-69, 288-311, Jāhiz, Ḥayawān, VI, 190-248, IV, 15, 77-93. Ibn Iyās, II, 272, Tanukhi, Faraj, I, 148-86.



The nobility and the cultured class considered trading and conducting business in the bazaar rather humiliating since one had to use subtlety and evasion to succeed in business.<sup>1</sup> The nobility and high officials employed agents and deputies to conduct their commercial activities.<sup>2</sup> In fact even important merchants employed middlemen and brokers to do the humiliating jobs for them.<sup>3</sup> As a class they are called al-sūga,<sup>4</sup> or those who reside in markets to do business, and are continuously in touch with the common people.<sup>5</sup>

Once a vizier of al-Mu'tadid, who owed his life to a merchant, rose in honour of the man when he entered his saloon. Al-Mu'tadid heard of this and told the vizier, "Do you degrade the saloon of the vizierate by rising in honour of a tradesman? If it had been a provincial ruler, it would have been unlawful; had it been an heir apparent, it would have been too much." But the vizier explained the reason for his conduct to the caliph and he was excused on that occasion. The merchant, as a consequence of this incident, became notorious and the vizier tried to compensate him by securing a fortune for him through using his influence.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Ibn Khaldūn, 396, Jahshiyāri, Wuzarā', 186.

2 Ibn Khaldūn, 399.

3 Dimashqi, 35.

4 Nights, II, 210.

5 Makki, Qūt, II, 272, Tanūkhi, Nishwār, I, 263, here Ibn al-Jaṣṣaṣ is called an uncultured commoner.

6 Tanūkhi, Table-Talk, 48-50.

A similar reaction is shown by al-Mu'tadid in the "Nights" when he enters, in disguise, the house of a Khurāsāni merchant. He gets quite angry when he observes that the magnificent furniture has the emblem of his grandfather al-Mutwakkil, engraved on it and asks the master of the house whether he is a Sharīf, and when the man answers that he is of the sons of merchants, the caliph threatens him and demands an immediate explanation for having this kind of furniture in his house, which he proceeds to do in great fear.<sup>1</sup>

Compared to princes, merchants seem cowards in the "Nights" and are notorious for their ignorance in fighting, hunting and swordsmanship.

Warfare, bravery in battles and sports are confined to princes and the nobility. When Abu al-Shāmāt's caravan is attacked by robbers, he smears his clothes with blood, lies down among the killed and pretends to be dead.<sup>2</sup> 'Ali-Nuraddin the merchant shows utter ignorance of fighting and lets princess Maryam fight for him. He tells her that he is afraid even of the voice of a crow.<sup>3</sup> Although this may sound exaggerated, merchants took even less interest in fighting than in politics.

Even in the first century of Islam, the period of Jihād, merchants were reluctant to fight. When Yazīd I attacked Medina, the Medenise forced the perfumer-merchants to form a batallion to defend the city. The perfumers put their standard down and withdrew. Yazīd attacked the banner and found the field empty. He almost lost the battle because of this mistake

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1 Nights, IV, 264.

2 Ibid., II, 176.

3 Ibid., IV, 143.

and as a result he imposed a fine of 400,000 dirham on the people of the town of Dārīn where the perfumer-merchants originated.<sup>1</sup>

Sindbad, despite his determination and toughness in difficulties, avoids bloodshed and aggressive acts. Al-Dimashqī reports a saying which indicates that merchants were no good in battles. It states that if shopkeepers join the sultan in taking up arms he will be ruined.<sup>2</sup>

Although merchants seldom took part in the holy wars, they tried to help by their money to provide comforts for Muslim captives. It is reported that a Muslim merchant provided a monk with money and made a pact that if the monk looked after Muslim captives in the Byzantine territory and supplied them with food and blankets he would look after the churches in the Muslim part of the country.<sup>3</sup>

At home, merchants followed the policy of non-intervention to ward off trouble.<sup>4</sup> When 'Alī Nuraddīn, the son of a vizier, enters into a fight with his rival and envier the vizier Al-Mu'īn, the people in the market, mostly merchants, stand by watching. They advise the soldiers who want to intervene not to do so since both antagonists are from the official circle, and one never knows who will be safe and who will be harmed if one intervenes.<sup>5</sup>

1 Balādhuri, Ansāb al-Ashraf, IV, 43, ed. Scholoessinger, Goitein, 598.

2 Ishāra, 41.

3 Tanūkhī, Table-Talk, 32f.

4 Cf. Zaki, Al-Hayāt al-Adabiyya . . ., 72.

5 Nights, I, 147, IV, 261.

Consequently, despite the fact that several members of the merchant class occupied positions as high as those of viziers and executives of the state, they had no political power.<sup>1</sup> Authority was in the hands of foreign soldiers who ascended to power from the 9th c. onwards.<sup>2</sup> In the Mamlūk period the power was strictly in the hands of trained soldiers.<sup>3</sup>

As a result of excluding themselves from politics and warfare, merchants seem to have a compromising patriotism. The country which secures for them justice and strong governmental power can be their own.<sup>4</sup> Thus in the "Nights" merchants are always on the move to find safety and financial stability.<sup>5</sup> They are advised to immigrate when their conditions are straitened and their business is in danger.<sup>6</sup> If they do not immigrate they employ other devices to escape persecution and show themselves poor in order to avoid clashes with the authority or rivals.<sup>7</sup>

The common people make a clear distinction between the largesse given by the aristocrats to poor people and those given by the merchants. For example, Ma'rūf's alms to a beggar is described as the "King's alms", for while he gives the beggar

1 Goitein, 599f. Fakhri, 212-14, 286. Tabari, III, 1182.

2 Goitein, 584. Zaydān, IV, 162.

3 Ibn Iyās, II, 245, 248, 331 and passim, Prescott, Once to Sinai, 127f.

4 Cf. Faqīh, 48. Nights, I, 148.

5 Nights, I, 75, 149, II, 194.

6 Dimashqi, 51, Jāhīz, al-Tabassur . . ., 10.

7 Dimashqi, op. cit., Maqrīzi, Khitāt, II, 497, 499.

a handful of gold pieces, his merchant colleagues give him half a dirham or less. Even the King observes that Ma'rūf's charity belongs to the royal kind of generosity rather than the merchants'.<sup>1</sup>

Despite homilies and mottos urging merchants to be generous and give in charity,<sup>2</sup> people have a fast conviction that their charity has a purpose of gain behind it. Hence a tailor says to a merchant that he has given him more than enough for his services which is not in keeping with merchants' principle of giving charity with a view for gain.<sup>3</sup>

The cultured people, on the other hand, whether writers or 'ulamā', demanded the observance of religious injunctions in business. 'Umar said "No one would trade in our market but he who is wholly knowledgeable of religious matters, otherwise he will employ usury whether he wants or not."<sup>4</sup> An honest merchant was considered among the martyrs<sup>5</sup> because he was greatly exposed to sin since "the devil himself dwelt in markets".<sup>6</sup>

A whole list of charges are made against tradesmen such as dishonesty,<sup>7</sup> lack of religion, greed for gain,<sup>8</sup> deceit, lack

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1 Nights, IV, 335, 350-52.

2 Ibid., II, 242f.

3 Ibid., IV, 267.

4 Shayzari, Hisba, 61.

5 Makki, Qūt, II, 262.

6 Tha'alibi, Thimār . . ., 59.

7 Goitein, 593, Ibn Sa'd, Tabagāt, VI, 167.

8 Ibn al-Jawzi, Sayd, II, 472.

of murū'a (manly honour)<sup>1</sup> and dignity.<sup>2</sup> The cultured people believe that though merchants try to follow moral principles their religion cannot be profound,<sup>3</sup> unless they constantly arm themselves with knowledge and thankfulness.<sup>4</sup> They should observe the prayer times and avoid monopoly of foodstuffs, usury, avarice and maintain just prices and measures.

Though the "Nights" respects merchants' wealth, it attempts, often without comment, to bring out the good and bad sides in the mercantile folk. Their lack of manly honour, for instance, is shown in emphasising the fact that they often withdraw from the field when their ruined friends are in financial crisis. However, this does not imply that some others do not gallantly help their fellow merchants who are in need.<sup>5</sup>

The dishonesty of some of them is shown when a merchant for example, arrives at a new country and claims that his caravan is on its way, and after winning the merchants' trust, he borrows from them great sums of money.<sup>6</sup> al-Dimashqi warns against swindlers who assume the role of great merchants and deceive those who sympathise with them.<sup>7</sup>

- 1 Tawhīdi, Imtā', III, 61. Ibshīhi, II, 208.
- 2 Ibn Khaldūn, 383, 395, 399. Dimashqi, 47.
- 3 Tawhīdi, op.cit. Cf. Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 106.
- 4 Makki, Ibid., II, 261.
- 5 Nights, II, 60, 66.
- 6 Ibid., IV, 337 and Cal.ed. II, 466.
- 7 Dimashqi, 55f.

As far as status is concerned, it seems that though merchants had the control over the vigorous daily life of the big cities, as a class, they were regarded as members of an unprivileged group who had no qualification except wealth to distinguish them from the craftsmen and the lower orders of society. When al-Mu'taṣim appointed a wealthy merchant named al-Taḥḥān (the miller) to the vizierate, a poet said that by the appointment the miller exceeded all the limits of luck and destiny.<sup>1</sup> It is reported that when al-Zayyāt (an oil merchant) was appointed a vizier, he was very grateful because, as he put it, the caliph had raised him from the humility of trade to the dignity of the vizierate.<sup>2</sup>

Medieval society ascribed lofty qualities to nobility, religious bodies and ruling officials alone,<sup>3</sup> and hence there was but little distinction between craftsmen and wealthy merchants.<sup>4</sup> Thus in the "Nights" merchants dare not approach slave-girls of the court. They go through hardship and pain before they can obtain the consent of the slave-girls' masters for marriage.<sup>5</sup> Ghānim is a wealthy merchant who falls in love

1 Fakhri, 212f.

2 Tha'ālibi, Khams Rasā'il, Constantinople, 1301/1884, 26.

3 Jāhiz, Tāj, 22-30, Tanūkhi, Nishwār, I, 45. 'Iqd, I, 222.

4 Jāhiz, Bukhalā', 35, where a merchant banker who owns 100,000 dinars borrows 2 dirhams from a neighbouring shopkeeper. See Tupper, 14f on considering tradesmen and plowmen people of servile degree in medieval Europe.

5 Nights, I, 161, II, 53, IV, 263.

with the caliph's slave-girl. While she shelters in his house he keeps away from her and says "whatever belongs to the master is unlawful for the servant."<sup>1</sup>

This absence of barriers between the merchant class and the lower orders of society is ascribed to the nature of social life in medieval towns where everybody knows everybody else.<sup>2</sup> In the market places trade and crafts were carried on side by side and the joy and sorrows of the people who worked there were no secrets to others.

Sindbad the Sailor takes the trouble of inviting the porter to relate to him his life story and explain the reason for the financial difference between him and the toiling porter.<sup>3</sup> In the story of The Barber, the merchant and the barber seem to be on the same social standing except that the merchant is capable of providing the barber with several dishes and incense for the latter's luncheon party. The merchant is even invited by the barber to the party but he politely declines the invitation.<sup>4</sup>

Consequently rich heroes of the "Nights" both merchants and lucky commoners, try to get closer to the high world of princes, courtiers and viziers, either by the back door, i. e. marriage to the daughters of nobility or slave-girls of the court,<sup>5</sup> or by making fabulous contributions to the King's private treasury.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, I, 172f, II, 188.

2 Qalamāwi, 80.

3 Nights, III, 95f.

4 Nights, I, 117.

5 Ibid., IV, 263, I, 179, II, 223.

6 Ibid., IV, 227 and Cal. ed. II, 466.



## CHAPTER IV

### The Lower Class

#### General Condition

The lower class was divided into two main groups in medieval time, freemen and slaves. The freemen who lived in towns and cities were made up of craftsmen, shopkeepers and small tradesmen, and labourers.

As a class they were called al-'amma or the common people. They earned their livelihood either with the use of their equipment or the labour of their bodies.<sup>1</sup>

In the advanced and affluent societies of Iraq and Egypt, industrial arts such as silk and brocade weaving, tailoring, dyeing and building greatly prospered.<sup>2</sup> Indulgence in luxury gave special significance to crafts concerned with clothing, jewelry, glassware, perfumery, baking and cooking.<sup>3</sup> The goldsmiths' arts provided the rich not only with ladies' ornaments but with table utensils and other decoration.

Rich people had a great number of garments, expensive furnishings such as carpets, tapestry, hanging curtains, cushions, and sofas.<sup>4</sup> Their demands and high standard of living

1 Ikhwan al-Safa, Rasa'il (4 Vols, Bombay, 1305 A.H.) I, pt. 2, 31.

2 Ibn Khaldun, Mugaddima, II, 302. ESS. VII, 684, art. Industrial arts.

3 Ibn Khaldun, op. cit.

4 Washsha', 132-159. Ibshihi, II, 175, Duri, 101.

determined the prosperity of numerous crafts and industrial arts.<sup>1</sup>

The demand of the caliphate for fine fabrics, not only for personal consumption but for robes of honour, gifts, banners and soldiers' clothing was so great that they established their own manufactory for fine fabrics called Dār al-Tirāz.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem that the increasing demand for labour in consequence of the growth of industry and trade should have brought prosperity to the lower classes, but there seems to have been a great gap between poor and rich, and a noticeable divergence even between the earnings of master craftsmen and the hands they employed.

It is difficult however to make an adequate assessment of the conditions of the lower class because the Arabic sources concentrate on the life and experiences of the upper classes and attached no importance to the class of al-'Āmma. They are mentioned only when they come in contact with important personalities or when writers make remarks on their ignorance and unpredictability.<sup>3</sup>

What information there is, shows that the majority of craftsmen and shopkeepers earned just enough to ward off poverty. Al-Dimashqi (10th c.) defines a craft as a means to secure against both poverty and riches since a craftsman's earnings do not enable him to buy an estate or acquire luxury goods.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ibn Khaldūn, II, 352, 277, tr.

2 Ibn Khaldūn, 267, (Beirut, 1900), ESS, op. cit. Taghribirdi, Nujūm, II, 192, (ed. Joynboll.)

3 Dūri, 237. Cf. Zaydān, V, 4, 50.

4 Dimashqi, 42, Ibn Khaldūn, II, 330, tr.

In the social scale, of those usefully employed, craftsmen and labourers ranked the lowest among free citizens.<sup>1</sup>

The social and economic position of this class remained at the same relatively low level throughout medieval times; and since they could not attain riches, each group was contented with its occupation and preferred it to other work.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding the often quoted saying transmitted on the authority of 'Ali, "Every man's value consists of what he knows well," there was a wide variation in the social esteem accorded to the different crafts in society.<sup>3</sup>

Some crafts (ṣinā'a) were considered noble because they called for contact with rulers such as medicine, midwifery, arts and writing; others were valued because of their necessity such as carpentry, tailoring and agriculture.<sup>4</sup>

Low in the social estimation were the barbers and bath-attendants practicing massage. Still lower in the social scale were people such as slave-dealers, fishmongers, tanners, sifters, grain-measurers, porters and servants.<sup>5</sup>

A later book on al-Hisba (16th c.A.D.) adds to the above list weavers, animal-herders, camel attendants, money changers and charlatans.<sup>6</sup>

1 Op. cit. Jāhīz, Ḥayawān, IV, 434.

2 Jāhīz, Rasā'il, 126f, ed. Sandūbi, Ḥayawān, IV, 429f, 434.

3 Dimashqi, 4), Ibn Khaldūn, II, 355f. tr., 'Abd al-Hādī, Mashriq, 1937, 385.

4 Ibn Khaldūn, op. cit.

5 Dimashqi, 43.

6 'Abd al-Hādī, op. cit.

Opinions were however unanimous that weaving, blood letting or cupping and tanning were the most despised professions, even among the commoners themselves.<sup>1</sup>

A most comprehensive, though rather theoretical evaluation of trades, crafts and labour, is to be found in the treatise of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā.

The crafts, they maintain, differ in virtue when considered from five angles: firstly, with regard to the material on which they work, and this gives an advantage to goldsmiths. Secondly, according to the products manufactured, the astrolabe makers rank highest. Thirdly, as regards utility and necessity, weaving, farming and building are the most essential. Fourthly, from the point of view of the service to the public, bath-keepers and scavengers are essential to city life. Finally, arts as decoration, painting and music are valued because of the skill and talent involved.<sup>2</sup>

Crafts may also be valued according to the income of the craftsmen, and in this respect, bakery, perfumery, tailoring, trading and farming bring a lucrative income,<sup>3</sup> whereas labourers such as woodcutters, water-carriers, clog-makers and porters are among the workers of the lowest wages.<sup>4</sup>

Although it is difficult to find definite data for the income of the members of the lower classes, isolated references can

1 Rāghib, II, 460.

2 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, I, pt. 2, 32.

3 Dimashqi, 41f.

4 Ibid., 43, Hādī, op. cit.

be cited to show approximately the economic standard of the mass of people.

A workman and his wife managed to live humbly on 300 dirhams a year.<sup>1</sup> A whole capital of a pedlar amounted to 1-3 dinars.<sup>2</sup> A potter's capital was no more than a hundred dirhams; the rent of his house, which cost 500 dirhams to purchase, was 5 dirhams a month. The daily earnings of a glazier were about one and a half dirhams. He paid one dirham daily to a tutor to teach him grammar and lived on the remaining half a dirham a day.<sup>3</sup>

Anecdotes show that the wages and annual expenditure of the poor were always expressed in terms of dirhams.<sup>4</sup> Even the inheritance of a craftsman was estimated by dirhams.<sup>5</sup>

It was extraordinary for a craftsman or a labourer to earn a dinar for his services as when the cobbler in the story of 'Ali Bābā was paid one dinar for sewing up secretly the body of a murdered man; or when the porter was extravagantly tipped with a dinar by the three gracious ladies of Baghdad.<sup>6</sup>

An anecdote by al-Jawzi reports that once a gang of thieves was discovered merely because the police inspector

1 Ibn al-Sarrāj, Maṣāri'., 159.

2 Tanūkhi, Nishwār, I, 60. The number of dirhams in each dinar varied, it seems however that in the 3rd/9th and the 4th/10th centuries in Baghdad a dinar was generally equal to fifteen dirhams. (See Ibn Hawqal, 218, Dūri, 222 and

3 Nishwār, I, 39, 134.

4 Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 155, on the Baghdadi young man who earned half a dirham daily.

5 Nights, I, 117, The Barber and his six brothers inherited a 100 dirhams each.

6 Ibid., 380, Scott's tr. and I, 32. Cairo ed.

found the bones of a whole dinar's worth fish thrown outside a house which they used as their headquarters. The police suspicion was roused because it was a poor district where no one could afford such a luxury.<sup>1</sup>

The proper way to estimate the standard of living of the lower-class would be to reveal the gap that existed between the poor and rich by a study of the material given, in both the Arabic sources and the "Nights", in the form of contrast images will be shown presently.

Al-Mas'ūdi, for instance, reporting the enormous income of the Governor of Baṣra in the time of al-Rashīd, 100,000 dirhams a day, comments that once a poor madman interrupted the governor's procession and asked why he earned only half a dirham daily when the governor's income was so great.<sup>2</sup>

This kind of contrast is echoed in the Egyptian story of the great lady and the Slaughter-house cleaner. The cleaner spends only two fiṣ for his bread and īdām out of the 50 mithqāl (ounces) of gold bestowed upon him by the lady, and buries the rest under earth.<sup>3</sup>

The gap between the classes was not narrowed by the way in which public money was used. The income of the public treasury, except for regular charities, was mainly spent on the palaces of the caliphs, princes, army officers or on favourites among whom were musicians, slave-girls and poets.<sup>4</sup>

1 Jawzi, Kitāb al-Adhkiyā' (Cairo, 1304 A.H.) 46.

2 Mas'ūdi, VI, 290.

3 Nights, II, 213.

4 Amīn, Duḥā, I, 139. Ibn Kathīr, Al-Bidāya. (14 Vols; Cairo, 1932) XII, 221.

In the following verses a poet expresses the anxiety of the have-nots in the prosperous city of Baghdad:

If Qārūn, the god of riches, resided in it, he  
would grow anxious and troubled,  
There are nymphs, lads and everything that you  
wish for, except people.<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the scarcity of information about commoners in Arabic sources, the "Nights" can be regarded as one of the most honest and authentic sources giving us some truthful glimpses into the life of this class.

Tailors, bakers<sup>and</sup> barbers in the "Nights" are shown to be people of higher income levels than many others of their class.<sup>2</sup>

A well-off tailor can entertain a guest to a supper consisting of fried fish, one kind of fruit and sweetmeats, though an unlucky tailor can barely sustain a small family.<sup>3</sup> Craftsmen can even gather together for modest banquets.<sup>4</sup>

The Barber of Baghdad claims that he has supported his six vagrant brothers. He can also invite for lunch people who have lower incomes than himself, such as bathkeepers, fishmongers, fortunetellers, scavengers and milkmen.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 Yaqūt, Mu'jam al-Buldān (6 Vols., Leipzig, 1866-70), I, 693.
- 2 Nights, IV, 228, 267, I, 113. Cf. 'Abd al-Hādī, op. cit. and Sābi, 204-6, on a barber (4th/10th c.) who owned a house and a slave servant and lived a decent life.
- 3 Nights, I, 93, and Scott's tr. 197.
- 4 Ibid., I, 113.
- 5 Ibid., I, 136, 117.

A baker assists his unfortunate and penniless neighbour, the fisherman, by giving him daily bread with a little money until such time as he can afford to pay him back.<sup>1</sup> A grocer can afford to employ a poor man to make up his accounts against a payment of one dirham a day, and dyers and tailors to employ apprentices at their shops.<sup>2</sup> Goldsmiths seem to be considered close to merchants as regards their economic position and have several apprentices employed at their workshops.<sup>3</sup>

A distinction which seems to elevate the status and consequently the income of a craftsman in the "Nights", is his establishing contact with the higher classes through his occupation; such craftsmen are called the Sultan's goldsmith or the Sultan's steward.<sup>4</sup> When craftsmen, states Ibn Khaldūn, "have no rank and are restricted to the profits of their crafts, they will mostly be reduced to poverty and indigence . . . . they make only a bare living somehow fending off the distress of poverty."<sup>5</sup>

Crafts were commonly hereditary and sons took up their father's occupations.<sup>6</sup> There are a number of examples in the "Nights" where the authority of fathers and the social tradition

1 Nights, IV, 228.

2 Ibid., III, 239, II, 143, IV, 153, 217.

3 Ibid., III, 244, IV, 281.

4 Ibid., IV, 280, I, 94.

5 Muqaddima, II, 330, Eng. tr.

6 Ikhwan, I, 35-7.



were resisted. Aladdin was reluctant to follow his father's occupation as a tailor, and desired to be a merchant, because merchants clad themselves handsomely and had plenty to eat.<sup>1</sup>

Abu Muhammad al-Kaslān's father was a hajjām (barber and cupper) who worked in a public bath, but his son preferred to stay unemployed than take up his father's despised occupation. He relied on his mother's wages until five dirhams, given by his mother to a merchant, brought him luck and fortune.<sup>2</sup>

The affluent society of the "Nights" necessitates the depiction of craftsmen who cater for such affluence. The emphasis on cloth dealers (bazzāzūn) and tailors is due to the great demand for fine clothes.<sup>3</sup> Barbers and bathkeepers on the other hand, help the rich to put on an impressive and clean appearance.<sup>4</sup> Thus the barber in the "Nights" boasts that he has the heads of kings and sages lowered under his hands.<sup>5</sup>

Beside hair-cutting, barbers used to do other jobs, such as cupping, dentistry and reading horoscopes.<sup>6</sup>

As medieval people used to draw great satisfaction from the depiction of the typical characteristics of each occupation

1 Nights, 198, 200ff, tr. Scott.

2 Ibid., II, 234f, II, 235-242.

3 Ibid., I, 99, 106, IV, 266f.

4 Cf. Ibn Khaldūn, II, 302, tr.

5 Nights, I, 116.

6 Ibid., III, 245, I, 115f.

and trade, the narrator employs the barber's characteristic of endless prattle in order to present eight stories, all within the framework story of The Barber of Baghdad.<sup>1</sup> This barber, who is ironically called "the silent man", relates, in a torrent of talk, stories of himself and his six brothers.<sup>2</sup>

Arabic sources also show that barbers seemed to be notorious for inquisitiveness, curiosity and unbearable chatter. It is reported that once al-Rashīd asked his vizier al-Faḍl to find for him a barber who was more silent than a stone and the latter sent him a quiet barber who was one of his servants.

Despite his comparative silence, he did ask the caliph three brief but very important political questions. Al-Rashīd is said to have postponed answering until after the hair-cut but ordered Masrūr to dismiss the barber immediately.<sup>3</sup>

Barbers were also considered unclean because of their connection with cupping.<sup>4</sup> In the "Nights" when Prince Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi hides in the house of a hajjām, the latter hastens to buy new cooking utensils and wine glasses. Handing them to the Prince, he says, "I know you will be sickened by me because of my profession, so I have bought for you new saucepans and glasses."<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, I, 113.

2 Ibid., I, 116-136.

3 Rāghib, II, 462.

4 Op. cit. Ṣābi, op. cit.

5 Nights, II, 134. Cal. ed. For the source of the story see Mas'ūdi, VII, 63f.

In Persia as well as in Arabia the hajjām's profession was socially scorned.<sup>1</sup> The Prophet's barber was an exceptional case because <sup>after</sup> he had drunk of the Prophet's blood, he was honoured by marrying into the Arab nobility. However, no one would usually give a daughter in marriage to a hajjām or even take his daughter in marriage.<sup>2</sup>

Weavers were not only despised but notorious for their stupidity.<sup>3</sup> In the "Nights", a weaver who was watching some guests entering a palace, where they were shown great respect because of their expensive and fine clothes, said to himself, "If I change my profession for a more lucrative one I would earn lots of money and buy expensive clothes, and become more important and respected in the eyes of people." As he watched an acrobat who was entertaining the guests, he decided to imitate him and jumped off a high wall and broke his neck.<sup>4</sup>

The moral of the story is that stupid weavers should not aspire to the impossible. There is also irony in the fact that the man who weaves fine materials longs to wear nice clothes in order to earn people's respect.

More interesting and illuminating is the portrayal of the wage-earning poor, whose place in society seems to be more hopeless than that of the slaves. A host of labourers of the lower orders such as fishermen, water-carriers, porters,

1 Rāghib, op.cit.

2 Ibid., II, 461.

3 Ibid., II, 460f.

4 Nights, II, 52.

pedlars, doorkeepers, beggars and vagabonds, are among the figures portrayed in the "Nights" casually but realistically. Their misery is as conspicuous as the opulence which they suddenly and miraculously acquire.

'Abdallah the fisherman, for example, had great difficulty in obtaining his daily provision. He had a large family of nine children, one new-born infant and his wife. It was a year of dearth and the cost of living was high. He owned only a net which could not be pawned because it was so to speak, "his shop and the door of his subsistence".<sup>1</sup> He was anxious to get back home with some food for his family, but had cast his net several times without any luck.

In his despair he calls out "Has God created this new-born child without assigning his subsistence? This can never be, for He who had 'opened a new mouth' had undertaken to provide for him his portion of provision<sup>2</sup> and God is bountiful and a liberal supplier of the necessaries of life." God does not fail him and his neighbour, the baker, offers him bread and money for several days until Fate brings him, from the bottom of the sea, his friend 'Abdallah-of-the-sea who exchanges with him sea jewels for fruits.<sup>3</sup>

Another method employed by the narrator to bring home the desperate state of the poor is by putting the rich and poor side by side and setting a contrast. This is done in one of the Baghdadi stories in a realistic and cheerful way and without interference from the supernatural.

1 Nights, IV, 228.

2 Cf. Rāghib, II, 516, on the same idea that God who creates a 'mouth' must provide for feeding it until death.

3 Ibid., IV, 228, 230.

A fisherman who could not provide his family with food for days, makes his way under the darkness of night to al-Rashīd's "Garden of Delight" although it is forbidden to go into the caliph's private palace. He casts his net, and while waiting, recites verses comparing his lot with that of the master of the palace, and ends up his recitation by praising God who gives His bounty to one and withholds it from the other so that some people fish and others eat the fish.<sup>1</sup>

The funny part of the contrast is shown when al-Rashīd wishing to disguise himself, exchanges his fine silk clothes for the fisherman's coarse woollen jubba (cloak), which had a hundred patches and was so full of lice and fleas "that they might almost transport him from place to place". His turban had never been unwound for three years and had grown bulky from the frequent twisting of pieces of rags around it.

By cheerful mockery and comic comments, the fisherman makes his complaint about fruitless toil and establishes the difference between an insignificant fisherman and any other princely heir who does not have to work for his living.

A clear and more direct comparison is made in the Baghdadi story of Sindbad the Sailor between the rich merchant Sindbad and his namesake pauper Sindbad the porter. The porter fatigued by his burden and the hot sun, throws his load aside and rests in the shade next to the door of Sindbad's house. When he smells the odour of nice food, and perfumes blowing about, he recites the following verses:

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1 Ibid., I, 156.

How many wretched persons are destitute of ease,     217  
And how many in luxury reposing in the shade,  
I find myself afflicted by trouble and strange  
is my condition and heavy is my load.

.....

All men whom God has made are in origin alike.  
And I resemble this man and he resembles me,  
But otherwise between us is a difference as great  
as the difference one finds between wine and vinegar.  
Yet in saying this, I utter no falsehood against you  
O my lord for you are wise and with justice you have  
judged.<sup>1</sup>

There are other means of complaint and criticism which help to reveal the social position of the lower class. Although these means are used in the "Nights" by members of all classes when in distress or exposed to persecution, it may not be amiss to relate them, in particular, with the lower classes, since the narrators themselves, who narrated the stories and compiled the verses, were of the obscure class of story-tellers and were more familiar with the condition of the poor than with the luxury of the upper classes.

The traditional method of criticising authority and power is to blame misfortune on Time (zamān) and "the Age" (dahr), which allegorically denote the strong and superior authority. Evidence shows that these allegories were particularly used to point to the caliph or rulers.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Tr. Lane, III, 3. For other contrasts see Nights, II, 213f, and 288, Cal. ed.

2 Mas'ūdi, VI, 400, Iqd, I, 167, Jabarti, 'Aja'ib al-Āthār (4 Vols. Cairo, 1297 A. H.) I, 12. It has been reported that the Arabs were accustomed to curse al-dahr, and that Abu Hurayra told them not to abuse it because the dahr denoted God, see Jāhiz. Hayawān, I, 340.

When the sage suspects that King Yūnān may order his execution he recites:-

Oh you who are afraid of time, have peace and leave matters to Him who created the plain of earth.<sup>1</sup>

When the cook Nuraddin is hurt by a stone thrown at him by the son of the vizier he says:-

Do not ask justice from time or you will wrong him for you can never find any justice in him.<sup>2</sup>

Criticism of corrupt rulers is expressed thus:-

It is as though our Time was a Sodomite  
Since it is fond of giving precedence to little boys.<sup>3</sup>

Tyranny and political persecution are expressed in terms of ghurba (alienation) as in the following:-

I am a stranger who will not take refuge with anyone,  
I am an alien even in my own country,  
I shelter in the mosques and reside there,  
My heart would never part with them.  
I thank God, the Lord of the Universe for his help to preserve my soul in my body."<sup>4</sup>

To conclude, the low economic and social condition of the poor is shown in the "Nights" either by indirect contrasts or by

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1 Nights, I, 20.

2 Ibid., I, 86.

3 Ibid., II, 126.

4 Ibid., II, 325.

straightforward comments expressed usually in verse. Simultaneously, these pictures indicate the prevailing belief that the hierarchical order of society is fixed on earth by the will of God who bestows and withholds his bounties according to His wisdom.

It is worthwhile noting that the Baghdadi stories seem to show an awareness of social differentiations which are exposed in a humorous and realistic way whereas the Egyptian stories of the lower orders are dominated by resignation and a kind of escapism which accept with relish a reliance on the supernatural and talismans.

#### The Status and Morality of the Lower Class

The bulk of craftsmen, labourers and vagrants had no social rights, and were on the whole regarded as incapable either of good or harm.<sup>1</sup> Though they were frequently helped by charity and individually employed by the rich, both the aristocrats and the educated classes looked down upon them and regarded them "a filthy refuse and scum of the earth."<sup>2</sup>

The educated class complained of the 'amma's stupidity, mean values and superstitions.<sup>3</sup> The poet al-Ḥajjāj (10th c. A. D.) declares in his verses that he who had neither riches nor learning ('ilm) would be placed on the same footing as the dog.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Ibn Khaldūn, II, 328, Eng. tr.

2 See above, 100

3 Zaydān, V, 50. Jāhiz, Ḥayawān, I, 302, II, 105.

4 Shayzari, 104.



"The misery of the lowly", writes Grunebaum, "is made permanent by the contempt of the squalid masses that has animated the leading castes throughout Islam, individual charity and religious equality notwithstanding. The finest accomplishments of Muslim civilisation remained confined to a relatively small circle . . . . Social consciousness never grew sufficiently strong to raise the value of human life not protected by any claim to special consideration, such as power, wealth or education."<sup>1</sup>

This attitude towards the 'amma is reflected quite eloquently throughout the "Nights".

They are depicted as anonymous people frequently made known only by their occupations such as the Porter, The Fisherman, and the Barber of Baghdad.<sup>2</sup>

Even in the instances where characters of the lower class are given names, these are followed by a trade qualification as Ma'rūf the cobbler or 'Arābish the milkman,<sup>3</sup> in order to indicate the background and status of the characters concerned.

Because of their poverty and ignorance, the 'amma are depicted in the "Nights" as a segregated and excluded class, and they are often treated with ridicule, and regarded as a trivial section of society.<sup>4</sup> Thus when the rich say something people agree and applaud even if what is said is wrong, but

1 Grunebaum, 1953, 343f.

2 Nights, I, 13, 32, 113.

3 Ibid., IV 329, I. 117.

4 Ibid., I, 93-138.

when the poor speak the truth people tend to regard it as falsehood.<sup>1</sup>

One finds this attitude echoed in Arabic writings dealing with the subject of riches and poverty. It is reported that traits which call for praise when found in the rich can bring forth blame when applied to the poor. For instance, forbearance in the rich is stupidity in the poor, courage becomes impetuosity and a quick-tongued man is branded as a chatterbox.<sup>2</sup>

The members of this class kept up their morale by an absolute belief in fate. Fatalism which means that all things happen according to a pre-arranged fate, rules man's lot throughout the "Nights".

Although fatalism is a belief common to all classes, it is mainly connected here with the lower class, because of its direct social and religious effects on the members of this class in particular.

The idea of fate and destiny appears in Greek philosophy as well as in Judaism, Christianity and Islam.<sup>3</sup>

In Islam, fatalism is expressed by the idea of al-qada' and al-qadar; "the first being the pre-ordained decree of God and the second its continual realisation."<sup>4</sup>

1 Ibid., II 238.

2 Al-Raghib, II 503, Dimashqi, 68f.

3 E.B., X, 198, art. Fatalism, JE, V, 351, Quran, 32, 11, 13

4 Lane, The Arabian Society in the Middle Ages (London, 1883), 3, n.1, al-qada' (fate) is defined as God's decrees, and al-qadar (destiny) is the application of these decrees. See also ERE, V, 794, art. Fate (Muslim).

Both ancient philosophy and theology of the three religions have thoroughly investigated the concept of fate. We are mainly concerned here with it as a popular sentiment rather than a theological doctrine.

Religions tried to soften the irrational and inscrutable power of fate by stating that actions are done under the will of God who really wants to fulfil the highest hopes of man. Fatalism provides man with a "comforting quietism" in times of social stress, and with peace of mind in times of individual distress.<sup>1</sup> It serves to ease difficulties and adjust people to their unfavourable situations. The pessimism of the believers in fate is not absolute and their resignation to its power seems to enhance their morale because of the hopes which they attach to its turns.<sup>2</sup> Death, moral failure, material loss and misfortunes are immediately accepted with patience since they are attributed to forces beyond man's power.

Man's acceptance of his predetermined lot in the "Nights" is based on his religious belief in al-gadā' wa'l gadar, inculcated by the Quran.<sup>3</sup> The idea of the all-powerful will of God is echoed by the narrator in the following lines: "God according to His will, distributes His gifts among people; to some He gives many talents, while others are compelled to earn their daily subsistence. Some people He has destined to be chiefs, and for others He has decreed asceticism. Good and evil, wealth

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1 ESS. VI, 147, Ghazālī, Iḥyā'.. IV, 210-50 esp. 250.

2 Burton, X, 200. ESS. op. cit.

3 Quran, 37<sup>96</sup>, 4<sup>78</sup>.

and poverty, life and death are all pre-ordained by His will, and to Him everyone returns, it is therefore necessary to be grateful to Him. "<sup>1</sup>

According to this, man however miserable, knows his duties and due rewards and tries, by patience and acceptance to tolerate his misfortune and surrender himself to the will of God.

To say that all men are created from the same original substance and are therefore equal or alike is as foolish as to say that since wine and vinegar are made from the same substance they must taste the same. There is as we know, a great difference between the two, and just as the process of fermentation alters their taste so does fate alter man's position in life. Hence in the eyes of the poor, a man must not try to change his destiny and get rich because if he does, he will die.<sup>2</sup>

Ensuing from this fixed belief in fate is the idea, prevailing among members of the lower class, that toil is in vain when destiny stands in the way of one's subsistence. A fisherman who casts his net several times without luck believes that fate is determining his share of provision and that he has no power to alter what has been written for him on the "Board of Fate" and thus recites:-

O toiler through the night in peril, stop your toil,  
for daily provision comes not by effort. The prob-  
lem of daily bread cannot be solved by your  
attempt, for neither will your pen avail you, nor

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1 Nights, IV, 163.

2 Ibid., III, 95. 252

writing a line. "<sup>1</sup> (i. e. trying to alter what was written for him by his own pen.)<sup>2</sup>

Fate is such an unrelenting power that if it obstructs man's action, "he is neither favoured by luck nor is able to gain profit from the craft of his hand." Because it is a blind power it often "places the ignorant in splendour and the wise in obscurity."<sup>3</sup>

The poor ropemaker whom fate fails to provide with subsistence despite his hard work, finds consolation in resignation to the power of fate and has the courage to face his poverty by cheerfully stating "what have the rich which we have not? Do not we breathe the same air, enjoy the same light and warmth of the sun?"<sup>4</sup>

The irrational element in fatalism, which assigns no initiative to the individual, is the basic theme of the story of Khoja Hasan al Habbal (the ropemaker).<sup>5</sup>

Sa'd and Sa'di were two rich friends. Sa'di believed that if a man had enough money to start a job he would in time grow rich by hard work, but Sa'd disputed this and maintained that a man needed neither wit nor industry but luck alone to acquire and preserve riches.

1 Nights, I, 13f. See also Burton, Supplemental Nights, III, 350.

2 Cf. ERE, V, 796, art. Fate (Muslim).

3 Nights, op.cit.

4 Ibid., 253 (tr. Scott), Burton, Supplemental, III, 345.

5 Burton, op.cit.

To prove his theory Sa'di twice gave the ropemaker Hasan al-Habbāl sums of money as a capital. By unusual accidents Ḥasan lost the money and remained poor. Then Sa'd stepped in, and gave him a piece of lead to see whether it would help him to make money by means of luck.

Fate intervened, and it so happened that one day a neighbouring fisherman needed something to weight his net and the ropemaker gave him that useless piece of lead. In return for this kindness, the fisherman promised to give Ḥsan his first catch. On cutting open the fish given to the ropemaker, his wife found a diamond which was sold to a neighbouring jeweller for 100,000 pieces of gold, enabling the ropemaker to start a big ropemaking business in the town.<sup>1</sup>

The above example also shows the importance of destiny as an instrument for social transformation in the "Nights".

Closely connected to the idea of Fate is the idea of the supernatural, and its significance in the life of the poor people.

Since gain cannot be obtained through work because of a pre-ordained decree, it would be best to fulfil one's ambition either through lucky accidents or the intervention of supernatural powers, which are used by the narrator in order to make exceptions to the static rules of the social order, and thus tailors, cobblers, barbers and other poor people turn wealthy by the aid of the supernatural powers and talismans.<sup>2</sup>

The idea of resignation to God's will and the all powerful force of fate resulted in the general conviction found among

1 Burton, Supplemental, III, 341-358, Scott's tr.250-59.

2 Nights, IV, 329, II, 234, and Scott's tr.197.

the members of the lower class that poor orphans were bound to be slothful and good-for-nothing until Fate came to their rescue. Abu Muhammad the Slothful who was the orphan of a barber may be cited as an example.

He lies sleeping all day long waiting for his mother to attend to his needs. One day his mother compels him to get up and take five dirhams to a merchant so that he can trade with it abroad. The story ironically tells how the lazy youth asks his mother: "Sit me up, bring my slippers, put them on my feet, raise me up, support me while I walk . . ." <sup>1</sup>

However when these poor people get hold of big sums of money they seem to abandon their lazy ways and acquire middle-class ideas. For example, the fatalism of the middle class gives certain initiative to man's action, and Sindbad the Sailor, a merchant from the middle class, believes that riches grow by hard work and embarking on dangerous travels. <sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, when Aladdin, the irresponsible son of a tailor is enriched by a talisman, he immediately joins some merchants, and attends the bazaars to gain experience. <sup>3</sup> The enriched ropemaker opens workshops and warehouses in several parts of the town to store up his goods, and sells both wholesale and retail. <sup>4</sup>

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1 Nights, II, 235.

2 Ibid., III. 96.

3 Ibid., 210, Scott's tr.

4 Burton, Supplemental, III, 358.

Thus the fabulous wealth, often achieved by fairy means in the "Nights" have an aspect of social significance. It expresses the profound longing of the poor protagonists for a happy and perfect living which, in reality, is nothing but a dream impossible to realise. It reveals the unconscious concern of the members of the lower class over the station allotted to them in real life.

It has been mentioned above that people of the upper or middle classes, especially members of the educated class, turned to mysticism either as a protest against wide-spread dissipation or as a reaction from their former life of intemperance.<sup>1</sup> In the same way, but for the opposite reasons, when the people of the lower class are unable to solve their social and economic problems by the aid of fate or the supernatural power, they attempt to make their escape from reality by shunning, altogether, greed and the comforts of life. Several tales show poor men and craftsmen seeking the heavenly rewards of the next world by turning to asceticism.

The pious fan-maker who earns his livelihood day by day,<sup>2</sup> is portrayed as against the impious and worldly rich woman who makes advances to him. As he makes his escape out of her house, he is unable to earn his daily bread, but God, the guardian of the poor, provides him with his daily bread as well as a diamond from Heaven. The fan maker is shown to be satisfied with the bread and refuses the diamond because he finds out in his dream, that any comfort that he gains in this world will diminish his heavenly reward.

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1 See above, Ch. III.

2 Nights, III, 19-21.



Piety and asceticism, though greatly recommended in the "Nights", are not, however, as popular a narrative mode as the device of making worldly dreams come true by supernatural means. .

In real life, however, seeking refuge in God was the only salvation for members of the lower class, especially craftsmen, and it is no accident, perhaps, that most famous Sūfis of the earlier 'Abbāsīd period have surnames which indicate their original profession, as for example; al-Ḥallāj (the cotton dealer), Sārī al-Saqqāṭī (the second-hand dealer), al-Qaṣṣāb (the butcher) and al-Ḥaddād (the blacksmith).<sup>1</sup>

The fame and position of saints did not fail, however, to bring them, along with prestige, the financial comforts and the privilege of position, which, with their original professions, they could not have attained. Ibn Khaldūn, commenting on the importance of rank in increasing one's possessions, recognises famous fagihs and saints as among those people who gain opulence as a result of their status and their influence upon the people who appreciate their good deeds and virtuous conduct.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding this resignation, the moral code of the lower class emphasised that charity and benevolence were duties which should be observed by the higher grades towards the need y.

The caliph, the sultan or the head of state were regarded as the supreme power of social justice and liberality.

Thus one notices that the narrator, seeking for justice and immediate reward or punishment (poetic justice), brings in the

1 Goitien, 1956, III, 585f and n.10.

2 Ibn Khaldūn, 389 (Arabic), and II, 330. Eng. tr.

caliph as the instrumentality of fulfilling such a purpose.

In actual practice, however, it was through the Dār al-Mazālīm, headed by the ruler or his representative, that the problems of people were solved and justice was done.<sup>1</sup> Evidence also shows that direct personal contacts between the caliphs or officials, and the culprits and justice seekers were not very rare.<sup>2</sup>

Thus the two nations lived side by side and were brought closer together by the universally acknowledged social principle of murū'a. Whenever the rich acted in a miserly way the poor became pressing and critical,<sup>3</sup> and begging became an accepted profession.<sup>4</sup>

It is interesting to note that the practice of concubinage was quite alien to the morality of the lower classes. There is not one instance where members of this class, after being miraculously enriched, seek to acquire concubines.

