

ON THE EMERGENCE OF SINBAD THE NAAGIAN  
reign which was devoted to justice and generosity. This story has  
come down as a memorial of him.

74

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4.0  
Introductory statement

4. Wed Sep 27 Before Islam: Arabia

4.1	Extracts on the Arabs before Islam
4.2	What led 'Amr ibn Kulthum to compose his poem
4.3	The Mu'allaqā of 'Amr ibn Kulthum
4.4	Ibn Khaldun on the Arabs

With both the empires set up, we now move to Arabia, a very different world from that of the Byzantine and Sasanian states. Here the textbook kicks in with an overall survey. The rest of the readings are from primary sources, and are here to illustrate one aspect or another of the society and culture of the pre-Islamic Arabs.

Reading 4.1: By now you should be adept at figuring out what I choose extracts for. "Scenites" means "tent-dwellers"; "Sarcens" is another term for Arabs. The Scythians in extract 4.2 are Iranian nomads of the steppes, north of the Black Sea; you already encountered this episode at the end of Reading 3.2.

The next two readings are a pair: Reading 4.2 gives you the narrative background to the poem in Reading 4.3. The story is set in northern Arabia, on the edge of Iraq, in the sixth century. The poem is one of the most famous examples of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry (it belongs to a set of seven poems called the Mu'allaqāt). Since this is not a literature course, your task is to pick out the themes which are relevant to our concerns as historians.

Reading 4.4: Every great culture has someone who isn't content just to narrate history as one thing after another, and tries to analyze how it works on a grand scale. The Muslim historian who does this is Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406). Here is some of what he has to say about the Arabs. He is thinking of the desert Arabs, very much as they were on the eve of the rise of Islam. How far do you think he gets it right?

Overall, you should read these materials with the fact that the Arabs are about to conquer a substantial chunk of the world not too far towards the back of your mind.



(Sozomenus, VI. 38)

"Some of the Saracens were converted to Christianity not long before the present reign. They shared in the faith of Christ by intercourse with the priests and monks who dwell near them, and practiced philosophy in the neighboring deserts.... It is said that a whole tribe, and Zocomus, their chief, were converted to Christianity and baptized about this period, and under the following circumstances: Zocomus was childless, and went to a certain monk of great celebrity to complain to him of this calamity! For among the Saracens, and I believe other barbarian nations, it was accounted of great importance to have children. The monk... sent him away with the promise that if he would believe in Christ, he would have a son. When this promise was confirmed by God, and when a son was born to him, Zocomus was initiated, and all his subjects with him."

1. "This is the tribe which took its origins and had its name from Ishmael, the son of Abraham; and the ancients called them Ishmaelites, after their progenitor.... Such being their origin, they practice circumcision like the Jews, refrain from the use of pork, and observe many other Jewish rites and customs. If, indeed, they deviate in any respect from the observances of that nation, it must be ascribed to the lapse of time, and to their intercourse with the neighboring nations.... The inhabitants of the neighboring countries, being strongly addicted to superstition, probably soon corrupted the laws imposed upon them by their forefather Ishmael.... Some of their tribe afterwards happened to come in contact with the Jews, gathered from them the facts of their true origin, returned to their kinsmen, and inclined to the Hebrew customs and laws. From that time on, until now, many of them regulate their lives according to the Jewish precepts.

*Arabs or Jews*

G. Sozomenus on Saracen monotheism (fifth century A.D.)

(ibid., 102)

"The Saracens... whom we never found desirable either as friends or enemies, ranging up and down the country, in a brief space of time laid waste to whatever they could find.... Among those tribes whose original abode extends from the Assyrians to the Cataracts of the Nile and the frontiers of the Blemmyae all alike are warriors of equal rank, half-nude