All they do is to get married to the daughter of an important man, and acquire property, a house, furniture and slaves.

Unlike the princes and merchants, the lives of the poor characters in the "Nights" seem to lack adventure and excitement.<sup>5</sup>

1 Māwardi, 72-92. Samadi, The Theory of State and Administration under the 'Abbāsīd, IC., 1955, XXIX, 120-50.

2 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 152-161. Jawzi, Adhkiyā', 39.

3 As shown by al-jāhiz in Bukhalā', passim.

4 Ibid., 51-3, 76-9.

5 Nights, I, 39.

Clothes indicated the class to which a man belonged and differed according to rank, profession and age.<sup>1</sup> Well-tailored and expensive clothing made a tremendous impression on the minds of the lower classes, compelling them to awe and respect.<sup>2</sup>

The table manners of the poor are mocked in the "Nights" especially when the narrator is depicting the wicked and dark characters who are not cast as heroes.

Against all the fine etiquette of eating,<sup>3</sup> the members of the poor class stretch out their hands to dishes far from them at the table, overfill their mouths, adding mouthful to mouthful in haste and continuously molesting other people at public banquets.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to the elegance and beauty of the members of the upper classes, poor people are often depicted as filthy, gloomy and disfigured.<sup>5</sup> It was indeed unusual for a labourer to look fresh and joyful. Thus the Caliph al-M'tadid once saw a worker carrying loads of clay twice as much as the other workers, and jumping up two steps at once, it is reported that he was immediately suspicious. On investigation, it was discovered that the labourer was no longer dependent on his wages alone having stolen a purse and killed a man in the process.<sup>6</sup>

1 Jāhīz, Bayān, 60, ed. Jabr. Jūmard, Hārūn, I, 296. Amin, Duḥā, I, 105.

2 Nights, II, 72, and tr. Scott, 201, Cf. Tanūkhī, Table-Talk, 31, tr. Margoliouth.

3 See the Table-Manners in al-Muwashshā, 105-113. Ghazālī, Iḥyā', II, 2-17.

4 Nights, II, 257, IV, 213, 257. On grossness and indelicacy at dining-tables see Bukhlā', 76-8.

5 Nights, I, 113-38.

6 Jawzī, Adhkiyā', 33.

Whether in times of ease or adversity, members of this class show considerable social solidarity and kindred feelings. If one of them declared his need for money or showed signs of distress, the rest of his colleagues and friends hastened to assist him.<sup>1</sup> If poor people borrow money in the hour of need they amply compensate their poor helpers in times of prosperity.<sup>2</sup>

Although the "Nights" shows conformity to the prevailing idea that craftsmen and labourers are folks of little importance in society, it bears no contempt for their misfortunes and depicts them with a considerable degree of sympathy and understanding.

"Poverty", comments the narrator, "causes the lustre of man to grow as dim as the paleness of the setting sun. When absent, a poor man is not remembered among men, and when present, he does not share their pleasures. He goes through the markets unnoticed, and once he is alone, he pours forth his tears."<sup>3</sup>

Mutilation among the poor seemed to have been a normal thing; loss of an eye, blindness, amputated hands and other disfigurements, were defects due to diseases, accidents, violence of daily events, punishments and wars.<sup>4</sup>

1 jāhiz, Rasā'il, 46, Nights, IV, 228.

2 Ibid., IV, 231.

3 Nights, I, 102.

4 Ibid., I, 121, Cf. Tha'ālibi, Latā'if (Lugd. Bat. 1867), 66f.

Incidents of the life of the lower class throw light upon aspects of life in medieval towns. In the streets were acted tragedies and comedies such as the cries and fuss when chasing an offender, or catching a thief, and the tragic scene of chopping his hand off, the public execution of criminals and the contrivances of sharpers against one another.<sup>1</sup>

Flogging, whipping and beating were common punishments inflicted for trivial offences. It has been reported that one of the leaders of thieves recommended that all his colleagues should attend these flogging sessions, in order to get accustomed to the brutality of whipping and be ready for it.<sup>2</sup>

The punishment of ishhār (public humiliation) aimed to make the culprit ashamed of himself, and give a lesson which would deter other citizens from following his example. In addition to his whip, the muhtasib must keep at hand, a special costume made of bells and jingles, and a clown's cap (tartūr) for the culprit to wear when paraded on a donkey around the city.<sup>3</sup>

Acts of violence which resulted in mutilation or killing are episodes recurrent in the "Nights" as part and parcel of the previous ages of lawlessness. It should be added however that, paradoxically, acts of benevolence were often done to assist and protect the weak and poor on a scale greater than we could perceive.

1 Nights, I, 102, 123, 173.

2 Rāghib, III, 191.

3 Shayzari, 10. See also Jawzi, Muntazam, X, 6f.

### The Craft-Guilds

Craft-guilds existed in most parts of the ancient world under the civilisations of Greece, Rome, India and Persia.<sup>1</sup> They were an important aspect of medieval social life both in Europe and Asia between the 9th-19th centuries A.D.<sup>2</sup> The shape of the bazaars in the Islamic cities was determined by the need of the guildmen since each guild had its own market.<sup>3</sup>

The term guild, in Arabic Sinf, denotes an association of craftsmen "who exercise, either by custom or by virtue of specific delegation of authority to them, certain officially recognised powers of control over the occupation which they follow."<sup>4</sup>

In Islam, guilds were not a canonical institution like hisba. They came into existence as a result of the growing economy of the big cities in the 3rd/9th c.<sup>5</sup>

Opinions agree that the Islamic guilds, which developed three centuries after the conquest, "were of a type which cannot be explained by Byzantine influence or heritage,"<sup>6</sup> and since from the beginning they presented novel features, they were by no means a revival of the Byzantine or Sassanian local guilds.<sup>7</sup>

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1 CE, VI, 632, art. Guilds.

2 Ibid., VI, 633. Lewis, The Islamic Guilds, in The Economic History Review, Nov. 1937, VIII, 20.

3 Op. cit.

4 CE, op. cit. Shayzari, Hisba, 12.

5 Massignon, E.S.S., VII, 214f, art. Islamic Guilds.

6 Lewis, 22.

7 Massignon, op. cit.

According to Massignon the origin of Islamic guilds is associated with the movement of the Caramathians (9th-12th c. A.D.) which organised the artisans into guilds and admitted both non-Arabs and non-Muslims members into the guilds.<sup>1</sup> Lewis argues this hypothesis and states that there is no sufficient evidence that the Caramathians actually created the guilds. He, however, believes that they played a great role in the development of the guilds and left their deep and lasting imprint in the inner life of these guilds.<sup>2</sup>

Because of the connection between the Caramathians and the Fāṭimid dynasty, the guilds attained their zenith during the Fāṭimid period in Egypt.<sup>3</sup> Under the 'Abbāsīd, there seems to have been no sign of governmental persecution of the guilds.<sup>4</sup>

It was on account of their sectarian connection with the 'Alid movements that guilds became involved in difficulties with the Sunnite governments.<sup>5</sup> Thus in the time of Saladin's rule in Syria and Egypt, the Seljuks in Antolia and the Mongols in Iraq, the Sunnite government attempted to curb the activities of guilds.<sup>6</sup>

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1 E.S.S. op.cit., This interconfessional characteristic of the Islamic guilds sharply distinguishes them from the Byzantine and European guilds.

2 Lewis, Ibid., 22ff.

3 EL, IV, 436, art. Sinf, Lewis. 35.

4 Dūri, 85.

5 Grunebaum, Medieval Islam, 217, Lewis, 27.

6 Massignon, op.cit. Shayzari, Introd., III.

From the 11th c. A.D. onwards, guilds were subjected to strict police control, and insurrections of guilds continued to occur especially during the 14th and 15th c. A.D.<sup>1</sup>

Under state control, the chief of the guild, 'arīf' was either appointed by the muhtasib, who was himself a state representative, or elected by the members of the guild with the consent of the muhtasib.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of this control only the purveyors to the sovereign, who had governmental monopoly of the guilds, prospered,<sup>3</sup> whereas ordinary craftsmen were often short of work.<sup>4</sup> The prosperity of the 'arīfs' is confirmed by a much earlier report transmitted from al-Ḥasan b. Sahl who said that no chief craftsman was ever in economic difficulty unless he lived in the most wicked times or under the rule of the worst sultan. One can also infer that 'arīfs' were not popular since al-Rāghib states that although 'arīfs' are necessary for the people they are among the inhabitants of Hell because of their disobedience.<sup>5</sup>

In the "Nights" one obtains the same impression of the prosperity and importance of 'arīfs', the considerable authority they had over the members of their orders and their close connection with the authorities.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Lewis, op. cit.

2 Shayzari, 12. For details on the muhtasib, see Kremer 1920, 292-96, and Shayzari, 5-12, and *passim*.

3 ESS., op. cit.

4 Nights, IV, 212.

5 Muhādrāt., II, 465.

6 Nights, IV, 280, 231 and Cal.ed., II, 298,



As regards the earlier period, we have no details on the regular workings of the guild tribunal or the degree of its competency. Some sort of co-operative life among craftsmen was however obvious. Although we have more details on the later Anatolian guilds of the 14th c. A.D. upwards, these are confined to customs, rules and ceremonies of joining the guilds.<sup>1</sup>

The duties of shaikh al-hirfa (chief of the craft) were to regulate the conditions of labour, watch the standard of crafts, punish those who violate the rules, and supervise the initiation of the new guildmen; he was a representative of the guild in public affairs and contacts with the government, and was the arbiter in the differences between members who could also appeal from him to the qādi.<sup>2</sup>

Initiation to the guild took place in a special ceremony called shadd,<sup>3</sup> but we have no clear description of the practice except when it refers to the initiation of the fityān. There seems to have been a close connection between futuwwa and crafts from the 12th and 13th centuries A.D. onwards, but the origins of the Futwwa and the precise relationship between the two organisations are still obscure questions.<sup>4</sup> Hence neither in

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1 Lewis, 30-4. Massignon, op.cit., Cf. Nights, I, 111, 178.

2 El. IV, 245, art. Shadd. Cf. Tanūkhi, Farāj, II, 113.

3 Ibn Batūṭṭa, I, 214f. Ibn al-Mi'mār, Kitāb al-Futuwwa, (Baghdād, 1958), 88, 207-9.

4 Lewis, 28.

its early nor later stories does the "Nights" touch upon any relation between crafts and the futuwwa movement.

Some sort of hierarchical organisation was characteristic of each trade. The master-craftsman was called mu'allim, his journeyman khalīfa, the apprentice muta'allim and the labourer ṣāni'.<sup>1</sup> When a mu'allim became the head of his order he was called 'arīf, a position above that of the naqīb.<sup>2</sup>

In the "Nights" the 'arīf is also called a shaikh or gayyim,<sup>3</sup> and an apprentice whether a muta'allim or labourer is called ṣabi (boy) or ṣāni'.<sup>4</sup>

An ordinary tailor or dyer might employ only one ṣāni', whereas a well-off dyer or goldsmith might have several apprentices under training. Each guild had a headquarter (qā'a) where they met to discuss professional questions and fix the prices of their commodities.<sup>5</sup>

The guilds, like their counterparts in Europe, did not believe in free competition as a way to regulate the economy and develop their crafts. Thus, one of the most important duties of the guild was the retention of the trade secrets. Strict control was exercised within each guild "to preserve for its members a monopoly of the trade in the wares in which they

1 El. IV, 436, art. Ṣinf.

2 Rāghib, Ibid., II, 465, Cf. Lewis, 30-4.

3 Nights, IV, 23 and Cal.ed. II, 298.

4 Ibid., III, 241, IV, 281.

5 Ibid., III, 239f.

dealt as in the services which they provided. "<sup>1</sup>

Admission to the guilds was normally confined to the sons of the craftsmen and apprentices of the guild members. Strangers, no matter how skilful, were excluded from membership. An example of the operation of such a monopoly is given in the episode of the dyer who emigrated to a new town and wanted to start business there.<sup>2</sup>

Noticing that the dyers in his new abode used only two colours, blue and white, he offered to teach one of them the secrets of dyeing with red, green, or yellow and asked the dyer to take him on as an employee. He refused and so did all the other dyers, and their chief. The stranger was told that the number of dyers in the town was limited to forty. "When one of us dies" said a dyer to him, "We teach his son the craft, and if he has left no son, we prefer to stay one member short. If a craftsman leaves two sons, we train only one of them, and when one son dies, we teach his brother."<sup>3</sup>

Where no craft secrets are in danger, the guilds seem to be more co-operative with strangers. For example, a broke Egyptian water-carrier arrives in Baghdad, goes to the chief of the water-carriers and tells him his story and he is immediately provided with a shop, water skins and the other necessary equipment for his work.<sup>4</sup>

1 CE, op. cit.

2 Nights, IV, 215.

3 Ibid., op. cit.

4 Ibid., III, 253.

The spirit of the grouping of people by their craft or occupation is apparent even in parties such as those where cloth dealers, tailors and barbers meet for supper.<sup>1</sup>

Members of the same craft had their shops grouped together distinct from those of other crafts.<sup>2</sup> These separate markets themselves had to be arranged in a sensible order so that the bazaars of bakers, cooks and blacksmiths should not be placed next to the cloth and perfumery bazars because of the smudge and cooking smells.<sup>3</sup>

Besides the craft guilds, there was a fantastic variety of organisations, similar to the guilds, to which belonged the lowest occupations, such as mendicants, charlatans, forgers,<sup>4</sup> tufaylis and beggars, each with an 'arif to organise them.<sup>5</sup>

The well-organised profession of begging was particularly widespread in rich cities. Ibn Khaldun remarks that the beggars of such cities begged for luxuries, such as meat, butter, special cooked dishes, garments and even certain utensils.<sup>6</sup>

Begging is a phenomenon which is closely associated with the rise of wealthy classes and is the result of unstable economy, wars and periods of change and unemployment.<sup>7</sup>

1 Nights 2 I, 117. Cf. Dūri, 80-83.

2 Ya'qūbi, 264, 246. Prescott, 1954, 174f. Nights, I, 176.

3 Shayzari, 11. Lewis, 20.

4 Ibn Baṭṭūṭa, I, 20, II, 213, 221, Nights, I, 35, III, 236-73.

5 Al-Ḥarīri, Maqāmat (Beirut, 1873), 304-14. Nights, I, 134, 126. See also Khaṭīb, al-Tatfīl... (Damascus, 1927), 51, 81-104.

6 Muqaddima, II, 274, Eng. tr.

7 ESS., II, art. Begging.

The "Nights" presents a host of examples of mendicants and blind beggars.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, al-Jāhiz enumerates five kinds of professional beggar. Some were genuinely infirm and others faked infirmity and pretended various ailments in order to increase their income.<sup>2</sup> Beggars consorted together and profited by the division of their area into districts for begging, and there was some division of labour, some begging at night and others in the day time.<sup>3</sup>

The profits of the three blind beggars in the story of The Barber of Baghdad, who meet at their headquarters to count their gains, amount to 10,000 dirhams,<sup>4</sup> but beggars' earnings seem to be exaggerated at every period and in all lands.

A number of books have sections dealing with the eccentric anecdotes of this group of the populace.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Ḥarīri in one maqāma, relates the episode of the shāikh of beggars who in the beggars' headquarters conducts a ceremony of marriage between a widely travelled and active beggar and a sharptongued and most impertinent female beggar.<sup>6</sup>

The tatfil (sponging at banquets) is closely connected with the principle of hospitality required of the well-off classes. The job of the tufaylis 'arīf was to provide his followers with

1 Nights, I, 35, 125. IV, 336.

2 Bukhalā', 51-3.

3 Nights, I, 126f. Ḥarīri, op. cit.

4 Nights, op. cit.

5 Bukhalā', 46-53. Rāghib, III, 190. Sharīshi, Sharh... I, 244.

6 Maqāmāt, 309f.

decent clothes to wear at banquets, direct them to the houses where feasting took place and give them advice as to what to do. In return for this, he would receive half of whatever they gain from each banquet. A member would be punished and thrown out if he betrayed his fellows by selling his proceeds.<sup>1</sup> In the "Nights", anecdotes on the tatfīl involve only amateur tufaylis of high rank.<sup>2</sup>

### The Organisations of Thieves

A curious form of guild which plays a greater role than any other kind of guild in the "Nights" is the fraternities of thieves and sharpers known as the immoral guilds of brigands and bandits.<sup>3</sup> They had the hierarchical division of an organised body and were leading a communal life, with mutual professional interests and ceremonial code and rites.

The popular names given to thieves in Baghdad were 'ayyārūn, shuṭṭār or fityān all of which seem to signify the same kind of groups.<sup>4</sup> This leads us to consider the futuwwa movement which took very diverse and irreconcilable forms in successive periods, having connections with Sufism on the one hand and with youth associations and professional groupings on the other.<sup>5</sup> The fityān themselves came from varied ethnic

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1 Khatīb, Tatfīl., 81-92, 51, 66.

2 Nights, II, 328ff. and cal.ed. II, 298, on amateur tufaylis, see Tatfīl, 35-44.

3 Lewis, 35.

4 Ṭabari, II, 887, Qushayri, Risāla (Cairo, 1886) 134f.

5 Op.cit. Jawād, Introduction to Kitāb al-Futuwwa (Baghdad) 1958), 12-14. El. II, 961 art. Futuwwa.

and social origins and hence the movement was dominated by the masses at one time, by the aristocrats at another, or by a mixture of all classes.<sup>1</sup>

In this study we are only concerned with the movement insofar as it was connected with thieves whose names in the "Nights" appear as the fityān of Iraq, the shuttār of Egypt and the mahara (experts) of Persia.<sup>2</sup>

The origins of the futuwwa movement are extremely obscure, and opinions vary as to whether it started as an aristocratic movement, transformed into a bourgeois movement in the 13th c. A.D. and finally became adopted by the craft-guilds in the 15th c. A.D., or whether it had an inverse development.<sup>3</sup>

Massignon and Taeschner have dealt explicitly with the futuwwa in the strict sense of the term as a peaceful and moral youth movement of the upper and middle classes which later on became largely confined to craftsmen. However, its relation with the masses started much earlier, in the 9th and 10th centuries A.D., when vagabonds, outlaws and wage earners adopted the rules of futuwwa and set themselves to rob and oppose the rich and the middle class merchants in Iraq.

1 Jawād, Ibid., 42, 46. Athīr, XI, 42, 63. H. Zayyāt, al-Futuwwa wa'l fityān, in al-Mashrig, 1947, XLI, 477, -83. Qushayri, op.cit.

2 Nights, III, 262, 266.

3 Lewis, 27f. Taeschner, Die Islamischen Futuwwabünde, ZDMG, 1934, XII, 6ff. Dūri, 84.

To explain the irreconcilable meanings and roles which this movement showed, one should not associate it with, or confine it to a certain class or group of youths. The futuwwa was a norm of conduct and an ideology which could be adopted by the young people of diverse aims and different classes and yet, in its general character, the movement owed nothing to the various co-existing groups which adopted it.<sup>1</sup>

A fatā had to be honest, modest, brave, generous and chivalrous. Some groups of young people were pious, others indulged in a comfortable life of merriment and refinement.<sup>12</sup> Beside this ideal kind of futuwwa, there were the fityān of humble origin whose names as 'avyārūn (vagrants) and shuttār (artful ones) suggest that they were from the mob or rabble.

To assess the picture of robbers depicted in the "Nights", it is necessary to consider briefly the history of the fityān robbers in Iraq and Egypt.

The 'avyārūn of Baghdad are mentioned for the first time in connection with the civil war between al-Amīn and al-Ma'mūn. They fought on the side of al-Amīn who sanctioned their movement so that people were forced to form groups to fight back and defend themselves against them.<sup>3</sup>

For three centuries, from the 3rd/9th to the 6th/12th, chronicles are full of the disturbances and exploits of these thieves in Iraq.<sup>4</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 579/1183) came to regard

1 Cahen, El. art. Futuwwa.

2 Qushayri, op. cit. Zayyāt, op. cit.

3 Ṭabari, II, 887-893-911, III, 1008-1010, Miskawayh, Ṭajārib, VI, 413, 433.

4 Ṭabari, op. cit. Mas'ūdi, VI, 457, Athīr, VIII, 12, 83, 455, IX, 299, 406, XI, 40-42.



them as a class on their own. In his opinion they are people who are not rich but their demands for luxury and pleasures make them thieves and highway robbers. They are, he states, the worst of all classes since they are in constant fear of the authority and are destined to be killed or hanged.<sup>1</sup>

The emergence of this class of people was connected with political unrest and economic discontent. Low wages and unemployment coupled with indignation at the deceptive methods employed by the rich in amassing money while ignoring the payment of the zakāt,<sup>2</sup> resulted in the spread and the persistence of the robbers' movement, ceasing only at exceptional times of strong rulers.

From the middle of the 4th/10th c. onwards, an indirect cause of their activities was the aversion they had towards the new rulers of the Buwayhid and Seljuk dynasties.<sup>3</sup> In the year 350/961, their violent exploits were supported by some 'Alid and 'Abbāsīd Sharīfs who had been reduced to a secondary social and economic position during the Buwayhid rule.<sup>4</sup>

It is noticeable that their destructive activities were intensified in the times of disorder, ineffective governments or corrupt officials who were at times in league with the thieves.

1 Sayd, II, 473.

2 Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 106, Rāghib, III, 190, Zaydān, V, 46f.

3 Ṣuli, 259, Athīr, VIII, 455, Dūri, 69.

4 Sābi, 331, Jawād, 30, Ṣibt, Mir'āt, al-Zamān (Hyderabad, 1951), VIII, pt.1, 183.

The well-known 'ayyār Ibn Ḥamdi (10th c.A.D.) promised Ibn Shīrẓād, a governor and vizier, 10,000 dinars a month from his illegal proceeds. Ibn Ḥamdi was later captured and hanged by the Buwayhid Amīr Tūzūn.<sup>1</sup>

At times the 'ayyārūn virtually ruled the city. In the year 424/1032, al-Barjami and his fityān thieves pillaged the markets and shops and burgled the residence of the caliph and the district where the vizier lived. People, in protest, asked the preacher to pray, not for the caliph, but for al-Barjami, the real master of the city.<sup>2</sup> He claimed the title of qā'id (leader) instead of 'ayyār and officially obtained it. His followers carried their own golden banners and marched through the streets.

It has been reported that they were shielded by the Turk soldiers and court attendants who housed them during the day time. Mu'tamad al-Dawla spent a lot of money to arrest al-Barjami who was finally ambushed and drowned.<sup>3</sup>

The 'ayyārūn would seem to have entered houses and asked for whatever they wanted just as the sultan would take over confiscated property; they would fight the government troops and then exchange captives with them. In the year 532/1137, the wālī of Baghdad Abu al-Karam was so terrified of the 'ayyār Ibn Bakrān and his colleague Ibn al-Bazzāz that he asked his own nephew to be initiated into the fityān movement. These two

1 Athīr, VIII, 311f. Ṣūli, op. cit.

2 Athīr, IX, 299, Sibṭ, Mir'āt... B.M. MS. Or. 4619, 2 Vols, II, fol. 224<sup>b</sup>, 226<sup>b</sup>.

3 Sibṭ, op. cit. Cahen, El. II, 961.

'ayyār̄s became so powerful that they intended to strike coins in their names.<sup>1</sup>

A few years later, the Sultan's cousin and the vizier's son were members of the fiṭyān organisation which plundered and looted every shop and khān. The Chief of the Police could do nothing against the robbers until he obtained the Sultan's consent to put their distinguished leaders to death.<sup>2</sup>

From the above it seems that the 'iyāra-futuwwa movement had developed from a gang of escaped prisoners and rabble to an organised movement which attracted members of the middle and upper-classes and won their sympathy. The erudites became curious and wanted to explain, criticise and elucidate this movement. As a result, alongside the extra-legal aspect of futuwwa, there appeared the ṣ ūfi futuwwa from the 5th/11th c. onwards.<sup>3</sup>

By the time the Caliph al-Nāṣir took over the movement in the 6th/12th c., there were five diversified branches of futuwwa.<sup>4</sup> The movement became so troublesome and confused that people of all classes and ideals got mingled with the rabble. The Caliph sought a way of transformation, abolished the order as it stood and issued an edict in 604/1207 reconstructing it as an aristocratic order of futuwwa, excluding from it murderers and those who harboured them, and putting it

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1 Athīr, IX, 284, XI, 40ff. Jawzi, Muntaẓam, X, 95.

2 Athīr, XI, 63. Sibṭ., op. cit.

3 Cahen, El., I, 963.

4 Op. cit.

completely under his patronage.

Amīrs, kings, as well as ordinary people, from all countries joined al-Nāṣir's movement which was, however, destroyed after the Mongol conquest and was eventually modified in Anatolia, until in the 15th and 16th centuries A. D., it was once more adopted by the lower classes, this time, however, not by the vagrants and unemployed, but by the craftsmen fityān.<sup>1</sup>

There was a certain parallelism in the conditioning and the evolution of the movement in Egypt. As early as the time of Khumārawayh (884-895 A. D.) the fityān of humble origin were allied to the ruler. Khumārawayh took their leaders into his service and offered them and their followers regular salaries. His object was to divert their anti-social tendencies into useful channels, and to make them fight in front of his own proper army. They were called al-Mukhtāra, and wore silk and brocade garments, golden belts, and carried shields and swords.<sup>2</sup>

It is to be noted, however, that the 'iyāra-futuwwa movement in Egypt and Damascus did not acquire the quality of violence which characterised it in Iraq and was not recorded under the same names. For a short period in the Fāṭimid time the shabāb shuj'ān (young heroes), combined communal life

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1 Athīr, XII, 221, 285-89, Maqrīzi, Sulūk, I, pt. 1, 172. Levy, 1929, 241. Ibn Buttūṭa, I, 214f.

2 Taghribirdi, III, 459, ed. Cairo, 1932, Maqrīzi, Ibid., I, pt. 2, 397, 459, 496.

with violent anti-aristocratic activities but were soon exterminated by al-Mu'izz.<sup>1</sup> The other Egyptian popular group of ḥarāfīsh reveals an undeniable relationship with 'ayyārūn, but the earliest mention of this group in the chronicles does not occur until as late as 697/1298.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 653/1255 however, the Mamlūk Sultan Baybars, encouraged by al-Mustansir II, of the line of the 'Abbāsīd figure-head dynasty, revived al-Nāṣir's aristocratic futuwwa, in Egypt.<sup>3</sup> There is no indication as to how long this aristocratic movement lasted.

Unlike the 'ayyārūn of Iraq, the Egyptian popular movement of ḥarāfīsh did not claim connection with futuwwa.<sup>4</sup> The ḥarāfīsh organisation continued until the end of the 16th c. A.D. when it was transformed and adopted by the guilds of craftsmen.

To return to the "Nights", the collection presents us with three categories of thieves; first, the highway robbers of the A'rāb class who are condemned as ruthless and outrageous murderers. Second, the individual thieves represented in the group of crime stories related by Egyptian Police officials.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Cahen, op.cit.

2 For the meaning of the word and the history of the movement see the "Harāfīsh" and their "Sultan", in IESHO, July, 1963, VI, pt. 2, 190-215. The ḥarāfīsh were a large organised group, an unruly element, given to violent action and had clashes with the authority. 202.

3 Maqrīzi, Sulūk, I, pt. 2, 495-97.

4 Cahen, op.cit. Brinner, op.cit.

5 Nights, II, 23-9, and Cal.ed. II, 290-97.

The aim of these stories is to show the corruption, injustice and immorality of the Mamlūk organs of justice. The stories point to police inefficiency, plain and veiled bribery, planting of evidence in the victim's house and other acts of corruption.<sup>1</sup>

However, we shall here discuss the stories which deal, not with individual sharpers but with fraternities and guilds. The principal theme of these stories is the co-operation between the thieves and the police.

Most of the thieves in the "Nights" are acknowledged by the authorities as organised bodies after they had declared their repentance and joined the police force to catch active thieves.<sup>2</sup> They draw salaries from the government and are allowed to continue to organise themselves in guilds and are offered headquarters to live in.<sup>3</sup>

Aḥmad al-Danaf, for example, is in charge of the security on the highways. "The Caliph bestowed garments of honour upon Aḥmad and made him captain (of the watch) on his right, and upon Shūmān also he bestowed a garment of honour and made him captain on his left."<sup>4</sup>

This point can be verified by historical evidence which also shows a relationship between the government and the repentis or (tawwābun). In the time of al-Mu'tadid, ten bags

1 Gerhardt, 1963, 173.

2 Nights, III, 236-73, II, 186.

3 Ibid., III, 272.

4 Ibid., III, 236.

of coins, the payment of the troops, were stolen and the Caliph sent out his agents who were ex-thieves to search for the culprit whom they brought back and denounced as the thief. In his attempt to extract a confession from the thief, al-Mu'tadid promised him a salary of 10 dinars a month and an establishment.<sup>1</sup> This shows that the government not only paid reformed thieves but also arranged to forgive practicing thieves if they co-operated with the government.

Cahen remarks that the 'avyārūn' of Baghdad had a specific ambition which may cause some surprise: "they wanted to be enrolled in the Police, partly, of course, for the sake of regular pay, but also and primarily because to join the Police is the surest way of avoiding trouble with them."<sup>2</sup>

Burton states that "in the East, the police like the old Bow Street runners, were and are still recruited principally among the criminal classes."<sup>3</sup>

Thus in the "Nights" when the wālī of Baghdad fails to capture Dalīla the Crafty, he commissions the captains of the watch to arrest her. When she repents, he forgives her and appoints a salary for her.<sup>4</sup>

1 Murūj, VIII, 152-56.

2 El., II, 962, art., Futuwwa.

3 Supplemental, II, 6.

4 Nights, III, 251.

Further, the picture given in the "Nights" of these mugaddams (captains) and their subordinates, marching in the streets of Baghdad with their attractive clothing, bears resemblance to the official regiment of al-Mukhtāra described by Taghribirdi.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this, there is no sufficient evidence that the repentis of Baghdad were in the habit of marching in processions.

On the other hand, the chronicles show that the defiant 'ayyarūn would seem to have the chance, at times, to march openly under their golden banner<sup>6</sup>, pick whatever they wanted from shops, hire porters to carry their thefts and march back home. If the 'ayyarūn had such opportunities, one can therefore deduce that the tawwābūn must have also appeared in processions as the "Nights" plainly indicates, at least in the way of challenging the true 'ayyarūn against whom they were recruited by the police.<sup>2</sup>

The other reason which gave the thieves' organisation power and importance, and to which this picture of an official procession of repentis is perhaps related, was the participation

1 Nights, III, 253.

2 Sibṭī, II, fol. 225a. Athīr, XI, 41f, IX, 248, 299. Ibn Battūṭa's description (8th/14th c.) of the Ikhyān (craftsmen fityān) in Anatolia marching in their procession each craft with its distinct clothes and banners, trumpets and drums alongside the soldiers of the sultan, resembles al-Danaf's procession in the "Nights" (See Ibn Battūṭa, I, 214f). However, a comparison cannot be made here; first, because this was seen by Ibn Battūṭa only in Anatolia, at a much later age and second, because these groups were craftsmen and not organised thieves. One can however assume that the practice of the Anatolian Ikhyān must have been a tradition handed down from the Baghdadi fityān thieves of the early period.



of these popular groups, whether in Iraq or in Egypt, in the border wars against the Franks. The seljuk amīrs seemed to have sought the help of the 'ayyārūn against the enemy, and their regiment was often stationed with the government troops on the borders.<sup>1</sup>

It is noticeable that whenever there was a call-up for recruits from the 'amma, whether against the Byzantine or the Franks, and arms were distributed, the 'ayyārūn had a chance to form a force and create trouble and chaos in Baghdad, especially if the authorities failed to accomplish the campaign.<sup>2</sup>

The other aspect of a relationship between the notable people and the fityān thieves is shown in the "Nights" when abu al-Shāmāt, the chief of the merchants, the head of the court guards, and a favourite of the caliph, becomes the "adopted" son of the fityān's chief Aḥmad al-Danaf (a reformed thief who turned policeman).<sup>3</sup>

The rules of initiation to the official futuwwa, as illustrated by Ibn al-Mi'mār,<sup>4</sup> were equally applied to all the members whatever their origin or class. Thus even notable and exalted persons who joined the movement would call their senior leaders by the title kabīri (my chief) or maḡaddami (my captain), as Abu al-Shāmāt and his son do when they join the fraternity

1 Sibṭ, VIII, pt. 1, 429, pt. 2, 689. Athīr, VIII, 455, Brinner, Ibid., 196, 202.

2 Athīr, op. cit., Tawhīdi, III, 151.

3 Nights, II, 186, 193, 196.

4 Kitāb al-Futuwwa, 192.

of the reformed thieves.<sup>1</sup> The ceremony would seem to include the drinking of the cup of futuwwa from the hand of the senior chief, marching under his banner and wearing the futuwwa clothes.<sup>2</sup>

Although the main thieves' story in the "Nights", namely Aḥmad al-Danaf and Dalīla, is supposed to be Egyptian in characteristics, it shows a marked relationship with the 'ayyārūn-fityān of Iraq as described by al-Mas'ūdi.<sup>3</sup> The story must be Baghdadi in origin, augmented later by stories of Egyptian thieves, since the main thief Aḥmad al-Danaf is based on the personality of the famous Baghdadi 'ayyār Ibn Ḥamdi of the 10th c. A. D., and since Aḥmad's partner Dalīla has also been reported as a famous Baghdadi woman thief.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to point out here the differences between the thieves of Baghdad and Egypt as they appear in the "Nights". The Baghdadi thieves were anti-government, anti-social and inclined to violence. Thus robbers in the story of 'Ali Bābā made regular raids on caravans and filled up a whole cave with their plunder. They killed 'Ali Bābā's brother and intended to kill him too.<sup>5</sup> The way in which 'Ali Bābā and his slave-girl got rid of the forty thieves and buried them in the garden without informing the police recalls the often repeated accusation that

1 Op. cit., Nights, op. cit.

2 Nights, III, 259, 261. Although there is no specific mention of the sarawīl (trousers) in the "Nights", these were officially worn by the fityān of all the branches of futuwwa.

3 See below, 256.

4 See above, 245, and below, 255.

5 IRAS., 1910, 227-386.

the police in Baghdad were not quite efficient in curbing the gangs, and that sometimes people formed their own civil defence to deal with the 'ayyārūn.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the Egyptian shuṭṭār committed only minor crimes by ruse and trick to show their cleverness and the desirability of attaching them to the police force, one finds the sons of the notable people of Baghdad attaching themselves to the 'ayyārūn to avoid their menace as has been mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

Because of this marked difference, the narrator admits that Baghdad is the place where the real fityān are to be found, and that Iraq is undisputedly the origin of the futuwwa movement.<sup>3</sup>

From the thieves' stories of the "Nights" we learn how these guilds organised themselves, and showed their solidarity and sporting spirit when each leader, with conscious pride, devised tricks to outwit the others. The people exposed to the rude humours of these contesting parties of thieves are eventually consoled by having their goods returned to them or, by being compensated by the authorities.<sup>4</sup>

From this one can gather that only the top criminals were employed by the police force. If these repentis, however, resorted to their criminal ways, they would be punished, imprisoned for life or hanged.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Miskawayh, VI, 433f. Tawhīdī, III, 153-60, Sibṭ, VIII, pt. 1, 183, Ṭabari, III, 1008-1010.

2 See above, 245.

3 Nights, III, 256, 252.

4 Op. cit.

5 Ibid., II, 189f, 194, III, 248.

The reformation of these thieves, it would seem, was never complete because of their former loyalties to their profession and colleagues. Al-Mas'ūdi points out that some of these reformed intermediaries shared the proceeds of the robberies committed by the active thieves.<sup>1</sup>

In the "Nights", the mugaddam Ahmad al-Danaf harbours the shātir 'Ali al-Zaybaq in his qā'a until he completes all his tricks, and then introduces him to the caliph who asks him to join the police force.<sup>2</sup> Further, Zaynab, an active woman thief, successfully asks the captain of the watch, a reformed robber, for protection, and offers to pay him the taxes levied on her tavern instead of paying them to the wālī.<sup>3</sup>

There is no sufficient evidence that women thieves, such as Dalīla and her daughter, had their own followers and lived a communal life, or appeared in processions wearing the futuwwa clothes. Al-Mas'ūdi, commenting on the rogueries of a shaikh of thieves, marks that "He outrivalled the wiles of Dalīla and other tricksters whether ancient or modern."<sup>4</sup> This, however, does not make clear whether Dalīla worked as an individual sharper or had a gang of her own. A brief account of a woman sharper (muhtāla) who defrauded people of their possessions in Baghdad resembles the exploits of Dalīla in the "Nights".<sup>5</sup>

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1 Murūj, op. cit.

2 Nights, III, 266-72.

3 Ibid., III, 250. Similarly, it has been reported that the powerful 'ayyār al-Barjami levied taxes from taverns and Khāns, Sibt, II, fol. 225<sup>a</sup>, year 425/1033.

4 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 175.

5 Rāghib, III, 192.

It is quite clear, however, that women were often employed as 'ayns (spies) by the gangs of thieves.<sup>1</sup>

The thieves in the "Nights" seem to complain of unemployment, and are jealous because their reformed colleagues have fixed salaries, big headquarters to shelter them at night and two meals a day, comprising four to six various dishes.<sup>2</sup> When sharpers decide to join the police they set out to do their tricks disguising themselves either as Sūfis, or as opulent looking persons, and often spend some of their own money to make their devices succeed.<sup>3</sup>

Accounts of thieves' organisations in Arabic chronicles show that thieves had properly accredited leaders or amīrs. They divided themselves into groups of tens, each ten thieves having an 'arīf, and each ten 'arīfs coming under a naqīb: each ten naqībs in turn came under a qā'id and each ten qā'ids were led by an amīr.<sup>4</sup>

In the "Nights" the amīrs who turned policemen have the title of muqaddams or 'aqīds.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Rāghib enumerates five kinds of thieves: ṣāhib Layl (a night thief), ṣāhib tarīq (a highway robber), al-muhtāl (the sharper), al-nabbāsh (the grave and treasure digger,) and

1 Sibṭ, VIII, pt. 1, 183.

2 Nights, III, 236, 256, 259.

3 Nights, III, 237, 243, 257, 241, 249.

4 Mas'ūdi, VI, 452. Nights, III, 249.

5 Ibid., II, 186, III, 236, 252. See Sibṭ, VIII, pt. 1, 429 on the muqaddams of thieves and the Seljuk amīrs fighting together against the Franks.

finally the thief who renders his victim unconscious, by hitting him with a stone just on the right spot, and proceeds to rob him, namely al-khannāq, (lit. strangler).<sup>1</sup>

Among the assistants were: the 'ayn, who studied the conditions of shops, houses and cargo ships, and the mu'ti (literally, bringer), who provided the thieves with food and clothes and sold their thefts for them.<sup>2</sup>

According to al-Tanūkhī the order had secret and secluded headquarters, with doors secured by iron locks. Organised thieves distinguished themselves by wearing a mi'zar (apron) round their waists and an īzar (cloak) to cover their bodies.<sup>3</sup>

In the "Nights", when the sharpers go to negotiate with their opponents or have a plea to make to them, they wrap a handkerchief round their necks.<sup>4</sup> The repentis of the "Nights" wear gilded helmets, waist-bands, quilted cloaks and carry shields and swords.<sup>5</sup>

One of the sporting privileges of the fityān was the rearing and the flying of home pigeons,<sup>6</sup> since this was a

1 Muḥadrāt, III, 189, Sibt, II, fol., 238<sup>b</sup>. Nights, II, 189, III, 262. Al-Jāhīz speaks of a group of khannāqūn in Kūfa who used dogs for the purpose of strangulation, Hayawān, II, 264-67.

2 Rāghib, op. cit. Sibt, VIII, pt. 1, 183, Athīr, XI, 63.

3 Tanūkhī, Faraj, II, 112f, Nights, II, 71f.

4 Nights, III, 261, 265.

5 Ibid., III, 253, 256.

6 Jāhīz, Hayawān, II, 157, III, 20.

Athīr, XII, 286. One fata is said to have shot 1073 of these birds and al-Nāsir himself shot 1445. See Jawād, Introd. 73.

disreputable occupation, al-Nāṣir replaced it by the practice of ramiy al-bunduq or the shooting of a species of "honourable" birds called al-manāsīb. However in the "Nights" the reformed thief Dalīla, is proud to get a job of rearing the carrier-pigeons which belonged to the caliph.<sup>1</sup>

The fityān thieves, like other followers of the futuwwa, adopted a norm of conduct which was to be observed by the members of the guild.<sup>2</sup> Chroniclers, when recounting the outrageous exploits of the thieves, report with astonishment, their acts of chivalry. Al-Barjami, for instance, is described as a terrorist who harassed the people of Baghdad, yet he is said to have shown futuwwa in his dealings with women and the people who surrendered to him.<sup>3</sup>

The fityān thieves had to keep their word and be generous and act according to the ideal of murū'a. According to this precept, Ibn Ḥamdi, a leading thief, took upon himself not to rob a merchant who carried less than 1,000 dinars.<sup>4</sup> 'Uthmān al-Khayyāt, a highly skilled thief, is reported to have advocated that thieves should not rob their neighbours, or generous men, or those who had fallen under the protection of the thieves and above all they should not interfere with women or harm them. Robbers should try to be mere sharers in the victim's property and not despoil him of everything.

1 Nights, III, 251, 261.

2 Qushayri, 135f. Rāghib, III, 191.

3 Athīr, IX, 294, 299. Tawhīdī, III, 161. Rāghib, op. cit.

4 Tanūkhi, Ibid., II, 108.

Another leader is reported to have said that he had never lied nor betrayed anyone since he became a fata.<sup>1</sup>

A similar vein of their conduct runs through the sharper stories of the "Nights", whether of active thieves or repentis. In a Baghdadi story the thieves return the furniture removed from a merchant's house and do not touch the jewellery of a slave-girl when they realise the anxiety of the merchant arising from the fact that the slave-girl, who is involved in the episode, belongs not to him but to the court and is only on a secret visit to his house.<sup>2</sup>

In the "Nights", a thief gets angry if he is told that someone else is braver or more generous than him. A thief must fear no one but the authority of the Creator, must avoid blameworthy aconduct and show every good quality in his character.<sup>3</sup>

To conclude, since the "Nights" concentrates on futuwwa at the level of the masses, it does not deal with the other aspects of the movement which were connected: first, with the young and idle rich who followed the fashion of the day and grouped themselves in fityān associations,<sup>4</sup> second, with the exalted and religious Šufi futuwwa,<sup>5</sup> third, with the

1 Rāghib, op. cit.

2 Nights, II, 71-3.

3 Ibid., III, 252.

4 For details see Jawād, Introd., 14-23.. Zayyāt, 1947. 477-83, Aghāni, I, 154, XI, 98.

5 Qushayri, 134-37.



aristocratic organisations which emerged under the patronage of the Caliph al-Nāṣir,<sup>1</sup> and finally the professional groupings of the fityān guildmen which appeared in the 14th and 15th centuries A. D.<sup>2</sup>

One may wonder why any importance should be attached to these extra-legal organisations both in the "Nights" and Arabic chronicles. The significance of this section of the lower class arises from the following: firstly, by organising themselves in fraternities, the fityān thieves attracted a greater number of young people of various classes and constituted an unruly element in the structure of the society. Secondly, among the masses they enjoyed the popularity of thieves who attacked the rich, and of tricksters who were clever enough to perform cunning stratagems. The thieves regarded themselves, like other craftsmen, the followers of a ṣinā'a (profession),<sup>3</sup> who chose to make their livelihood the dangerous way.<sup>4</sup> They organised themselves in guilds, perhaps to secure for themselves a share in the income from a financially profitable, though perilous profession.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Athīr, XII, 286, Taechner, 1934, 6ff.

2 Massignon, ESS., VII, 215. Battūta, op. cit.

3 Rāghib, III, 191.

4 Cf. Dimashqi, 39, on earning one's living by tricks or violence.

5 Nights, III, 255, on a chief of 40 thieves who earns about 1,000 dinars while travelling between Egypt and Baghdad, and sends the money to his headquarters in Egypt to be distributed among his followers.

The ideology of the futuwwa which they followed eliminated the stigma attached to their so-called profession, not only in their view,<sup>1</sup> but also to some extent, in the view of those people who quoted their sayings and described their exploits.<sup>2</sup>

It is to be noted that not all the members of these organisations were destitute people<sup>3</sup> since the names of the Baghdadi 'ayyars, such as Ibn al-Bazzāz (cloth-dealer) and 'Uthmān al-Khayyat (tailor) suggest their former professions. Similarly Ibn Taghriberdi remarks that most of the ḥarāfīsh of Egypt had left their proper occupation to take up begging. These sturdy beggars, he states, competed with the infirm who had no other means of livelihood. They would sit and ask for alms mocking the people in the name of the prophets, complaining of the cruelty of men and criticising them.<sup>4</sup>

It would seem, therefore, that this phenomenon, which lasted from the 9th - 14th centuries A.D. was at once social, economic and political, closely linked with the affluent societies of the medieval East, in which wealth was confined to the middle and upper classes. The fityān of the lower class were not content to live the hard life of craftsmen and wage earners, and tried, by violence and tricks, to share the comforts and pleasures enjoyed by the well-to-do classes.

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1 They adopted their name 'ayyarūn with as much pride as did the people in revolutionary France the term sans-culotte.

2 Cf. Rāghib, op.cit. Jawzi, Zirāf, 46f.

3 Cf. Cahen, El., op.cit.

4 Nujūm, VI, 763 (tr. Popper). Brinner, 1963, 205.

This is confirmed by the fact that when the 'Abbāsīd civilisation was destroyed by the Mongol invasion, the 'ayyārūn disappeared. In the same way all mention of the ḥarāfīsh of Egypt ceased in the 10th/16th c., towards the end of the Mamlūk reign.<sup>1</sup>

One can therefore presume that when the economy declined and the number of the rich was reduced, these extra-legal groups, who made stealing their profession, were compelled to make their livelihood in proper occupations.

They would seem to have carried on the tradition of their predecessors, the popular fityān to their new craft-guilds of the 9th/15th c. This subject is, however, outside the scope of our study, and involves the unsolved question of that obscure link between the later professional guilds and the futuwwa movement.<sup>2</sup>

### Slaves

Slavery in ancient as well as the medieval times was a universal institution which gave rise to a class at the bottom of the social scale.

The main sources of slaves were wars and raids, especially in early Islam,<sup>3</sup> and the widely-spread slave-trade which

1 Brinner, Ibid., 207.

2 Cf. Lewis, 27. For details on the link between the ḥarāfīsh and guildmen see Brinner, 1963, 207-215.

3 Mez, 166. Nights, I, 211, IV, 120. Though it was forbidden to enslave other Muslims (Quran, 47<sup>4</sup>), Nuzhat al-Zamān in the "Nights" is captured by a Bedouin and sold as a slave (Nights, I, 214). It has been reported that in the time of trouble and disorder, the Arāb used to raid on the cities and captivate Muslims and sell them (Sibt, Mir'āt, II, fol. 226<sup>b</sup>).

brought a regular flow of slaves into the markets of the Muslim world.<sup>1</sup>

Further, the offspring of slaves remained slaves. There were, however, restrictions in the case of umm-walad, whose children were acknowledged by her master as his own. These were regarded free and their mother was no longer subjected to sale<sup>2</sup>

The acquisition of slaves remained a characteristic feature of Muslim society up till the 19th c.<sup>3</sup> Thus stories of all periods in the "Nights" show this class as an integral part of the social structure, and slaves were owned by both the Muslims and non-Muslims.<sup>4</sup>

However, slaves in the "Nights", with the exception of singing slave-girls, form only a background to the affluent society of which they were an essential part. Accordingly, we propose to examine the conditions of the groups of anonymous slaves depicted in the "Nights" by surveying the Islamic laws pertinent to the aspects of slavery shown in our source only.

#### Rights and Condition of Slaves

Islam like its predecessors Christianity and Judaism, did not abolish slavery, which was the common practice in

1 Mez, 159f, Nights, II, 246, I, 139.

2 Khwārizmi, Jami' Masānīd Abu Hanīfa, (2 Vols. Cairo, 1332 A.H.) II, 152, Nights, I, 181, III, 278.

3 EL, art. 'Abd, I, 31.

4 Nights, IV, 67. Mez, 156f.

pre-Islamic society.<sup>1</sup> Islam, however, endeavoured to moderate slavery and improve the legal and social status of slaves.

Slaves were defined as milk al-yamīn,<sup>2</sup> As property, they could be inherited, given as presents or sent as part of the state revenues,<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in the "Nights", besides purchasing them, slaves are also inherited, or presented to favourites, or bestowed as rewards in appreciation of talents or services.<sup>4</sup> The rulers themselves received them from those who wanted to win favours.<sup>5</sup>

The laws of slavery were derived from injunctions in the Quran and the Ḥadīth, both of which preached the humane treatment of slaves and recommended their manumission.<sup>6</sup> The Quran regards them as members of the family and commands the believer to treat them as kindly as one treats parents, relatives and neighbours.<sup>7</sup> The Ḥadīth bids believers to "give them food such as you eat and clothe them with the same

1 Levy, 1957, 73, 81.

2 Quran, 4<sup>36</sup>.

3 Ibn Khaldūn, tr., I, 363. Zaydān, IV, 45.

4 Nights, I, 143, 221, II, 187, 330.

5 Ibid., I, 181, Ibn Sā'ī, Nisā' al-Khalafā' (Baghdad, 1960) 92.

6 Ibn Māja, Sunan (2 Vols, Cairo, 1954) II, 843.

Sha'rāni, Al-Mizān al-Kubrā (2 vols. Cairo, 1889), II, 178.  
Quran, 24<sup>33</sup>.

7 Ibid., 4<sup>36</sup>.

garments as you wear and impose not too much labour upon slaves. Keep those you like and sell those you do not like but do not torment God's creatures. "<sup>1</sup>

This right of the maintenance of slaves by their masters was so important that if owners failed to support their slaves, the law required that they be sold.<sup>2</sup>

This is reflected in the "Nights" in stories which show the masters eating the same food as their slave-girls,<sup>3</sup> and in the fact that masters feel uneasy when they own a big number of slaves and are not able to look after them. Thus Abu Q̄ir prefers to take a sum of money from the sultan for a largesse rather than slaves, since he might spend all his income feeding and clothing these hundreds of slaves.<sup>4</sup> For the same reason Abu al-Shāmāt returns to the caliph the slave-girl and her attendants bestowed upon him.<sup>5</sup>

The conditions stipulated on the purchase of slaves must be closely observed by both parties.<sup>6</sup> These may include various promises made by the master of a slave. In the "Nights" Zumurrud, who looked after her master during his

1 Al-Khatīb, Mishkāt al-Maṣābiḥ (tr. Robson, 14 parts, Lahore, 1960) Pt. IX, Bk. XIII, 714 f. Ghazālī, Ihyā', II, 195.

2 Mishkāt, IX, 717.

3 Nights, II, 396, Cal. ed.

4 Ibid., IV, 220.

5 Ibid., II, 188.

6 Abu Dāwūd, Sahih Sunan .. (2 Vols, Cairo, 1280 A.H.) II, 105, Mizān, II, 181.

illness, was promised that she would be sold only to a buyer she chose and not to the highest bidder.<sup>1</sup> The condition laid upon the master who bought a black eunuch was that he be allowed to tell one lie each year without punishment.<sup>2</sup>

However, the most important concession, which can be made to a slave, is the promise that he will be granted eventual freedom.<sup>3</sup> Islam regarded the manumission of slaves as a pious duty and encouraged it as much as possible.

In the "Nights", Marjāna was freed by her master 'Ali Bābā as a reward for her services since she killed the forty thieves who plotted to murder him. Shajart al-Durr was granted her freedom when the Caliph told her to make a wish, and she asked for her freedom.<sup>4</sup> Other slaves were manumitted as a result of a vow.<sup>5</sup>

Granting a slave woman her freedom, when she had no honest source of income to rely upon, was not encouraged by law.<sup>6</sup> Thus freed slave-girls in the "Nights" were given in marriages immediately after manumission.<sup>7</sup> The Ḥadīth urged

1 Nights, II, 245.

2 Ibid., I, 164.

3 Ibn Māja, II, 841, f. Khwārizmi, Jāmi', II, 165.

4 Nights, tr. Scott, 313, 317, and Cairo ed., IV, 272.

5 Ibid., II, 76, Mizān, II, 111 and margin, II, 97, 100. Quran, 5<sup>89</sup>.

6 Mizān, II, 181.

7 Nights, I, 107, IV, 272.

owners of female slaves to give them a good upbringing and education and then to free and marry them or arrange marriages for them.<sup>1</sup>

The "Nights", however, shows that slaves who were not able to earn their living often preferred to stay in bondage. A black eunuch said to the master who wanted to free him because he was tired of his harmful lies: "Take me to the market and sell me but do not free me for I know no craft by which I can earn my livelihood."<sup>2</sup>

A freed slave becomes the mawlā of his master or his 'atīq (freedman).<sup>3</sup> In return for this patronage, which can be passed to the heirs of the ex-master, the ex-master receives certain benefits from his client.<sup>4</sup> In the "Nights" a freed slave-girls periodically performs at singing parties for her ex-master.<sup>5</sup>

Slaves could, with the consent of their masters, marry outside or within the bonds of slavery since Islam allowed them to do so, with certain restrictive conditions and that was when dowries could not be provided.<sup>6</sup> The children of

1 Bukhārī, Sahīh (9 Vols., Cairo, 1348), I, 58. Abu Yūsuf, al-Kharāj, (Būlāq, 1302 A.H.) 37, El., op.cit.

2 Nights, I, 167.

3 Jāmi', II, 172-76. Ibn Māja, II, 842f.

4 Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad (6 Vols., Cairo 1313), I, 22, 46. Mālik, Muwatta' (Cairo 1280) 311f.

5 Nights, IV, 272.

6 Mīzān, II, 98, 100. Jāmi', II, 84. Mālik, al-Mudawwana al-Kubrā (4 Vols., Cairo, 1323 A.H.) I, 49, 52.



a male slave who married a free woman were free but the children of a free man who married a slave woman belonged to the master of the woman. Thus in the "Nights" when merchants marry slave-girls the latter are, in all cases, freed by their owners.<sup>1</sup>

It was legally forbidden to separate a slave-mother from her young child until it reached the age of seven.<sup>2</sup> Accordingly, in the "Nights" a Kūfi aristocrat, who wanted to purchase a little girl to play with his son, had to purchase both the mother and her child.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to the condition of slaves in Muslim society, one finds that despite the injunctions of the Quran and the Ḥadīth, maltreatment of slaves was not unusual, especially for punishment. A master had the power of life and death over his own and his son's slaves.<sup>4</sup>

As regards other men's slaves, the Muslim Schools will not put a free man to death for killing another man's slave with the exception of the Ḥanafis.<sup>5</sup> Accordingly, there is no question of disapproval in the "Nights" when a slave is killed, especially by his own master.<sup>6</sup>

1 Makki, Qūt, II, 240. Nights, I, 107, 178.

2 Mishkāt, pt. IX, 717f. Ibn Māja, II, 755f. Ḥanafīs did not regard this as a legal sanction but only objectionable, Mizān, II, 59.

3 Nights, II, 152. Shayzari, Ḥisba, 84.

4 Mizān, II, 122, El, op. cit.

5 Mizān, op. cit., Shafiq, Al-Riq fi al-Islām, (Bulāq, 1892), 73, but Cf. Ibn Māja, II, 888.

6 Nights, II, 131. Ṭabari, III, 590.

Punishing slaves by beating and whipping was customary, but if punishment caused mutilation of the slave he must be emancipated by his master.<sup>1</sup>

The condition of slaves has no doubt been bad in all ages and nations, but the enactments of the Prophet made the lot of a Muslim slave tolerable.<sup>2</sup> One may attribute this to two things. Firstly, the law, regarding the slave as a person not responsible for his actions, allotted punishments for his sins and crimes, lighter than those of free men.<sup>3</sup> Secondly, the right of slaves to marry outside bondage removed, to some extent, the barriers which divided the two worlds of slave and freeman. In ancient times and medieval Europe, for example, the law prohibited such contracts between the two degrees.

A man who married a slave woman in medieval Europe was destined to fall under bondage together with his children.<sup>4</sup> In Islam the children of a man slave, born of a free wife were free from bondage. The children of the umm walad were also born free, whereas in medieval Europe, if a free woman married a slave, she was condemned to death by hanging both in France and Italy. If the slave she married was her own property, the woman and her slave were punished by having them burned alive, as was the rule among the Germans.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Mishkāt, pt. IX, 715, Al-Riq, 72.

2 Mez, 168. For slavery in more recent times see Doughty, Travels in Arabia Deserts (2 Vols, London, 1964), I, 603-5.

3 Abu Yūsuf, Kharāj, 98.

4 Al-Riq, 32f, 83. EB. XXV, 1, 220.

5 Al-Riq, op.cit., EB., op.cit.

Although a woman slave-owner in Islam was not allowed to marry her own slave, it was possible to do so if she emancipated him.<sup>1</sup>

There were two kinds of slaves, white and black. The first were called mamālīk and the second, 'abīd.<sup>2</sup> Black slaves were imported from Africa through Egypt and South Arabia;<sup>3</sup> white slaves of every racial origin such as Tartars, Caucasians and Europeans of Greek, Serbian and Albanian origin, were imported from Central Asia.<sup>4</sup> The most popular of the white slave-girls in the "Nights" would seem to be the Rūmiyya Khumāsiyya or (a Greek girl who is five spans tall.)<sup>5</sup>

Prices of slaves were determined by various factors among which were the cost of living, supply and demand, the origin, age, sex, physical condition and skill of the slave. As a rule white slaves were worth more than black, and skilled boys and girls were more in demand than the unskilled.<sup>6</sup> Eunuchs were more expensive than other slaves.<sup>7</sup> Most costly of all were slave-girls who combined beauty and musical attainment.<sup>8</sup>

There are no indications of the prices of slaves in the "Nights" except for the singing slave-girls. It gives their

1 Mīzān, II, 93.

2 Zaydān, V, 22. Nights, II, 220, 242.

3 Mez, 157. Lane, 1883, 253.

4 Ibn Ḥawqal, 368, Ibn Khurdādbih, 91. Mez, 159.

5 Nights, I, 181, IV, 112f. Cf. Tanūkhi, Nishwār, I, 204.

6 Mez, 157f. El., I, 32.

7 Mez, 355. Nights, I, 167.

8 Nuwayri, V, 78, 80, 86. Ibn Sā'i, Nisā', 45, 63.

prices as ranging from 1,000 dinars to 10,000 dinars. The heroine Tawaddud was exceptionally expensive and was sold for 100,000 dinars.<sup>1</sup>

This reminds us of the price asked from al-Rashīd when he wanted to purchase the singing slave-girl and poetess 'Inān. Ja'far, his vizier, sent him the sum in dirhams to make him realise the great amount of money which was being paid; when al-Rashīd saw the huge pile of dirhams he changed his mind and cancelled the purchase.<sup>2</sup> Evidence however shows that the prices of slave-girls in the "Golden Age" were as high as those indicated in the "Nights", since even an ordinary rich man was prepared to pay as much as 100,000 dinars, with 20,000 dinars for the broker, to purchase one of 'Urayb's qiyān.<sup>3</sup>

Highly skilled male and female slaves were not often exhibited in the markets. It was regarded as degrading for any such slave to be sold publicly.<sup>4</sup> The practice seemed to have started early in Islam when three Persian princesses refused to be shown in the market, and it was suggested to purchase them privately by the sons of Abu Babr 'Umar and 'Ali.<sup>4</sup>

Thus in the "Nights" slave-girls such as Tawaddud, Princess Nuzhat al-Zamān (who was a captive) and Julnār, were taken directly to the courts of the masters who bought them.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, IV, 111, 180, II, 245, I, 139, III, 14.

2 Tabari, III, 1332. Nuwayri, V, 78f. Aghāni, XVIII, 175.

3 Ibn Sā'i, 63-66. Nuwayri, V, 86.

4 Mez, 160. Miskawayh, VI, 391.

5 Ibshīhi, II, 70.

6 Nights, II, 339, I, 222, III, 273.

### The Slave-Girls

Slave-girls occupy a more important place than any other group of slaves as they constitute the heroines of a large number of stories in the "Nights". Their portrayal in the collection agrees with the picture of slave-girls conveyed to us in the annals and the histories which deal with this subject, especially as regards the stories which either derive from Arabic sources or are literally copied from them.

The "Nights" portrays three kinds of slave-girls who were found in the 'Abbāsīd society: the court slave-girls, ordinary slave-girls who belonged to rich and middle-class masters, and finally, the slave-girls who belonged to the slave houses run by slave-dealers.<sup>1</sup>

As far as their status is concerned, slave women fall into three categories. Slave-girls who attain special positions,<sup>2</sup> secondly, the waṣīfāt who act as attendants, hairdressers, cup-bearers and messengers,<sup>3</sup> and thirdly, kitchen maids and other unskilled menials who occupy the lowest grade of bond women and slave-girls.

It is evident that the social factors which helped to bring slave-girls into distinction were first, the popularity of the concubinage system and second, the spread of al-ghina' (singing and music).

By the 9th c. A. D. concubinage had become so popular that al-Jāhīz ascribes the preference of concubines over wives

1 Nights, I. 106-109, II. 242, IV. 243.

2 Ibid., I, op.cit., II, 219.

3 Ibid., I, 107, II, 63. Ibn Sā'i, 61. Aghāni, XII, 86.

to the fact that, whereas concubines are chosen by men themselves, wives are normally chosen by other women whose tastes and judgment might well differ from those of men.<sup>1</sup>

Further, there were no ties in the concubinage system and if a man had no children from his concubine he could either sell her at will and regain his capital, or give her in marriage to another man, whereas a wife, with her many legal rights and family relationships, is a heavy burden to a man.<sup>2</sup>

Throughout the collection, the narrator attempts to portray the conditions in which these fortunate favourites and highclass singing slave-girls lived. They were pampered and well taken care of by their masters. Anīs al-Jalīs' price, which is 10,000 dinars, hardly covered the expenses which her master paid for the amount of chicken she consumed.<sup>3</sup> They had separate apartments in the ḥarīm and were attended upon by waṣīfāt.<sup>4</sup> Their only job was to play the lute and sing at entertainments.<sup>5</sup> The rest of their time was spent in idleness, and they frequently visited markets to spend great sums on clothes and jewellery.<sup>6</sup>

The Arabic sources inform us about the fortunes spent on these favourites and the qiyān.<sup>7</sup> There was a well-known and popular verse which stated that the qiyān would not be satisfied with mines of gold.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Rasā'il, 274 (ed. Sandūbi).

2 'Iqd, III, 296, Nights, IV, 112.

3 Nights, I, 139.

4 Ibid., II, 54f. Cf. Taghribirdī, II, 68, ed. Juynboll.

5 Ibid., IV, 271, II, 59.

6 Ibid., I, 99, II, 54.

7 A Qayna (pl. qiyān) was a slave-girl skilled in singing and music (a hetaira). Cf. Tanūkhī, Nishwar, I, 99, VIII, 145, on the kind of presents given to qiyāns.

8 Washshā', Muwashshā', 77.

The number of slave-girls in the 'Abbāsīd court reached thousands. Al-Rashīd is said to have owned two thousand slave-girls, al-Mutawakkil four thousands<sup>1</sup>. The high officials, princes and wealthy merchants followed suit and owned them by the hundreds.<sup>2</sup> Although there was no restriction on the number of concubines a man could have, few of the slave-girls however, became the concubines of their masters.

As concubines, slave-girls of humble origin, attained their highest wishes, especially when they became the mothers of sons of important people such as the caliph or viziers and high officials. Because they were not entitled to inherit as umm walads, they compensated for this drawback by hoarding up great fortunes in jewels, money and other possessions. For example, Qabiḥa, the concubine of al-Mutawakkil and the mother of his son the caliph al-Mu'tazz, is reported to have intended to smuggle from the palace 500,000 dinars when her son was killed. It was also discovered that she had buried a treasure of over one million dinars, which consisted of jewels filled in baskets and kept in a house built under the ground.<sup>3</sup>

The law regarded marriage to a bond woman after marriage to a free woman as objectionable unless the latter agreed to the marriage.<sup>4</sup> Thus most concubines and umm walads retained their status as such during the master's lifetime. Although not married, they ranked equivalent to legal wives.<sup>5</sup> In the 'Abbāsīd time ,

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1 Al-Ḥamawī, Tajrīd al-Aghānī (Cairo, 1956) III, 1176. Mas'ūdi, VII, 267.

2 Cf. Tanūkhī, Nishwār, I, 260, VIII, 147.

3 Athīr, VII, 135.

4 Malik, Muwatt'ā' (Cairo, 1303 A.H.) II, 70.

5 N. Abbott, The two Queens of Baghdad (Chicago, 1946), 67, 140. Even as recently as the Ottoman period, the sultan marriage to a concubine was regarded with amazement and concern, Penzer, The Harīm, (2 Vols, London, 1936), I, 175.

among the caliphs' umm walads, only al-Khayzurān married her master, the caliph al-Mahdi, long after she bore him his two sons al-Hādi and al-Rashīd.

Similarly in the "Nights", King al-Nu'mān, King Shahramān and other caliphs do not marry their concubines who become the mothers of the heirs to their thrones, although they are regarded as the first ladies in the court.<sup>1</sup> It is noticeable, however, that the concubines who belonged to bachelors in the "Nights" eventually married their masters.<sup>2</sup>

The recurrent theme of slave-girls being given in marriage by their masters the caliphs to the men they choose has its counter parts in incidents reported in the Arabic annals.

Al-Ma'mūn, al-Mutawakkil and al-Muqtadir, for example, were reported to have granted their consents to the marriage of certain slave-girls of the court.<sup>3</sup>

One should however point out the difference between the circumstances of the real incidents and the form in which they are presented in the "Nights". The annals show that these marriages took place between court slave-girls and singers, scribes, or military officials, but in the "Nights" it is often a merchant who is involved with the slave-girl in question.

It is also evident from the annals that some well-known and important slave-girls such as al-Ma'mūn's 'Urayb,<sup>4</sup> and

1 Nights, I, 180, III, 274, I, 171.

2 Ibid., II, 263, IV, 148, 154.

3 Iqd. III, 260. al-Jawziyya, 92. Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 149-51. 168.

4 Aghāni, XVIII, 179, 182, 184.



the vizier Yaḥyā's slave-girl Duqāq,<sup>1</sup> were known to have formed secret relationships with the men they loved behind their masters' backs, yet unlike the case in the "Nights", these relationships were made with men from the upper class circles and the military caste.<sup>2</sup>

When a slave-girl got married, it was her privilege to carry along with her all her valuable possessions and to be provided with a suitable dowry by her master.<sup>3</sup>

We should now turn to discuss the subject of al-ghinā' which was closely associated with the category of slave-girls named giyān.

After the Persian and the Byzantine nations, the Arabs became famous as the nation most addicted to the arts of music and singing.<sup>4</sup> The art of al-ghinā' under the 'Abbāsids was carried to near-perfection.<sup>5</sup> In the time of the decline, their loss of real authority would seem to have turned the caliphs wholly even more to music and pleasure.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nuwayri, V, 67.

2 Ibid., 66.

3 Nights, I, 109, II, 330, IV, 272. It is reported that al-Mutawakkil provided a dowry of 10,000 dinars to a slave-girl who belonged to his concubine Qabiḥa. The slave-girl was in love with the latter's property agent whom she wanted to marry, see Ibn al-Jawziyya, Akhbār al-Nisā' (Cairo, 1901) 92, On the obligation of providing dowries to slave-girls see Mālik, Muwatta', III, 4, and on giving a freed slave all his possessions see Māja, II, 845.

4 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 93f.

5 Farmer, History of Arabian Music, 90.

6 Muir, The Caliphate, 566.

In the 9th and 10th centuries A.D. writing on music and its history had been compiled. Al-Jāhiz discussed music in his book Tabaqāt al-Mughannīn<sup>1</sup> and Abu al-Faraj compiled his famous Kitāb al-Aghāni. This is how Ibn Khurdādhbih, in the time of al-Mu'tamid (890-992 A.D.) describes the art of music: "Al-ghinā' sharpens the intellect, softens the disposition, and agitates the soul. It gives cheer and courage to the heart and high-mindedness to the debased. With wine (nabīdh), it creates freshness and vivacity against the grief and care which afflicts the body."<sup>2</sup> Later on, the teaching of al-Ghazzālī (d.1111) and the tracts of Ikhwān al-Ṣafā greatly contributed to the art of al-ghinā' and to its defence.<sup>3</sup>

Through the qiyān, musical parties penetrated into all social classes, from the palace and the most conservative class of society down to the taverns and public houses.<sup>4</sup>

Since wine and singing parties were normally opposed by the religious and orthodox people, writings, as those mentioned above, attempted to vindicate al-ghinā' which has become widely spread in Muslim countries.<sup>5</sup>

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- 1 Jāhiz, Rasā'il, 187 (Ed. Cairo 1324 A.H.) and 62f (Ed. Finkel)
  - 2 Farmer, Ibid., 156. See also Mas'ūdi, VIII, 88-102 on music.
  - 3 Ihyā', II, 238-169. Rasā'il, I, pt.1, 84-120.
  - 4 Tawhīdi, II, 181-84, Hague, Music in Ancient Arabia and Spain (London, 1929) 65.
  - 5 See also, 'Iqd, III, 412-17, Rāghib, II, 678. Nawāji, Halbat al-Kumayt, (Cairo, 1276, A.H.) 10-19.

Nevertheless, in times of disturbances, these entertainments and pleasure parties were the targets on which malcontents and religious people focused their resentment. In the Hanbalite riots, (years 323, 466, 475, 487 A.H.) musical instruments were broken, drinks spilled and the qiyān attacked.<sup>1</sup> But the practice continued throughout the Muslim ages.

Although the rulers of Egypt and Iraq attempted sometimes to appease the public by banning these parties,<sup>2</sup> the attempts were not successful because the caliphs themselves would be the last people to give up the practice; al-Qāhir's command to ban musical parties was in fact devised to buy the qiyān cheaply, since he ordered skilled slave-girls to be sold as unskilled, and he was able in this way to purchase them all since he was fondly devoted to music.<sup>3</sup>

The general appreciation of singing, and the role of the qiyān in promoting it, resulted in the establishment of several schools for the training of talented slave-girls. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili was the founder of the first training school for music.<sup>4</sup> It is reported that training raised the price of a slave-girl from 300 to 3,000 dinars.<sup>5</sup> Some men had one or more singing slave-

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1 Athīr, VIII, 229, X, 63, 156. Maqrīzi, Khitat, II, 149. 145, 287, Sulūk, II, pt.2, 510.

2 Athīr, VIII, 204. Maqrīzi, Khitat II, 24, Sulūk, I. pt.3, 942, 945. Ibn Iyās, I, 212.

3 Athīr, op.cit.

4 Aghāni, V, 9.

5 Ibid., V, 164, Nawayri, V, 80.

girls in their possession, but others hired them for their nightly entertainments.<sup>1</sup>

Many among these qiyān had their names registered in history books and the Arabic annuals, not only because of their association with caliphs and eminent persons, but because they contributed to the art of music and singing by their musical compilation; and to poetry, both by composing verses and lyrics, and preserving and popularising the verses of great and famous Arab poets through setting them to music.<sup>2</sup>

The "Nights", being a true picture of the world of forbidden pleasures (malāhi), reflects the appreciation of music among all classes especially in the Baghdadi and early Egyptian stories.<sup>3</sup>

Thus al-samā' (listening to music and singing), is likened to food, medicine and a refreshing fan. Drinking wine without samā' is not pleasant, lacks joy and results in headache.<sup>4</sup>

The instruments of music such as the 'ūd (lute), nāy (flute), jank (harp) and others, are described in detail as they are affectionately handled by the expert slave-girls.<sup>5</sup>

During the meetings of lovers and at receptions, there is always chamber music to entertain. It was the custom during

1 Tanūkhī Faraj, II, 16.

2 Aghānī, III, 184.

3 Farmer, The Minstrelsy of the Arabian Nights (Bearsden, 1945), 3-7.

4 Nights, II, 181, I, 154. Al-ghinā' was usually accompanied with a more disapproved practice, namely, wine-drinking, which was the subject of great religious controversy. See 'Iqd, III, 230, 234f.

5 Nights, I, 155, 158, II, 55, 219.

these singing sessions to draw a curtain to hide either the caliph and the chorus or to hide the chorus from the people, but this was not always followed,<sup>1</sup> and the curtain was sometimes lifted especially in private gatherings.<sup>2</sup>

In the "Nights", the direct mentioning of the custom occurs only in anecdotes copied literally from Arabic annals.

As for public entertainments, al-Jāhiz and al-Washshā's<sup>3</sup> accounts of the behaviour of the qiyān at these entertainments make clear that no such veils were drawn between them and their audience.

The custom of veiling, however, applied both to bond and free women once they were outside the house.<sup>4</sup>

Despite their humble origin and their bondage, the hetairae of the 'Abbāsīd society became the mainspring of aesthetic life and the inspiration for poets and literature.<sup>5</sup> They were associated with wealth, luxury, music and all that denotes frolic, pleasure and love. Love poetry was written for them or by them, and engraved on everything that surrounded them, on tapestry, furniture, curtains, clothes and musical instruments.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Nights, II, 328. Aghāni, I, 91. Tanūkhi, Nishwār, I, 193.

2 Farmer, History . . ., 102f. Tanūkhi, Faraj, I, 80.

3 Rasā'il, 69-75, ed. Finkel. Muwashshā, 74-91.

4 Nights, I, 99, 106. Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 168.

5 A. Amin, Duhā al-Islām (3 Vols. Cairo, 1938), I, 100-103

6 al-Muwashshā, 133-59.

### Other Kinds of Slaves

Among the male slaves were eunuchs, ghilmān (youths) and armed slaves, both white and black.

Eunuchs were recruited to guard both the master and the harīm of palaces, where they moved freely in the ladies' quarters and watched and reported any suspicious movement.<sup>1</sup>

A eunuch was called khādim (servant).<sup>2</sup> The high cost of eunuchs was one of the factors which perpetuated the lucrative trade. Further, the need for eunuchs arising from the seclusion of women was an important factor in the supply of the trade.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the fact that the emasculation of men and animals is condemned by the Quran as the mutilation of God's creatures,<sup>4</sup> the trade in eunuchs in Arab countries became extensive in the 3rd/9th c.<sup>5</sup>

The custom is, however, of ancient origin and existed in the pre-Islamic civilisations. The houses of the aristocrats and wealthy had a number of eunuchs as servants during the Greek, Roman, Byzantine and Persian empires.<sup>6</sup>

1 Sābi, 12. Jāhiz, Ḥayawān, I, 118, II, 103. Nights, II, 76, IV, 267.

2 Khaṭīb, I, 101, Ḥayawān, I, 175, 169.

3 ERE., V, 584, art. Eunuchs, Zaydān, V, 27, IV, 163.

4 Quran, 4<sup>118</sup>

5 Mez, 353.

6 ESS., XIV, 74-77, Mez. op. cit.

The stigma attached to eunuchs seems to have been ancient and universal.<sup>1</sup> Al-Jāhīz in his study of eunuchs enumerates their defects in a long list.<sup>2</sup>

It has been reported that the people of Baghdad had much contempt for this group of slaves and used to pelt them with stones when they walked in the streets of Baghdad.<sup>3</sup> Once al-Mu'tadid punished a group of Baghdadis who had assaulted one of his eunuchs when he was sent on an errand.<sup>4</sup>

In the "Nights" the stories of black eunuchs combine the contempt felt for eunuchs and for black slaves in general. Thus in the story of Ghānim the First Eunuch is revealed as a destructive liar and the Second Eunuch is shown as a lustful servant who was punished for assaulting the daughter of his master by emasculation.<sup>5</sup>

However, on account of the important and confidential offices which they filled, they were usually treated with great consideration by their masters, and especially those of them who were armed slaves.<sup>6</sup>

Armed slaves were a special order of trained slaves who formed the army and the caliph's body-guard. The former were paid by the public treasury and were called jund, and the

1 ERE., V, 582f.

2 Hayawān, I, 119. Ṣābi, op. cit.

3 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 180f. Tabari, III, 2164. Ibn al-Jawzi, Zirāf. 75.

4 Mas'ūdi, op. cit. Tabari, op. cit.

5 Nights, I, 163-67.

6 Lane, 1883, 254, ERE., IV, 585.

latter were the personal property of the rulers and were referred to as ghilmān.

Al-Ṣābi gives a detailed account of the tests given by the caliph al-Mutāḍid to these ghilmān in order to choose the best among them as his bodyguard, those of medium ability as 'askār guarding the important highways and the rest for collecting taxes.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Muqtadir was the first of a series of caliphs to acquire a great number of ghilmān and eunuchs, who formed his bodyguard and helped to prolong his rule.<sup>2</sup> It was not unusual for some of these armed slaves, especially the eunuchs, to reach high positions because of their faithful service to their masters the caliphs.<sup>3</sup>

Becoming all-powerful, they might be tempted also to seize power for themselves. Mu'nis who was promoted to high offices by his master al-Muqtadir became an important figure, the adviser to the Caliph and commander of the forces, or amīr al-umara'.<sup>4</sup> Among the servants who reached the position of commanders were Badr, Bajkam and several others.<sup>5</sup>

In Egypt Jawhar helped the Fātimīds to establish their rule, and Kāfūr, a negro eunuch of Khumārawayh actually succeeded

1 Ṣābi, 12f. Mez, 141f. 165.

2 Khaṭīb, I, 99f. Zaydān, IV, 163f.

3 Ṭabari, III, 1383. Miskawayh, VI, 542. Zaydān, op. cit.

4 Mas'ūdi, VIII, 212, 196-99, 285f.

51 Athīr, VI, 317, VII, 28, 357, VIII, 250, 260.



in becoming the ruler of Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

As is also well-known the Mamlūk dynasty was formed of rulers who were originally purchased mamlūks trained as armed slaves.<sup>2</sup>

The "Nights" refers to mamlūk soldiers as 'asākir or jund.<sup>3</sup> The jobs assigned to them in the "Nights" are: the arresting of criminals, raiding the houses of persons who had fallen out of the Sultan's favour<sup>4</sup> and acting as personal guards, standing with swords unsheathed around the ruler's camp.<sup>5</sup>

In the story of the Porter, the First Mendicant relates that his father, the King, was betrayed by his ghilmān and 'asākir and was killed by his vizier. The Mendicant, who was the heir, was banished and thus became a vagrant.<sup>6</sup>

The word ghilmān in the "Nights" denotes all kinds of slaves whether servants or private bodyguards. Evidence shows that not only the rulers, but all notable viziers, amīrs, and wālis had ghilmān serving them as bodyguards; it is reported that a Turkish general had 500 of them and the vizier Ibn Killis of Egypt had 4000.<sup>7</sup> In the "Nights" these may be referred to as the atbā' or the jama'a (followers) of the person concerned.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Maqrīzi, Khitāṭ, I, 377f. Ibn Khallikān, II, 525, Eng. tr.

2 Levy, 1957, 448-450.

3 Nights, I, 43, 133, 245.

4 Ibid., I, 74, 14f. 174.

5 Ibid., I, 245.

6 Ibid., I, 41.

7 Zaydān, V, 25, IV, 163.

8 Nights, I, 112, 126. Zaydān, op. cit.

They are employed to saddle horses, accompany their master on his travels and to attend his guests at banquets and in the baths.<sup>1</sup>

In society, however, the ghilman came to be associated with sexual perversion.<sup>2</sup> Al-Amīn surrounded himself with a great number of ghilmān, that Zubayda, his mother, to divert his attention, offered him a number of ghulamīyyāt, or slave-girls dressed up in boys' clothes. These disguised girls attended the caliph and his guests and served drinks and food.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from their domestic duties, slaves had a variety of jobs. In the "Nights" they act as intermediaries between lovers,<sup>4</sup> reporters on the secrets of the ḥarīm and as instruments by which a master might dispose of his opponents.<sup>5</sup>

However, the "Nights" lacks sufficient references to the role of slaves as spies and political agents trying to gather information, execute political plots and destroy by poison or other mysterious means.<sup>6</sup>

The "Nights" often reflects the stigma attached to black slaves. A negroe's record, for example, is described by the narrator as black, as a negroe's colour. They are regarded as

1 Nights, I, 85, 71, II, 233f.

2 Ibid., II, 301, Zaydān, IV, 161f.

3 Ṭabari, III, 950, 956, Mas'ūdi, VIII, 299.

4 Nights, II, 58, 63, 67, IV, 268.

5 Ibid., II, 16-8, 76, IV, 246.

6 Jāhīz, Tāj, 170, Ṭabari, III, 133, Fakhri, 205, Ibn Uṣaybi'a, Ṭabaqāt al-Atibba' (2 vols, Cairo, 1882), I, 182.

stupid, fickle and often as sources of trouble.<sup>1</sup> The narrator goes as far as to accuse them of grilling and eating men's flesh. This accusation echoes al-Ṣābi's account of the Zanjī soldiers in the caliph's court, who segregated themselves from the white soldiers, and were reportedly in the habit of eating the flesh of dead animals and men despite the punishment they received.<sup>2</sup>

The attitude towards black slaves in the "Nights" is probably a picture of a general public prejudice, the same that induced al-Jāhīz to write his treatise in defence of negroes.

He endeavours to analyse and define the reasons for their conduct, and argues that imported negro slaves are not to be regarded as the best members of their race, and that it is the circumstances of their present condition which affects their intellect and behaviour.<sup>3</sup>

Social disapproval would seem to have surrounded relations between a master and his negress concubine, for a man was ashamed to show his black children in public.<sup>4</sup> However, this might have been the case among people of the middle-class only since we know that the mother of al-Rashīd's half-brother Ibrāhīm and his sister 'Ulayya, was a negress concubine called Shakla.<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, II, 131, I, 3, 28, 67, 163.

2 Ibid., III, 107ff. Ṣābi, 12. These soldiers previously fought in the Zanjī uprising.

3 Rasā'il, 68, 76. ed. Van Vloten (Leyden, 1903). See also Ibn Khaldūn, I, 163.

4 Jawzi, Ṣayd, III, 656.

5 Ibn Khallikān, I, 17. Eng. tr.

Violent punishment and killing by the sword were carried out in the "Nights" by negro slaves.<sup>1</sup> The most famous negro-slave both in the "Nights" and the 'Abbāsīd history is of course, Masrūr, the executioner of al-Rashīd.

From the contradictory evidence given above, one can infer that the attitude towards negroes should not be attributed to any colour bar, but to the inferior status of the slaves in general, and the conduct of the individual black slaves in particular.

This is confirmed by the fact that one of the Ṣūfi protagonists in the "Nights" is a godly negro slave, whose supplications for rain are immediately answered by God. Thus his tomb becomes a sacred place where people go to pray for rain.<sup>2</sup>

To conclude, since the slave depended for his future on his master, his loyalty to him could be assured, and as a result of this he stood a good chance of promotion, and had more security than the labouring poor, for he was not exposed to the hazards of unemployment, vagrancy and starvation as were the poor men of free status.

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1 Nights, I, 39, 63, Zaydān, IV, 161.

2 Ibid., II, 549-52, ed. Cal.

CHAPTER V

The Non-Muslims in the Arabian Nights

The non-Muslim characters represented in the stories of the "Nights" fall into three categories: Ahl al-Kitāb, the idolaters such as the worshippers of fire, sun and stones, and finally the Christians of Byzantium and Europe.<sup>1</sup>

According to the Quran the Ahl al-Kitāb are the Christians, Jews and Sabians.<sup>2</sup> They are also called Ahl-al-Dhimma or the people whose religions are tolerated under certain conditions.<sup>3</sup>

The tolerated status confined to Ahl-al-Kitāb was widened to include the Magians (Zoroastrians), the heathens of Ḥarrān and the pagan Berbers of North Africa.<sup>4</sup> These were supposed to be given the choice of Islam or Tribute;<sup>5</sup> but the number of Magians (Zoroastrians), for example, was so numerous in Persia that it was not possible to put them all to the sword, and they also were offered protection against payment of a certain annual tribute called the jizya (Poll Tax).<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, IV, 66, 94, III, 266-73. II, 139, I, 57, III, 296, 303, I, 180.

2 Quran, 9<sup>28</sup>, 2<sup>62</sup>, 3<sup>64-71</sup>, 5<sup>69</sup>, 22<sup>17</sup>.

3 EL., II, 227. Dictionary of Islam, art. Zimmi, Quran, 9<sup>7-10</sup>.

4 Hitti, 233. Tritton, The Caliphs and their Non-Muslim subjects (London, 1930), 44.

5 Grunebaum, 1953, 177.

6 Balādhuri, Futūh, I, 424, 121, 110, 118. tr. Hitti, (New York, 1916). Abu Yusuf, al-Kharāj, 73f. Muqaddasi, 41, 481.

the term Sabians being interpreted as referring to them, as was confirmed by Ibn 'Awf, the Companion of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup> Islamic law differentiated these worshippers from Ahl al-Kitāb by calling them Ahl al-Jizīya.<sup>2</sup> However, Arab pagans were usually put to death since Arabs should either be Muslims or Dhimmis.<sup>3</sup>

Though non-Kitābis paid the poll-tax like the People of the Book, they did not obtain the status of a tolerated community until the 4th/10th c.<sup>4</sup> They were segregated and worshipped in secret as the story of al-As'ad tries to indicate.<sup>5</sup> In their own homeland however, they were able to keep their own marriage laws and had numerous and much visited temples.<sup>6</sup>

They were not entitled to other rights and privileges of the People of the Book and no Muslim was allowed to marry or take as a concubine a Magian woman, or eat animals killed by Magians.<sup>7</sup>

Before discussing the relationship between Dhimmis and Muslims as shown in the "Nights", it is worth discussing such aspects of the sumptuary laws as are necessary for the understanding of the background to these relations.

1 Al-Balādhuri, op. cit.

2 Shāfi'i, Kitāb al-Umm (5 Vols., Cairo, 1322 A.H.) V, 6, IV, 104. Kharāj, op. cit., 127. Māwardi, 137.

3 Kharāj, op. cit., 127. Māwardi, 137.

4 Mez, 34, 38. Athīr, VIII, 522.

5 Nights, II, 151.

6 Hawqal, 189f. Balādhuri, Futūḥ al-Buldān (Leyden Butavorum 1866), 80. Rusta, 165.

7 Shāfi'i, op. cit. Kharāj, op. cit.

The covenant of 'Umar I set out the conditions imposed upon the Dhimmis as well as the rights they enjoyed under the protection of Islam. We are not in a position to discuss the authenticity of 'Umar's covenant which is thought to contain later accretions inserted into it.<sup>1</sup> From the point of view of the "Nights", such a critical approach is not essential.

The covenant contained six necessary and six desirable regulations. The six necessary regulations were: that Dhimmis should not revile the Quran or the Prophet or Islam, marry Muslim women, convert a Muslim, assist the enemy or harbour spies.<sup>2</sup>

The six desirable conditions were: that they should wear distinctive clothes (al-ghiyār), that they should not drink wine in public or build their houses higher than the Muslims, that they should not ring their church bells or read their scriptures loudly, and finally they should ride only on asses.<sup>3</sup> The last six conditions are believed to be unworthy of 'Umar I and have been added by 'Umar II.<sup>4</sup>

The Muslims, on the other hand, guaranteed them security of life and property, the freedom to practice their religion and defence against aggressors.<sup>5</sup>

1 Tritton, 1930, 8-12, Hitti, 234.

2 Māwardi, 138f. Muir, 137. Tritton, Ibid., 5-8.

3 Māwardi, op. cit. Muir, 138.

4 Muir, op. cit.

5 Op. cit., Kharāj, 70f.

At various periods during the Muslim rule various enactments were added to these mentioned above. It seems, however, that such discriminatory legislation was for the most part short-lived, especially the more bizarre laws such as the requirement that Dhimmis should affix images of devils to their doors,<sup>1</sup> or that, at public baths, Christians should wear heavy crosses of wood and Jews either bells or balls of wood (representing a calf's head) round their necks.<sup>2</sup>

In the "Nights", only the laws concerning distinctive dress are mentioned, as for example, the rules regarding the wearing of the zunnār (belt) and coloured turbans. Thus we see Maryam the girdle-maker, making a good profit selling hand-made girdles (zanānīr) in the market.<sup>3</sup>

In the story of The Prince of the Black Islands,<sup>4</sup> the enchanted fish are described as white, red, blue and yellow, representing different sections of the population, the white corresponding to the Muslims, the red to the Magians, the blue to the Christians and the yellow to the Jews. These of course correspond to the colours of turbans, worn by the people of the various religions in the Mamlūk period.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Athīr, VII, 34, 47.

2 Athīr, IX, 147. Maqrīzi, II, 288. Ibn Sa'īd, Histoire de Yahya b. Sa'īd (Paris, 1924, 1932) XXIII, pt.2, 490, 508, 511.

3 Nights, IV, 113.

4 Ibid., I, 29.

5 Lane, I, 110.



As regards the relationship between Muslims and Dhimmis it has been remarked that the Dhimmis appear at one time as having a destructive influence on the Muslims round them, and at another as persecuted people.<sup>1</sup>

During the time of peace and toleration which marked the reigns of competent caliphs such as al-Rashīd and al-Ma'mūn, the Dhimmis were engaged in public office and were encouraged to carry out translations and research in the fields of philosophy, the sciences and other branches of learning.<sup>2</sup>

During the reign of some of the more bigoted rulers, Dhimmis were undoubtedly subjected to humiliation. The worst periods of persecution were, in the Umayyad caliphate under 'Umar II,<sup>3</sup> and in the 'Abbāsīd caliphate during the reigns of al-Mutawakkil (847-61 A.D.),<sup>4</sup> al-Muttaqī (940-44)<sup>5</sup> and al-Muqtadi (1074-1094)<sup>6</sup>, and under the Fāṭimid caliph al-Hākīm (996-1021), the Dhimmis also suffered considerably.<sup>7</sup>

Even during the worst period of persecution, however, distinguished Dhimmis such as physicians and scribes were respected and favoured by rulers who otherwise persecuted their non-Muslim subjects.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Tritton, 1930, 229.

2 Hitti, 310-16, 363f. Ghanīma, al-Yahūd fi'l 'Irāq, (Baghdad, 1924), 108-113.

3 Athīr, V, 49.

4 Athīr VII, 32, 47. Tabari, III, 1389-93, 1419.

5 Athīr, VIII, 134.

6 Ibid., X, 123.

7 Maqrīzi, II, 286, 288. Athīr, IX, 147. Ibn Sa'īd, pt. 2, 464, 490-94, 508.

8 Sābi, 37, 39. Qiftī, Ṭarīkh al-Hukama' (Leipzig, 1320 A.H.) 102, 393.

Under some of these caliphs, it is fair to say that their Muslim subjects also suffered.<sup>1</sup> Al-Mutawakkil, for example, suppressed all liberal thinkers and his rule was generally oppressive.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, al-Ḥākim's unbalanced personality led him alternately to persecute and to tolerate the Dhimmis, either appointing them to high office or expelling and maltreating them.<sup>3</sup> But he is also notorious for his enactments against the people and especially women causing the latter to be confined to their houses for seven years.<sup>4</sup>

There have always been a number of reasons for the deterioration of relations between Dhimmis and Muslims. Zaydān ascribes such occasions to religious zeal and to the self-interested fanaticism of rivals in office who exploited the religious sensibilities against Dhimmis advancing in office; and to the mutual jealousies between the lower orders of Muslim and Christians, especially when distinguished posts had been lavished upon Dhimmi physicians, scribes, accountants and translators.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Grunebaum, 1953, 180.

2 Athīr, VII, 25, 36, 43. Mas'ūdi, VII, 190, 195.

3 Taghribirdi, II, 62, 66, 72-74 (ed. Popper) - Maqrīzi, II, 285-88, 495. Ibn Sa'īd, pt. 2, 480, 494, 507, 509.

4 Taghribirdi, II, 63, 118. Suyūṭī, Husn, II, 18. Ibn Sa'īd, Ibid., 468, 481.

5 Zaydān, IV, 127. Qiftī, 197.

Al-Maqrīzi informs us that in the reign of Khaīl al-Ashraf (1290-1293 A.D.), Christians enjoyed power and affluence, and were appointed as tax-collectors and scribes, They became strong and supercilious towards Muslims, humiliating them when collecting the taxes.<sup>1</sup> People were so annoyed at this treatment that they complained to the amīrs and these in their turn issued orders dismissing them from office and eventually forcing them to choose between death or Islam. Many Christians professed the faith and hence a poet wrote:

They saved their property and lives,  
And thus they should be called those who are safe, not  
Muslims.<sup>2</sup>

From al-Maqrīzi's accounts, it would seem that these laws would be forgotten only to be brought to the remembrance of the authorities when new incidents took place. Sumptuary laws were reimposed, for example, when a splendid procession of a rich Christian was seen in the market. The Christian was wearing gorgeous clothes and the white turban appointed for Muslims only, and a poor Muslim was seen pleading before him with great humility.<sup>3</sup>

The following verses recited by Zumurrud in the "Nights" against the Christian who wronged her, reflect the grudges that the Muslims had against influential Dhimmis on the one hand, and the tyranny of the Christian state officers on the other:-

1 Khitāṭ, II, 497-99.

2 Op.cit. Suyūṭī, Ibid., II, 152f, 173.

3 Khitāṭ, op.cit. Tritton, 1930, 16, 299.

They ruled and had their own way for long,  
 But soon afterwards their rule vanished,  
 As it had never existed.  
 If they acted with justice, it would have been  
 acceptable.

But they acted tyrannically,  
 And "time" in return smote them with catastrophe  
 and crises.

They became like the one who had his just deserts,  
 But who can blame the vicissitudes of time.<sup>1</sup>

Another reason which led to the persecution was the  
 jealousies among the Christians themselves who took every  
 opportunity to topple down their fellow Christians.<sup>2</sup>

However the most significant reason for the hostility  
 was the warfare between Muslims and Christians during the  
 Byzantine-Muslim wars of the borders, and the prolonged  
 Crusades.

In the "Nights" themes through which the relationship  
 between persons of different religions is brought out are: con-  
 version to Islam, warfare, religious and social relations and  
 finally, business transactions.<sup>3</sup>

In order to assess the conditions of the Dhimmis and  
 the relations with foreign Christians, it is necessary to study  
 these aspects.

1 Nights, II, 259.

2 Qifti, op.cit. Zaydān, op.cit.

3 Conversion: Nights, II, 202, 332; warfare, I, 180;  
 religious and social relations, III, 14-30, II, 248, IV, 93;  
 business contacts, I, 75, 94, III, 244.

### Conversion to Islam

In medieval times, when religion was the main basis of thought and learning, and the main source of all human spiritual actions, conversion to their religion gave the people of that religion great satisfaction and triumph.<sup>1</sup>

This is shown in the "Nights" when non-Muslim women embrace the faith of Islam.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted here that in real life foreign slave-girls were free to retain their own religion,<sup>3</sup> provided that their children were brought up as Muslims.

The tendency to emphasise the zeal for Islam, which these slave-girls display, could be linked with the desire to see in the best light slavery and the system of concubinage which brought into the Muslim community foreign captives employed as nurses, wet or dry or as concubines whose sons had become either rulers or celebrities.<sup>4</sup> It would seem that for partisan reasons, the narrator wishes to stress the fact that these foreign girls ought to be more Muslim even than the Muslims themselves, otherwise it would not be fitting that they should occupy such important positions in Muslim society.

Ṣafīyya the captive princess of Ceasarea is a case in point. Among 360 concubines<sup>5</sup> and four wives, she was the

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1 ERE., IV, 105., art. Conversion.

2 Nights, IV, 144, II, 203.

3 Aghāni, I, 67, XIX, 138; Amīn, Ḍuḥā, I, 91. Mālik, Mudawwana, I, 157.

4 Zaydān, 211. Eng. tr.

5 Cf. Ibn Khallikān, I, 158, on the ruler of Mosul, Naṣr al-Dawla (d. 453/1061) who possessed 360 concubines.

only one who bore twins for King Nu'mān, both of whom, later in the story, become staunch defenders of the Muslim faith.<sup>1</sup> Princess Maryam of France shows such a zeal for Islam in the presence of the Caliph al-Rashīd that he turns down a request from the Byzantine King to give the Princess over to him.<sup>2</sup>

It is noticeable that there are no stories of persecution or proselytising on the part of the Muslims to bring about converts to Islam.<sup>3</sup> Bulūqiya, for instance, finds the truth of Muḥammad's message in the ancient books of his ancestors.<sup>4</sup> Ḥusn Maryam becomes acquainted with Islam through reading the Old Testament, the Bible, the Gospels and the Quran.<sup>5</sup> But where non-Kitābis are concerned the pattern is different.

Al-As'ad takes a more positive missionary attitude when he teaches Bustān, the daughter of a Magian, about the truth of the Faith and the message of the Prophet, and as a result she professes Islam.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, in another story, a messenger or a crier calls upon a community of pagans to worship God instead of their idols, threatening that their city will be petrified if they refuse to answer the call.<sup>7</sup>

1 Nights, I, 180, 209.

2 Ibid., IV, 148.

3 Cf. Grunebaum, 1953, 181. He states that no attempts of convulsion or forcible conversion to Islam are made by Muslims.

4 Nights, III, 30.

5 Ibid., II, 202. Quran, 3<sup>65-71</sup>, 2<sup>42</sup>.

6 Ibid., II, 151.

7 Ibid., I, 59, IV, 315f.

Only in a few incidents, however, do miracles play a prominent part in proving the manifest veracity of the Muslim faith, as in the conversion of a number of monks in the story of The Devotee and the Christian Girl.<sup>1</sup>

The story is, however, about a Sufi who falls in love with a Christian girl, and Sufism is often associated with miraculous acts. In the story, the devotee dies because he is stoned by some Christian children. To help the martyr who lost his life because of his love, God causes the girl to rise to Heaven and then return to earth bringing with her three apples from Paradise. She offers them to the Prior and the monks as a proof for this miracle but they refuse to believe her.

A few days later, the girl falls dead over the grave of the devotee, and two muslim shaikhs come to bury her as a Muslima. There then issues an argument between the shaikhs and the monks, each party wanting to bury the girl according to its religious rites. As it happens, however, the monks find it impossible to lift the body whereas the shaikhs are able to lift it instantly. The monks are then convinced of the miracles and embrace Islam.<sup>2</sup>

The conversion from one Dhimmi religion to another was considered as apostacy,<sup>3</sup> and hence a Jewess and a Christian merchant in the "Nights" both embrace Islam in order to marry.<sup>4</sup>

1 Nights, II, 331f.

2 Op. cit. The story is based on a similar anecdote reported by Ibshihī, I, 141f.

3 Mez, 33.

4 Nights, IV, 66-94.

Whereas the conversion of women to Islam is welcomed with rejoicing, the conversion of males is generally considered insincere and superficial, perhaps because the element of self-interest is more evident, involving a mere change of name and the professing of the shahāda. Hence, many converted Magians and Christians in the "Nights" are regarded as "outwardly Muslim but still infidels at heart."<sup>1</sup>

The conversion of Rashīd al-Dīn is an example of the case in point.<sup>2</sup> Al-Qalqashandi remarks that though a Dhimmi was allowed to adopt the title of shaikh, he was not allowed a name or a title containing the word al-dīn. Therefore it was customary for a Christian convert who was called Shaikh al-Muwaffaq to add the prefix al-Dīn to his name after professing Islam and would be called Shaikh Muwaffaq al-Dīn.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, in the "Nights", Shaikh Rashīd al-Dīn who is mentioned above, is a convert to Islam carrying a proper Muslim name though he is still an "infidel at heart."<sup>4</sup>

In connection with converts to Islam, al-Maqrīzi reports that orders were at one time issued which demanded that no Jewish or Christian convert was to be allowed into the government service, since he would still be associating with his Christian family, and thus a convert should be forbidden from visiting his family and had to observe closely praying at the mosque five times a day and especially on Friday.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Nights, II, 172, 249, 259.

2 Ibid., II, 249.

3 Subh, IV, 491.

4 Nights, op.cit.

5 Khitat, II, 500. Rashīd al-Dīn uses his Christian brother to plot the capture of a Muslim slave-girl.



Al-Maqrīzi further comments that the conversion of those Christians who turned Muslim by merely professing the shahāda was a fraud and a device to preserve their jobs and posts and to be able to marry Muslim girls and defile the pure blood and the noble geneology of the Muslims.<sup>1</sup>

This statement is echoed by Zumurrud, in the "Nights", who tells the converted Christian Rashīd al-Dīn: "Your occupation is to set traps for women slaves of the Muslim faith in order to capture and imprison them."<sup>2</sup>

The name and the exploits of the convert Rashīd al-Dīn in the "Nights" recall a historical parallel in the person of the Qāḍī Karīm al-Dīn, the controller of the sultan's household, who was of Christian origin, and of whom al-Maqrīzi remarks that during the religious riots between Muslims and Christians, he always sided with the latter because they were "of the faith of his ancestors."<sup>3</sup>

Closely connected with conversion is the subject of apostacy. In the Middle ages converts were severely punished for returning to their own faith, or for the deliberate abandonment of one religion for another.<sup>4</sup>

The violence in the treatment and punishment of infidels and apostates<sup>5</sup> was a characteristic of medieval times. In

1 Khiṭat, op. cit.

2 Nights, II, 259.

3 Khiṭat, II, 511. Sulūk, II, p.t.1, 103, 135.

4 ERE, I, 624f. art. Apostasy, VII, 333, art. Inquisition.

5 Nights, op. cit., Athīr, VII, 53.

Europe the Inquisition was a method for searching out heretics or finding out lapsed Jews and Moors.<sup>1</sup>

Thus in the "Nights", Zumurrud orders that Rashīd al-Dīn and his Christian brother be flayed and their skin stuffed with straw and hung over the gate of the race-course, and that a pit be dug outside the city and their bones burnt in it.

However, modes of torturing to death and burning are expressly repudiated by Muslim jurists since the Prophet had said that the right to punishment by burning belonged exclusively to God, and thus punishment by death is to be carried into execution only by the sword, and after giving the apostate time to repent and reconvert.<sup>2</sup>

However, the Mamlūk rulers, like the European inquisitors, seem to have permitted torture and punishment by flaying, burning and drowning in cases of apostasy.<sup>3</sup>

The theme of conversion also comes up in a more legendary connection in the tale in which the Prophet Solomon and his miracles play a role.<sup>4</sup> Solomon and his vizier and cousin Āṣif b. Barkhyia<sup>5</sup> employ their magical powers in the cause of God and help the King of Egypt, who worshipped the sun, to beget a son and heir, as a result of which the King and his whole nation are converted to Islam.

1 ERE. op.cit. Mez, 33, n. 1.

2 Kharāj, 110 ERE. I, 625.

3 Khīṭat, II, 512-515. EI, III, 737, art. Murtadd. Nights, op.cit.

4 Ibid., III, 62.

5 Cf. Nadīm, 309.

### Warfare with Non-Muslims

The warfare with non-Muslims such as Pagans, Magians and Christians is represented in the "Nights" in two long epic romances, 'Ajīb and Gharīb<sup>1</sup> and King 'Umar al-Nu'mān.<sup>2</sup>

The first story is connected with pre-Islamic times and relates the heroic battles fought by the Muslims, the followers of Ibrāhīm al-Khaḥīl, against the Pagans, the Fire worshippers and the stone worshippers of both the Arab and Persian nations, who eventually professed the faith of Ibrāhīm at a time, evidently, preceding the appearance of the Prophet Muḥammad.

This study, however, is only concerned with the warfare against the Christians which is presented in the story of 'Umar al-Nu'mān, because the Paganism of the story of 'Ajīb and Gharīb has little bearing to the conditions of the Dhimmis during the period with which we are concerned.

Whereas Paganism was abolished and the number of Magians greatly diminished, the Kitābi Christians and Jews, as we know, survived as tolerated peoples within the structure of the Muslim community. Thus, the wars with the foreign Christians, unlike the imaginative wars with pre-Islamic Pagans, greatly affected the position of the Dhimmis in the Muslim world.

Further, it seems that the background to the pre-Islamic story of Ajīb and Gharīb, is not clear to the narrator, and hence the heroes of the story and its incidents are basically imaginative and depict mainly successive battles against all sorts of strange and unidentifiable nations.

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1 Nights, III, 236-367, Cal.ed. This story is omitted in the Cairo ed. of the "Nights".

2 Nights, I, 180- II, 30.

It throws little light on the pre-Islamic period which it presumes to depict and which must have been quite different, at least ideologically, from the life which developed after the establishment of Islam, so that the whole story seems to be unreal as its title 'Ajīb and Gharīb (amazing and strange) indicates.

The warfare with the Christians on the other hand, covers two phases in the Muslim history, the border wars with the Byzantines, and the Crusade period. These wars and battles are the theme of the long epic romance King 'Umar al-Nu'mān comprising more than a hundred nights.<sup>1</sup>

Marital relations between Muslims and foreign Christians commence with the conquest of Islam and extend over several centuries to the Mamlūk period (648/1250 - 923/1517). The end of the 11th c. A.D. saw the beginning of the Crusades which lasted until the 13th c. A.D.

Although victory in the Crusades was won by Saladin in 1187, the recovering of all Muslim lands was not achieved until over a 100 years later in 690/1291 and 702/1302 A.D.,<sup>2</sup> when al-Malik Khalīl al-Ashraf captured Acre in 690/1291<sup>3</sup> and his younger brother and successor al-Nāṣir recaptured the last foothold Aradus (Arwād) of the Crusaders.<sup>4</sup>

In the "Nights," the two phases of wars are merged. The emphasis however is on the Crusades, since the story starts with the formation of an alliance between the Muslim King and

1 Nights, op. cit.

2 Abu al-Fidā, al-Mukhtasar fi Tarīkh al-Bashar, (4 vols; Istanbul, 1286 A.H.), II, 220-22, IV, 25-7. ERE, IV, 345-51, art. Crusade.

3 Abu al-Fidā, op. cit. Khitāṭ, II, 238f.

4 Abu al-Fidā, op. cit.

the King of Constantinople against another Christian King, namely, the King of Caesarea. The only point in which the story is identified with the earlier period of wars is the siege of Constantinople.<sup>1</sup>

The theme which sets the story in motion revolves around the systems of slavery and concubinage. When the King of Constantinople hears that his daughter Şafīyya has been enslaved and has given birth to twins to the Arab King al-Nu'mān, he devises a stratagem to recover his daughter and avenge himself against the Muslim army. He sends a delegation to al-Nu'mān asking for military aid to repel an attack which he claims has been launched against him by the Christian King of Caesarea.

Al-Nu'mān and his council decide to despatch an army under the leadership of Sharkān, the eldest son of the King and the vizier Dindān. Before the Muslim army reaches the ambush point within the borders of the Kingdom of Constantinople, Sharkān meets queen Ibrīza, the daughter of the King of Caesarea, who is supposed to have attacked the King of Constantinople, and she reveals to him the stratagem.<sup>2</sup> He decides to return and asks Ibrīza to accompany him.

Although she goes to the court of King al-Nu'mān voluntarily and not as a captive, the King seduces her. She regrets her escape and decides to return to her father's land when she is with child by King al-Nu'mān.

On her way home she is escorted by a woman and a black slave but is murdered by the latter, not however, before she

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1 Nights, I, 281-92. Maqrīzi, Sulūk, I, pt. 3, 777.

2 Nights, I, 383. Cal. ed.

gives birth to a boy who is destined to contribute to the reconciliation of the Christian and Muslim armies later in the story.<sup>1</sup>

Since the war between the two powers was marked by alternative periods of truces, expeditions, outbreaks of battles, exchanging of captives and reconciliations,<sup>2</sup> the story continues in a succession of wars and counter wars with dramatic reasons behind each expedition such as the enslavement of Şafyya, the murder of Ibrīza, the poisoning of al-Nu'mān and the martyrdom of his son, the leader Sharkān.

This joint campaign between Muslims and Byzantines against the Christian King of Caesarea is not altogether an invention of the narrator. A rift between the Byzantine Emperor Alexius and the Franks was caused by the repeated attacks launched by various Frank rulers against Byzantium. In 500/1106, the Emperor urged the Seljuks to send him troops, and the Muslim and Byzantine armies fought side by side against the Franks.<sup>3</sup>

A few years later in 504/1111, Emperor Alexius, annoyed by the attacks of Tancred of Antioch, sent an embassy to the 'Abbāsīd caliph, al-Mustazhir, to discuss the possibility of a joint action against the Franks of Antioch. After some hesitation the caliph sent a message to his father-in-law the sultan of Işfahān and an expedition under the leadership of Amīr Mawdūd

1 Nights, I, 396-401, Cal. ed.

2 Maqrīzī, Khīṭat, II, 191f. Abu al-Fidā, op. cit. Athīr, XI 240-45. 313.

3 Athīr, X, 294.

of Mosul was prepared. But Mawdūd's campaign was thwarted, because Raḍwān, the ruler of Aleppo, did not co-operate with him and he retired to Mosul.<sup>1</sup>

In the dramatisation of these historical events, the narrator makes Sharkān retire with his army to Baghdad when he discovers the stratagem of the emperor as has been mentioned above.

The second part of the story involves the poisoning of King al-Nu'mān by an old Byzantine woman called Shawāhī, who prepares a clever plan in which she presents the King with seven beautiful and learned Greek slave-girls. Winning his trust by her devoutness, she induces him to drink a poisonous draught and thus avenges the murder of Princess Ibrīza.<sup>2</sup>

This act of provocation instigates a second expedition to seek revenge for the King's death. In this expedition there is brave fighting, intrigues and a siege of Constantinople which lasts four years. During it, the eldest son of al-Nu'mān is slain treacherously by the same old woman who poisoned his father.<sup>3</sup>

In the third and last part of the story, the Muslim expedition is led by al-Nu'mān's grandchildren. It is revealed in the last part of the romance, that King Rūmzān, the leader of the Christian army is in fact the son of al-Nu'mān by Ibrīza, and the family reunion is compacted by exacting punishment from all those who had harmed the royal families. Amongst these was Shawāhī Dhāt

1 Runeiman, A History of the Crusades (3 Vols, Cambridge, 1951-54), II, 121, 130. Athīr, X, 339.

2 Nights, I, 255.

3 Ibid., I, 266-92.

(the lady of calamities), who is hanged at the gates of Baghdad.<sup>1</sup>

Although it would not be correct to regard this long romance of war and reconciliation between Muslims and Christians as history, some points in it can be historically verifiable though not necessarily connected with definite dates or persons, <sup>or</sup> set out in correct sequence.

The narrator's primary mission is to convey the religious zeal and the ardour with which the Muslims fought,<sup>2</sup> and the expeditions supply material to display the chivalry and prowess of the Muslim warrior.

Thus the siege of Constantinople in the story could have been inspired by one of the actual sieges of the city which took place both in the Umayyad and the early 'Abbāsid periods.<sup>3</sup>

The narrator claims that the story is related to the period preceding the Caliphate of 'Abd al-Malik,<sup>4</sup> and this indicates that the narrator might have had in mind the pre-'Abbāsid sieges such as that laid by Yazīd b. Mu'āwīya in 49/669.

Despite the fact that the story makes Baghdad, which is the legendary metropolis of the "Nights", the capital of the King and his grandsons, there seems to be some relation between the

1 Nights, II, 30. See Ibn Sa'id, XXIII, pt. 2, 405f on the role of an Armenian woman in helping the King of Constantinople to take over a Muslim Castle.

2 Cf. R. Paret, Die Legendäre Maghāzi Literatur (Tübingen, 1930), 146, 167.

3 Tabari, II, pt. 1, 86. Aghāni, XVI, 33.

4 Nights, I, 180.



siege of Constantinople laid by Sharkān and this legend of Yazīd as related in al-Aghāni.<sup>1</sup> Yazīd distinguished himself for bravery and valour and earned the title of Fata' al-'Arab.<sup>2</sup>

The meeting between Sharkān and the Amazon Christian queen Ibrīza in the "Nights" bears a resemblance, however remote, to the presence, at Yazīd's siege, of the daughter of the Byzantine King and the daughter of the Christian Ghassānid King Jabla b. al-Ayham. During the fighting each princess cheered her own people. It is said that Yazīd was stimulated to fight in order to please the Arab princess.

The other episodical similarity is shown in the martyrdom of the Crown Prince Sharkān at the gates of Constantinople, which is reminiscent of the martyrdom of the Prophet's companion and standard bearer Abu Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, who was killed during Yazīd's siege and was buried, just like Sharkān, before the walls of the city.<sup>3</sup>

However the period against the background of which this epic romance is set is undoubtedly the Crusade period, for pointers to the Crusade wars are clearer and more straightforward than the references to these more remote Muslim-Byzantine wars. For example, Caesarea is said, in the story, to be under Christian rule.

1 Aghāni, op. cit.

2 Hitti, 201.

3 Tabari, III, 2324, Abu al-Fidā, Mukhtasar, I, 197. Khatīb, I, 154. Nights, II, 292.

It was first taken by Mu'āwīya in 20/640, and then it fell into the hands of the Crusaders in 495/1101.<sup>1</sup> Thereafter it was lost and regained by the Muslims several times,<sup>2</sup> until Baybars finally destroyed it in 664/1265 so that it would never be recovered by the Christians.<sup>3</sup> It seems reasonable therefore to assume that the story could have taken place sometime between 1101 and 1265 A.D., when Caesarea was under Christian rule.

Further, there are a number of references to the "Crusading gang" and the Christian army of soldiers from France, Austria, Germany and Genoa.<sup>4</sup> The story reports that after Shawāhi's success in poisoning the Arab king, these soldiers of various nations rejoiced and planned to meet in Constantinople and then descend to the country of al-Nu'mān.<sup>5</sup> This is reminiscent of the first Crusade which descended to Arabia through the historical route in Asia minor in 1099 A.D.<sup>6</sup>

The description of the admirable feats and heroic battles fought by the Muslims may have been inspired by the triumphs of the counter-crusading Zangid Amīrs of Mosul, from 538/1143,<sup>7</sup>

1 Runciman, II, 73, El. II, 660, art., Kaisāriya.

2 Paret, 'Umar al-Nu'mān (Tübingen, 1927), 28.

3 Runciman, III, 423, El., op.cit.

4 Nights, I, 266, 258.

5 Ibid., op.cit.

6 Cf. Runciman, II, 19. On the second Crusade in 1106 A.D.

7 El., IV, 1224, art. Zengi.

which culminated in Saladin's victory and extended to the time of the late Mamlūk sultans. Thus the story mentions the Knights of Mosul, the Turks and the Dailams who rushed to the aid of the Muslim army.<sup>1</sup>

In the last expedition against the Christians, the story relates that the grandsons of King al-Nu'mān and the Christian King Rūmzān were reconciled when it was revealed that the latter was the son of al-Nu'mān by queen Ibrīza.

Both the Christians and the Muslims agree to rule the Muslim country jointly on alternate days.<sup>2</sup> This imaginative conclusion perhaps alludes to the rule of the Latin Kingdom in Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup>

Such truces may further point to peace treaties signed by both sides at different times during the Crusade wars;<sup>4</sup> for example, when Richard the Lion-heart failed to recapture Jerusalem from Saladin in 587 /1191, he came to terms with him, and the Christians by the terms of this agreement were to retain the coast from Tyre to Jaffa and have free access to the Holy Sepulchre.<sup>5</sup>

Another treaty was concluded by the Venetian Republic with Egypt in 599/1202 to divert the Crusade in return for

1 Nights, I, 258, 279.

2 Ibid., II, 18f.

3 E. 'Atiyya, The Arabs, ed. Penguin, (London, 1955). 44.

4 Runciman, II, 96, III, 61, 68, 72-4.

5 Ibid., III, 61, ERE., IV, 349.

valuable commercial privileges.<sup>1</sup> The last concession in the story, allowing King Rūmzān to rule Baghdad, may allude to the treaty of 627/1229 between al-Kān-il (1218/1238) of Egypt and Frederick II.<sup>2</sup> By this treaty, Frederick was to receive Jerusalem and Bethlehem with a corridor connecting Jerusalem with the sea. The Temple arc and the Aqṣa Mosque were to remain in Muslim hands.<sup>3</sup>

Though this agreement was much disliked by both Muslims and Christians,<sup>4</sup> there is not the slightest condemnation in the story of the alliance between the two parties, unless one regards the description of the alternating form of rule as a kind of satire.

Though the story stretches over a long period of time, states Paret, it was finally linked together and shaped by one narrator who cleverly connected the sundry incidents of the warfare.<sup>5</sup> The end of the story suggests that the Crusades were not yet over when the narrator finally shaped it.

#### The Effect of the Wars on the Christian Dhimmis

The bitter hostility expressed against Christians in this story, and in the Egyptian stories which coincided with

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1 Op. cit.

2 Abu al-Fidā, III, 148f.

3 Op. cit., Runciman, III, 184-89, Treece, The Crusades (London, 1962) 243.

4 Abu al-Fidā, op. cit., Runciman, III, 187.

5 'Umar al-Nu'mān 28.

the events of the Crusades, is a clear evidence of the damaging effects of the wars upon Arab Christians relations.

This antipathy can be illustrated by comparing the treatment of the Christian characters in the earlier stories of the "Nights" with their treatment in the later stories of the collection.

In the Baghdadi story of The Hunchback, for example, there is no indication of a particular antipathy towards the Christian broker who figures in the story.<sup>1</sup>

As regards his social position, he is called the Sultan's broker. A Muslim trader entrusts his goods to him and offers him an ample profit. As a Christian, he has to wear a turban of a special colour, and when he thinks that the Muslim hunchback is trying to steal his turban he feels safe enough to strike him and knock him down.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to this, the Christian characters of the later Egyptian stories in the "Nights" whether Arab Christians or foreigners are abused and frequently insulted. Rashīd al-Dīn is lampooned, cursed and sentenced to death.<sup>3</sup> A Frank merchant residing in Cairo, is called "the enemy of God" and described as an "obstinate tyrant unsurpassed in cunning and intrigue."<sup>4</sup>

Lūqā the Byzantine warrior, is mockingly described as having "a face like a donkey's and a physique like that of a monkey." Shawāhi is called a calamity and a treacherous serpent.<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, I, 93.

2 Ibid., I, 95-105.

3 Ibid., II, 255.

4 Ibid., IV, 177.

5 Ibid., I, 260, 186.

The intensity of the resentment resulting from the prolonged wars and hostilities between the two religions is clearly reflected in the following verses recited by 'Ali Nuraddin when he becomes a prisoner of the Franks:'

I swear that if I were given  
 rule for one single day,  
 And became a mighty sultan,  
 I should pull down all the churches,  
 And kill every priest on earth.<sup>1</sup>

A study of the historical events of the Mamlūk period reflects the same kind of hostility. The accounts of the Cairo riots between the Muslims and Christians in the time of Sultan Muḥammad b. Qalāwūn and his successor is a comment on this deterioration in relations.<sup>2</sup>

In the time of Ibn Qalāwūn (721/1321), Muslims ransacked and destroyed churches and convents. Hardly a month passed before several fires broke out in Cairo and Miṣr, and the damage was many times greater than that caused by the destruction of the churches.<sup>3</sup> It was disclosed later that a band of Christians had organised the fires in retaliation for the destruction of their churches.<sup>4</sup>

After a series of atrocities on both sides, the Sultan decreed

1 Ibid., II 255.

2 Khitat. II 512-15.

3 Op. cit.

4 Ibid., II. 514.

that all Christians should wear blue turbans, ride only donkeys and be excluded from public offices.<sup>1</sup>

The "Nights" therefore "eloquently describes the deep hatred caused by the Crusades, which led to the deterioration of the status of the Eastern Christian..."<sup>2</sup> "The old easy tolerance of Islam was gone,"<sup>3</sup> and the victors of the later Mamlūk period, embittered by long wars, had no mercy on the native Christians and the Crusaders as Saladin had had.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, the Muslims had begun to fear Christians as a kind of "fifth column". Al-Maqrīzi reports that the Copts set fire to the district of al-Bāṭiliyya in the reign of al-Zāhir Baybars (658/1260-676/1277) because they resented the capture of Arṣūf, Caesarea, Tripoli, Jaffa and Antioch.<sup>5</sup>

The book of the Hisba, written about the time of the reign of Saladin, emphasises the need for the supervision of Christian quarters and markets,<sup>6</sup> in order to watch the Christians who might collaborate with their foreign co-religionists.<sup>7</sup>

1 Ibid., II, 516.

2 Grunebaum, 1953, 181. Guillaume, Islam (Penguin, ed. London, 1961), 86.

3 Runciman, III, 423. 469.

4 Runciman, op. cit. and II, 466.

5 Khitat, II, 8.

6 Shayzari, Intro. 3f., 106f.

7 N. Ziyāda, A Study of Urban Life in Syria, 1200-1400, (Beirut, 1953,) 120. Shayzari, 117.

Examples of the collaboration of native Christians with foreign powers can be cited in Muslim writings.<sup>1</sup>

In a similar vein, the "Nights" shows that the old Byzantine women Shawāhi employs Christian merchants from Syria as accomplices in her device to defeat the Muslim army heading to Constantinople.<sup>2</sup>

Spying activities seem to have become fairly common during the occupation of Palestine by the Franks. Thus in the story of Abu Šīr and Abu Qīr, even a Muslim is accused of being a spy. The dyer Abu Qīr, in order to ruin his rival Abu Šīr who was favoured by the Sultan, alleged that Abu Šīr's wife and children were captives in the hands of the King of the Franks, and that the latter had promised abu Šīr the freedom of his family if he succeeded in poisoning the Sultan.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast to this, the Jews did not seem to have provoked the same ill feelings that Christians provoked.<sup>4</sup> After the suppression of the Cairo riots and the imposition of measures against the Christians,<sup>5</sup> it had become much safer for them to wear the yellow turbans, decreed to the Jews, whenever they went out rather than the blue turbans assigned to the Christians since the riots had been directed only against Christians.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Al-Wāsiṭi, al-Radd 'Alā Ahl al-Dhimma, JAOS., 1921, XLI, 402. Maqrīzi, II, 22. Cf. al-Mufaḍḍal, Histoire des Sultans Mamlouks, (3 Vols., ed. E. Blochet, Paris, 1919-28), III, 37.

2 Nights, I, 266.

3 Ibid., IV, 222-24.

4 Tritton, 1930, 95.

5 See above, 313f.

6 Khitat, II, 516.



Likewise in the "Nights", the Jews are not represented as showing greed or dishonesty in business dealings.<sup>1</sup> Further, when a Jew acts treacherously, he is not attacked in the same terms of abuse showered upon Christians.<sup>2</sup>

This was not the case before the Crusades and the Christians used to occupy higher social and political positions than the Jews.<sup>3</sup> Al-Jāhiz reports that in the reign of al-Mutawakkil (847-861)A.D.), the Christians were physicians, druggists, scribes and court attendants whereas Jews were craftsmen, such as barbers, dyers, tanners, cobblers and butchers.<sup>4</sup>

Although the Muslim conception of the God-head, states Scott, is closer to that of the Jews than to the Trinity of the Christians, the Muslims regarded the Jews as far inferior to the Christians.<sup>5</sup>

Al-Jāhiz attributes the preference of Christians over the Jews to the disputes between the early Muslims of Medina and their neighbours the Jews which are often pointed out in the Quran, and to the fact that several Arab tribes were Christians, and that "the daughters of the Byzantines had born children for the rulers of Islam." In addition, Christians, unlike the Jews, were appreciated for their contributions to philology, medicine, philosophy and astrology.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Qalamāwi, 163. . Nights, I, 75.

2 Ibid., III, 57, 347.

3 Grunebaum, 1958, 182.

4 Rasā'il, ed. Finkel, 16.

5 The Arabian Nights Entertainments, Introduction (4 Vols., London, 1883), I, XXX.

6 Jāhiz, op.cit. Quran, 2<sup>40-79</sup>, on disputes with Jews.

Historical evidence shows that in both the 'Abbāsīd and the Fāṭimid courts, favourite Christian wives and concubines tried to secure high posts for their Christian relatives by using their influence upon the rulers.<sup>1</sup>

In contrast, Jewish women seldom had this kind of influence. One incident may however be cited to support this view. It is reported that a Jewish clerk named al-Tustari once enjoyed a significant influence in the court of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ẓāhir, having presented the latter with a slave-girl who bore the caliph his son and successor al-Mustaṣṣir.<sup>2</sup>

Although the concubine concerned was not specifically said to be Jewish, nevertheless her close connection with her former Jewish master made his influence at the court of some weight throughout the reign of the slave-girl's son al-Mustaṣṣir.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise in the "Nights" one notices that whereas the Christian women such as Ṣafyya, Ibrīza, Maryam and Ḥusn Maryam are all princesses who become royal wives or related to the caliph's circle, the Jewish woman Zayn marries an ordinary Christian merchant.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Christians had the prerogative of being supported by foreign Christian states. The Byzantines, for example, felt responsible for the problems of the Christians in the Islamic countries. They were on friendly terms with the Fāṭimid because, except for al-Ḥākim, they treated their Christian subjects kindly.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Ibn Sa'īd, XXIII, pt. 2. 415. Ḥasan, Tārīkh al-Dawla al-Fāṭimiyya (Cairo, 1958), 202, 623f, 646. Zaydan, 231, 281 (Eng. tr.).

2 Taghribirdi, II, 183 (ed. Popper). Maqrīzi, I, 424.

3 Maqrīzi, op. cit.

4 Nights, I, 181, 192, IV, 146, II, 204, IV, 93.

5 Runciman, II, 15. Ḥasan, 1957, 202-17.

Because of the Crusades however, the situation was reversed and the new hostility towards Christians was stronger than the earlier antipathy towards the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

In the same manner, warfare and political disputes between the Persian and the Arabs caused a rift between the Magians and the Muslims. The Iranian Magians were alienated from the Muslim society first, for religious reasons as they were regarded basically as idolaters, and second, because they were suspected of different national interests, owing to the successive revolts of the Iranians against the 'Abbāsīd rule.

The antipathy towards Magians shown particularly in the Iraqi stories,<sup>2</sup> may be ascribable to the long and oppressive Persian rule of the pre-Islamic periods, and to the jealousies that existed between the Arabs and the Iranian supporters of the 'Abbāsīd dynasty.

Thus Magians in the "Nights" are attacked in the same vein and with similar terms of abuse as those showered upon Christians. A Magian is described as a dog and the descendant of dogs" whose soul shall be sent to hell, the worst abode.<sup>3</sup>

#### The Religious Basis of the Relations between the Dhimmis and Muslims

In the following pages the conception of the Dhimmis' religions as reflected in the "Nights" will be discussed.

1 Grunebaum, op. cit.

2 Nights, I, 59, II, 115, 141, III, 342, 344, 347.

3 Nights, II, 347.

This conception is based partly on the Quran interpretation of the Kitābi religions,<sup>1</sup> partly on the stories of the Prophets transmitted by Muslim authorities in elaboration and extension of the Quranic verses relating to these Prophets.<sup>2</sup> and partly on the inherited superstitions and popular beliefs, regarding consecrated places and religious figures shared by the entire populace irrespective of their religion or country of origin.<sup>3</sup>

As regards Christianity, the narrator calls the Christians polytheists—as opposed to the Muslims who believe in the unity of God — because Christians believe in the divinity of Christ,<sup>4</sup> which is specifically rejected in the Quran.<sup>5</sup>

Comparing the simplicity of mosques and Muslim rites with the splendour of Christian churches, their statues, paintings and gilded crosses and their elaborate rituals, the narrator arrives at the view that the Christians really worshipped crosses and idols rather than God.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting to note that the rejection of images by Islam seems to have affected the Eastern churches which officially prohibit statues and reliefs of sacred persons.<sup>7</sup>

1 Quran, 19, 20, 3<sup>45-64</sup>.

2 Tha'labi, 271, 373, and passim.

3 Tritton, 1930, 152f; and cf. Hasluck, Christianity and Islam under the Sultans (2 Vols., Oxford, 1929), I, 32-6, 63, 71, 187. 302, e.g. the footprint on the Dome of the Rock is believed to be Christ's by the Christians, and Muḥammad's by the Muslims and Abraham's by the Jews (Ibid., I, 187).

4 Nights, IV, 148, I, 284.

5 Quran, 5<sup>17, 72-75</sup>, 19<sup>35</sup>. Shahrīstānī, Kitāb al-Milāl wa'l Nihāl (2 vols., Caire, 1910), I, 177.

6 Nights, Op. cit.

7 Hasluck, I, 190.

The narrator sees the churches not as places for prayers but as shrines for offerings where there are boxes full of treasures and valuables.<sup>1</sup>

Monasteries are storehouses where tons of gold, silver and jewels are amassed, where beautiful women reside and where the inmates are served with splendid food and eat and drink from vessels of gold and silver.<sup>2</sup>

The ceremonial preparation of the warrior Luqā for the holy fight with ointments, incense and ikons, seems alien to the narrator, and he tries to quiet his uneasiness by making fun of these proceedings.<sup>3</sup>

The narrator's knowledge of Christianity, however, is limited and is concerned mainly with what he sees of its external features. His information may be summed up in the sentence: "The soldiers of infidelity shouted in praise of the cross, the zunnar, the wine and its crushers, the priests, monks, the Palm Festival and the Patriarch."<sup>4</sup>

He also seems to be acquainted with the Christian ritual of baptism.<sup>5</sup> and believes in the version of the miraculous birth of Jesus as related in the Quran.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Nights, IV, 128.

2 Ibid., I, 269, 272, 277.

3 Ibid., I, 260.

4 Ibid., I, 263.

5 Op. cit.

6 Quran, 19<sup>17-34</sup>, 3<sup>45-48</sup>, 9<sup>30-32</sup>.

For details on the relations between Christianity and Islam in the Quran see J. Robson, Christ in Islam, (London, 1929), 8-28.

Among the Prophets who appear in the "Nights" are Solomon, Daniel the sage,<sup>1</sup> Elijah (Elias), who is associated with the Quranic figure al-Khidr,<sup>2</sup> and several others who are mentioned only by name, such as al-'Uzayr (Ezra), Aaron, David and Joseph.<sup>3</sup>

Daniel is known to Muslims as the patron of the occult sciences and of prophecy,<sup>4</sup> An anecdote in the "Nights" represents him as being the first judge to separate witnesses in an adultery case.<sup>5</sup> His tomb, which was a Muslim pilgrimage place, was in a town in Khuzistān called Tustar divided into two parts by a river.<sup>6</sup>

Because the Prophet's body was supposed to bring prosperity, it was kept for a year by each bank alternately, both Jews and Muslims accompanying it in its migrations. Later, this problem was settled by suspending it from a bridge half way between the two banks; and in honour of Daniel, nobody was allowed to fish in that part of the river.<sup>7</sup>

In the "Nights" Daniel prophesies the appearance of the Prophet Muhammad. The prophecy seems to have been written in a book concealed in a golden box which Bulūqiya, Daniel's son, happens to find. Bulūqiya however, angered by this concealment, leaves the country in search of the truth, only to be told that it is centuries yet before the Prophet's appearance is due.<sup>8</sup>

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1 Nights, III, 304, II, 318.

2 Ibid., III, 85, IV, 325. Cf. Hasluck, I, 319-233. El. art. Khidr, Vol. II, 861.

3 Nights, II, 347.

4 Hasluck, I, 298-303.

5 Nights, II, 319.

6 Hasluck, op. cit. Benjamin of Tudela, The Itinerary (London, 1907), 52f. 83-6. Tha'labi, 369.

7 Hasluck, I, 300. Benjamin, 70, Tritton, 1930, 152.

8 Nights, III, 30. Cf. the same story in Nuwayri, XIV, 182 and Tha'labi, 381.

This story would seem to base itself on Quranic statements which declare that the Jews had corrupted their scriptures, concealing their foreknowledge of the coming of the Prophet.<sup>1</sup>

After their captivity, the Jews, according to later writers, lost their scriptures which were rewritten after their return to Palestine by some of their scribes who changed some facts and concealed others.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Khidr is a walī who has the attribute of immortality and is therefore called "the Verdant one". He is identified with various figures of the Old Testament, notably Elijah, (Arabic, Elias), the Christian rainbringer,<sup>3</sup> because the story in the Quran which speaks of him as the servant of God who accompanies Moses on his travels, is similar to the story of Elijah and Rabbi Joshua ben Levi.<sup>4</sup>

Hasluck maintains that the Khidr of the Muslim legend is a composite of Elias-Enoch-Phinehas.<sup>5</sup>

In the "Nights" al-Khidr is a protector of travellers and a deliverer of people in distress. He is further associated with proclaiming the Muslim faith to pagans and idolaters.<sup>6</sup>

Other figures of the Old Testament, known in the Islamic popular tradition, can be instanced in the exclamation uttered by the Jewish physician who stumbles on the dead body of the Hunchback and shouts "Oh Ezra, oh Heavens and the ten commandments, oh Aaron and Joshua the Son of Nun."<sup>7</sup>

1 Quran, 2<sup>75, 79, 85, 87, 159.</sup>

2 Khitat, II, 475, Shahrīstāni, I, 163.

3 Hasluck, I, 319-33. Tha'labi, 271-80.

4 Quran, 18<sup>59-81</sup>, El. op. cit., art. Khidr.

5 Hasluck, I, 333.

6 Nights, III, 85, IV, 315 ff. Cf. Hasluck, I, 279.

7 Ibid., I, 94.

The tomb of al-'Uzayr (Ezra) is well known to the Arabs of the marshy area in the south of Iraq in which the tomb is situated, and where Muslims are accustomed to the annual pilgrimage of the Jews.<sup>1</sup>

Ezekiel's tomb is venerated by the Iraqi Arab tribes, as well and is called by them the prophet al-Kifl.<sup>2</sup>

There is besides a section in the "Nights" which is composed of anecdotes about the Israelites under the title of Akhbār al-Ṣāliḥīn, which preach piety and righteousness.<sup>3</sup>

It is maintained that this type of anecdote arrived in Islamic literature through the medium of converted Jews, such as Ka'b al-Aḥbār (d. 652 A.D.) and Ibn al-Munabbih (d. 728 A.D.) before they were incorporated into Arabic historical lore.<sup>4</sup>

However, it is noticeable that Muslim writers and commentators were in the habit of transmitting such didactic anecdotes,<sup>5</sup> firstly to preach morals,<sup>6</sup> and secondly to interpret and expand on certain verses of the Quran. Thus compare al-Tha'labī in his book Qisāṣ al-Anbiyā' where he may start a story with a relevant Quranic verse and then quotes Ibn 'Abbās, or Ibn al-Munabbih or Ibn Salām as his authorities on the specific stories of the Prophets.<sup>7</sup>

1 Ghanīma, 1924, 195.

2 Ibid., 203, and cf. Quran, 21<sup>85</sup>, 38<sup>49</sup>.

3 Nights, III, 14-20.

4 Hitti, 244.

5 Amīn, Duḥā, I, 350, 352, 357.

6 'Iqd, I, 329. Ibshīhi, I, 127-135.

7 Qisāṣ, 270, 281.



Quotations from supposed ancient Israelite lore were common both in books and in oral literature.<sup>1</sup> Thus when the caliph al-Muwaffaq once intended to scourge the vizier Sulaymān b. Wahb and his son 'Ubayd Allah, in front of each other, the vizier shouted that an Israeli king had once killed a goat in front of its mother and was immediately smitten by lunacy. The caliph, who was sitting behind a curtain, overheard and ordered the flogging to be stopped.<sup>2</sup>

Dhimmi, especially Christians, shared with the Muslim a common belief in talismans and amulets.<sup>3</sup> Some of these shared superstitions may be attributable to the effect of the harīm system where Christian wives and concubines introduced them to Muslim women. The other reason, maintains Hasluck, is the prevalence of the Semitic type of superstition which persisted among the populace of all religions and creeds.<sup>4</sup>

The narrator's knowledge of the Magian religion is superficial, and is often confused with sun worship.<sup>5</sup> al-Shahristāni distinguishes Sun worship as one of the religions of India. The Sun worshippers regard the sun as an angel ruling the world. They have Sun-Temples in which they pray, fast and give offerings.<sup>6</sup>

1 Qūt, I, 154-56 and in the margin, I, 142. Nights, III, 19-21.

2 Tanūkhi, Nishwār, VIII, 61.

3 Cf. Hasluck, I, 30-6, 71, 178, 181f, 187. Nights, I, 182. II, 19, 204. Shared beliefs in amulets and saints.

4 Cf. Hasluck, I, 36.

5 Nights, III, 293, 296, 303,

6 Milal, II, 452.

The confusion of Sun-worship with the Fire-worship in the "Nights" could be referred to the fact that one of the reformers of the Zoroastrian religion enjoined Magians to face the sun when kneeling and prostrating. Further, the Manichaens who, like the Magians, believe in the fundamental power of light as opposing the power of Darkness, place a special significance on the sun which serves to purify the power of Light from the devils of Darkness.<sup>1</sup>

However, even scholarly Arabic sources had no clear concept of the Magian religion and its theological basis. Al-Shahristāni for instance, contributes nothing to the knowledge of the ideas about Zoroastrianism prevalent among the Faqīhs.<sup>2</sup>

He, however, gives detailed information on the various sects of this religion especially the Manichaens. Perhaps this ambiguity is due to the fact that the Magians, unlike the Manichaens, had no written creed and concentrated mainly on building of Fire-temples.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from the Fire-temples in which the holy Fire continues to burn, every Magian had a sacred fire in his own house.<sup>4</sup> They considered fire the purest symbol of the Divine being, as against the Sabians who worshipped the heavenly bodies.<sup>5</sup> Whereas the Sabians are recognised by the Quran as equal to the people of the Book,<sup>6</sup> the Magians are ambiguously mentioned only once in a verse which refers also to the believers, the Kitābis, the Sabians

1 Milal, I, 187, 191.

2 El., III, 98, art. Madijūs, Shahristāni, I, 179-98.

3 Ibid., I, 188-96. Jāhiz, Hayawān, I, 55f.

4 Op. cit. Nights, II, 141, ERE., XII, 865.

5 Shahristāni, I, 198, 180, II, 244, 250.

6 Quran, 5<sup>69</sup>, 22<sup>17</sup>. 2<sup>62</sup>.

and the idolaters, and ends by stating "Verily God shall judge between them on the day of resurrection, for God is witness of all things." It is clear, however, that the Magians in the Quran are not regarded on the same footing as the Kitābīs and the Sabians.<sup>1</sup>

Muslim scholars distinguished the Magians as those people who do not follow a real prophet but only a mutanabbi. They are a sect intermediate between the real Kitābīs and the mushriks (heathens). Al-Shahristāni, distinguishing the Magians and the Manichaens from the people who have definite revealed Books, calls them "those people who possess shubhatu Kitāb, or something like an inspired book."<sup>2</sup>

In the "Nights" the Magian religion is regarded as ungodly, and the Fire-worshippers are placed at the same footing as the idolaters. They are distinguished by an oath repeatedly mentioned in association with them, viz: "By the Fire and the Light and the Shade and the Heat."<sup>3</sup> As Dhimmis they wear red turbans, and live in towns more or less remote and segregated where they worship the Fire in secret in their own houses.<sup>4</sup>

The origin of the idea that there was human sacrifice to the Fire God on the day of the Fire festival as shown in the "Nights" is difficult to trace.<sup>5</sup> In this connection Lane describes a singular ceremony in which the Magians formed a number of images of paste or clay representing those deceased personages

1 Quran, 22<sup>17</sup>. 2<sup>62</sup>.

2 El., III, 98, art. Madijus, Milal, I. 179.

3 Nights, I, 59, III, 347, 296.

4 Ibid., I, 29, II, 141.

5 Ibid., op.cit. III, 341.

whom they meant to honour, which they placed in the most public places. After paying them great homage they burnt them with much formality. Lane thinks that this practice might have given rise to the popular belief among Muslims that the Magians offered human sacrifices.<sup>1</sup>

It should be noted here that al-Shahristāni in his discussion of the various sects of Magians, does not mention such a practice in connection with Iranian Magians, but in the section related to Indian religions, he does mention that human sacrifice is associated with one of the sects among the Indian Fire worshippers, although the rest of them seem to forbid it.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Social and Economic Conditions

As a work primarily concerned with the artisans, the "Nights" does not deal with that section of the Dhimmis which worked in farming and agriculture and clung to their languages, Aramaic and Syriac in Syria, Coptic in Egypt, and Persian in Iran.<sup>3</sup>

On the whole, although there was social toleration of Dhimmis in the field of business and in allowing them their choice of profession, the feeling of the superiority of the Muslim faith and of Muslim people over non-Muslims is clearly shown in the "Nights".<sup>4</sup>

It is evident that there were certain para-religious characteristics attributed to non-Muslims in general. To them are ascribed the arts of magic, astronomy, geomancy, and alchemy.<sup>5</sup> All

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1 Lane, II, 239, n., 101.

2 Milal, I, 179-98, II, 455.

3 Khitat, II, 492, Muqaddase, 203.

4 Cf. Grunebaum, 178. Quran, 5<sup>156</sup>.

5 Nights, II, 204, III, 266, 343.

talismans, charms and inscription seem to be written in Hebrew, Greek or ancient Egyptian letters or symbols.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the Frankish Husn Maryam has skill in geomancy and pre-knowledge of her marriage to Abu al-Ehāmāt, By her magic she causes the transference of his wife to a Christian country, and her magical amulet re-transportes Abu al-Shāmāt, his wife and herself safely to the Muslim country.<sup>2</sup>

Ezra the Jewish Jeweller is also a magician who has obtained for his daughter a crown, a girdle and a jewelled slipper from an enchanted treasure. His castle could become invisible to on-lookers. He had the power to change his enemies into animals.<sup>3</sup>

Queen Lāb was also a magician who ruled over the country of the Fire worshippers. She performed all sorts of sorcery and turned her husbands into birds by the black arts.<sup>4</sup>

Magians are described in the "Nights" as treacherous and dangerous to Muslims. Bahram, for instance, kills a thousand Muslim youths to please the fire God.<sup>5</sup> Sindbad meets a group of Magians who used to stupify their victims, fatten them and eat them.<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, III, 140.

2 Ibid., II, 201-203.

3 Ibid., III, 267-69.

4 Ibid., III, 288-98.

5 Ibid., III, 341.

6 Ibid., III, 115.

The Jews in the "Nights" are described as perfidious and treacherous. Jānshāh is offered a lot of money by a Jewish merchant who takes him to the top of a mountain of jewels only to forsake him there after getting the jewels he wants.<sup>1</sup>

Accordingly, a tradition warns people not to travel with Jews for they shall play some tricks against them.<sup>2</sup>

The "Nights" refers to cruelty as a general trait of Christians and Jews.<sup>3</sup>

In this connection al-Jāhīz maintains that castration, which is an act of cruelty, spread to other parts of the world from Byzantium and Abyssinia where children were castrated to provide eunuchs, notwithstanding the fact that compassion was the keynote of Christianity.<sup>4</sup>

These special traits attributed to non-Muslims did not, however, affect the development of good and friendly relationships between Muslims and Dhimmis, especially in times of peace and under just rulers. The toleration of Dhimmis is based first and foremost on the fact that Islam recognises the sacred books of other religions.

This recognition created an atmosphere of toleration "absolutely unknown to Medieval Europe" as Mez puts it, though he attributes it mainly to the necessity for the various faiths to live side by side.<sup>5</sup>

1 Ibid., III, 56.

2 Wāsiti, JAOS, 1921, XLI, 396, 429.

3 Nights, II, 249, 251, I, 146, 216. Cf. Quran, 2<sup>74</sup> on the Jews and their hardness of heart.

4 Rasā'il, 21 (ed. Finkel) Hayawān, I, 124. Zaydān, V, 28

5 Renaissance, 32, 209.

Education was not barred to the Dhimmis. They were taught to read the Quran as children.<sup>1</sup>

Marriage to a Kitābi woman was as lawful as marriage to a Muslim woman even if she retained her religion,<sup>2</sup> and several marriages of this kind occur in the "Nights".<sup>3</sup>

Although the idea that Dhimmis could own Muslim slaves was regarded with repugnance, Islamic legislation did not forbid the purchase of any kind of slave since they were sold as ordinary goods.<sup>4</sup> Thus al-Maqrīzi is able to describe the pomp and magnificence of a rich Christian in whose possession there were slaves attendants and ghilmān.<sup>5</sup>

It is reported that some Christian men even acquired concubines. When Yūḥanna b. Masawayh, a physician and sexton, was criticised by his Christian fellows for acquiring concubines, he replied that since the Patriarch owned more than one garment - whereas the injunction forbade the owning of more than one garment or one wife simultaneously - he might likewise acquire more than one woman.<sup>6</sup>

As regards daily relations with Dhimmis, the lawyers gave various lists of stipulations and measures of conduct decreed for the Dhimmis,<sup>7</sup> but there is clear evidence that these

1 Tritton, 1930, 167.

2 Quran, 5<sup>5</sup>, 2<sup>221</sup>, Kharāj, 74. Umm, V. 6.

3 Nights, II, 201, IV, 94.

4 Tritton, 1930, 192, 101. Al-Shāfi'i thinks it right to make a Dhimmi sell his Muslim slaves, but admits that it is not possible to prevent him from buying them, IV, 188.

5 Khitāṭ, II, 498.

6 Qifti, 387, Uṣaybi'a, I, 177.

7 Sha'rāni, II, 162f. Kharāj, 70, 80-88. Shāfi'i, IV, 120-132.

stipulations were largely theoretical.

In this respect al-Jāhīz points out that the Christians had acquired beautiful garments, owned slaves and horses and adopted Muslim names and kunyas. They also abandoned the wearing of the statutory distinctive belts, or at least concealed it beneath their dress, and the distinguished Christians had even stopped paying the poll-tax.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Wāsiṭī (13th - 14th c. A.D.) also states that the protected people were so without fear and acted so independently that they should rank among the worst people ever subjected by the sword. He criticises their present superciliousness towards Muslim and protests at their holding of "stations of power and places of weight and council."<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, it seems well enough established that however strict and elaborate these rulers may have been, authority and people treated the Dhimmis better than laws and orders decreed.<sup>3</sup> For example a Dhimmi who committed adultery with a Muslim woman was usually fined and not stoned to death as the law decreed.<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the Jew in the "Nights" who was accused of marrying and defrauding a Muslim woman was only fined and punished by ishhar (public humiliation).<sup>5</sup>

The "Nights" refers to a few injunctions stipulated as regards the treatment of the non-Muslims. In war time for example, the

1 Rasa'il, 18.

2 JAOS., Ibid., 382.

3 Tritton, 1930, 231. Cf. Taghribirdi, II, 63, ed. Popper, Ibshihī, I, 105.

4 Kharāj, 109. Tritton, op.cit.

5 Nights, IV, 89.



leader Sharkān speaks of the injunction which urges the soldiers to avoid killing old people, children, women and monks.<sup>1</sup>

A tradition enjoins upon Muslims not to be the first in giving the Islamic salutation when meeting non-Muslims.<sup>2</sup> Thus in the "Nights" while al-Khawāṣṣ was touring certain Christian countries, he was taken to cure the King's daughter of her mental illness. When he entered the room he did not give the Islamic salutation and the princess reproached him by saying "Wherefore are you not greeting me with the salutation of faith and unity - peace be upon you?" To his astonishment she went on to explain that she had embraced Islam secretly and was hence thought to be mentally ill.<sup>3</sup>

With regard to the political and economic position of Dhimmis, the two treatises entitled A reply to Christian (9th c. A.D.) and An Answer to Dhimmis, (written towards the end of 13th c. A.D. or the beginning of the 14th c. A.D.) respectively, show that the Dhimmis in general, and the Christians in particular, possessed wealth and influence and harried Muslims in office and business.<sup>4</sup>

In those lucrative occupations such as banking, commerce, land ownership and the medical profession, Christians and Jews were densely represented and firmly established,<sup>5</sup> and a number of them were engaged in science and literature from the 9th c. A.D. onwards.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 364. Cf. Kharāj, 121, Ibn Sa'd, III, 137.

2 Bukhāri, VII, 125f, 156. ed. 1296 A.H. Shayzari, 106.

3 Nights, III, 22.

4 Rasā'il, 10-38. Wāsiti, Ibid., 387-415.

5 Mez. 39. Kharāj, 69. 'Arīb, 30, 164.

6 Fischel, The Origin of Banking (London, 1933) 8-10. Tritton, 1930, 155-74.

As physicians, bankers and officers in state service, the Christians and Jews were close to the ruling class and the court. Dhimmi physicians evidently won the trust of the caliphs to the extent that they had permission to treat their harīms.<sup>1</sup> Al-Qifti and Ibn Uṣaybi'a give many names of Dhimmi physicians, astrologers and mathematicians who served the courts of the Umayyads, 'Abbāsids and Fātimids.<sup>2</sup>

The family of Bakhtīshō' indeed produced six generations of distinguished court physicians during the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate.<sup>3</sup>

An incident related by al-Jāhīz indicates that a Muslim physician being unable to win any client laments his misfortune by saying "I wear a white cotton garment whereas I should dress in black and I speak Arabic whereas I should speak the language of Jundaysābur"<sup>4</sup> - meaning that he was not a Christian physician who was usually a graduate of the medical school of Jundaysābur.<sup>5</sup>

In the 10th c. A.D. the position of the Jews improved in that they became connected with banking and extensive trade.<sup>6</sup>

Al-Muqtadir employed them as physicians and bankers or what was called jahbadh.<sup>7</sup>

1 Qifti, 134, 142.

2 Qifti, 100, 115, 212, 316, 320, 324, 338 and passim. Ibn Abi Uṣaybi'a, Attība', II, 123-203, I, 175, 203, 308.

3 Qifti, 100, 102, 132-152, 158, 434.

4 Bukhalā', 102.

5 Qifti, 133. The school was founded by Khasraw I when Hellenic science was taught in Aramaic. El., I, 1064, art., Djundaysābur or (Djundayshapur).

6 Khurdādhbih, Al-Masālik.. (ed. De Goeje, Leyden, 1889), 153. Fischel, 9, n.3.

7 Ibid., 6-10. Sābi, 79-81, 158. For the definition of jahbadh see Dūri, 159-61.

Their wealth supplied the state with the soldiers' pay and other big sums of money for state expenditure.<sup>1</sup>

Their importance in the economic life of the country had grown to the extent that they also provided money for military expeditions whether on sea or on land. They supervised trade caravans and supplied ships for sea voyages which brought back from Africa slaves and various merchandise.<sup>2</sup>

To them was also ascribed the invention of the credit letter for traders in order to avoid the risks of carrying cash or exposing property to the perils of the journey.<sup>3</sup>

Jewish merchants spoke many languages and were well-travelled both in the East and the West.<sup>4</sup>

Both in the prime of the 'Abbāsid rule and in Spain, the Jews enjoyed prosperity and peace. Among them there were astrologers, mathematicians, philosophers, philologists and poets.<sup>5</sup>

The exilarch who was the head of the Iraqi Jews in (12th c. A.D.) would seem to have lived in affluence and to have owned plantations and orchards. He had audience with the caliph every Thursday and Muslims and Jews stood in his presence while he kissed the hand of the caliph.

There were several rabbinical schools and synagogues in Baghdad.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Sābi, 81. Fisḥel, op. cit. Bustāni, Mashrig, 1934, XXXII, Tamāzuj al-'Anāṣir al-Basharyya, 429-34.

2 Ibid., 430, 432.

3 Ibid., 431, 429.

4 Khurdādhbih, op. cit.

5 Qiftī, 255, 407, 426, 437. Kutubi, I, 29. Hitti, 255, 343.

6 Benjamine, 30, 39, 40-2, 51 (writing in 1166-1171 A.D.)

The Jewish people lived in a special quarter in Baghdad called darb al-Yahūd which continued to flourish until the city fell into the hands of the Mongols.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did the Jews live in colonies in the big cities as Cairo and Baghdad, but there were also cities exclusively inhabited by Jews,<sup>2</sup> especially towards the East of the Empire.<sup>3</sup>

Such was their prosperity in Egypt in the Fāṭimid times that they were ironically criticised in the verses of a contemporary poet which say "The Jews of our time have attained their highest hopes and grown strong. Power and wealth belong to them and from their number are chosen councillors and princes. Oh people of Egypt, I advise you to become Jews, for Heaven itself has become Jewish."<sup>4</sup>

Because of their significance in the economic life of the community, Jews at times attained direct political influence. In Iraq, Ibn 'Alān, for instance, was appointed by al-Muqtadi (908-932 A. D.) as the tax collector for Baṣra and who is said to have had great influence in the city until he was killed.<sup>5</sup>

Ibn Killis exerted the greatest influence in Kafūr's court, and lacked only the title of vizier. Kāfūr regretted that such an efficient man should be a Jew and hence unable to be given the title of vizier.<sup>6</sup> Later, however, he did turn a Muslim and was entitled "the grandest vizier."<sup>7</sup>

1 Yaqūt, Buldūn, IV, 1045.

2 Op. cit., Mez, 36f. Qifti, 194.

3 Muqaddasi, 414. Faqih, 312.

4 Suyūṭi, Ḥusn, II, 153. Cf. Athīr, IX, 81f.

5 Athīr, X, 75.

6 Taghribirdi, II, 45f, ed. 1909. Maqrīzi, II, 5f.

7 Op. cit. Though it was permissible to appoint a Dhimmi as vizier tanfīdh, it was not permissible to make him a vizier of tawfīd, of unlimited power and to give him the title of grand vizier. (see Māwardi, 21, 26).

As regards state offices, Mez remarks that "the most amazing feature of the Islamic government is the number of non-Muslim officers in State Service."<sup>1</sup>

In the 'Abbāsīd period, one notices that twice in the 9th c. A.D. even the War Ministers were Dhimmis, and the soldiers who defended Islam had to obey their commands.<sup>2</sup> Christian and Jewish clerks and secretaries were found everywhere. They were secretaries of influential men and superintendants of the caliph's private treasury.<sup>3</sup>

Despite al-Muqtadir's ordinances against Dhimmis (10th c. A.D.), his own vizier had four Christians among the nine privy councillors who were daily guests at his table.<sup>4</sup>

To get to high positions one had to call attention to his Christian connections. Thus the grandson of the vizier Ibn Wahb flatters and woos the Christian scribes and secretaries by telling them that his grandfather used to carry a crucifix beneath his clothes in the days of the caliph al-Mu'tadid.<sup>5</sup>

Muslims always complained that the decisions on the life and property of Muslims lay in the hands of the protected subjects.<sup>6</sup>

In Egypt the presence of a great number of Dhimmis in State service was explained by a spurious tradition: "The Copts will help the faithful to the path of piety by removing worldly cares from them."<sup>7</sup>

1 Mez, 51, Ṣābi, 95, 'Arīb, 164, Maqrīzi, I, 86.

2 Ṣābi, op. cit. 'Arīb, op. cit.

3 'Arīb, op. cit., 112. Mez, 52.

4 Ṣābi, 240, Arīb, 30.

5 'Arīb, 164.

6 Qutayba, 'Uyūn al-Akhbār (4 Vols., Berlin 1900), I, 99. Suyūti. Husn. II, 173.

7 Mez, 54. Maqrīzi, I, 24.

In the Fāṭimid period Dhimmis, especially Christians, had a succession of influential positions in the State.<sup>1</sup> After the death of Ibn Killis, the Fāṭimid caliph al-'Azīz appointed 'Isa b. Naṣṭūras as his vizier, and Mensha the Jew as his deputy in Damascus.<sup>2</sup> Al-Maqrīzi mentions several names of Christian viziers who worked for the Fāṭimid caliphs.<sup>3</sup>

It seems that once or twice each century, the good position of Dhimmis attracted the envy of Muslims, and rulers found it necessary to issue measures, however temporary, in response to the complaint of the populace against the rising power of the non-Muslims, such as al-Mutawakkil's measures in the 3rd/9th c. al-Muqtadir and al-Muttaqi's in the 4th/10th c. and al-Muqtadi and al-Ḥākim's enactments in the 11th c. A.D. as has been already pointed out.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the anger of the populace and the measures of the rulers,<sup>5</sup> the economic life of the Dhimmis suffered little interference. Experience taught them to conceal their easy circumstances and extravagant expenditures. Thus al-Qalqashandi comments: "When Christians went to offices, they used to wear their shabbiest

1 Suyūṭi, II, 152f. Maqrīzi, I, 424.

2 Athīr, IX, 54, 81f.

3 Khīṭat, op.cit. and II, 286, 291.

4 See above, 292 and Ghanīma, 113f, 117, 121.

5 Grunebaum, 180. Fischel, 28-30.

clothes, eat the coarsest food and ride donkeys. But once they reached their houses, their state instantly changed from poverty to affluence; and people exaggerated in making up stories concerning this matter."<sup>1</sup>

Now that we have briefly examined the economic and social background of the life of the Dhimmis in the Muslim society, it will be useful to see how far the "Nights" reflects of these conditions.

The warfare, as it has been illustrated above, has so much overshadowed the Muslim-Christian relationship in the "Nights" that it becomes rather difficult to have a clear picture of it in peace-time.

As regards the conditions of the Jews, the picture is more normal, and Jews figure as goldsmiths, jewel merchants,<sup>2</sup> ordinary merchants,<sup>3</sup> physicians and men of learning.<sup>4</sup>

To take an example, Zayn's husband, a wealthy Jewish merchant, provides her with a big house surrounded by a pleasant garden and furnished with brocade curtains, carpets and chandeliers. When Zayn receives her Christian suitor she puts on a dress of glittering gold and a fillet set with pearls and gems and jacinths.<sup>5</sup>

The Israelite 'Affān of Jerusalem, who accompanies Bulūkiya on his journey to the tomb of Solomon, is described as "a man of

1 Subh, IV, 43.

2 Nights, III, 244, 56. Benjamin, 63.

3 Nights, I, 75. Khurdadhbih, op. cit.

4 Nights, I, 93. Cf. Qifti, 318, 392, 407, 426. Uṣaybi'a, II, 115.

5 Nights, IV, 72.

learning with skill in geomancy, astrology, mathematics and alchemy."<sup>1</sup> These were, in actual fact, amongst the branches of learning in which the Jews were especially engaged.<sup>2</sup>

Towns inhabited exclusively by Jews also appear in the "Nights". When Jānshāh arrives at such a town, it was Saturday, the Sabbath day, and hence the streets were deserted and the Jews were fasting even from speech. Although a Jewish family offered him hospitality for two months, one of the Jews of the town is shown as treating him treacherously in a business deal.<sup>3</sup>

By virtue of his profession, a Jewish physician had access to the governor's palace. While he is treating the governor's sick son, the latter addresses him as "the sage (ḥakīm) of the age."<sup>4</sup>

The relationship with the Magians, unlike that with the Jews and Christians, seems to be surrounded with eery and uncanny mystery and an even greater degree of mistrust, and it would seem that many fictitious stories were current about the religion, customs and cruelty of the Magians. These unfounded and exaggerated stories seem to have formed a branch of the story-telling literature, and to have circulated as "thrillers" among the common people.

1 Nights, III, 32.

2 Qifti, op. cit. Krömer, 1905, 296. See J. Mann, The Jews In Egypt and Palestine under the Fātimid Caliphs, (2 Vols., Oxford, 1920), I, 230, 239, on Jewish contribution in transmitting the Arab learning to medieval Europe.

3 Nights, III, 54.

4 Ibid., I, 101. Since a physician was at the same time a metaphysician, philosopher and sage, the title ḥakīm was indifferently applied to him in all these capacities (Hitti, 364).



Thus al-Mas'ūdi refers to them as fabricated and invented tales, woven by people not only about the Magian Fire-temples, but also about the pagan cult of Ba'albak and the ancient city of Iram Dhāt al-'Imād.<sup>1</sup>

This kind of story seems to have served not merely as entertainment, but as propoganda against the defeated pre-Islamic worship, since such stories tend to leave an unfavourable impression upon the mind as do the stories in the "Nights" about Magians and Pagans.<sup>2</sup> Magian and idolaters are therefore associated with segregated towns, secret places of worship and remote foreign lands.

In conclusion it can be stated that the picture of the Dhimmis given in the "Nights", though not false or unfounded, is in part incomplete and in part exaggerated in its vituperative attacks on all non-Muslims. The picture, however, cannot be clearly comprehended without some reference to the background as has been done above.

Although the narrator does not touch upon the holding of high positions and official posts by the Dhimmis, he succeeds in depicting their various professions and easy circumstances.

One also notices that there is no reference to the occasional measures taken against Dhimmis by the rulers. The reason for this is probably that the "Nights" attempts to avoid the mention of all kinds of unpleasant occurrences; but more important than this is that minorities under Islam enjoyed a large measure of toleration.

Because of persecution, minorities in Europe, with the exception of the Jews, were non-existent. The Byzantines, for example,

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1 Mas'ūdi, IV, 89.

2 Nights, II 147-151, I, 59.

persecuted the Jacobites more than Muslims persecuted Christians. Under Muslim rule, Dhimmis were subjected to less physical persecution than the nonconformist under Christian rule.<sup>1</sup>

Despite the long and aggravating wars and hostilities between Christians and Muslims, the Christian community had always had a patriarch of considerable influence both among his own subjects and in his contacts with the Muslim rulers. In the time of seditions, Christians, accused of criminal acts, were referred to him for punishment.<sup>2</sup>

In matters of religious importance, such as the appointment of patriarchs and metropolitans, the Muslim government was quite conciliatory in its dealing with foreign Christian powers as Byzantium and Abyssinia.<sup>3</sup>

In contrast, the Byzantines did not tolerate any Muslim organisation upon their soil.<sup>4</sup> The toleration of mosques in Medieval Europe, whether in Constantinople or Spain, was inconceivable.<sup>5</sup> When the Jews were expelled from Spain in the 15th c. A.D. and came to the Muslim East, they enjoyed a toleration unknown to them before.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Grunebaum, 1953, 180, 184, Mez, 41.

2 Maqrizi, II, 515. Grunebaum, 184.

3 Tritton, 1930, 85.

4 Ibn Rusta, 193.

5 Mez, 32.

6 Hasluck, II, 679, Mez, 209, Kremer, 1905, 296.

The Quran's attitude towards Dhimmis "does not entail any obligation on the part of the Muslims either to convert or to exterminate them. And it is here that Islam's reputation as a religion of toleration arises."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Grunebaum, 178.

## CHAPTER VI

### The Position of Women in the Arabian Nights

The picture of womanhood which emerges from the collection of the "Nights", though of a stereotyped kind, is of considerable significance in throwing light on the social condition of women in medieval Islam.

Since the stories and anecdotes are set in various ages, some in ancient times and some in the early and late Islamic periods, the collection presents to us descriptions of interesting and diverse kinds of womenfolk.

Thus one meets in the "Nights" the devoted mother, the faithful wife and concubine, the wily intriguer, cunning old woman, saintly women, Amazons, learned women, jinnvyas, and women well versed in magic, whether for evil or good.

However, the two parts played by most of the women characters are the roles of love and devotion or of cunning and deceit. In some instances, these two parts seem complementary rather than contradictory, namely when women use their powers of cunning to win the men they love.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the position of women in society with which this chapter deals, the "Nights" presents us with three aspects. First, the conventional one, which exposes the conditions of womenfolk existing throughout ancient and medieval times up till very recent times and under all the religious and social institutions. Second, and this is the more important aspect, is the position of women under Muslim laws and institutions,

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1 Qalamāwi, 299, 306.

and third, the fictional aspect which presents the types of heroines, who have little connection with reality as such, created to provide exciting material for narrative literature.

Thus in their minor and realistic roles, the women of the "Nights" are either dutiful and obedient or nagging and jealous wives,<sup>1</sup> or devoted mothers and faithful slave-girls.<sup>2</sup> However as heroines of the world of fancy, they are Jinn women who can fly in their feather dresses, Amazonian princesses,<sup>3</sup> or eminent slave-girls and princesses who rule their men.<sup>4</sup>

Before proceeding to discuss the three aspects mentioned above, attention may be drawn to the two points which are emphasised in the "Nights"; first the question of love between the two sexes, and second, the dominant position of women of high status.

On the first point one can safely say that love affairs in Muslim society were extremely rare. The following quotation about fiction and women in medieval Europe could also apply to the Muslim women of those ages.

In medieval times, states Tupper, the lives of women were so punctiliously correct that "medieval fiction was the reverse of documentary, for it reflects not the life and the morality, but the waking dreams and the wondering fancies of its public."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 67, IV, 330, 342.

2 Ibid., III, 200, I, 145.

3 Ibid., III, 63, 347, II, 202, IV, 140.

4 Ibid., I, 108, II, 213, 223.

5 F. Tupper, Types of society in Medieval Literature, (New York, 1926), 134.

However, fiction of all ages tends to draw its plots not from events which happen to the ordinary individuals who form the majority of the people, but from particular incidents of a thrilling nature, imaginatively constructed to present an interesting story which, however, must have some roots in reality.

Thus the background for the love stories of the 'Abbāsīd period in the "Nights", and especially stories about slave-girls can be sought in the works of the Arab historians, annalists and essayists who devoted sections of their voluminous works to the subject of the faithfulness or perfidy of women and to the subject of pleasure parties with which singing, drinking and slave-girls were associated.

The "Nights", in this respect, seems a book which conveys the same kind of social life which Al-Aghāni, for example, depicts, and transmits anecdotes similar to these which the annalists report.

Thus 'Abbāsīd love romances of the "Nights" reflect the Muslim civilisation of the "Golden Age", and like the Arab sources, they show that slave-girls possessed literary and artistic accomplishments, that notable women and slave-girls enjoyed some measure of social liberty and that stories of excessive and unreasonable love show a great devotion in men to their unattainable mistresses.<sup>1</sup>

On the second point, viz, the evident masterful nature of the women characters in the "Nights", Burton points out that many European readers of the collection have remarked with astonishment that "they find the female characters were more remarkable for decision, action and manliness than men." He thinks that women

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1 See Aghāni, XV, 144. XVI, 136. XVIII, 175. XIX, 136. Nuwayri, V, 37-112. Ibn Qutayba IV, 87-92. Iqd, III, 252-70. Tawhīdi, II, 165-84. Jāhiz, Maḥāsīn, XV-XVI and passim. Ibshīhi, II, 141-56.

all over the world are what men make them, and that "the main charm of Amazonian fiction is to see how they live and move and have their being without any masculine guidance. "<sup>1</sup>

It is also to be noted that women who show a masterful attitude towards their men, belong to the upper classes, or to a class higher in rank than that of the men whom they marry. By virtue of their birth, prestige or status, these women have more authority over men of lower rank in the same society. In this respect, they belong to the class to which their male associates belong, rather than to the category of women.

Thus it is stated that "increasing emphasis upon the privileges of any class tends to extend those privileges to the wives or sisters of the male members of the particular class, just as it formally denies these privileges to the male members of other classes. "<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, we find in the "Nights" that a slave-girl who belongs to al-Rashīd's court would have the privilege of beating her merchant bridegroom, whereas the Second Lady of Baghdad is beaten almost to death on the orders of her husband, who is supposed to be the Caliph's son, Prince al-Amīn - because he suspects her conduct in the market. <sup>3</sup>

#### The Conventional Treatment of Women

On the whole, the portraits of women in the collection are founded on conventional social attitudes which view women as

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1 Burton, X, 192.

2 ESS., XV, 440.

3 Nights, I, 108, II, 63f.

inconsistent creatures of deficient and crooked nature, who are either wholly bad, or wholly good. For example, in comparing an adulterous wife to a good and virtuous woman, the narrator comments that "He who thinks that all women are alike, is a fool whose madness cannot be cured."<sup>1</sup>

An ancient proverb, in like manner, states that a wise woman will build up her house whereas a foolish woman will ruin it.<sup>2</sup>

However, the general attitude towards women which reflects old-established traditional opinions on women, gives a harmony and unity to the various women characters depicted in the "Nights", and these stereotypes have therefore characteristics in common with ancient Greek, Indian and European medieval women. They are all credited with Satanic seductive powers, fatal beauty, crafts and wiles, inconsistency, instability and unfaithfulness. It suffices here to cite but a few examples and to throw a brief glance at the history of the views attributed to womenfolk.

Burton illustrates the attitudes of various nations and religions towards women.<sup>3</sup> The prejudice towards women began in ancient times and became fiercer in the Middle Ages both in the East and West.<sup>4</sup> The Hindus, for instance, believed that faults are implanted in womanhood by Nature, and regarded humility as an unfailing characteristic of a good woman.<sup>5</sup>

1 Nights, IV, 304.

2 'Iqd, III, 271.

3 Burton, X, 192-95.

4 Tupper, Ibid., 111-122.

5 Katha Sārit Sāgara, I, 123.



Religions also have attached certain traditional qualities to women. With the development of Christian ethics in Europe, chastity became an essential moral virtue and since women were associated with unchastity, they occupied a degraded position in custom and law.<sup>1</sup>

"Women", states Brunetiere, "in the bourgeois life of the Middle Ages seem to have bowed the head as low as in any age and any place on earth beneath the law of force and brutality."<sup>2</sup>

To cite one example among many of the traditions which attribute faults to women, we may quote the well-known tradition "Women lack wit and faith".<sup>3</sup>

Ancient proverbs about the unfaithfulness and cunning of women are often quoted by Muslim writers. In the Kalīla Wa-Dimna, men are warned against three things that would endanger them: the company of a Sultan, trust in women, and drinking poison for the sake of experiment.<sup>4</sup> Women are chains round men's necks<sup>5</sup> and the nets of Satan.<sup>6</sup>

Books written by Muslim writers have sections on women relating anecdotes both ancient and contemporary on the goodness or evil of womenfolk.<sup>7</sup> The praise and dispraise may be equally balanced, yet the general trend emphasises the offensive side of

1 ESS., XV, 444. JE., XII, 556.

2 Gibb, The Legacy of Islam, ed. Arnold (Oxford, 1931), 185.

3 Bukhārī, III, 340, ed. 1348/1930. Lane, I, 38.

4 Ibshīhi, I, 85.

5 'Iqd, III, 295f, Ibn Qutayba, IV, 7.

6 'Iqd, op. cit., Jāhiz, Maḥāsin, 272, al-Tha'ālibi, Thimār al-Qulūb (Cairo, 1908) 60.

7 Jāhiz, Ibid., 218, 269. 'Iqd, III, 271-296, Ibshīhi, I, 186, II, 206-209.

women's character.

Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya opens his book on women with verses, sayings, and anecdotes which show women as perverse, vain, obstinate and unreliable creatures.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, the "Nights" opens with stories supported by verses to show that women will have their way despite their being confined and without heeding the consequences of their actions. The damsel who is imprisoned by an 'ifrit in a box placed in a chest with seven locks and which is then put on the bottom of the sea manages to be unfaithful, and tells Shahrayār "When one of our sex desires to accomplish any object, nothing can prevent her."<sup>2</sup>

Hence, one must not rely on women's vows:-

They offer a false affection; for perfidy lurks within  
their clothing.

By the tale of Yoosuf (sic) be admonished, and guard  
against their stratagems.

Dost thou not consider Iblees (sic) ejected Adam by  
means of women?<sup>3</sup>

The allusion in the second line refers to Joseph's story in the Quran and in which women's cunning is deemed great and harmful.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the narrator could not have found more effective stories to prove the perfidy of women than the stories of Eve and of Joseph, for they were widely popular among men when attacking women.<sup>5</sup>

1 Akhbar, al-Nisa' (Cairo, 1319/1901), 3, 71.

2 Nights, I, 5.

3 Lane, I, 9.

4 Quran, 12<sup>28, 33, 50</sup>.

5 Once a man is reported to have met a group of women, and immediately said on seeing them, "You are Joseph's fellows!" and they replied "But who cast him into the well, we or you?" (Jawzi, Ziraf, 100).

In the story of Qamar, the prince was resolved not to marry since he was widely read and had concluded that all the troubles recorded in the books of history were caused by women's artifices.<sup>1</sup>

Apart from this, the "Nights" devotes two stories, namely, Jalī'ād and Shimās and The Wiles of Women,<sup>2</sup> to the illustration of the cunning of women. Though the stories are originally Indian, they seem to be adequately attuned to the traits of the Muslim women.

These stories are formed of two parallel sets of anecdotes and examples, one to show the cunning of women and the other that of men, yet the general tone denotes that men's cunning is for self defence or that it is rarely exercised, whereas women themselves admit to their own artifices. Thus a mistress tells her man "Your heart is free from deceit and you know not our malice and perfidy."<sup>3</sup>

### Women Under Islam

Indeed Islam improved the lot conventionally allotted to women and gave them comparatively great legal privileges.<sup>4</sup> Above all it abolished infanticide and regulated the laws of marriage, inheritance and divorce.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to this, there are injunctions in the Ḥadīth urging kindly treatment of one's womenfolk. Examples of such are: "I charge you with your women for they are with you as captives."<sup>6</sup>

1 Nights, II, 80f.

2 Ibid., IV, 154, III, 156.

3 Ibid., I, 314.

4 Kremer, 1920, 452. Levy, 1957, 98ff.

5 Quran, Sūra, 4, al-Nisā', 16<sup>58</sup>f, 17<sup>31</sup>f.

6 Jāhīz, Bayān, ed. Jabr, 34. al-Dhahabi, Al-Aḥwāl, al-Shakhsīyya (Baghdad, 1958), 136-208.

and "The best man among you is the one who treats his family benevolently, and I am the kindest among you to my family."<sup>1</sup>

Another tradition confirms that the Prophet was fond of three things: women, incense and the spiritual comfort of prayers.<sup>2</sup> 'Ā'isha has said "Marriage is slavery, therefore consider the man to whom you give your daughter in bondage."<sup>3</sup>

Despite the improvement of the legal status of women under Islam, the old-established view of the female as a lesser being remained.

The Quran declared that men should have pre-eminence over women "Because of those advantages wherein God has caused the one of them to excel the other and for that which they expend of their substance in maintaining their wives."<sup>4</sup>

The traditionists tended to interpret Quranic verses related to women according to their views and the customs of the age, or to expand on them, guided by the relevant evidence and traditions.<sup>5</sup> The view that women are incapable and unfit for public duties arises from the interpretation of the above Quranic verse.

Baydāwi (13th c. A. D.), interpreting this verse, states that God has preferred the one sex to the other in the matter of mental ability and good counsel, and in their power for performing duties and carrying out (divine) commands.<sup>6</sup> Hence things like prophecy

1 Mishkāt, pt. IX, Bk. XIII, 691.

2 Tha'ālibi, Khams Rasā'il (Constantinople, 1884), 114.

3 'Iqd, III, 271.

4 Quran, 4<sup>34</sup>, tr. Sale.

5 Levy, 1957, 129f.

6 Baydāwi, Anwār al-Tanzīl, (2 Vols., Constantinople, 1314/1896), I, 273.

sainthood, the giving of evidence in law courts, the duties of the Holy War and the joining of the Friday assembly at the mosque are all confined to man. Men also have the privilege of electing chiefs, of having a larger share of inheritance and of discretion in the matter of divorce.<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, ḥadīths against women were collected to show, for instance, that most of the inhabitants of Hell were women because of their unbelief,<sup>2</sup> and that only four women had attained religious perfection. However, another ḥadīth stresses that Paradise is under the feet of mothers.<sup>3</sup>

Levy maintains that the early interpreters of the Quran were men who originated in Persia, a land where women had long been secluded and that their authority in this respect began to exert an influence after the close of the Umayyad rule.<sup>4</sup> Ḥadīths, he states, were deliberately manufactured which are in direct conflict with the statements of the Quran. Good believers among women are regarded in the Quran as equal to men in receiving the rewards offered to them by Heaven.<sup>5</sup>

When the significance of Quranic verses and ḥadīths were twisted, women gradually lost the rights given to them. To cite the most obvious example, the right to pray in the mosque on Friday became a prerogative of males as Bayḍāwī's interpretation given above indicates.

1 Bayḍāwī, op. cit.

2 Bukhārī, VII, 54, (Cairo, 1348/1930).

3 Bayḍāwī, II, 532. Ibshīhi, II, 9.

4 Levy, 1957, 127, 130.

5 Quran, 9<sup>71-72</sup>, 4<sup>85</sup>, 33<sup>35</sup>.

The theory of the superiority of men over women before God became established beyond any doubt. This is shown, for example, in the discussion of the Quranic verse "He giveth females to whom He wishes, and to others He giveth the males."<sup>1</sup> A vizier commented that God, here, honoured females by mentioning their names before the males. al-Tawhīdī replied that this opinion needs consideration, because God placed the definite article (al) before the word "males" whereas the word females is undefined by the article and thus God meant to honour the males.<sup>2</sup>

Even al-Jāhīz in his essay on the defence of women admits the superiority of men over women but urges kindness and just treatment as a gesture of mercy and compassion to the weak.<sup>3</sup>

Despite the conventional trend towards deprecating women both in the "Nights" and in the writings of the Middle Ages, the narrator, astonishingly enough, shows less prejudice when he is transmitting unfavourable traditions on women, than other Arab authors.

To cite an example, Arabic sources transmit a tradition which enjoins keeping one's women hungry so that they will not be violent or merry, and without clothes so that they will not go out and attract people's attention,<sup>4</sup> whereas the "Nights", while admitting the sly nature of women, recommends quite the opposite treatment: "Be kind in your treatment of women, show them consideration and spend amply at home for women are created from a crooked bone."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Quran, 42<sup>49</sup>.

2 Tawhīdī, III, 101, but cf. Nuwayrī, V, 131f.

3 Rasā'il, 272f., ed. Sandūbi.

4 Nisā', 45, 53, Jāhīz, Hayawān, I, 170f. Ibn Qutayba, IV, 78.

5 Nights, I, 226.

'Umar I is reported to have said: "Take refuge in God from wicked women and be on your guard from the good ones among them. "; but the narrator sees no reason to guard against good women and transmits thus: "Guard against wicked women and be cautious with them."<sup>1</sup>

In allusion to women 'Umar I also said "Consult them and do the contrary of what they advise," and "Treat their weakness with silence."<sup>2</sup>, but the narrator joins these two injunctions from 'Umar and transmits them thus: "Do not consult women in any matter and do not cease to be kind to them so that they will not be tempted to mischief."<sup>3</sup>

However, a study of the stories of women's deceit both in the books of annalists and in the "Nights" would evidently show that sometimes women's stratagems are actually designed to ward off a seducer or to curb the husband from straying off to another woman.<sup>4</sup>

Finally, as is the case in the majority of stories, a woman plans only to fulfil her happiness with the man she chooses.<sup>5</sup> In fact woman's treachery as such is merely the breaching of her promise to her dying husband not to marry again,<sup>6</sup> whereas her faithfulness is praised if she swears to spend her life in mourning for her dead husband. Sometimes women even break

1 Nights, I, 225, Jawziyya, Nisā', 70.

2 Qutayba, op.cit., Lane, 1883, 220.

3 Nights, op.cit.

4 Nisā', 36-7. Nights, IV, 353, II, 213.

5 Ibid., III, 178.

6 Nisā', 70-8.

their teeth and mutilate their beauty in order to stop men from proposing to them during their everlasting widowhood.<sup>1</sup>

Patience, obedience, self-denial and complete agreement with the husband are necessary requisites of a good and wise woman. The 'Iqd transmits an advice of a mother to her daughter who was about to get married in which she tells her to show to her husband-to-be respect, contentment, obedience and careful listening. She should not show joy when her husband is depressed, or sorrow when he is cheerful. She should deck and perfume herself for him, and manage the household efficiently, take care of his children and property and observe his wants in food and sleep.<sup>2</sup>

Faithfulness, obedience and self-denial are exemplified in the "Nights" in the conduct of the heroine 'Aziza who dies as a martyr to bring happiness to the man she loves.<sup>3</sup> A bad woman in the "Nights" is described as nagging, jealous and discontented. In the "Nights" disobedient and rebellious wives are beaten for their obstinacy and waywardness.<sup>4</sup>

Beating of disobedient wives was similarly perfectly lawful in medieval Europe.<sup>5</sup> The Quran licensed it for refractory women as a third stage in her treatment,<sup>6</sup> but the Prophet enjoined light beatings.<sup>7</sup>

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1 Nisā', 60-70.

2 'Iqd, III, 272.

3 Nights, I, 300.

4 Ibid., I, 7, 64, IV, 330f.

5 G. G. Coulton, Medieval Panorama (Cambridge, 1938), 615.

6 Quran, 4<sup>34</sup>, Baydāwi, I, 274.

7 Jāhīz, Bayān, (Ed. Jabr), 34.



Because it reflects on the conditions of women in Egypt, it may be worth noting here that in the "Nights", the beating of obstinate wives occurs only in the stories of the early period, whereas in late Egyptian stories, such as Ma'rūf the Cobbler, the impertinent and nagging wife takes her husband twice to the qādi for no good reason, and yet he still prefers to pray for the Jinn to transport him away from her persecution than to resort to the traditional remedy of beating.<sup>1</sup>

In the stories of purely Egyptian composition, the masterful attitude of the heroines could be attributed to the fact that ancient Egyptian women used to play a dominant role in social life. When Herodotus visited Egypt he found that women there conducted business in the market while their husbands used to spin and weave at home.<sup>2</sup> A man on his marriage was called after his wife, i. e. the husband of so and so. She also undertook to provide for him the expenses of mummification on his death.<sup>3</sup>

When the Arabs came to Egypt they attributed the dominant position of Egyptian women to the disaster of Pharoah and his army in the Red Sea. In this disaster all the men of Egypt were killed, and only the women and their men sālves remained alive, whereupon they decided to marry them on the condition that the women should stay in their position of supremacy.<sup>4</sup>

1 Nights, IV, 330-32.

2 The Egypt of Herodotus, 20.

3 Amin, Qāmūs al-'Adāt Wa'l-Taqālīd (Cairo, 1953), 362f.

4 Maqrīzi, I, 39. Mez, 363.

As for lovers in the "Nights", the traditional qualities which should be looked for in women do not seem in fact to form the basis of attraction. Women are loved at the first sight because of their beauty, clothes, jewellery and magnificent retinues. Other qualities to be found in the heroines are musical attainments, skills in handicrafts, learning or possessing unusual personalities due to their positions as princesses or noble ladies who refuse to be ruled by men.

Equality of passion in men and women are the basis of their attachment.<sup>1</sup> Both must have enough patience to be able to support pain with forbearance, since patience in love is a sign of honourable intentions and not mere passing desire.

This attitude in the "Nights" is supported by an anecdote reported about a slave-girl who belonged to 'Ali. When she told 'Ali that a man was persistently accosting her, he told her to tell the man that she felt the same for him and to ask him "what now"? When 'Ali heard that the man's answer was "We must support our pains with patience and pray to God", he gave the slave-girl to the man in marriage.<sup>2</sup>

Mothers, without any exception, have an honourable place in the "Nights". Wives have insecure marriages until they become mothers. Among Arabs, Greeks and Persians they were held in contempt and were regarded as servants occupied in household work until they became mothers. As mothers, their status rises and they come into full command of family affairs and are consulted about the children's welfare and

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1 ER., 1886, CLXIV, 194.

2 Washshā', 34.

education.<sup>1</sup> In the "Nights", bickering between husband and wife ceases after childbirth.<sup>2</sup>

Mothers in middle class families are the guardians and advisers of their younger sons after the father's death. They help them to administer their financial affairs and save them, if possible, when they show thoughtlessness and extravagance. A mother mediates between her children and their father in times of crises.<sup>3</sup> If the daughter, for instance, is in love and might be exposed to scandal, the mother controls the distressed father and gives him counsel as to what to do. She shares with him the task of educating their children at home.<sup>4</sup> The family relies on the mother's advice as regards her son's career or her daughter's marriage.<sup>5</sup>

During difficulties, mothers of both the rich and the lower classes, stand out for devotion, self-denial and practicality. They are most conscientious about their son's welfare. Ḥāsib's mother does not spare any effort to educate her son and direct him towards an occupation; failing to do this she attempts to get him married in order to make him feel more responsible. Her tender heart eventually becomes resigned to his failure, and when he becomes a woodcutter, she equips him with the necessary tools for the job.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Zaydān, Eng. tr. Gibb, 6f.

2 Nights, II, 169.

3 Ibid., IV, 265, I, 142.

4 Ibid., II, 301, I, 164, IV, 273.

5 Ibid., II, 171-73, I, 322.

6 Ibid., IV, 104, III, 27.

Abu Muḥammad's mother toils to provide for her lazy son, Jawdar's mother acts charitably even to the sons who have wronged her and reduced her to beggary.<sup>1</sup>

Mothers are shown to be able to bear grief and poverty when their sons undergo difficulties, and patiently wait and hope for their return. It seems to be the custom of mothers of all classes to set tombs in houses, and mourn their absent sons until they turn up safely from their long and perilous journeys and adventures.<sup>2</sup>

Even the Caliph's wife acts like all mothers, screams, swoons and weeps on hearing of her son's death.<sup>3</sup>

Among concubines, mothers of sons have more prestige and are dearer to their masters than childless concubines.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, any mother obviously earns more prestige and honour if she gives birth to a son rather than to a daughter. Characters in the stories who have undergone trouble and suspense for the sake of offspring are usually rewarded with sons. The difference in the rejoicing at being blessed with a male or female is shown in the story of King Al-Nu' mān. The King's concubine gave birth first to a daughter and when, a few moments later she was delivered with a twin son, the whole palace turned upside down with joy and celebration.<sup>5</sup>

It is important for the childless Kings in the "Nights" to have a male heir to their kingdoms and wealth, for when they have a daughter they have to offer their kingdoms to their sons-in-law. Likewise merchants and ordinary folk want sons to commemorate their names and preserve the inheritance.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Nights, II 235 III 200.

2 Ibid., I 86, 341, IV, 65.

3 Ibid., II, 324.

4 Ibid., I, 180f, III, 275f.

5 Ibid., I, 181.

6 Ibid., II, 129, 168, III, 304, I, 8.

To conclude, the assessment of the position of women in society during the medieval times is made difficult by the fact that both the "Nights" and Arabic records deal mainly with caliphs' women, princesses, eminent ladies and slave-girls.

As regards the bulk of women, we have merely reflections of the current male attitude rather than authentic accounts of women. Secondly, the difficulty arises also from the contradiction between theory and practice as a result of the hypocritical treatment of women. On the one hand, social laws and customs are sometimes defied, on the other, even women's rights are neglected. Thus while one often finds colourful pictures painted of women who had achieved eminence in society, for the majority of women their lot must be abject privation.

Thus, while the "Nights" regards women as creatures born for the pleasure of men, and often repeats the saying "Women were not created but for men"<sup>1</sup>, yet it highly appreciates learned slave-girls and educated women.

Despite the fictional purpose of the "Nights" at avoiding the monotony of ordinary life, there are instances when orthodox practices become evident, e.g.: marriages arranged by parents since childhood, or marriages to rich bidders,<sup>2</sup> as against the dashing young men who go through adventures to attain their beloved women. Though singing slave-girls and concubines occupy a significant place in the "Nights", the attitude of the ordinary man towards concubinage occasionally clashes with the general trend of the "Nights".

For example, the king in the story of Tāj al-Mulūk gives his reasons for refraining from concubines. The rank and lineage

1 Nights, III, 8.

2 Ibid., I, 300, II, 238.

of a purchased slave-girl, he says, is unknown. If she is of ignoble birth she may bear him a son who will be a hypocrite, tyrant and a shedder of blood, or he may be deficient in religion and disobedient to God. A slave-girl is likened to a marshy land whose product is worthless and attains no excellence, whereas the lineage and merits of a free woman are well known to everybody.<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps there is no other sphere in which the hypocritical nature of society appears as much as it does in the sphere of women's position and treatment in the Muslim society.

The moral standards which came to prevail at the court and palaces are to be considered in the light of certain Islamic institutions, including the seclusion of women, polygamy and concubinage, and in the light of "the general weakness of human nature which, with luxury and ease, tends on the whole to degeneration."<sup>2</sup>

To understand the question of womanhood in medieval times, it is necessary to discuss the application of the laws and institutions which effected the women's world.

#### The Seclusion of Women

The seclusion of women includes many things beside veiling as will presently be shown.

Some form of veiling and seclusion was always known among the free women of the cities in Persia, Greece, Ancient Babylon and Arabia.<sup>3</sup> The custom of veiling varies in the Jāhiliyya times, and whereas the desert women used to go out unveiled,

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1 Nights, I, 293.

2 Abbott. The Two Queens of Baghdad (Chicago, 1964) Introd. 8f.

3 Burton, X, 197. Levy, 1957, 124, 129, n.5. In the following free women in this context means al-harā'ir, or free-born women as against slave-women.

the women of the cities were veiled;<sup>1</sup> and in general, veiling was the rule for the free aristocratic women of Quraysh.<sup>2</sup>

Under Islam, the Prophet commended his wives and the women of the believers to protect themselves in public by wearing long veils. He also asked all women believers not to display their adornments except what necessarily appears of them, and to throw veils over their bosoms.<sup>3</sup>

Seclusion was first established by the Quran with regard to the Prophet's women when he requested his followers not to enter his house without permission and not to talk to his women except from behind the curtain.<sup>4</sup>

The interpreters differ on the meaning of 'letting down the veil', some saying it means women must cover their faces and heads showing nothing but one eye, others saying the forehead only need be covered.<sup>5</sup>

Some interpreters think that "the external parts which can by necessity be shown" are meant to be the outward garments; Bayḍāwī thinks that they are meant to be the face and two hands, but he specifies that this uncovering of face and hands is only allowed for the purpose of prayers,<sup>OR</sup> such occasions as presence

1 Zayḍān, V, 77, al-Hāshimī, Al-Mar'a al-Habība fi al-Shi'r al-Jāhili (Baghdad, 1960), 79f.

2 Bayḍāwī, II, 280.

3 Quran, 33<sup>59</sup>, 24<sup>31</sup>. It is reported that 'Ā'isha, a neice of the Prophet's wife and her namesake, did not comply with the rule and went unveiled in spite of her husband's protest because, as she said, God had bestowed on her the grace of beauty which she should display. (Aghāni, X, 54).

4 Quran, 33<sup>53</sup>. Bukhārī, VI, 136, VII, 121 ed. 1878, Ibn Sa'd, Ṭabaqāt (9 vols. Leyden, 1904 - 21) VIII, 124f.

5 Levy, 1957, 124.

in court or under medical treatment, otherwise a free woman ought not to uncover even those parts.<sup>1</sup>

The vagueness of the regulations relating to the appearance and conduct of women in public gave the interpreters a great scope to interpret them according to local custom in different places and ages, until it became unlawful to set eyes upon a woman.<sup>2</sup> Though some sects allowed a man to see only the hand and wrist of his wife-to-be, custom dispensed with this,<sup>3</sup> although the Prophet in fact commended men to see the women whom they intended to marry.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Jāhīz attempts to refute the claims prevailing at his time that looking at and conversing with women were unlawful, and asserts that a man who was fond of visiting women for the purpose of discourse and conversation was named "zīr nisā'."<sup>5</sup> Al-Jāhīz tries to prove his point by giving 'Umar I, who was known to be extremely jealous over his women, as an example. 'Umar, he says, did not seem perturbed when 'Ali lifted the curtain and talked to his bride 'Ātika.<sup>6</sup>

As time went by, Muslims who visited other countries would not believe that mixing between the sexes could be

1 Anwār . . ., II, 138.

2 Al-Bukhārī, VII, 121-22. Qutayba, IV, 84-7.

3 Sha'rānī, II, 93.

4 Abu Dāwūd, Sunan, I, 325, Mishkāt, pt IX, bk. XIII, 661f.

5 Jāhīz, Rasā'il, ed. Finkel, 58f.

6 Op. cit.



possible in a Muslim community. Ibn Baṭṭūṭa (14th c.A.D.), visiting an oasis in the Sahara was shocked to find the women there unveiled and conversing with their men friends, but yet assiduous in prayers.<sup>1</sup> In India, he, as a qādi, attempted to order the Indian Muslim women to cover their waists but they obeyed his rules only when they attended the court.<sup>2</sup>

In the time of Muḥammad neither the veil nor the seclusion hindered women believers from participating in politico-religious affairs.<sup>3</sup>

For one thing, the right to pray in the mosque permitted women to go out of doors several times each day, since the Prophet said, "Do not forbid the slave-women of God (imā'-Allāh) from attending God's mosques."<sup>4</sup>

According to this injunction a husband, who was not able to forbid his wife from attending the mosque at night, sat in wait for her on a dark road and accosted her, and so succeeded in stopping her from attending the mosque.<sup>5</sup>

'Umar I attempted to limit women's rights to praying at home only but he met with protests from his son and effective resistance from his wife.<sup>6</sup> As a compromise, 'Umar appointed an imām especially for women at public prayers, and in this way, though he allowed the practice followed in the time of the Prophet to continue, he succeeded in segregating women from men in the mosques.<sup>7</sup>

1 Rihla, II, 233f.

2 Ibid., II, 151.

3 N. Abbott, Women and The State in Early Islam, INES, 1942, I, 106-26, 341-68. 'A'isha (Chicago, 1942), 27-9.

4 Bukhārī, II, 25, 27, 35, ed. 1930.

5 Ibn Qutayba, 'Uyūn, IV, 115.

6 Ibn Ḥanbal, Mushnad (6 vols., Cairo, 1895), II, 127, 140.

7 Ibn Sa'd, Tabaqāt., V, 16f. Abbott, 1942, 93f.

It is difficult to say when the system of ḥarīm as portrayed in the "Nights" came to be strictly observed. The process of seclusion had been gradual and the freedom of women had been steadily in decline during the first century of Islam.<sup>1</sup>

Although the seeds of seclusion were sown in the later years of the Prophet's time, it was not until more than a century later that the gradual decline in the status of women led to the establishment of the practice of secluding women; social and economic developments, two centuries after the death of the Prophet, led to the spread of some social practices such as drinking and singing.<sup>2</sup> These practices resulted in a moral laxity which in its turn hastened the segregation of women under the system of the ḥarīm.

By the time of al-Rashīd (170/786 - 194/809), seclusion was well established and came to mean a rigorous restriction in the ḥarīm quarters of all the palaces.

Both veiling and seclusion came to be associated with family honour and social prestige. Women looked upon their restraint with great pride, and regarded themselves as precious jewels which must be preserved and guarded by men.<sup>3</sup>

The ḥarīm took on the characteristics of a grand female prison. An incident related by al-Mas'ūdi reveals that in the time of al-Rashīd, the key to the ḥarīm was in the custody of the vizier Yaḥya who was so stringent that Zubayda twice complained to al-Rashīd of Yaḥya's firmness and rigidity.<sup>4</sup>

1 Abbott, INES., 1942, 367f.

2 Op. cit.

3 Burton, X, 197.

4 Murūj, VI, 392.

Thus in the ḥarīm doors were locked, the movements of women were watched by guards and eunuchs, and high walls were erected as a precaution against encounters between women and the people outside.<sup>1</sup>

As there is no romance in this conventional way of living, the narrator manoeuvres to overcome the difficulties imposed by the strict regulations and absolute segregation of the sexes by bringing his characters close together in the markets, in the gardens of palaces, in secret wings of the ḥarīm, in hired houses and rooms and by encounters through windows and on balconies.<sup>2</sup>

Accordingly, love in the "Nights" is inflamed in a man's heart by a single glance upon a lifting of the veil, and hence the repetition of the formula "She looked upon him with an eye that caused him a thousand sighs."<sup>3</sup>

As a rule, singers, learned slave-girls and women preachers performed their jobs from behind curtains.<sup>4</sup>

But often in the "Nights" as well as in society, the custom was discarded as a convention,<sup>5</sup> and women performers conducted themselves according to the circumstances of the gathering and the wishes of their masters.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Jāhīz, Rasā'il, 268.

2 Nights, I, 99, 306, II, 69, III, 330, IV, 268.

3 Nbid., I, 37, II, 58, 328.

4 Aghāni, V, 13, 14, 42f. Nights, II, 330, IV, 150.

5 Mas'ūdi, VII, 224, Aghāni, I, 126f.

6 Tanūkhi, Faraj, I, 80, Nishwār, I, 193f, Aghāni, I, 91.

Strictness in veiling varied with individuals. Prince Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi married a woman merely after seeing her hands at a window, while the daughter of a qādi showed her face to the tailor.<sup>1</sup> 'Azīz's mistress went further, and threw a handkerchief to him and made meaningful signs and gestures with her hand so that she might meet him.<sup>2</sup>

Since veiling came to mean the "time-honoured notion of feminine decorum and delicacy", the shepherd's daughter in the "Nights" on seeing a calf (which was really a man transformed into an animal by magic) tells her father, who inadvertently brings the calf in, "... hath my condition become so degraded in thy opinion that thou bringest before me a stranger." <sup>3</sup>

As a result of seclusion certain customs took a firm hold over women, such as strict and long mourning, and an aversion to being seen out of doors except in extreme necessity.<sup>4</sup> Since the object of establishing the ḥarīm system is to keep women within its boundaries, the "Nights" indirectly shows the advantages of such confinement, because every time a woman emerges from her house alone or is lured by an old woman, there is bound to be some trouble in store for her.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Nights, III 298, Cal. ed. and I, 113, Cairo ed. For the origin of the story see Mas'ūdi, VII, 16.

2 Ibid., I, 302

3 Lane, I. 50, 173.

4 Nights, II 338, . Ghazālī, al-Jawāhir al-Ghawālī (Cairo, 1343 A. H.) 17.

5 Nights, I, 62, III, 238.

The customs of the ḥarīm forbade women to go out of the house unchaperoned. Although their visits were confined to occasions such as weddings,<sup>1</sup> wakes, annual festivals, and to a few places such as baths, holy tombs, and bazaars, women could not leave their houses without the permission of their husbands.<sup>2</sup> It was, however, a praiseworthy thing to give up going out altogether, and thus it is reported from 'Ali that four things bring trouble and calamity: letting women go to baths, wakes, weddings and holy tombs,<sup>3</sup> Ibn al-Jawzi (6th/12th c.) renders praise to a pious woman called Fāṭima bt. Naṣr, because she had gone out of her house only three times during her whole life.<sup>4</sup>

The Fāṭimid caliph al-Ḥākim forbade cobblers from making shoes for women to prevent them going out.<sup>5</sup> It is reported that al-Ḥākim, passing by a women's public bath and hearing their voices, ordered the bath-door to be sealed up and the women were buried alive.<sup>6</sup>

Further, it had become taboo to mention the names of the women in a man's ḥarīm. Poets, before composing eulogies to the caliphs, enquired about the names of their ḥarīm in order to avoid mentioning them.<sup>7</sup> Whereas the

1 Bukhāri, VII, 44, ed. 1930.

2 Nights, op.cit., IV, 155, See also Dhahabi, Aḥwāl .. 206.

3 Nisā', 58.

4 Muntaẓam, X, 279.

5 Nujūm, II, 63, 118 (ed. Popper)

6 Ibn Iyās I, 52, Suyūṭi, Husn .. II. 18.

7 Jāhiz, Tāj, 85, Aghāni, V, 174, Nights, III, 286.

names of free women were avoided, poets were invited to sing the praises of a man's favourite slave-girl as in the case of the beloved trio slave-girls of al-Rashīd.<sup>1</sup>

Women's imprisonment lasted all through the middle Ages and in all the Arab countries up till recent times.<sup>2</sup>

### The Two Worlds of Free and Bondwomen

In order to examine the position of women during the Islamic ages, a comparison between the free and bondwomen is necessary to bring out the contrast between the social freedom of slave-girls and the seclusion of free women.

The blow to women's freedom came in the first place from the custom of associating wine, song and the ever present slave-girls. These foreign captives, trained to sing and behave like courtesans, invaded the Muslim society and brought about a split between home-life and the world of pleasure. The upper classes, and eventually the whole community began to seek pleasure outside the family sphere whether in private or public parties.

Moral laxity of the most uncompromising kind prevailed, and the pressure on the movements and activities of the free women of the 'Abbasid society increased.<sup>3</sup>

Whereas in the "Golden Age" women survived the pressure and sometimes emerged with flying colours, in the time of decline, and after long ages of seclusion, free women and

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1 Aghāni, V, 67, XV, 80f. Khatīb, XIV, 12.

2 See Lane, The Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians, (London, 1860), 175.

3 Kremer, 1920, 51. Zaydān, V, 67f.

their daughters had their lives hedged about by many conventions and lived in a world of ignorance, neglect and superstition. Men's distrust in womenkind, and their resentment of unworthy females were so intensified that this led to the total withdrawal of women from public life.<sup>1</sup>

The two kinds of women are eloquently portrayed in the "Nights" in the pictures of the highly appreciated qiyān and learned slave-girls on the one hand, and the fickle-headed untrustworthy women intriguer on the other.

Mez maintains that both home and society benefited by the division between the free women and slave-girls. He argues that since orthodox morality was unwilling to let women out of their houses, the place of wives was taken by hetairae equipped with culture and accustomed to the free talk of men to entertain guests.<sup>2</sup>

But if this system in fact benefited men, inspired poets and contributed to the life of pleasure and entertainment in the great cities of the Muslim Empire, it had evidently, on the other hand, influenced the kind of relationships between the sexes and degraded the status of women in society.

The great difference in the concept of love became so palpable that writers make several comparisons between love in the early Muslim period and the lustful relationships of 'Abbasid times.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Bayhum, Al-Mar'a (Beirut, 1962) 122. Zaydān, V, 77f.

2 Renaissance, 362f.

3 Ibn al-Jawzyya, Nisā', 19-32.

The 'Udhri type of love, named after the tribe of 'Udhra, which was famous for its chastity, intensity and despair had become a legendary kind of love of which the "Nights" transmits a couple of anecdotes.<sup>1</sup>

Even the 'Umarite type of love,<sup>2</sup> which was named after the poet 'Umar b. Abi Rabi'a, and called for naive pleasure and merriment, became out of date under the new outlook on love and pleasure.<sup>3</sup>

The worship of the beloved at a distance by the Platonic Arab lover was displaced by the insatiable love of slave-girls concubines, emancipated slave-women, and even some free women as is demonstrated in the stories of the "Nights".

The contrast between the two worlds of free and owned women is clearly evident in the attitudes towards the two kinds of women, in the social customs required to be followed by them, and the degree of punishment they received for misconduct.<sup>4</sup>

It suffices here to give a few of the many examples in order to illustrate this point. The sharp contrast between the two modes of life can be shown in two anecdotes related by al-Tanūkhī. The first concerns a dishonourable man who showed no jealousy over the misconduct of his wife,<sup>5</sup> as most slave-dealers and owners of public houses used to do,<sup>6</sup> and the

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1 Nights, III, 229, 330. Nisā', 25-8. Aghāni, I, 167-81, VIII, 120. Washsha', 52f.

2 Aghāni, I, 36-97. Zaydān, V, 65f.

3 Washsha', 36, 48, Kremer, 1920, 34-44.

4 Abu Dāwūd, Sunan, II, 229, 239.

5 Nishwār, VIII, 139.

6 Jāhiz, Rasā'il, ed. Finkel, 74f. 65. Nisā', 114, 116. Nights, IV, 244.



second incident is about a middle-aged woman who on an urgent trip from al-Anbār to Baghdad sees a camel for the first time because she was not in the habit of going out of doors.<sup>1</sup>

It is reported that the merchant Ibn al-Jaṣṣāṣ was very embarrassed once when his guest heard a woman's footsteps near the men's quarter in his house; at having to prove to his guest that she was not one of his guarded ḥarīms, he called out and asked her what she was doing there, and her reply showed the guest that she was a kitchen maid informing the servants that the lunch was ready.<sup>2</sup>

This strict seclusion was an inevitable outcome of the great contrast which existed between the stock ideas concerning Muslim domestic policy and the demands of the orthodox way of life on the one hand, and the lax morality and indulgence in pleasures on the other hand.

The hetairae who became the centre of attraction overshadowed their free sisters. Thus in the "Nights", Princess Nuzhat al-Zamān had no chance to show her learning and scholasticism until she was made captive by a Bedouin and sold to the King of Damascus to be tested for her learning at the court, where all ministers, officials and notable people gathered to applaud her for her knowledge and qualifications.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, though 'Ulayya, the sister of al-Rashīd, was a poetess, a melodist and a singer of her own compositions, she could not publicise her work, and performed only in the

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1 Nishwār, op.cit.

2 Ibid., I, 22.

3 Nights, I, 223-31.

family circle. When slave-girls sung her compositions they dared not attribute them to her except by whispering her name.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Jāhīz devotes the main part of his essay on women to discussing the importance of slave-girls. As regards wives, he points out that there is not as much love for, nor attachment to free women as there is for slave-girls. The only merit which he credits to free women is their freshness, likening them to clear, well-preserved bread baked at home, while he likens slave-girls to bread obtained in the markets, alluding to its uncleanness, because of the many hands that handle it.<sup>2</sup>

He regrets the painful plight of free women and contrasts it with the liberty and love which slave-girls as a rule enjoyed. In his discussion of the condition of women, the rigorous restrictions imposed on the imprisoned free women become clear. He, for example, protests against the requirement imposed by custom on widows of remaining faithful to their late husbands, and wonders why their remarrying is not socially permissible, while slave-girls are willingly purchased by men despite the fact that they had had many masters.<sup>3</sup>

The ceaseless temptation of slave-girls,<sup>4</sup> and the ease with which concubines were acquired and then disposed of brought insecurity to the status of wives and made marriage a fearful adventure.

1 Aghāni, IX, 86f. 90, 92.

2 Rasā'il, 274, 270, ed. Sandūbi, and 66f, ed. Finkel. Mahāsin, XXf.

3 Rasā'il, 6 f (ed. Finkel)

4 Ibid., 65-75.

Al-Khwarizmi (4th/10th c) in a letter of condolence to a friend who had lost his daughter asserts, "We are living in an age in which if one of us . . . should marry his daughter to the grave he would thereby acquire the best of sons-in-law."<sup>1</sup>

This shows that not only marriage was insecure, but to have an unmarried daughter was equally bad. A girl could not be safe from the immorality of an age where good men and chaste women were believed to be rare.<sup>2</sup> "To be wedded to the grave" had therefore become the only alternative.

A similar view is echoed in the "Nights" in the following statement: "The Princess Jawhara must needs be wedded, for the sage says a girl's lot is either the grace of marriage or the grave."<sup>3</sup>

To secure a proper and compatible marriage for young daughters must have become a problem because of the widespread dissipation.<sup>4</sup> The son of al-Mutawakkil is reported to have said, "Happy is the man who has no daughter". He was commenting on the misfortune of an honourable qādi whose son-in-law had, by his dissipation, brought a great deal of trouble to the qādi, his married daughter and the whole family.<sup>5</sup>

An example of the insecurity of marriage is shown in The First Lady of Baghdad. The husbands of the Lady's two

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1 Rasā'il, 20f, 60.

2 Op.cit.

3 Nights, III, 286.

4 Jāhiz, Rasā'il, ed. Finkel. 72. Zaydān, V, 129f. Amīn, Duhā, I, 97.

5 Aghāni, IX, 143f.

sisters dissipated the inheritances of their wives and abandoned them. They came back in rags to the Lady, who helped them out of their difficulties by making them join with her in her trading business. When her sisters became rich again they wanted to remarry whereupon their sister warned them that good husbands in that age were rare, and reminded them of their first unsuccessful experiences but they did not heed her.<sup>1</sup>

Having examined the differences between the two worlds of free women and the hetairae, we proceed to discuss the rivalry which issued from this situation.

It is noticeable that during the "Golden Age" women stood almost on an equal footing with men in the pursuit of the literary and theological activities of the age. Not only did free women in high circles achieve distinction, but women of the middle class and the daughters of learned men also participated in intellectual pursuits.<sup>2</sup>

This was not merely due to the chances provided for women in an age of renaissance and flourishing of the arts, but also partly due to the competition with their bond-sisters; and since it was not possible for free women to rival their opponents in the world of hetairae itself, they turned to seek eminence in the field of knowledge.

However, not all free women who suffered the pressure of customs and the pangs of jealousy, were able to distinguish themselves by their intelligence and serious works, and here the question arises whether there was any sort of

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1 Nights, I, 63f.

2 See Ibn al-Khaṭīb, XIV, 430-47, for accounts of the Baghdadi women who distinguished themselves in fiqh, and learning.

convergence or fusion between the two worlds.

Although it is difficult to reach a definite answer to this question, it is necessary to discuss it in order to show why the narrators make little distinction between the behaviour of the two sets of women. The difficulty in finding the answer is due to prudence as regards the conduct of free women and to the vagueness of our sources in referring to such matters as scandals.

However, evidence available to us shows that some free women acquired the customs prevailing in the world of hetairae, such as giving drinking and musical parties or attending them. Al-Tawḥīdi reports that in the year 360 A.H. a group of men embarked on night adventures and counted some 460 slave-girls, 120 free women and 95 handsome youths whose parties they had attended.<sup>1</sup> From the numbers indicated here one can estimate that there was one free woman to every four slave-girls who gave this kind of party.

Al-Tawḥīdi further comments that there were many other women whose houses were inaccessible because of their high ranks and the numerous guards and watchmen who surrounded them. Some, he says, usually stipulate that all guests should keep the entertainment in confidence.<sup>2</sup>

The last statement may shed light on the story of The Porter<sup>3</sup> in which three Baghdadi ladies entertain a few guests, among them al-Rashīd and his vizier. It is interesting to note that the ladies stipulate that their guests should neither disclose the night gathering nor ask questions about what does not concern them.

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1 Imtā', II, 183.

2 Op. cit.

3 Nights, I, 32.

The principle of secrecy is carefully followed in all the meetings between men and women in the "Nights". Both men and women guard against social censure, and fear the indignation and wrath of the women's parents. Uneasiness runs through all relationships, until the guardian's consent to marriage is obtained.

That some free women emulated the way of life which slave-girls followed, namely mixing with men in private or perhaps semi-public parties, is revealed in specific incidents. Al-Aghāni, for instances, reports that a young woman and her cousin once held a musical party. The hired singer, recognising that the girl was a free woman, started to sing a song on "coy girls who refrain from scandalising their brothers, and from bringing shame upon their fathers". When the girl heard his insinuations she left the party. The next day she sent 1,000 dinars to her cousin, in the way of dowry, and told him to ask for her hand.<sup>1</sup>

Much later, in the year 531A.H., Ibn al-Jawzi reports that four women were publicly put to shame (ishhār), followed by beating drums because they were caught drinking wine with men at an entertainment party held on a boat.<sup>2</sup>

The mixing of men and women was more open however when the meetings did not involve songs and wine. It is reported that a group of genteel women (zarīfāt) used to attend the mixed parties given at the home of the blind poet al-Bashshār, to listen to poetry and discuss literary subjects. Al-Bashshār fell in love with one of these women through hearing her voice and sent her a message asking her to respond to his

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1 Aghāni, IV, 98.

2 Muntazam, X, 69.

to his love, but she replied that she did not consider him handsome enough and that he being blind, could not appreciate her beauty. Bashshār is further reported to have written love poems to another woman who attended his parties.<sup>1</sup>

Another question to be discussed in this connection is the love stories about free women presented to us in the "Nights", and the likelihood of such stories against a background of strict segregation.

The cycle-story of The Hunchback for example, presents to us in its sub-stories the adventures of women of various ranks and categories. These women range from a qādi's daughter, a governor's daughter, a court slave-girl, an ordinary slave-girl and a wealthy lady whose dead father has left her a great fortune, to wives among city dwellers and Bedouins. Other love stories include princesses, daughters and sisters of viziers and women of the merchant class.

Are these events merely devices to enhance the excitement of the narrative or do they have any connection with reality?

To answer the first part of the question one must take into account the considerable exaggeration ensuing from the tendency of males to abuse females, and attribute this attitude primarily to the tremendous distrust which men nurtured for women-kind as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Aghāni, III, 50, 41.

2 Nights, I, 93-138.

3 Cf. Aghāni, XII, 85, and Nisā', 3.

To answer the second part of the question, one has to examine Arabic sources other than the "Nights". Incidents connected with the conduct of free women in these sources are brought forth only after they have been made public, otherwise references to women's misconduct are characterised by their generality and ambiguity.

Al-Tanūkhi, discussing how a notable figure called Ibn Abi 'Awf lost his prestige, connects it with his foolishness in tackling an affair of his daughter.

This man, on entering his house one day, found with his daughter a man who was not a relative. His companions advised him to let the man go and merely watch and fetter the daughter. He declined to take the advice, sent for the Chief of the Police and had the man scourged with whips in front of the door. The story got abroad in Baghdad and Ibn Abi 'Awf was publicly criticised for punishing the man and sparing the girl.<sup>1</sup>

Police reports of the 4th/10th c. show that daughters of ex-ministers, amīrs and dignitaries participated in the moral laxity of the age. The reason given for this behaviour is that the guardians of these girls did not give them in marriage while they were alive and when they died, the daughters were left with great wealth and considerable freedom.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Mas'ūdi reports the story of a respectable girl who was lured by an old woman to a place where a group of men had gathered for immoral purposes. The man who attempted to save her had to be brought to court accused of killing his

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1 Nishwar, I, 167.

2 Faraj, II, 61.



friend who had tried to assault the girl.<sup>1</sup> In the time of al-Mu'taḍid (3rd/9th c), an investigation of the murder of a woman, disclosed that a dissipated Hashimite was notorious for corrupting other men's ḥarīm. People could not complain to the authorities because of the Sharīf's relation to the 'Abbāsīd family.<sup>2</sup>

Apart from particular incidents in which free women were involved, references to the conduct of women in general had been made by authors of different periods.

Al-Washshā', discussing the methods employed by slave-girls to attract men and to rob them of their money, comments also on the behaviour of free women, and concludes that one should not be fooled by the claims that secluded women have no chances but to correspond with their suitors and gaze upon them at a distance, for if one investigates the truth about free women one will discover their treachery, cunning and perfidy. Hence men should steer away from slave-girls as well as from free women.<sup>3</sup>

Al-Jāhīz uncovers the morality inside the ḥarīm when he discusses the relationship between women and eunuchs. He maintains that, among other reasons, women preferred eunuchs to husbands because they feared and over-respected

1 Murūj, VII, 212.

2 Jawzi, Adhkiyā', 34f. He was a descendant of the line of the caliph al-Mahdi.

3 Muwashshā', 81, 97f.

the latter.<sup>1</sup>

When Khumārawayh the Egyptian ruler (3rd/9th c.) intended to investigate the corruption among his ḥarīm and eunuchs, he was murdered by his servants on the eve of the investigation.<sup>2</sup>

Historians of the Egyptian periods also make general remarks on the corruption of the ḥarīm and the misconduct of women.<sup>3</sup> If what they state is to be taken as fact and not as male prejudice against female, this shows that a certain kind of woman was able to defy ruler and restrictions much in the way that the stories of the Egyptian period in the "Nights" often show.

The ḥarīm quarter was so secluded that much of the activity which went on inside this big prison could not reach the masters' ears unless some slave-girl, out of spite or revenge, informed on them.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ḥayawān, I, 167-69. We have no particular evidence to prove al-Jāḥiẓ's statement. However, the unsuspected attachment of 'Ulayya to two eunuchs is reported in al-Aghāni (IX, 83-5). Al-Rashīd is said to have forbidden her to mention Ṭal's name in her verses, but he ultimately offered the eunuch to her as a gift. The other eunuch about whom she composed verses was called Rasha', but guided by her first experience she nicknamed him Zaynab. See also Aghāni, XIV, 114, for the verses of al-Ma'mūn's daughter on her father's servant. On the relationships between the ḥarīms and eunuchs in the Ottoman court see Penzer, The Harim 145-49. For the same subject in the Nights (See, I, 27-30).

2 Abu al-Fidā, Mukhtasar, II, 60.

3 Maqrīzi, Khitat, II, 24, Sulūk, I, pt. 3, 942.

4 Nights, II, 76. The story of al-'Abbāsa, according to one report, reached al-Rashīd through a spiteful slave-girl, see al-'Uyūn Wa'l-Ḥadā'iq, ed. De Goeje, III, 307f., and Ṭabari, III, 677.

This is also the reason why it is difficult to verify the background of the stories in which the narrator overcomes the strict regulations by hiding, for instance, a man inside a chest and smuggling him through locked and guarded doors,<sup>1</sup> or by making him disguise himself in women's clothes for the same purpose.<sup>2</sup>

A spurious ḥadīth reported by Ibn al-Khaṭīb (5th/11th c) can perhaps help to sum up the morality in the city of Baghdad, "... When the darkness of the night falls, the women (of Baghdad) will take shelter in the most secure (literally, deepest) places, for fear of the debauchees.<sup>3</sup> Thus, if debauchees were able to intimidate even virtuous women, it was possible for immoral women to behave in the way they would choose.

From the evidence given above one can infer that though there was a split between the two worlds of the free and slave women, man with all his restrictions and efforts could not draw an absolute and distinctive line between the two sets of women and some form of fusion was, in fact, inevitable. Thus slave-girls had to comply with the ḥarīm restrictions, and free women are shown diverging from the code of behaviour set down for them.

It is worth noting, in this connection, that the narrator attempts to make these love stories acceptable by drawing the background of his characters convincingly. Thus, free women who indulge in this kind of risky conduct with relative liberty

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1 Nights, I, 107, 119.

2 Ibid., II, 160, IV, 268f, and Cal.ed. II, 137, See also Tajārib. VI, 3447 Prince Ibrahim b. al-Mahdi, makes his escape disguising himself in women's clothes.

3 Tārīkh, I, 39.

are described as either women desperately in love, or capricious wives, or independent and strong princesses, or wealthy widows who are the guardians of themselves.

Secondly, the narrator is cautious to indicate that the ultimate goal of the lovers is marriage, and hence he often avoids depicting serious relationships in his stories. Sometimes the marriage contract is written on the first meeting of lovers as in the case of the sister of the Barmaki vizier.<sup>1</sup> Further, when a rich woman of independent status forms a love relationship with a man, they are made to marry one another eventually.<sup>2</sup>

The chastity of young girls is shown to be more carefully guarded than that of married women or independent widows. When the little daughter of a vizier falls in love with an officer, a guard shows her parents the message she intended to send to the man and the girl is sent away with servants and attendants to a lonely place beyond the Mountain of the Bereaved.<sup>3</sup>

In all other cases when women are portrayed as deceivers who design to ensnare men with their nets, or plot against their husbands for the sake of their suitors, they are shown to end up miserably, and their stratagems bring them the punishment of death.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Nights, II, 223.

2 Ibid., I, 104, IV, 93.

3 Ibid., II, 301.

4 Ibid., II, 146, IV, 302, I, 112.

It remains for us to discuss the reasons for such behaviour in free women which was the opposite of desirable to the men who tried hard to fetter them.

Al-Nuwayri relates an incident which indicates that the liberties taken by free women in this respect could be attributed to the jealousy of wives. When a wife suspected that her husband was dressed up to go to his marriage ceremony with another woman, she threatened him by saying that a woman needs two husbands more than a man needs two wives. Upon hearing this the man took off his turban and changed his mind.<sup>1</sup> Ibn al-Jawziyya, writing about women's unfaithfulness, attributes it to the dissipation and unfaithfulness of the husbands themselves, especially if they bragged about their amatory adventures in front of their wives.<sup>2</sup>

The fact that men sometimes bragged about their adventures in front of their women is shown in the story of 'Aziz and Aziza,<sup>3</sup> the betrothed cousins. 'Aziz used to talk about his wicked mistress to his fiancée and ask instructions as to how to deal with her. 'Aziza was an example of virtue and used to help him in his distress but died broken-hearted.

However in the story of "The Great Lady and the Slaughterhouse Cleaner, the wife avenges herself when she hears that her husband has relations with the kitchen maid, by being herself unfaithful to him.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Nihāya, IV, 22.

2 Nisā', 44.

3 Nights, I, 302-13.

4 Ibid. II 213.

### The Influence of the Hetairae and Concubines

To do justice to the question of women in the 'Abbasid time, it is necessary to discuss also the position of the hetairae and concubines and their influence on the society at large.

The name jāriya had come to denote all kinds of women whether free or owned women. Both the "Nights" and Arab writers apply this word to describe daughters of Kings, Bedouin girls or ordinary women in the anecdotes which they transmit.<sup>1</sup>

Concubines of non-Arab and non-Muslim origin altered the social attitude towards the man of mixed blood and the contempt directed towards the hajīn was no longer valid in the 'Abbasid society.<sup>2</sup>

In the jāhilyya, a hajīn could not inherit from his father. The early Umayyads would never allow the accession of a hajīn to the caliphate, and since they considered umm walads inferior to free wives, they would not marry them. However, in the 'Abbasid time most caliphs were of mixed blood.<sup>3</sup>

The popularity of foreign concubines increased when the grandsons of Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Ali, born of Persian princesses, distinguished themselves as leading faqīhs of Madina,<sup>4</sup>

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1 Nisā', 115. Jāhīz, Mahāsīn, 202, 223. Nights, II, 221,

2 Hitti, 332f.

3 'Iqd, III, 296-98.

4 Ibid., III, 296. Ibshihi, I, 70.

The offspring of the hetairae, however, retained their mother's fondness for music, as for example, al-Rashīd's half brother Prince Ibrāhīm and his sister Princess 'Ulayya.<sup>1</sup>

The influence of the hetairae on arts and literature was twofold. On the one hand they inspired poets by their beauty and talents, and on the other hand, discourses with them were often marked by indelicacy.<sup>2</sup>

However, the appearance of this kind of humour, which cannot be repeated in decent society, seems to be a characteristic of a renaissance in any country, as for example the literature of the Italian Renaissance where both men and women tolerated and enjoyed bawdy passages.<sup>3</sup>

In the "Nights" the tendency towards indelicacy does not show in the moral behaviour of its characters but only in a few passages which seem to be like cliché-passages inserted by the narrator to entertain the audience. These insertions can be done away with without it showing any effect on the course of the narrative as Lane's translation shows and the expurgated Arabic edition of Ṣālḥāni proves.

Burton maintains that these passages are "delivered with mirth and humour ... rather than designed for debauching the mind .. Their's is a coarseness of language not idea, they are indecent not depraved."<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 Aghāni, IX, 83, XIII, 114f. Hague, Music in Ancient Arabia and Spain (London, 1929) 65.
  - 2 Nuwayri, IV, 18-22. Jāhiz, Maḥāsin, 197.
  - 3 J. B. Priestly, Literature and The Western Man (London, 1960) 12.
  - 4 Terminal Essay, X, 203.

It is surprising to note that the "Nights" shows less indelicacy than the works of some men of letters. At times it may even present an expurgated version of a tale as in the story of Budūr and Jubayr which is recounted in al-Mahāsin with less reserve than in the "Nights".<sup>1</sup>

Another subject largely connected with hetairae and the system of concubinage, is the subject of al-'ishq or love-mania. This is not to say that this subject was not a part of life in every age and place, but with the presence of hetairae and slave-girls at parties, it became a customary subject in mixed society.

Al-Jāhiz states that a gayna may learn ten thousand lines or more devoid of moral and admonishing value, and merely intended to arouse passion and desire. He maintains that love for hetairae incurs more danger to men than other kinds of love because it arises from the combination of seeing, hearing and touching the object of love.<sup>2</sup>

Many writers dwell upon the subject of 'ishq<sup>3</sup> which seems to mean intense love and a sort of infatuation, when the loved woman is impossible of attainment, either because of her being secluded, or because of her rank or other obstacles such as parting<sup>and</sup> inaccessibility.

In the case of slave-girls, difficulties arise from the girl being in the possession of another man, or when the man cannot afford purchasing her or when he is forced to sell her.

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1 Nights, II, 266. Jāhiz, Mahāsin, 312-16.

2 Rasā'il, 69.

3 Mas'ūdi, VI, 370-86, VII, 311-15. Erotic literature is to be found in the works of historians, annalists, biographers and geographers (Macdonald, Aspects of Islam, (New York, 1911) 352.



Although acts of suicide are rarely reported in the annals, and no suicide occurs in the "Nights", stories tend to show that lovers need not commit suicide, since they may expire from the sheer intensity of their emotions and frustration.<sup>1</sup> In the "Nights", Ibn Bakkār, the slave-girl he loved and 'Azīza all die as martyrs of love.<sup>2</sup>

The "Nights" portrays two types of love emotions, sensual love, through which men are shown to be seduced, driven out of their senses and stripped of their riches, and the medieval type of sentimental and self-indulgent love.

In the traditional type of 'ishq, suffering outweighs pleasure and lovers find no rest or sleep and are likely to swoon both from happiness and despair.<sup>3</sup>

Anguish and excessive love are expressed by weeping yearning and reciting exotic verses.<sup>4</sup> 'Ishq both in the "Nights" and in 'Abbāsīd times was generally expressed in songs. On hearing songs, lovers rend their clothes and act madly or faint.<sup>5</sup> They frequently exchanged presents and messages of love.

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1 Ibn Sarrāj, Maṣāri'..., 135. Washshā', 49. Nights, II 330.

2 Nights, II, 78, I, 213.

3 Ibid., IV, 19f, 56, II, 56.

4 Ibid., II, 298-315.

5 Ibid., 220f. Nuwayri, IV, 182. Tawḥīdī, II, 166, 177.

Love and passion in medieval Muslim society were often accompanied with an ominous sense of danger, distrust in womankind and extreme frustration because of the pressure of custom and the treacherous turns of fate. As a result of apprehensions of the external world, complications in the plots of the stories do not arise from unreciprocated love or the direction of emotion towards two women at a time or vice versa. The difficulties seem to arise from public and social or family obstacles which play an important part in obstructing the course of love.

In spite of the general view that slave-girls were treacherous and used notorious methods to trap men, many of the hetairae and concubines were famous for their fidelity and devotion to their masters.<sup>1</sup> In the "Nights," Maryam, Qūt al-Qulūb, Anīs al-Jalīs and several others, weep, plead, plot, fight and endure hardship in order to be reunited with their masters.<sup>2</sup>

These slave-girls have their counterparts, in, for example, al-Wāthiq's Farīda, al-Mutawakkil's Maḥbūba and the Barmakis' slave-girl Danānīr,<sup>3</sup> who remained loyal to their masters even after their death, and preferred at that time to withdraw from the glamour of social life to obscurity and seclusion.

Despite the differences between the free and bondwomen, they, all alike, had to be content to share their men with numerous other women, among whom were wives, concubines, and other palace maids that caught the passing fancy of their masters.

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1 Washshā', 67.

2 Nights, IV, 94, I, 158, 176.

3 Aghāni, III, 185, XIX, 133 . Nuwayri, V, 91.

A strange method of winning a husband's favour, especially in the royal society, was the development of the custom of presenting one's husband or master with a slave-girl that he favoured.<sup>1</sup>

Zubayda presented al-Rashid with ten slave-girls among whom were to be the mothers of al-Ma'mun and al-Mu'tasim.<sup>2</sup>

The love between the concubine Farida and al-Wathiq was well-known for its intensity and sincerity, yet when she sensed his inclination towards one of her slave-girls, she willingly offered her to him.<sup>3</sup>

Some Arab writers attribute this strange phenomenon to a lack of chivalry and consideration on the part of men, and to the loss of jealousy on the part of women.<sup>4</sup>

Al-Jahiz sheds some light on this unusual practice when he states that the gesture would be considered a meritorious act which would raise the woman's esteem in her husband's eye, and place her in a unique position, for by doing this, she has placed her husband's wish over her own and has rendered him an unselfish service of which women - except for a few of them - are incapable.<sup>5</sup> This shows that the practice was therefore a means of gaining precedence in the man's heart.

1 Jāhiz, Tāj, 148. Tanūkhi, Faraj, II, 183.

2 Aghāni, XVI, 137.

3 Ibn Sā'i, Nisā', 61f.

4 Zaydān, V, 67, Bayhum, 195.

5 Jāhiz, Tāj, 148.

However, historical records indicate that jealousy always existed. Queen Zubayda often fought to distract al-Rashīd's attention from other women as in the case of his attachments to Danānīr and 'Inān (or 'Anān), the famous songstress<sup>1</sup>. In some cases she managed to prevail over her rivals, as when she once planned with 'Ulayya a device which caused the Caliph great delight and applause.<sup>2</sup>

An example of Zubayda's jealousy is shown in the story of Ghānim. The Queen drugs al-Rashīd's concubine Qūt al-Qulūb while he is away on a journey. The girl is put in a chest and taken to the graveyard where the merchant Ghānim finds her and takes her to his lodging.

To perfect her stratagem, Zubayda erects a tomb in the Palace and claims to have buried her there. The caliph discovers the truth and the story ends up with the concubine being presented as a gift to the merchant she loves.<sup>3</sup>

Having discussed the conflict arising from the existence of two kinds of women and two sets of rules within the structure of the same society, we proceed to consider the laws of marriage and divorce and other relevant customs which affected women's standing in society.

#### The Laws of Marriage

Since man was the master of the family, and marriage was a woman's sole life-time career, it would be useful to

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1 Aghāni, op. cit., Nuwayri, V, 78.

2 Aghāni, IX, 88.

3 Nights, I, 161.

give a brief account of the laws of marriage in order to examine the situation of women in the family.

Islam limits the number of wives a man can marry at a time to four, provided that a man should favour no one wife over the others. If he fears that he may not be able to fulfil this condition he should confine himself to one wife only.<sup>1</sup>

However, some interpreters of Quranic verses in the 'Abbasid period thought differently. Al-Makki (4th/10th c.) for example, goes so far as to state that God, in fact, favours polygamy since the words two, three and four wives precede the word one: "Take in marriage of such other women as please you, two, three, four; but if ye fear that you cannot act equitably towards them then marry one only".<sup>2</sup>

Men overcame the restriction regarding the number of wives by using the license of divorce with greater liberty than the spirit of the law would permit.<sup>3</sup> Well-to-do men used to marry and divorce several times in an attempt to keep the number of wives down to four at a time.<sup>4</sup> Al-Ḥasan, 'Ali's son, for example, was known for having married and divorced about 250 women, a matter which called for 'Ali's disapproval.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Quran, 4<sup>3</sup>. Both this verse and verse 129 of the same sūra indicate that it is difficult for a man to act with impartial justice to his wives.

2 Qūt, II, 245. Quran, op.cit. tr. Sale.

3 Ibid., 4<sup>35</sup>, 2<sup>231</sup>, the Quran emphasises bridging the differences by reconciliation, and reconsideration of the decision of divorce.

4 Lane, 1883, 222-24. Bukhārī, VII, 14.

5 al-Makki, Qūt, II, 246.

The question of marriage in the "Nights" is so full of variations that to give a lucid account of the attitude of society to monogamy or polygamy of marriage is difficult. One can safely assert that there seems to be no fixed convictions, on the part of the narrators or society, on such personal matters as marriage. However, most of the characters of the stories show a tendency to monogamy. Destiny or circumstances may lead others to marry more than one wife, irrespective of their class, wealth or position.

People differed in the choice of their wives and concubines, and in the pattern of life they would prefer to lead. Whereas al-Makki advocates polygamy, Ibn al-Jawzi (13th c. A.D.) comments that men who work hard to get every beautiful woman they see, become insatiable and will continue to commit sin after sin.<sup>1</sup>

He believes that too many women bring harm to man and the wise man should confine himself to one woman, since several women will occupy a lot of his time as he has to supervise them, spend for them, overcome their jealousies and clear up their quarrels.<sup>2</sup>

A man may own as many concubines and wives as he pleases but still yearn for a quiet and uncomplicated family life. The following incident shows that a life of pleasure and polygamy was not always considered the happiest mode of life: Once a courtier asked his fellows as to who they considered the happiest man. When they replied that it ought to be one of the companions of the caliph he disagreed and said, "The

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1 Şayd, II, 413f.

2 Ibid., III, 583.

happy man is he who lives in a rented house and has one agreeable wife who willingly shares with him his hardship; a man who does not associate himself with people like us, nor do we make friends with him, for if we do we will ruin for him both his present life and his life in the hereafter."<sup>1</sup>

The various attitudes towards marriage can be illustrated by examples chosen from among the stories themselves. Reasons for such diversity in attitudes towards marriage and polygamy are not hard to find. Among the factors which affect these attitudes in the "Nights" are the social position of the characters, their circumstances and the supposed time of the story as well be shown presently.

Characters drawn from the lower classes seem to be satisfied with one wife until they become rich enough to join two of them. When 'Abdallah the fisherman became rich, he married the Sultan's daughter in addition to his wife, the mother of nine children. But 'Ali the Egyptian merchant, a man from the middle-class, declined the King's offer to marry him to the princess because he already had a wife and suggested that she should be given in marriage to his son.<sup>2</sup>

The Baghdadi young man, also a middle-class merchant, seems to reject polygamy altogether. When he lost his slave-girl, he married a grocer's daughter because he became poor, but when he found his lost girl again he did not wish to have two wives at the same time, and hence he divorced the grocer's

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1 'Iqd, I, 32.

2 Nights, IV, 233 and Cal ed. II, 482.

daughter, after giving her the due dowry, and married his girl.<sup>1</sup>

Prince Qamar, however, married a princess with the consent of his first wife.

The differences in attitude here may be ascribed to the class of the man who practices polygamy, and the status of the wives in question. While it seemed suitable for Prince Qamar to marry two princesses of the same rank, it was not fit to join a grocer's daughter with an educated and skilled singing slave-girl, and so he divorces the grocer's daughter.

Similarly, kings and caliphs in the "Nights" often have, in addition to four wives, a great number of concubines, and are usually portrayed as incredibly ready for new marriages.

The question of marriages between Caliphs, as represented in the "Nights" by the figure of al-Rashīd, and ordinary womenfolk, may seem incredible, but despite the fact that such stories are exaggerated and far-fetched, incidents of caliphs contracting instantaneous marriages, even on hearsay, are not absolutely rare in the books of the annalists. Al-Mutawakkil, for instance, married several girls who were described to him, one of whom became as dear to him as his favourite concubine Qabiḥa;<sup>2</sup> another woman whom he married in this way, was however, divorced by him for a trivial reason.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Nights, II, 129.

2 Jāhīz, Mahāsīn, 234.



Al-Rashīd is said to have married an Arab girl when he heard his vizier, al-Faḍl, praising her cleverness and witty answers.<sup>1</sup> In the "Nights", a similar reason induces al-Rashīd to marry a desert girl; al-Ibshīhi, reports that al-Ma'mūn also married an Arab girl for her eloquence and cleverness.<sup>2</sup>

It is also reported that when the Caliph al-Mahdi heard a man of the court circle describing the beauty of his wife, he asked him to divorce her so that he would marry her.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it would not seem quite baseless an assumption when the narrator pictures the caliph marrying the interesting women whom he meets during his nocturnal wanderings.

In the "Nights", circumstances sometimes necessitate marriage to more than one wife. Thus Abu al-Shāmāt was content with his wife Zubayda the Luteplayer, and after her death, he married again, not without reluctance. Complications in the course of the story resulted in Abu al-Shāmāt being married to three wives; his first wife Zubayda turned up alive, his second wife who had born him a son, and his third wife was a Christian princess, whose marriage to him was supposed to have been pre-destined by fate and brought about by the princess's power of magic.<sup>4</sup>

Circumstances again forced 'Ali Bābā to marry his sister-in-law in addition to his wife, because his brother was murdered in the treasure cave and he married her out of pity.<sup>5</sup>

1 Op. cit.

2 Nights, III, 225, Mustatraf... I, 52.

3 Jāhiz, Ibid., 300.

4 Nights, II, 163.

5 JRAS., 1910, 333-86.

Further, the desire for having children can be an important motive for polygamy among the middle class people.<sup>1</sup>

On the other hand, the narrator in 'Ali al-Zaybaq does not see any impropriety in making 'Ali the Sharper marry four wives on the same day with one and the same contract. At the outset, 'Ali plans to marry Zaynab only, and for her sake he goes through several adventures, during which he meets three women who help him out of his difficulties and offer to be his wives. To satisfy them all, he marries them simultaneously.<sup>2</sup>

Although stories of rogues and knaves such as the last which are told merely for fun, should not be taken as accurate reproductions of real life, one must not forget that according to the Shaṛī'ā a man is allowed to marry four wives by the same contract, provided that he names the separate dowries of his brides clearly.<sup>3</sup> Al-Ḥasan, the son of 'Ali, is reported to have married four wives by one contract but exceptions such as these must have been extraordinary cases.<sup>4</sup>

It has been already pointed out that the marriage of widows or divorced women was considered disgraceful in the 'Abbāsīd time. In early Islam, however, this was quite a normal marriage; and 'Ātika is reported to have married Abu Bakr's son, 'Umar I and Ibn al-Zubayr, successively. Since her three husbands were either killed or assassinated, she refused to marry 'Ali when he proposed to her, because she feared he would also be killed. After that she married two

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1 Nights, I, 8, III, 238.

2 Ibid., III, 273.

3 Mālik, Mudawwana, I, 123.

4 Makki, op. cit.

other husbands.<sup>1</sup>

Reports of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries show the opposite attitude towards this kind of marriage. al-Khwārizmi for example, wrote a letter to a friend whose widowed mother had remarried, and instead of wishing her a long life he prayed to God for her death because of her remarriage.<sup>2</sup>

Even as recently as the 19th c. A.D. a friend of Lane, Shaikh al-Ṭanṭāwi, wrote to him telling him proudly that the women of his family, if widowed or divorced while young, passed their lives, however long, in widowhood.<sup>3</sup>

The same change in attitude takes place in the "Nights". In the story of Hind bt. al-Nu'mān, which represents an early period, Hind, after getting a divorce from al-Hajjāj, marries the caliph Mu'awiya and attempts to humiliate her former husband who accompanies her to the court.<sup>4</sup>

However, in the Baghdadi story, The Porter, the Second Lady of Baghdad relates apologetically the story of her second marriage which she says was brought about by an old woman.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Washshā', 64f.

2 Rasā'il, 173.

3 Lane, 1883, 223, n. 1.

4 Nights, III, 224.

5 Ibid., I, 63.

The situation becomes worse in the later centuries since the abstention of a widow from marriage was a source of pride to her. Thus, in a story of later Egyptian composition, the widow of a jeweller refuses to remarry and returns to her father's home in Egypt. She tells the King of Baghdad who wants to marry her, "There is no woman among us who would want to marry after her husband's death."<sup>1</sup> This sounds much like the Shaikh's statement mentioned above.

The other point to be discussed is the treatment of the two institutions of marriage and concubinage by later narrators of the "Nights" who seem to put no demarcation lines between the two institutions. Thus slave-girls are immediately emancipated and become wives, and wives, on the other hand, may act exactly like hetairae, that is to say, they sing and entertain their husbands' guests, which seems an improbable thing for a free wife to do. This indicates a marked change in the attitude towards hetairae, and a decline of their status in later ages.

To illustrate this point, a story of early Egyptian composition which is set in Baghdad and has al-Rashīd as its central figure, depicts a free wife behaving as a gayna. The excellent singing of Zubayda the Luteplayer,<sup>2</sup> Abu al-Shāmat's first wife, attracts the Caliph to the merchant's house where he attends her musical performances every night.<sup>3</sup>

1 Nights, IV, 303.

2 The Arabic name Zubayda al-'Udiyya, which sounds like the name of a famous singer, 'Ubayda al-Tanbūriyya, (a tambourinist) who lived in the 3rd/9th c. (See Aghāni, XIX, 134-37).

3 Nights, II, 180-86.

In actual life, a hetaira might sing and entertain her master's guests, but when she becomes umm walad, a master would forbid her from entertaining guests and impose seclusion upon her.<sup>1</sup>

What is more surprising than this is that Abu al-Shāmāt's second wife whom he married after Zubayda's death, and who was a slave-girl, was immediately emancipated and taken as a wife by Abu al-Shāmāt. Though one expects her to sing and entertain, she, unlike the first free wife, never sings or entertains, and soon bears a child.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem likely that this picture of wives acting as slave-girls and vice versa, is due to the socially mobile phase of history in which the story was written. The early Egyptian story mentioned above was either composed or reshaped and modified at a time when the acquisition of concubines was no longer a widely spread custom of the day, but confined to comparatively few rich people,<sup>3</sup> and when the respectability and prestige of the qiyān had declined.<sup>4</sup>

Thus the convention of the period requires that both the hetaira Zubayda and the purchased slave-girls should figure as lawful wives to maintain their respectability.

It is noticeable that in the Baghdadī stories, a singing slave-girl has her rights as an individual, and sufficient status as an entertainer or concubine, for these stories

1 Aghāni, XIX, 136.

2 Nights, II, 189.

3 Cf. Ibn Iyās, I, 212.

4 Ibid., III, 64, 180. Maqrīzi, Sulūk, II, pt.2, 491.

represent an age when female slaves, as poetesses and singing slave-girls, were acknowledged,<sup>1</sup> and when concubines especially umm walads ranked equal to free wives.<sup>2</sup>

There was no reason for an immediate marriage of a master and a purchased slave-girl, nor was chastity a requirement in a female slave as the "Nights" inclines to show.

In the 'Abbāsid time, not only dissipation but also the irresponsible attitude towards marriage bonds, caused the instability of women's future.

Because of the great number of manumitted slave-girls available, immediate and verbal marriages occurred everywhere in the big cities and provinces. From al-Madīna, which had become one of the famous centres for training and exporting skilled slave-girls, both the 'Iqd and the "Nights" record the incident of a man who is conducted by an old woman to a house, where an informal ceremony of marriage takes place for which the man pays a dowry of one dinar. The "Nights" however does not mention a dowry or contract.<sup>3</sup>

The ridiculous manner in which the laws of marriage and divorce were utilised to serve men's purposes is shown in the Baghdadi story of Tawaddud.

A philosopher, in an attempt to test a slave-girl's knowledge, asks her the following question: "Explain to me the case of a man who looked at a slave-girl in the morning, after prayers, but she was forbidden to him, yet when noon came she became lawful to him. In the afternoon, however,

1 Nights, I, 138, 161.

2 Tanūkhi, Nishwar, I, 132.

3 Nights, I, 124. 'Iqd, III, 424.

she was again unlawful to him, and in the evening she once more became lawful to him. Then at suppertime she was forbidden to him and next morning she became lawful to him? "

Tawaddud's reply to this puzzle was that when the man looked at the slave-girl in the morning he committed an unpermissible act since she was in the possession of another man. At noon, our man evidently purchased the slave-girl and she was lawful to him. He apparently freed her in the afternoon, and being no longer in his possession she became forbidden to him. When that evening he married the emancipated woman, she became his lawful wife. By supper time, however, he must have pronounced the formula of divorce and she was no more his lawful wife. But if a man divorces his wife, it will still be his legal right to retract after the first and second pronouncements of the formula of divorce. Thus, in the morning he took her back as his wife in accordance to this law.<sup>1</sup>

There seems to be an ironic exaggeration in the above example and the narrator, whether deliberately or perhaps inadvertently, overdraws the attitude of men who make light of religious injunctions and treat women, marriage and divorce unscrupulously.

The case, at any rate, is different when a wife stipulates upon her husband, on drawing the marriage contract, not to marry another woman or acquire a concubine.<sup>2</sup> In Abu al-Shāmāt, the husband is vexed because he happened to be bound by an oral promise which he made to his wife, who turned out to be childless, not to marry a second wife or acquire a concubine, but the situation is saved by making the wife conceive and give birth to the hero of the story Abu al-Shāmāt.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Nights, III, 9.

2 Ibid., III, 237.

3 Ibid., II, 168f.

Parallel examples of conditional marriage in actual life are to be sought in the lives of rulers and their womenfolk. Evidence shows that contractual rights drawn at marriages were given either as an oral promise, in front of witnesses or in a written agreement. The first 'Abbāsīd caliph al-Saffāḥ, promised his wife Umm Salama, on oath, never to marry or even to take a concubine, and he kept his promise.<sup>1</sup>

Al-Manṣūr's wife, Umm Mūsā, is reported to have had the same kind of promise in a written document. During 10 years of his reign, he attempted to obtain a fatwā to have it legally voided but his wife managed to stop the theologians, either by her threats or bribes, from giving the caliph the fatwā he wanted. When she died however al-Manṣūr was presented with a hundred maidens.<sup>2</sup>

These were however extremely rare cases and very few women had the courage and determination to utilize these rights and risk provoking men's indignation at what was considered a deplorable audacity on the part of wives.

Equality (al-Kafā'a) in marriage is an important principle. Background and rank are generally much regarded and no merchant, for instance, marries a weaver's daughter. It is important to consider the class of the couple, their standard of living, religion, property and occupation.<sup>3</sup> A companion of the Prophet said: "If you don't find an equal to your daughters, marry them to the grave."<sup>4</sup>

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1 Mas'ūdi, VI, 111f. 'Iqd, III, 52. Cf. Mālik, Muwatta', II, 66.

2 Jāhīz, Mahāsin, 232.

3 Sha'rāni, II, 95, Lane, I, 320. Levy, 1957, 110.

4 'Iqd, III, 273. Tha'ālibi, Zarā'if, 94.



The subject of equality in marriage is discussed by theologians, and Abu Yūsuf states that a Qurayshite man is equal to a Qurayshite woman or an Arab to an Arab. A new convert to Islam, on the other hand, is not an equal to a woman of Muslim parentage. The slave is not an equal to a free woman nor the freed son of a slave is equal to a woman free by descent.<sup>1</sup>

The principle of equality is, however, applied only to women in the matter of choosing a husband for her, whereas a man of high rank can marry any woman lower than him in rank. Commentators argue that since a man is the provider of the family, he should not therefore be inferior in property or rank to his wife, and that as a master, a man is capable of raising the low standard of his wife.

Further, if he did not succeed in doing so, or the marriage turned out to be incompatible, a man, unlike the woman, can bring the unsuccessful marriage to an end by divorcing the wife, whereas a wife cannot divorce her husband if such difficulties arise on her marriage to a man inferior to her in rank and property.<sup>2</sup>

How is the principle of al-Kafā'a treated in the "Nights"? as far as men are concerned the principle of equality is mostly discarded in the "Nights", and when a man wishes to marry any woman lower than him in rank, he could do so without any hesitation. Hence a caliph, as has been mentioned above, could marry a poor Bedouin girl if he admired her eloquence.<sup>3</sup>

In the story of The Fisherman and the 'Ifrīt, when the king

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1 Abu Yūsuf, Kharāj, 32 (margin). Dhahabi, Ahwāl, 115-18.

2 Dhahabi, op. cit.

3 Nights, III, 225.

wanted to reward the fisherman, he married one of the fisherman's daughters and gave the other in marriage to the Prince of the Black Island, whereas the fisherman's son was not allowed to marry one of the king's womenfolk but was simply appointed as chief of the king's treasury.<sup>1</sup>

When special circumstances arise, priority is given to love, and heroes of mediocre or even ignoble descent marry women higher in rank, as when a jewel merchant marries Dunyā, the sister of the Barmaki vizier Ja'far.<sup>2</sup>

So the principle of equality is violated in three ways in the "Nights". Firstly, when a match such as the above is made in secret, the Caliph has to give his support in order to bring together a woman of high rank and an unfortunate merchant.

Secondly, the principle is violated when merchants may marry Frankish princesses, but the construction of the plot makes this fact quite convincing, since the princesses concerned are captives who are sold as slave-girls. Thirdly, the fact that men of low occupation such as cobblers, tailors, or fishermen marry daughters of Kings and rule the kingdoms of their fathers-in-law, should not be taken as factual occurrences, for motives of wishful thinking and the dreams of castle-building play an important part in narrations of this nature.

Thus, the treatment of the doctrine of equality in the "Nights" is twofold, although, parity of rank and descent are given much regard, marriage to people of lower or higher ranks are permitted either through the power of love or money

1 Nights, I, 31f.

2 Ibid., II, 265.

or by exceptional allowances.

The following quotation may show us who may marry whom in society, and what is considered possible or impossible. When Prince Ardashir was disguised as a merchant, he asked the old nurse to marry him to princess Ḥayāt Al-Nufūs. The old woman said, " My son, you are called a merchant, and even if you own keys for treasures, you are still only a merchant. If you are to be promoted one step higher than your rank, you should ask for the daughter of a qādi or a prince, but why, my son, do you aspire to marry the daughter of the King of the Age . . . for no one jumps from the ground to the sky in one leap. "<sup>1</sup>

Another example in the same line, is Tāj al-Mulūk who, disguised as a merchant, was about to be beheaded for aspiring to marry the King's daughter. But his father, another King, arrived with his army in the nick of time and the punishment was willingly changed into a wedding ceremony.<sup>2</sup>

Merchants, compared to sharifs, were considered as mere vagabonds traversing lands in the pursuit of a dirham or a dinar.<sup>3</sup>

To conclude, despite the fictional atmosphere prevalent in the "Nights", the question of kafa'a in marriage is indirectly stated on several occasions.

If a girl has been married before, or is a widow, her consent is required for her marriage by all the codes.<sup>4</sup> However, an unmarried girl is merely informed of her engagement. Her refusal is not considered of much importance because it is the wali who decides the marriage.<sup>5</sup> The mother, at any rate, can

1 Nights, III, 487, Cal. ed.

2 Ibid., I, 339.

3 Ibid., III, 487, Cal. ed.

4 Mishkāt, p. IX, bk. XIII, 665-67 (Eng. tr.) Bukhārī, VII, 131.

5 Mishkāt, op. cit. Nights, I, 295, II, 238.

succeed in persuading her daughter to marry the man who is chosen for her.

In the "Nights" mothers and daughters when consulted, discreetly leave the decision to the father as is the case in arranged marriages.

Thus, a daughter refusing to marry is a rare occurrence, and when it happens in the "Nights", the daughter is usually a princess of great status and strong personality.<sup>2</sup>

A greater degree of seclusion is imposed on such rebellious daughters by their parents.

When princess Budūr refused several marriage proposals, her father surrounded her with ten old stewardesses to keep watch upon her. In addition to this, he sent messages to all kings and princes declaring that his daughter was in complete confinement because she was mentally ill.<sup>2</sup>

Custom demands that a cousin is, as a rule, a man's first wife who remains the mistress of the house, even when other women, who become the husband's favourites, are introduced. This was the practice both in Jāhili and Islamic times.<sup>3</sup>

A father, however, may refuse to give his daughter in marriage to his nephew if the latter is unable to support her or to offer a good dowry.<sup>4</sup> However, a cousin has always the first claim to his woman-cousin, and if he insists on his claim, custom does not permit the marriage of that girl to a stranger unless the cousin gives his consent.

1 Nights, II, 87, I, 324, IV, 254.

2 Ibid., I, 87.

3 Aghāni, XIV, 161f. Levy. 1957, 102f.

4 Nights, II, 5, Jawziyya, 128-32.

Thus the disadvantage of this custom to women is that while a man, after performing his duty of marrying his woman-cousin, is free to marry other women or to acquire concubines, a woman is not free to marry a stranger if her cousin is not willing to forgo his right.

There are two kinds of attitude towards cousin-marriage in the "Nights". First, since it is regarded as a family duty, a man marries his cousin either because of his love for her or because he respects customs. Second, cousin-marriage in the "Nights" arouses no interest, and is depicted as a kind of arranged marriage in which adventure, and passion have no place except perhaps in the story of The Two Viziers,<sup>1</sup> where the cousins are separated since childhood. At any rate, the privilege of a male cousin to marry another wife or acquire a concubine is evident in the "Nights".

An important aspect of Islamic marriage is the independence of wives in administering and guarding their own property. Muslim women, both married and unmarried, had a definite advantage over medieval European women in that their property rights were secured to them by law.<sup>2</sup>

There is no community of property between husband and wife, and each retains full possession and control of his or her property. Thus, it is repeatedly manifested in the "Nights" that a wife has complete control over her property, and that neither her husband nor any male member of her family can interfere with her in this respect.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 69.

2 Amir'Ali, The Legal Position of Women in Islam, (London, 1912), 43, 46. Quran, 4/-12

3 Nights, I, 57f, 60.

Abu al-Shāmat's mother, convinced that her son should travel for trading purposes, provides him with ten loaded camels out of her own property, and his father, when he is eventually persuaded to allow his son to go, adds another forty loads to what she had given him.<sup>1</sup> Similarly Nuraddin's mother provides for her son's escape from his angry father and promises to maintain him without the knowledge of her husband.<sup>2</sup>

When a wealthy woman marries her suitor in the "Nights" and wishes to compensate him for having had his hand cut off because he stole money for her sake, she decides to offer him back all the presents he had brought and all the property she possessed. But to do this, she had to bring witnesses to testify to her declaration.<sup>3</sup>

Before closing the subject of marriage, it is not amiss to discuss briefly the wedding ceremony, since this will throw light on Muslim manners, especially as weddings are the chief kind of entertainment in the life of the secluded women.

The simplest and in fact the most essential formalities are the ceremony of performing the marriage contract in the presence of a qādi and two witnesses, and the specification of the amount of dowry.<sup>4</sup> These formalities should be followed

1 Nights, II, 173.

2 Ibid., IV, 104.

3 Ibid., I, 104

4 Shaltūt, Al-Fatāwi (Cairo, 1964) 300. Sha'rāni, II, 96. Nights, I, 62, 104.

by a wedding festivity however simple it may be. Tradition commends celebrating even with one sheep to be presented as food for the guests.<sup>1</sup>

When details of the wedding festivities are given in the "Nights", they represent Egyptian wedding ceremonies in particular. In the story of The Two Viziers, the bride attends the bath, and so does the bridegroom. In the procession from the bath to the wedding hall, each person carries a lighted candle. As the grand train proceeds, singing women stop for the people to give money which they throw into the tambourines.

When they enter the saloon of the festivity, all the notable guests stand in rows from the foot of the couch of the bride to the top of the hall. After the tire-women, the hair-dressers and maids have prepared the bride, they lead her with the singing girls to her couch beside the bridegroom. The tire-women then proceed to display the bride in seven different dresses.<sup>2</sup>

The wedding festivities of kings, princes and viziers make occasions of great splendour in the "Nights". For several days banquets and festivities are held, music and singing parties are performed. The whole city is decorated, and soldiers participate in a show of stately splendour. Gifts of gold, and silver money are cast among the crowd and banquets are held in public.<sup>3</sup>

The wealth and splendour of the 'Abbāsid and Egyptian rulers are fully displayed on the occasions of their weddings

1 Mishkāt, XIII, 670, Mutwaṭṭa', II, 79.

2 Nights, I, 77f. In countries other than Egypt and Syria, the festivities of the women are held in a separate hall, Cf. Levy, 1957, 112.

3 Nights, I, 76, 231, II, 112, 314, III, 336.

Al-Ma'mūn's wedding to Būrān was celebrated with such enormous expenditure of money that it has been recorded as one of the memorable extravagances of the age.<sup>1</sup>

The extravagance of the wedding of Qatr al-Nadā, the daughter of Khumārawayh of Egypt (884-895 A. D.) when she married al-Mu'taḍid, also became a subject of legendary accounts. Her wedding expenditure would seem to have emptied the treasury of her father.<sup>2</sup>

Medieval audience evidently took great pleasure in listening to the descriptions of feasts and banquets as Ibn Ṭiqṭaqa maintains.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the narrator takes the opportunity of describing not only the joyful occasions of weddings but also of births and circumcisions, to show the pomp and the magnificence of their rulers and the people of high rank.

Similarly, historians of Mamlūk Egypt have described the festivities that took place on the occasions when the Mamlūk rulers celebrated their weddings, pilgrimages and the circumcision of their sons in almost the same tone as the narrators.<sup>4</sup>

#### The Laws of Divorce and other Customs

The situation of women was greatly influenced by the fact that husbands had the privilege of divorcing their wives when they wished. However, a ḥadīth declares that divorce is a lawful act most disliked by God.<sup>5</sup>

1 Tabari, III, 1081-4.

2 Tabari, III, 2145f. Tanūkhī, Nishwār, I, 262.

3 Fakhri, 51.

4 Ibn Iyās, II, 208, 244f, 263, III, 265.

5 Abu Dawūd, I, 340, <sup>Maḥki</sup> II, 254.



There are frequent references in the stories to the state of suspension ensuing from the pronouncement of the formula of divorce subject to certain conditions, and when these conditions are not observed or fulfilled, divorce must consequently take place.

The utterance of the oath of divorce on certain conditions in a moment of foolishness, could make many wives unlawful to their husbands. Divorce affects women more than men because the children, after a certain age, must belong to their father. Furthermore, it was much more difficult for a divorced woman to marry again than it was for a man.

A hasty divorce may take place in the market during business transactions, when heated arguments occur and at drinking parties. The people of Iraq were once criticised for their frequent divorces which were attributed to their indulgence in drinking.<sup>1</sup>

That divorce often took place because of drunkenness, is substantiated by the following instance. A man at a party held at the court of al-Mu'taṣim divorced his wife while he was jesting with another man, and when the caliph reproached him for needlessly uttering the oath of divorce, he replied: "Oh Commander of the Faithful, each one of us has somehow divorced his wife for no justifiable reason. Have you not heard the poet's verses: Umayya is gone, for she has just been divorced, and I am free of my binding ties.?"<sup>2</sup>

A ḥadīth asserts that three things are taken seriously, whether they are uttered in earnest or in jest, namely, marriage, divorce and rajā.<sup>3</sup>

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1 'Iqd, III, 333.

2 Jāhīz, Maḥāsin, 219, 242.

3 Mishkāt, XIII, 697. raj'a is taking back a wife after a divorce which is not final.

An example of the harmful effect of pronouncing the oath of divorce in a state of rage is shown in the following incident from the "Nights". Nuraddin comes home drunk for the first time in his life and his father chastises him. Before he knew what he was doing, Nuraddin hit his father, and the latter swore that his wife (Nuraddin's mother) would be divorced if he did not order the cutting off of the son's right hand the next morning.

To avert the consequences of her husband's solemn oath, which would have affected either herself as a wife or her son's hand, she smuggled Nuraddin out of the house in the middle of the night.<sup>1</sup>

In the "Nights" the oath of divorce is exercised upon individuals in cases of exortation of promises from people, and in forcing them to do things they would not normally do.

'Ali Nuraddin was bullied into drinking wine which he detested because a man, holding the cup, pronounced the oath of divorce upon his wife if 'Ali Nuraddin did not drink it. In the same way he was forced to attend the party given by the Franksih consul, though his concubine Maryam had warned him emphatically to avoid him.<sup>2</sup>

Although actual divorce might not take place in all the cases when the formula of divorce is pronounced, a husband certainly was in a state of anxiety and suspense, not to mention the dreadful fate waiting for the innocent wife. A jurist must be consulted in order to establish or revoke the

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1 Nights, IV, 104.

2 Ibid., IV, 98, 117.

divorce,<sup>1</sup> since even when a husband has retracted, witness-ess must be brought to testify that the husband has divorced his wife and then retracted.<sup>2</sup>

After the third pronouncement of the formula of divorce, raj'a (retraction) is not allowed, and in this case the Quran decreed al-tahlil<sup>3</sup> (i. e. the marriage of a divorced woman, to another man and her divorce from him before being able to return to her former husband). This law was originally decreed to make divorce too difficult for the husband to trifle with.

However, the views of theologians concerning the validity of the practice vary. It is reported that the Prophet cursed the practice, and that 'Umar I believed that both the Muḥallil and the man for whom a woman was made lawful should be stoned.<sup>4</sup>

It might happen that a muḥallil would attempt to retain his new wife. This theme is used by the narrator in the marriage of the muḥallil Abu al-Shāmāt to Zubayda the Lute-player. To avoid any complication, Zubayda's father binds the muḥallil by a contract of 10,000 dinars by the way of a dowry, in case he refuses to divorce her. When he refused to divorce Zubayda, the qādi ordered him to pay the money, and since he was penniless he was helped by al-Rashīd to pay off the debt.

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1 Abu Dawūd, I, 341. Amīr 'Alī, Ibid., 40.

2 Abu Dawūd, Op. cit.

3 Quran, 2<sup>230</sup>. Mālik, Muwatta', II, 75f.

4 Mishkāt, XIII, 699, Shaltūt, Fatawi, 301.

The narrator shows his disapproval of the practice in the following words said by Abu al-Shāmāt when he was asked to divorce Zubayda: "What law on earth should make a man marry a woman in the evening and divorce her the next morning?"

After divorce a woman must go through a specified waiting period before remarrying another man. This period is called 'idda whereas istibrā' is the time appointed for a concubine.<sup>1</sup>

Whereas the law of 'idda is closely observed in the "Nights", and a man who defies it is described as "an infidel who has neither creed nor religious conduct,"<sup>2</sup> the istibrā' is not always followed. For example, in the story of Al-Rashīd and Qādi Abu Yūsuf, the caliph, wishing to ignore the istibrā' period, consults the Qādi Abu Yūsuf who marries the girl to a slave and then asks the slave to divorce her immediately in order to make her lawful to the caliph.<sup>3</sup>

The original story as told by al-Sha'rānī and Ibn Khallikān, states that Abu Yūsuf asked al-Rashīd to declare her free and marry her, since as a free woman she was no longer bound by the istibrā' obligation, and in such a case Abu Ḥanīfa does not take the istibrā' into consideration.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Quran, 2<sup>235</sup>, Muwatta', II, 95-100, Abu Dāwūd, Sunan, I, 341.

2 Nights, IV, 353.

3 Ibid., II, 229f.

4 Sha'rānī, II, 107 (margin). Ibn Khallikān, IV, 280f, 275, tr.

This leads us to discuss a branch of jurisprudence which developed into a complete science called al-Ḥiyal al-Shar'īyya. This science includes subtle questions answered in a way which could get one out of difficulties. "These collections of quibbles, subterfuges and evasions that the jurisconsult recommends to his clients, have introduced a whole tradition of hypocritical laxity into the Sunni law." as Lammens puts it. "By a suitable application of rules of supple hermeneutics", Lammens continues, "certain imperatives in the Quran can be transformed into simple optatives, i. e. strict duties into works of supererogation."<sup>1</sup>

However, this kind of science gave jurisprudence a greater degree of elasticity to meet the growing demands of a secular community, but as far as women were concerned many of the subtle solutions in fact helped husbands to break their oaths and promises to their wives.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to this science of casuistry the story mentioned above is a case in point, and the narrator attempts here to assemble a number of these subtle questions to which the Qāḍī gives his accommodating answers in order to solve the problems.

Al-Rashīd and his vizier Ja'far pronounced the dreaded triple formula of final divorce upon their wives while they were arguing about a slave-girl whom al-Rashīd wanted to take or purchase from Ja'far. Abu Yūsuf was sent for and asked to abrogate the grave pronouncements. The Qāḍī said:

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1 Lammens, Islam (London, 1929), 91.

2 Shaybānī, Kitāb al-Makhārij Wa'l-Ḥiyal (Leipzig, 1930) 45-55.

"Let Ja'far give you half of her (the slave-girl) and sell you the other half and he will then have neither given her nor sold her to you." This done, the divorce pronouncement was revoked.

The second problem was how to overlook the period of istibrā' which has been discussed above. The third problem arose when her new husband, a slave, refused to give her the required divorce though he was offered 1000 dinars to do so. This difficulty was, however, overcome by the Qāḍi asking the caliph to offer the male slave to the slave-girl. The marriage was thereupon dissolved since it was unlawful for a woman to marry a slave who was in her possession.<sup>1</sup>

In this manner the narrator deals with several legal problems, and solves them by the aid of al-ḥiyal al-shar'iyya.

From this we move on to discuss other customs which can be considered as points by which the situation of women can be assessed.

The theme of women's adultery is of considerable importance in the "Nights". It is the basis of the framework story of Shahryār and his brother Shāhzamān. The adultery of their two wives made King Shahrayār distrust womenkind and kill every woman he married. This distrust was the current view among men in all preceding periods of history.

As a consequence, the social position of women at various ages was not so much dependent upon laws and legal rights as upon what customs and ideals occupied men's minds.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Nights, op.cit.

2 J. L. Davies, A Short History of Women (New York, 1927), 7.

Here again, there seems to be a gap between custom and law. To illustrate this point, the Islamic hadd (punishment of adultery) should be compared to laws of punishment which developed by custom during the Islamic periods.

The punishment for adultery as we know, is stoning for the married men and women and a hundred lashes for the unmarried. The punishment of slaves, male or female, is half of that decreed for free men and women.<sup>1</sup> If a slave-girl is freed and gets married and then commits adultery, she will still receive the lighter punishment decreed for bondwomen.<sup>2</sup>

However, it required four witnesses to establish a case of adultery, and since it was difficult to prove it, punishment by stoning was rarely put into practice unless the adulterous couple themselves confessed their sin, as it happened in the time of the Prophet.<sup>3</sup>

Accordingly, when the narrator relates a story about the wisdom of Daniel, he refers to stoning as an ancient practice,<sup>4</sup> not only because it was connected with the Israelite ancient punishment of adultery, but because the narrator himself did not seem to be acquainted with it as an Islamic practice. Since the proof of adultery was made hard by the Quranic law, custom developed in a different line and necessitated the death of an adulterous woman by means other than stoning, such as the sword, drowning and burning.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Bukhāri, VI, 85, Kharāj, 98. Quran, 24<sup>2</sup>, 4<sup>25</sup>.

2 Kharāj, 107, Shafi'q, al-Riq..., 68.

3 Bukhāri, VII, 295. Quran, 41<sup>5</sup>

4 Nights, II, 318.

5 Jāhiz, Tāj, 66, Jawzi, Muntazam, X, 58. In Europe, adulterous wives, under mediæval custom, were sentenced to various kinds of death by their husbands who had the power of life and death over their wives. (See Malcolm, Manners & Customs of London, (London, 1811), 60.

The punishment of adulterous women in the "Nights" differs from one story to the other. In stories where magic plays an important part, the guilty wives are metamorphosed to beasts, such as mules or deers.<sup>1</sup> According to custom, punishment by killing is accomplished in various ways. When the 'Ifrīt suspected his captive woman of incontinence, he cuts her into pieces with his sword and says: "It is allowed us by our law, if a wife be guilty of incontinence, to put her to death."<sup>2</sup>

If there is no doubt about a woman's adultery, she is killed immediately and her punishment is publicly approved. Thus when the deceived husband in the story of Qamar and His Mistress strangled his unfaithful wife,<sup>3</sup> his host, the merchant entered the room and told him that if he had not killed his evil wife he would have struck him with his sword, but now, as a reward, he would marry him to his own daughter.

The triumph and approval with which the punishment is described is almost startling, were it not that the character of Qamar's mistress shows deliberate immoral and evil conduct all through her married life. If, however, the husband kills his wife on the grounds of mere suspicion, he keeps his deed secret and disposes of the corpse in the river.

In the story of The Three Apples,<sup>4</sup> it was pure chance that

1 Nights, I, 10-12.

2 Ibid., I, 47.

3 Ibid., IV, 302.

4 Ibid., I, 66. For the origin of the story see Jawzi, Adhkiyā', 34f.



al-Rashīd happened to look into a chest, brought out of the river by a fisherman, and saw the pieces of the body of a murdered woman and thus opened an investigation into the murder. Though the incident is narrated with much sympathy for the innocent murdered woman, neither the sad husband, who deeply regretted murdering his wife, nor the negro slave who caused the murder by his silly lie were punished by law.

Death as a punishment for adultery among the women and men of the ḥarīm seems to have been fairly common. Al-Jāḥiẓ refers to it in his book Al-Tāj. Many a gracious lady dear to her people, he states, was eaten by whales. Many skulls which were at one time perfumed with musk were thrown out into the wilderness, while the headless corpses were buried in the earth, all because of what happened between the ḥarīms and youths, servants and slaves. As for the men concerned, they were punished by the sword or poisoning and their bodies were thrown to beasts or crushed by elephants.<sup>1</sup>

As regards ordinary folk with no large ḥarīms, vague references made by al-Jawzi (6th/12th c. ) show that the same kinds of punishment were employed. "A Muslim woman", reports Ibn al-Jawzi, "was publicly burned to death because she was accused of forming a relationship with a famous 'ayyār."<sup>2</sup> "A man called al-Ḥammāmi, killed his wife and ran away because he suspected her in some matter (sic)." "A brother slaughtered his sister and ran away as if he had been told something of no good about her."<sup>2</sup>

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1 Tāj, *op. cit.*, Ibn Iyās, II, 156. For similar punishments in the Ottoman's time, see Penzer, The Ḥarīm, 185.

2 Muntazam, X, 58, 34, 266.

These vague statements show that caution in the punishment of adultery was observed to avoid scandal and consequent investigation.

However, when the people involved were men and women slaves, masters might openly punish them by death, though for adultery the religious hadd for slaves did not in theory exceed 50 lashes.<sup>1</sup>

The laws of adultery were therefore more the product of custom and usage rather than legislation.

Islam forbids marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslims, and no incident of this kind occurs in the "Nights".

It may be worthy to note in this connection that Abu al-Fidā' reports that the Sultan of Egypt conquered Malta in the year 715/1315 because he heard that the Muslims there mixed with the Christians to the extent that they gave their Muslim women in marriage to Christians.<sup>2</sup>

The general aversion to this kind of marriage is shown in the story of The First Lady of Baghdad when compared with its imitation and counterpart the story of 'Abdallah b. Fādīl and His Brothers.<sup>3</sup> Both the Lady and 'Abdallah find in the petrified cities of idolaters their life-time partners.

However, on the way back to Iraq, the Lady lost her fiancē who was drowned, but by a slight alteration in the ending of 'Abdallah's story we find that his fiancée who was drowned in the same way had after all turned up safe and

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1 Jawziyya, 47.

2 Al-Mukhtaṣar, IV, 77. The other reason given for the invasion is that the people gave the Tartars information about the movements of the Muslim army.

3 Nights, II, 59-61, IV, 328f.

sound at Baṣra having happened to drop on to the back of a whale and reaching the land safely. 'Abdallah then finds her and marries her.<sup>1</sup>

Another kind of relationship which is condemned from the moral and religious points of view is incestuous relationship with the muḥramāt or the forbidden members of the family.<sup>2</sup> The brother and sister who tried to escape into an underground cellar, well stocked with provisions, were immediately burned and turned to charcoal.<sup>3</sup>

The treatment of this theme, however, has no point of reference to any known event in the Islamic background. In the story of Qamar al-Zamān the incident of the two co-wives who attempt to seduce their step-sons might probably have a Zoroastrian background since the story is supposed to be Persian in origin.<sup>4</sup>

It is reported that among Magian sects there were some who permitted and even encouraged this kind of marriage.<sup>5</sup> The Muslim jurists seem to have given solutions to problems which arose from such marriages when Persians who practiced it were converted to Islam, as for example, in the problem of distributing inheritance among relatives.<sup>6</sup>

1 Op. cit.

2 Quran, 4<sup>22</sup>, 33<sup>4</sup>. Abu Dāwūd, I, 322.

3 Nights, I, 40.

4 Ibid., II, 134.

5 Shahrīstānī, I, 187, 193. Bīrūnī, 192f, Levy, 1957, 104, n.7.

6 Shāfi'ī, Umm, IV, 12.

Stories of great affection developing between sisters and brothers, with no incest being involved, were popular in the chronicles of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic periods, as in the stories of al-Khansā' and her brother, Ṣakhr,<sup>1</sup> and the story of Khawla bt. al-Azwar, the sister of Ḍarrār. Khawla, disguised as a soldier, fought bravely against the Byzantines in her attempt to save her captured brother.<sup>2</sup>

This kind of deep affection is shown in the "Nights" in the love between Princess Nuzhat al-Zamān and her brother. Their parting and eventual reunion however, is treated as if it were the separation of two unfortunate lovers.<sup>3</sup>

It is however difficult to explain why the narrator makes Nuzhat al-Zamān, after her capture by a Bedouin, marry the King of Damascus without knowing that he was her half brother. After she gives birth to a daughter, the brother discovers the truth and immediately marries her to his janitor who adopts the daughter and thus a scandal is averted. It is possible to infer that the narrator aims, here, to emphasise the misfortunes of the royal family of King 'Umar al-Nu'man, and by this incident he could achieve a more dramatic effect on the audience.

On the other hand, there could be a subtle irony in reference to marriage with captured or purchased slave-girls

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1 Aghāni, I, 70.

2 Sakākinī, Ummahāt al-Mu'minīn wa Akhawāt al-Shuhadā' (Cairo ed. n.d.) 162-64. Bustāni, Nisā'..., 112.

3 Nights, I, 214, 235ff.

of unknown parentage or origin, who may in some way be related to the purchaser. The likelihood of such marriages is referred to by Ibn al-Jawzi, who relates that a man emancipated his slave-girl and his man-slave and married them to each other. Twenty years later, and after they had four children, they found out that they were brother and sister. They were in great distress and cried and wept in front of the Qādi.

To ease their distress, the Qādi told them not to worry, for what has been done unaware was not regarded as sin. They were separated and the woman went through her 'idda period.<sup>1</sup>

To conclude, the survey given above has shown that the interpretation and application of Islamic laws and institutions, and the introduction of new customs which ruled and surrounded women's life brought about marked social changes and alienated society from the uncomplicated precepts of early Islam. These institutions and customs were, at the same time, the cause and effect of the degeneration of women's status in later ages of Islam.

### Women and Education

No woman in the "Nights" seems to be unable to read the messages of her suitor and reply to them.<sup>2</sup> There is special regard for women who are skilled in the arts of singing and poetry, science, religious knowledge and history. Sheherazade is credited with copious reading. She has read various books

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1 Muntazam, X, 271.

2 Nights, II, 66f, 299, 300, III, 176.

of history and the lives of preceding kings, and collected together a thousand books of histories and works of the poets.

When a slave-girl is shown in the market, she is not only praised for her skill in handicraft and musical ability, but she is also credited with knowledge of poetry, calligraphy, grammar, lexicography, and canon law.<sup>1</sup>

There are two of these learned girls who have been submitted to tests, in public, to prove their learning in many departments of knowledge; Princess Nuzhat al-Zaman represents the learned free-born woman of the nobility who is captured and sold as a slave-girl, and Tawaddud represents the distinguished class of slave-girls, highly trained in many branches of learning. When al-Rashid asks Tawaddud in what branches of knowledge she excels, she claims that she is well versed in syntax, poetry, jurisprudence, exegesis, lexicography, theory of music, fundamental laws of religion, arithmetic, division, geodesy, fables of the ancient, the Holy Quran and Tradition, philosophy, logic and rhetoric. She is however especially fond of playing the lute ('ud) and dancing.<sup>2</sup>

Al-Rashid is amazed at her erudition and rhetoric and demands that she shall prove her claims by a public test and that she shall be examined by the readers of the Quran, mathematicians, physicians, astronomers and the learned men of the age, and above all by the renowned philosopher, al-Nazzam.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Nights, I, 139, 223, II, 246.

2 Ibid., II, 339, Farmer, 1945, 21f.

3 Ibid., II, 340.

In every department of knowledge she answers all the questions correctly, and in her turn puts one question to the examiner which he is unable to answer and has to give her his robe as a token of his failure.<sup>1</sup>

How far is the picture of a learned woman submitting to an examination true? Historically, Tawaddud might be dated 9th century A. D. because of the mention of the philosopher al-Nazzām (d. 231/845).<sup>2</sup> Al-Khawānsārī (12th and 13th centuries A. D.) wrote a book in which he mentioned that al-Nazzām was invited by al-Rashīd to examine a slave-girl of the Imām Ja'far household, called al-Ḥussayniyya, who also had entered into discussions and disputations with the Imām al-Shāfi'i and the Qādi Abu Yūsuf and triumphed over them.<sup>3</sup>

The present form of the story is, however, post-'Abbāsīd; first because the narrator at the close of the story regretfully states that, after the 'Abbāsīd caliphs, one does not encounter such generosity any more.<sup>4</sup> Secondly, though the story has retained its Baghdadi characteristics, the Egyptian narrator puts more emphasis on the Shāfi'i doctrine. But the fact is that this doctrine was in a difficult position in Iraq in the 9th and 10th centuries A. D.; and in the time of al-Rashīd the Ḥanafī doctrine was the official school adopted by the caliphate and the people. Al-Shāfi'i established his school

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1 Ibid., III, 12f.

2 Ibn Khallikān, I, 186, note 4.

3 Qalamāwi, 289, quoted from al-Khawānsārī, Rawdat al-Jannāt, which I was unable to consult.

4 Nights, III, 14.

in Iraq in 810 i. e. after the death of al-Rashīd, but he had lived in Egypt since the year 804 A. D. , so it must have been reshaped in Egypt.<sup>1</sup>

It seems that the aim of the introduction to the story is to show the remarkable knowledge and science attained by Muslims in the "Golden Age" of their civilization, yet the standard of knowledge thereby given is a little more than the ordinary knowledge of the average citizen, especially the riddle type of questions which have a great appeal for the uneducated classes. This is also indicated by the fact that the girl was not actually examined in all the branches of sciences which she claimed to know. Religious knowledge, astronomy and popular medicine were the main subjects of her examination.

Although physical beauty and singing were the keys to the admiration of slave-girls, there were times when learning and culture played an important part in choosing a slave-girl. Al-Rashīd is reported to have owned 2000 slave-girls who were all examined for their learning.<sup>2</sup> Al-Jāhīz particularly mentions the examination of two slave-girls by al-Aṣma'i at the request of al-Rashīd.<sup>3</sup>

The picture of a learned slave-girl, however exaggerated it may seem, has its counterpart in the famous Muslim women of the 3rd/9th and 4th/10th centuries. Besides the trained slave-

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1 EI. III, 252, art. Shāfi'i.

2 Jumard, Hārūn, I, 264. Khaṭīb, X, 411-13.

3 Mahāsin, XV-XVI.



girls who had an overwhelming impact on the public life of 'Abbāsid society, free women became teachers, lecturers, traditionists, poetesses and even medical scholars.<sup>1</sup>

Islam advocated knowledge for both sexes, and there was no rule or custom which could bar women from attaining knowledge or practising it in public. The difficulty lay in the means by which to obtain higher education. The slave owners trained and educated their slave-girls in order to gain high prices for them.<sup>2</sup> Free women, on the other hand, obtained their education through the male members of their own families or by private tutors at home.<sup>3</sup> As a result, educated women seem, more often than not, the daughters or sisters of eminent Muslim scholars. Macdonald states that "Islam has had many families of scholars with the golden line of learning running on from one generation to another. So when it came to a single daughter, she would heir the tradition."<sup>4</sup>

"Biographical notes on 1543 traditionists, who flourished in the early times of Islam are included in Al-Isābah fi Tamyīz al-Ṣaḥabah by Ibn Ḥajar. Al-Nawawi in his work Tahdhīb al-Asmā', al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdadi in Tārīkh Baghdad and Al-Sakhāwi in al-Daww' al-Lāmi'; all devote much space to women who were famous for their learning and scholarship."<sup>5</sup>

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1 Shalabi, A History of Muslim Education (Beirut, 1954). 188-201.

2 Zaydān, V, 30, Hague, 64f.

3 Shalabi, Ibid., 191.

4 Macdonald, Aspects of Islam (New York, 1911), 294.

5 Shalabi, Ibid., 193.

It is not our intention, in this section, to discuss the biographies and achievements of the highly educated women of the 'Abbāsīd age, but the names of a few of them should be mentioned in order to show how the pictures of a preacher, a saint, a public woman lecturer, and a learned slave-girl entered the "Nights".<sup>1</sup>

Shaikha Shuhda (6th/12th c) designated Fakhr al-Niṣā', lectured publicly at a Baghdad Mosque in literature, rhetoric and poetry.<sup>2</sup> Karīma bt. Aḥmad al-Marwazi interpreted and explained the Ṣaḥīḥ of al-Bukhārī to the celebrated scholar al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī in a few days.<sup>3</sup> Zaynab bt. al-Sha'ri studied under the eminent theologians of the time and obtained her certificates.<sup>4</sup> She granted Ibn Khallikān, the encyclopaedic biographer, a certificate when he was two years old.<sup>5</sup> The daughter of Mālīk b. Anas was able to correct the errors of those who recited and transmitted her father's Muwatta'.<sup>6</sup> Among early Arabs Zaynab was an eminent physician.<sup>7</sup>

Ibn Al-Jawzi mentions several names of women ascetics in the (5th/12th) and (6th/13th) centuries.<sup>8</sup> Among the court

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1 Nights, II, 333, III, 17, I, 223, II, 337.

2 Ibn Khallikān, I, 625.

3 Jawzi, Muntaẓam, VIII, 265, Yāqūt, Irshād, I, 247.

4 Ibn Khallikān, I, 551.

5 Shalabi, op. cit.

6 ERE., V, 205.

7 Uṣaybi'a, I, 123.

8 Muntaẓam, VI, 361, VIII, 63, 128, 350, X, 7f.

ladies, Queen Zubayda, Princess 'Ulayya and Princess Khaṣṣija, the daughter of al-Ma'mūn, were well known for their literary abilities; the latter two were also melodists.<sup>1</sup>

Among famous slave-girls 'Inān competed with contemporary poets in versification.<sup>2</sup> 'Arīb, the composer of 1000 songs was admired by Prince Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi, the singer Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣili and a series of caliphs as al-Amīn, al-Ma'mūn, al-Mu'taṣim and al-Wāthiq.<sup>3</sup> Badhl composed 30,000 songs. Shāriya, the slave and wife of Prince Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdi, was a singer who deviated from the classical school of singing, and people were divided into two camps, the admirers of the classicist singer 'Arīb, and the admirers of the new school represented by Shāriya.<sup>4</sup>;

Educated women and slave-girls in the "Nights" appear mainly in the Baghdadi stories. To cite one example of the appreciation of women artists, in the story Anīs al-Jalīs, al-Rashīd is enraged at finding a couple using his private garden as a place for drinking and singing. He intends to punish them, yet all his rage disappears when he hears the slave-girl singing to her master. He so admires her verses and voice that he goes as far as disguising himself as a fisherman to enter the hall where they held their carousel. When he hears their sad story, he offers to relieve them from their trouble without disclosing his identity.<sup>5</sup>

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1 Aghāni, XIV, 114, IX, 89.

2 Sā'i, 84.

3 Aghāni, XVIII, 175-91. Nuwayri, V, 92-108.

4 Nuwayri, V, 84f.

5 Nights, I, 155, II, 181.

One of the anecdotes indicates that girls have attended kuttābs (elementary schools) with boys during childhood;<sup>1</sup> however, the girl involved here is a slave-girl. Shalabi in the History of Muslim Education, argues and refutes the views which point to the existence of mixed kuttābs, and asserts that girls had their education privately.<sup>2</sup> But his judgement that such views are erroneous is not valid, since the quotations which he argues do not generalise by stating that all girls received their education in the kuttābs, nor that all of them received it privately. It is true that it was customary for girls to have tutors at home or to be taught by the members of their own family, but evidence also indicates the existence of co-education, which does not however go beyond the kuttāb level.<sup>3</sup>

It is, however, not quite clear what kind of girls attended this sort of school. It is fairly certain that slave-girls did attend these schools as is reported by al-Tanūkhi (10th century) and Ibn Sarrāj (11th century). Al-Tanūkhi relates that a boy and a slave-girl actually went to school together since the boy says, "She was taught what I was taught and we used to leave school together every day."<sup>4</sup> Then the girl stopped going to school and started her training in singing at home. Ibn Sarrāj's anecdote shows that a man saw a slave-

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1 Nights, II, 384, Cal. ed.

2 Shalabi, 191.

3 Cf. Macdonald, 1911, 293f. Farmer, 1929, 103.

4 Faraj, II, 158.

girl in the kuttāb and fell in love with her.<sup>1</sup>

There is an indication that even in later periods of medieval Islam, there were girls' kuttābs in existence, both for free women and slave-girls. In the book of Al-Hisba (written 8th/15th century) by Ibn Bassām, instructions are given to the muhtasib to visit girls' kuttābs and inspect what poetical pieces were being taught to girls by their female teachers. Ibn Bassām adds that the muhtasib had to see that the teacher "must not instruct any woman or female slave in the art of writing for thereby they would accrue to them only an increase of depravity."<sup>2</sup>

This view, however, cannot be applicable to the early Baghdadi periods, when the standard of women's education was higher, and when learning and literature were encouraged and more widely spread. Ibn Iyās refers to a woman preacher of notable rank and status who preached in a mashyakha in the year 891/1486 and remarks that that was a rare occurrence, whereas this was not the case in earlier ages of Islam.

Despite the maxims censoring the education of women, and the prohibitive tradition which states "Do not let them (women) frequent the roofs, do not teach them the art of writing, teach them spinning and the Surat al-Nūr."<sup>3</sup> the education of a considerable number of women at various Abbāsīd ages attained a high standard.

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<sup>1</sup> Masāri', 135.

<sup>2</sup> Ibn Bassām, al-Hisba, al-Mashriq, 1907, X, 1085. Shayzari, Ibid., 104.

<sup>3</sup> Qutayba, IV, 78, ERE, V, 205.

However, as a result of men's dominance in society, the place assigned to women, as a rule, was the house where they had to spin, weave, embroider and raise children; and while it was deemed necessary to instruct girls in moral and religious subjects there was no desire to give them intellectual training.<sup>1</sup>

It is most likely that when the "Nights" took its final shape in the Mamlūk period, women's education did not include teaching them how to write, and education was confined to reading the Quran and memorising poetry. This is evident from the books about Ḥisba, written in the 6th/13th and 8th/15th centuries, in which women are prohibited from being taught the art of writing. Thus, whenever the narrator introduces one of the educated slave-girls, he does not forget to mention, among other things, that she was instructed especially in the art of writing (Al-Khaṭṭ).

In the story of The Wiles of Women, the merchant's wife, while walking in her garden, sees an arrow darting in with a message attached to it. The narrator remarks that since the lady was acquainted with the art of handwriting, she read the message and wrote a reply to the Prince who shot the arrow.<sup>2</sup>

To sum up, women of high rank and princesses received private education which enabled them to write, read literary books and even compose poems. Women of the middle-class received elementary education such as reading, writing,

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1 Op. cit.

2 Nights, III, 176.

arithmetic<sup>1</sup> and knowledge of the household and domestic arts to fit them to become wives.

The cultured middle class tried to give the female members of their families as high an education as they could receive. As for the lower classes, it seems that both men and women were illiterate and unable to read, write and do arithmetic.<sup>2</sup>

### Old Women

Old women have a specially significant role in almost every story in the "Nights". Whenever the plot is complicated, when men and women are manoeuvring to meet, or lovers trying to overcome their painful separations, old women play the parts of confidantes, intermediaries, and temptresses. Their cunning and shrewdness are considered notorious, both when they act as advisers and temptresses. This is not especially an Arab theme since bad old women appear also in the Indian narrative literature;<sup>3</sup> and in medieval Europe, old woman nurses or chaperones acted as intermediaries as well.<sup>4</sup>

The old women in the "Nights" are anonymous people, depicted as the personification of contrivance and perfidy.

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1 Nights, IV, 273.

2 Ibid., II, 326f. I, 316, IV, 153.

3 Katha Sarit Sagara, I, 87-91.

4 As in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

Their general characteristics are summed up in the following verses from the story of The Porter.<sup>1</sup>

An ill-omened old woman who, in silence  
 teaches Satan deceit,  
 By her diplomacy she can lead a thousand mules  
 By cob-web nets, if they shy.

Indeed, such qualities are attributed to women in general, as the story of The Wiles of Woman attempts to show, but young women use their craft and deceit to gain the men they love, or to avoid the punishment of their deceived husbands, whereas old women tempt young men and women in order to gain money. They lead both men and women to their traps, but men are usually easier victims since, unlike women, they are not confined to the ḥarim, or surrounded by guards, family restrictions and conventions.<sup>2</sup>

To gain a woman's trust, an old woman usually acts the part of a pious woman, carrying her rosary and repeatedly offering prayers and incantations. She often uses the pretext of performing ablution or prayers in order to enter people's homes. After striking up a friendship with the woman in question, she draws her sympathy either by persuasion or deceit until the victim yields to her requests. The second lady of Baghdad was brought out of her house when the old woman wept and kissed the lady's feet asking her to attend the wedding of her orphan daughter.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Ibid., I, 61.

2 Ibid., I, 132, 316.

3 Ibid., I, 61.



The cunning woman, hired by al-Ḥajjāj, lures the slave-girl Ni'ma out of her house by showing great piety and abstention from worldly pursuits, and thus succeeds in getting permission for her to visit a saint's tomb. Then she smuggles her from Kūfa to Damascus to present her, on behalf of al-Ḥajjāj, to the Umayyad Caliph 'Abd al-Malik.<sup>1</sup>

Why do old women have such an important place in the stories of the "Nights"? Since love is the universal theme in the collection, and the seclusion of women is a prevalent feature of the Muslim society, the role of confidante, acted by old women, is a necessary scheme in most of the stories. In addition to this, old women had greater liberty of movement, they could hold conversation with men in public without drawing attention, whereas it was not possible for a man to speak to a young woman. It is interesting to note that one of the jobs of the muhtasib was to watch men who loitered in corners and deserted places, near markets, embankments and public baths, waiting for young women, and to chastise both the man and the woman if he sees them conversing.

Annals and historical works of various periods of Islamic history show that old women have played special parts in both the political sphere and the private sections of the ḥarīm. Ibn al-Jawziyya reports that al-Jāhiz had said that if a man was <sup>at</sup> inflicted with the love of a woman who was either difficult to get because of her virtue, or superior to him in status, the best way to overcome these barriers was to send her a woman who possessed seven qualities: ability to keep secrets, deceit, intrigue, alertness and intelligence. She must have money and be known

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1 Ibid., II, 155.

for her conscientiousness so that no one might doubt her intentions. Her profession must be connected with midwifery, selling perfumes, or preparing trousseaux. Her job is to inform the girl of the man's love, and make clear to her that he is not her equal yet he wants to marry her, and to persuade her to accept him if he proposes. In this way, says al-Jāhīz, he can obtain her by lawful means.<sup>1</sup>

Ibn al-Jawziyya also records a poem which gives advice to men to employ an old woman, if the women they love prove to be difficult. The old woman, he says, must carry a rosary and have the appearance of a pious worshipper. Another poet says that an old woman who invites respect by her ascetic look and rosary can make a wolf turn to a lamb, can smooth the hardest tracks and open locked doors.<sup>2</sup>

It is reported that al-Ma'mūn employed 1700 old women to inform him about conditions among his people, about mischief makers, those who liked or disliked the caliph and those who corrupted other men's ḥarīms. As a result of this elaborate information system, the Amīr of Baghdad was fully informed about the positions and the families of all the men who were attached to the court.<sup>3</sup>

Sometime later, in the time of the Fāṭimids, al-Ḥākim of Egypt was regularly informed about the details of the lives of his amīrs and slaves. He used to gather his information by employing old women, who had free access to these houses, but when he was asked

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1 Nisā<sup>2</sup>, 113f.

2 Ibid., 118.

3 Tāj, 170, and note 2.

how he came to know such a great deal of secrets, he claimed that he possessed the knowledge of the unknown.<sup>1</sup>

Incidents which show that old women used their powers of persuasion and deceit to gain the trust of other women are also reported. Al-Mas'ūdi relates how an old woman lured a young woman to accompany her to see a jewel box, when she had actually prepared a trap for her.<sup>2</sup> Ibn al-Athīr reports how an old woman won the trust of a wealthy merchant's wife in North Africa and deprived her of her pearl necklace. The necklace was not restored until the husband complained to the governor, who eventually sacked the vizier who employed the old woman to obtain the necklace.<sup>3</sup>

Beside the anonymous old women who are depicted as types rather than individuals, there are two characters of old women who play important roles in public rather than private life, namely Shawāhi, the Byzantine spy, and Dalīla the crafty, who belongs to the sharpers' guild. Shawāhi, disguised as a saint, directed the battles between the Muslims and the Byzantines. Dalīla's exploits and tricks on people brought her a post and a salary. She was appointed as a caretaker of the newly-built municipal Khān, where she bred carrier-pigeons.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Ibn Iyās, I 56.

21 Murūj, VII 212.

3 Kāmil, VII 198, see also Maqrīzi, Sulūk, I, pt. 2, 521.

4 Nights, I, 265, III, 251.

### Fictitious Women in the "Nights"

The portraitures of extraordinary heroines in the "Nights" bear little or no relation to reality as such. Amazonian women, Jinn women, and ruling queens are characters mainly drawn from the narrator's imagination, folk-lore sources and the store of popular beliefs, or from certain remote impressions, as will be explained presently.

There are several reasons for the immediate acceptance of fictitious characters by the audience. With regard to Jinn, medieval Muslims, in general, believed in the existence of several species of Jinn. Widely spread Arab-legends relate encounters between men and Jinn in deserts and secluded places.<sup>1</sup> Although the Quran itself sanctions the world of Jinn and locates Babel as the origin of the Jinni power of magic, it rejects the history of the Jinn Kingdom, as confirmed by popular beliefs, and condemns the art of magic as an act of unbelief.<sup>2</sup>

The Quran also makes references to the relation between King Solomon and the Jinn. One of the most obvious features of this relation is the belief that Solomon, when enranged with the Jinn, imprisoned them in jars and threw them into the sea.<sup>3</sup>

Arab historians and authors refer to several species of Jinn which were claimed to be in existence, although some writers reject them as superstitions. The Kingdoms of Jinn, where these species lived, were to be found under the sea, in islands, in lonely places (khalawāt) and in baths.<sup>4</sup>

1 Ibshīhi, II, 120-25. Mas'ūdi, III, 314, 320. Hayawān, VI, 158-224.

2 Quran, 2<sup>102</sup>.

3 Lane, 1860, 25, 29, 80.

4 Mas'ūdi, op. cit.

The Jinn eat, drink, <sup>and</sup> beget offspring, sometimes in conjunction with men. It is believed there are two kinds of Jinn, Muslim and infidel.<sup>1</sup>

Of the world of Jinn and their relationships to man and magic, this study is mainly concerned with the supposed intermarriage between Ins (human beings) and Jinn as depicted in the "Nights".

Al-Jāhīz ridicules the claims of the interpreters who attempted to base the popular belief in intermarriage on such Quranic verses as "And share with them (the Jinn) in property and children", and he criticises these interpreters for their superstitions and wilful falsification of the truth.<sup>2</sup>

It would seem that the stories about unions between Ins and Jinn, which were constantly circulating among people, found their way into the "Nights". Thus Ḥasan of Baṣra marries a Muslim jinniya whose people live in remote and unfamiliar islands called Wāq Wāq, which are inhabited by Amazonian bird-maidens each of whom is dressed with a coat of mail and carries a sword. The islands were ruled by a Jinn queen, Ḥasan's sister-in-law, who was violent, hard-hearted as all the Amazonians of the islands.<sup>3</sup>

Ḥasan's seven Jinn sisters adopted him as their brother and lived at the top of a lonely mountain as high as the clouds.<sup>4</sup>

Badr Bāsīm's queen was a jinniyya, apparently a fire-worshipping infidel who, by her black magic, transformed her former lovers, including Prince Badr Bāsīm, into birds which she kept in her household.<sup>5</sup>

1 Lane, op. cit.

2 Jāhīz, Ḥayawān, I, 185-89, 299-302, VI, 162.

3 Nights, IV, 32-61. Cf. Mas'ūdi, Akhbār, 16. See above III,

4 Nights, III, 346, IV, 22.

5 Ibid., III, 296.

The portrayal of fictitious women in the "Nights" often reveals great imagination and a profound curiosity in penetrating beyond the border of the familiar. The desire to portray Amazons, beautiful Jiniyyas and reigning queens is, in part, due to the audience's wishful thinking. This kind of story about women, like the stories on limitless wealth, power and grandeur, enables the audience to enjoy love and beauty through characters created by the narrators.<sup>1</sup>

To cite one example, Ḥasan's wife is depicted as a bird-maiden who has such unusual beauty that when she goes to the baths all eyes are drawn to her. Queen Zubayda is told by a slave-girl that if al-Rashīd should see such beauty, he would be tempted to oppose the Shari'a, kill the husband and marry the wife because she is more beautiful than all the slave-girls he owns. Zubaydā, getting angry and curious, swears that if the slave-girl is proved to be wrong in her statement, she will strike off her head; she sends for Ḥasan's wife, and orders her to come to the palace. The Jinniyya was not only beautiful but could also fly in her feather dress.<sup>2</sup>

However, the fantasy weavers may not identify their waking dreams with reality, but merely be enjoying dreams "of fairy bread and honey dew".<sup>3</sup> Fiction of any age tries, to some extent, to express the conflict between the ideals of the age and the needs of the people. That is to say, that when the audience are aware of the existence of ideally pretty slave-girls, imported usually from foreign lands, laden with jewels and silk clothes,

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1 Cf. Lewis, An Experiment in Criticism (Cambridge, 1961), 53.

2 Nights, IV, 15f.

3 Lewis, Ibid., 51-6 .

they feel the need to depict similar types of heroines for themselves, even if it be at the expense of creditibility.

Although fictitious women are depicted in sharp contrast with women of the real world, they are presented with familiar details of everyday life.<sup>1</sup> The Jinn Amazons, for example, behave like any other ordinary women or mothers. They love deeply, they cry in distress for their children, they develop profound friendships with human beings, and believe, as human beings believe, that women are not created but for men. Ḥasan's wife is helpless without her feather dress and has no extraordinary powers. The queen of the Amazons, like other Muslim women, is veiled. Her father is married to more than one wife, and Ḥasan's wife is supposed to be her sister from a different mother.<sup>2</sup> The Amazon who brings Ḥasan and his wife together is described, like any other old woman, as an ugly old nurse who can perform magic acts.

Beside the motive of wish-fulfilment, elements of folk lore are evident in Ḥasan of Baṣra, The "forbidden chamber", which Ḥasan opens, leads him to see the "bathing fairy", who later becomes his wife, and both of these themes are folk lore themes.<sup>3</sup> The folk-lore taboo of fairy girls marrying mortals is expressed by the many difficulties which come into Ḥasan's way when restoring his jinn wife. The Amazon queen is not only angry because her sister got married, but because she regards her sister's marriage to a mortal as an act of treachery to her race.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Ibid., 58-9. "The medieval ages", states Lewis "favoured a brilliant . . . development of presentational realism . . . They dressed the stories in the manners of their own days."

2 Nights, IV, 8, 33, 42.

3 Thompson, The Types of Folk-Tales (Helsinki, 1936) VI, 221, 38.

4 Ibid., I, 502 (Copenhagen, 1955-58) Nights, IV, 51.

The other kind of fictitious women portrayed in the "Nights" is the Amazonian woman fighter . The Amazon bride is again a folk-lore theme.<sup>1</sup> Yet Amazon princesses behave like ordinary women and call their merchant master "My lord". Maryam the girdle-maker is an Amazonian who serves her master by embroidering each week a fabulous girdle to be sold in the market.<sup>2</sup>

To give the portraits of Amazonian princesses, a genuine touch and make them credible, such women are usually connected with foreign races, such as the Indian al-Danmā', or with Christian nations. Though they show bravery and skill in swordsmanship and duels, their real power lies in their faith, magic or beauty. Thus Ibrīza and al-Danmā' disarm men in duels by lifting their veils.<sup>3</sup>

It is interesting to note that not only does the "Nights" attribute valour, swordsmanship and knight-errantry to Frankish women, but an anecdote reported by al-Tanūkhi also shows that the Byzantines used to teach their daughters the art of fighting. Similarly, in the "Nights", Maryam is said to be instructed in these arts, with her brothers since childhood.<sup>4</sup>

Perhaps the connection, in the narrator's mind, of foreign women with power and authority is also due to the influence exercised in the court by women of foreign and especially Greek descent, such as Shaghab the mother of the Caliph al-Muqtadir,<sup>5</sup>

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1 Nights, III, 184, IV, 130, 143.

2 Ibid., IV, 113f.

3 Ibid., III, 184, I, 208, IV, 130.

4 Faraj, I, 143, Nights, IV, 2130.

5 Athir, VIII 47-9.



Sitt al-Mulk, the sister of the Fāṭimid Caliph al-Ḥākim<sup>1</sup> and Shāhān, the Caliph al-Mustansir's (13th c. A.D.) concubine.<sup>2</sup>

In actual life, ordinary Muslim women had no connection with fighting or wars. According to the narrator, women's special realm is intrigue or love. In the story of Jalī'ād, the conniving wife was the cause of the killing of the vizier and the king's councillors, and when the country was attacked by the enemy, the King, who was left without a vizier or councillors, went to his wife to ask for her advice, but when she heard of the attack she began to weep and tear her clothes, saying "What have women got to do with war, they have neither strength nor opinion. Power, mind and cunning in wars lie solely with men."<sup>3</sup>

Perhaps the background to the women fighters in the "Nights" can be connected with impressions and pictures drawn from early Islamic chronicles which have recorded the bravery of Arab women fighters of the early Islamic period.

During the Arab conquests, Muslim women fought side by side with their men.<sup>4</sup> Juwayriyya, the daughter of Abu Sufyān, fought with her father and husband in the Battle of Yarmūk.<sup>5</sup> Under al-Manṣūr, two royal princesses namely Umm 'Īsa and Lubāba who, clad in mail, accompanied the troops marching to the Byzantine territories.<sup>6</sup>

1 Taghribirdi, II 72-4 (Ed. Popper). Ibn Iyās, I, 57-

2 Ibn Sā'i, 120.

3 Nights, IV, 198.

4 Balādhuri, Futūḥ al-Buldān, (Lug. Bata, 1866), 118, 135, 343.

5 Ṭabari, I, 2100.

6 Ibid., III, 125. Athīr, V, 372.

However, with the total seclusion of the medieval women, this has become too remote a picture to be reproduced in any contemporary Muslim woman.

The question of ruling queens bears some relation to reality, in that the pictures of queens are drawn from history and folk-tales rather than actual life. The people of the area know about the Arab queens Balqīs and Zenobya,<sup>1</sup> about Persian, Indian, Byzantine and Ancient Egyptian queens, but no Muslim woman has ever reigned as<sup>a</sup> queen, except Queen Shajarat al-Durr and her short-lived rule. She was the concubine of the last Ayyūbid Sultan al-Ṣāliḥ (d. 635/1249), Turkish or Armenian in origin, freed by al-Ṣāliḥ after she bore him a son.

When he died, she kept his death from the public until his son arrived from Iraq. His son ruled for two months and was murdered by the Amīrs who set Shajarat al-Durr as queen after him. She struck coins in her own name, had her name mentioned in the Friday prayers and signed official papers as "Umm Khalīl".<sup>2</sup> During her reign, which lasted about three months, Shaikh 'Izz al-Dīn wrote in one of his books the fact that the Muslims had recently had inflicted on them the reign of a woman.<sup>3</sup>

But the real blow to her power seems to have come from the 'Abbāsīd Caliph al-Mustāṣim (640/1242 - 657/1258 A.D.), who sent a message to the Egyptian Amīrs saying "If you have no man to rule you, let us know and we will send you one."

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1 Quran, 27<sup>23, 38</sup>. Bustāni, Nisā', 90-108.

2 Ibn Iyās, I, 89-92, Suyūṭi, Husn, II, 46f. Hitti, 671.

3 Suyūṭi, op.cit. Ibn Iyās, op.cit.

When Shajarat al-Durr heard this she abdicated. The idea of rejecting women as rulers and queens in Islam goes back to the time of the Prophet. When Abu Bakr heard that the Persians had crowned a woman as their queen, he quoted the prophet as saying "A people whose chief is a woman cannot prosper."<sup>1</sup>

Although women were generally excluded from political affairs, it was not <sup>rare</sup> for them to exert influence in matters of public concern. Despite the injunction of al-Manṣūr to his son al-Hādī not to let women interfere in politics, al-Khayzurān, the mother of the Caliphs al-Hādī and al-Rashīd, was the first woman to exercise any appreciable influence on the 'Abbāsīd Caliphate affairs.<sup>2</sup>

Shaghab, the mother of the Caliph al-Muqtadir (296/908 - 341/952), assumed considerable political power and constantly interfered with state affairs. "It was she that held public audience to redress wrongs and receive petitions, summoned governors and qādīs to render account of their doings, and who herself signed and issued state edicts."<sup>3</sup> Her power extended to the stewardess of the Caliph's court, Umm Mūsā, who sat to arbitrate in the Dīwān al-Mazālīm. The latter's influence once caused the dismissal of a vizier.<sup>4</sup>

The reaction of Muslim society to political influence exerted by women is shown in a remark made by Ibn al-Athīr when mentioning Umm Mūsā in his chronicle. "Umm Mūsā" he writes, "was

1 Ibn Hanbal, V, 38, 43, 47, 50. Arnold, 1931, 296.

2 Mas'ūdi, VI, 282, Tabari, III, 569f.

3 Levy, 1957, 133. 'Arīb, 79f, 127. Fakhri, 236.

4 Athīr, VIII, 47f.

made the **stewardess** of the Caliphate court, and she used to carry the **messages** of the caliph al-Muqtadir and his mother to the vizier. Had it not been necessary to mention her name . . . it would have been much better to avoid doing that. "<sup>1</sup> The public showed its disapproval by absenting itself on the first occasion, when the stewardess presided over the court, but on the second Friday she brought the Qāḍi with her and things took their ordinary course."<sup>2</sup>

One of the reasons for the deposing of the Caliph al-Muqtadir in (296/908) and then restoring him, was the interference of the women of his court in the state affairs. Thus al-Qāhir was chosen as a caliph instead of al-Muqtadir's son simply because of the interference of Queen Shaghab.<sup>3</sup>

In Egypt, Sitt al-Mulk, al-Ḥākim's sister, plotted to kill the caliph, and assumed power by becoming the guardian of her nephew al-Zāhir who succeeded al-Ḥākim.<sup>4</sup> However, women who exercised political power, unlike queen Shajart al-Durr, would seem to have ruled from behind the scenes rather than directly and officially.

In the same manner queen Budūr and queen Zumurrud of the "Nights" had to rule the kingdoms which fell to their lot, by accident, disguised as men.<sup>5</sup> This led to complications, (since

1 Op. cit.

2 'Arib, 71. Mas'ūdi, al-Tanbih wa'l-Ishraf (Leyden, 1894), 378.

3 Ibn Kathir, Bidaya . . . XI. 170. Abu al-Fidā, II, 78 81.

4 Taghribirdi, II, 70f, 77f. Suyūṭi, Husn. . . , II, 18. Ḥasan, 1958, 168, 646.

5 Nights, II, 117, 253.

the real king gives his daughter in marriage to the new supposed male ruler). Budūr had to tell her secret to the bride and the two women kept silent. Budūr resumed power until her husband, Prince Qamar, was found. The father King was told the whole story and Qamar was made King instead of Budūr.

When Zumurrud, the slave-girl, ran away from the thieves disguised in men's clothes, she was held by soldiers and made the king of a country whose king had lately died. She releases the prisoner, abolishes taxes, eliminates tyranny and gives public banquets. When she finds her master, she, however, puts a deputy in her place and pretends to go travelling. She actually returns to her master's country, marries him and has children.<sup>1</sup>

As for real queens who rule their countries directly, they appear in stories of foreign origin, or rule lands unfamiliar to Muslims, as the Jinn islands or a country under the sea, e.g. Queen Marjāna, Queen Lāb and the Jinn queen of the Wāq Wāq islands, Nūr Al-Hudā.<sup>2</sup>

Besides being attributed to foreigners and Jinn, magic is attributed to ordinary wives and women who possess the supernatural power of transforming the people they hate into animals or stone. Sometimes they help to remove a spell cast on a transformed animal and restore him to his human shape.<sup>3</sup>

This may be linked to the prevailing idea of women as being connected with Satan because of their power of contriving and

1 Nights, II, 263.

2 Ibid., II, 147, III, 293, IV, 39.

3 Ibid., I, 9, 29, 51.

intrigue. This is dealt with in folk-tales as well.<sup>1</sup>

In spite of the magic power attributed to such women, they normally occupy the same subdued position assigned to average women in society.<sup>2</sup> In this respect they would not be considered as belonging to the fictitious women of the "Nights".

In conclusion, the study of women's condition in Medieval Islam has shown the subordinate place which they occupied in society, and the handicap they suffered from the social and conventional laws on which their lives hinged. Despite the colourful fictional presentation of women's characters in the "Nights", the unhappy nature of their lot and the social disadvantages of womanhood are apparent.

Before closing the subject, attention is to be drawn to the one circumstance in which medieval women held a unique position. As saints, women entertained a remarkable status, both in the "Nights" and in the Muslim society. Despite their disabilities, women could achieve saintliness and their miracles are equal to the miracles of male saints.<sup>3</sup>

It has been suggested that since there was no organised priesthood or priestly caste in Islam, it was easy to permit the rise of women saints.<sup>4</sup> However, even in medieval Europe

1 Muccullock, Folk-memory in folk tales (London, 1949).  
IX. 309, Thompson, Types . . ., 1928, XXV, 194.

2 Ikhwān al-Ṣafā, IV, 288; the Ikhwān ascribe a trivial kind of magic to foolish old women and frivolous young women.

3 Levy, 1957, 132.

4 M. Smith, Rabi'a The Mystic (Cambridge, 1928), 2.

where women, like their Eastern sisters, were denied all human and social rights, it was possible for women, as heads of religious houses, to hold positions "of great dignity and influence" and to "discharge their duties worthily."<sup>1</sup>

In the dictionaries of the biographers of Muslim saints there is a row of names of holy women under each letter of the alphabet.<sup>2</sup> The most notable among women saints in Islam is Rabi'a the mystic.

Al-'Aṭṭār, writing her biography, shows, in the following remark, the attitude of Muslim men towards women during the dark periods of Muslim history: he begins "If any one should ask me why I note her amongst the ranks of men I reply that the master of the Prophets has said, 'God looks not to your outward appearance'. Attainment of the divine lies not in appearance but in the sincerity of purpose. Since a woman on the Path of God becomes a man she cannot be called a woman."<sup>3</sup>

The "Nights" indicates an earlier attitude towards women saints since it exalts them for their holiness and purity, and women saints in the "Nights" become the elect of God, and perform miracles of curing the sick and having their prayers immediately answered by God.<sup>4</sup>

Macdonald remarks that in the ascetic and religious life only, men and women are equal before God and all the differences between them drop away.<sup>5</sup>

1 Allen, P. S., The Age of Erasmus (Oxford, 1914), 199f.

2 Goldziher, Muhammedanische (2 Vols, Halle, 1889) II, 300.

3 Farīd al-Dīn al-'Aṭṭār, Tadhkirat al-Awliyā' (Leyden, 1905-1907) I, 59. (tr. Levy, 1957, 132).

4 Nights, III, 16f, III, 17, 22 and Cal. ed. II, 302, 588.

5 The Religious attitude and Life in Islam (Chicago, 1912), 205.

## CONCLUSION

Having shown detailed pictures of the social classes, one would ask what has been accomplished. It has been the aim of the present study to show how the "Nights" reflects modes of social life in medieval Islam.

The correlation of the material of the "Nights" with accounts provided by Arabic sources has shown that there are more similarities than differences between the two kinds of information. The "Nights" has therefore gained additional value for being a rich source of information on social life.

Since the scope of this study has been confined to the social structure of society, I feel that there are still ~~other~~ important fields of study to be explored such as the political, religious and moral aspects of the "Nights".

This study has shown that the Arabs possessed a superior and refined civilization represented by the magnificent courts of the caliphs and by the great commercial prosperity of the middle class.

That Baghdad was the centre of a wealthy civilization is fully appreciated by the narrator. Although the capital did not always rule by armies or wield a lasting political power, it remained the centre of the Islamic faith that ruled the empire for several centuries.

The worship of wealth is demonstrated in the descriptions of palaces, of expensive households, and of the trains of attendants and slaves.

Subterranean places, buried treasures, drawn curtains, window shutters, disguised tours and street violence are in fact descriptions of the medieval feudal palaces, and depict the manners of everyday life.



The position of the merchants in the commercial age ranks equal to the position of business men in the industrially developed countries of the present time.

Episodes in the life of the lower classes throw light on interesting aspects of town life, and reveal social and economic conditions which have hitherto been dealt with only in an incidental way. Considering the importance of religious faith to medieval society and governments, the non-Muslim subjects in medieval Islam lived in especially tolerable conditions.

Our inquiry into the social position of women has shown that the Abbāsīd women participated in the intellectual life of the age and in private entertainments, but women of later medieval times lived in an atmosphere poisoned by ignorance and superstition. The presence of the singing slave-girls in society was however a characteristic of the early medieval Islamic time.

It has also been shown that some seemingly improbable themes in the "Nights" are in fact true, and had parallels in reality. For example, the themes of excessive extravagance, and a man turning vagrant overnight frequently occur in other Arabic sources.

Further, the recognition of the guilds of ex-thieves (repentis) by the government has a firm basis in reality. To keep in check the power of the thieves, the government attempted to win them over and pay them salaries to catch other thieves.

By contrasting the conditions of the upper and lower classes, it has been shown that life in Arabian society was a mixture of laughter and tears, silk and rugs and beauty and filth.

It is noticeable that Muslim society demonstrated a dual morality. While conforming outwardly to religious observances, wealthy people tried to conceal their indulgences and unorthodox practices. Hence secularism and puritanism appear paradoxically side by side in the "Nights", as is shown in the stories of the heroes who pursue forbidden pleasure on the one hand, and the heroes who work in the service of God on the other.

The Baghdadi age of excessive extravagance and luxurious living represents an age when people reaped the harvest which was sown by their predecessors of the Muslim faithful, that is, the age of affluence accompanied by political decline, a phase which characterises the civilisation of every rich empire in the successive stages of its rise and subsequent decline.

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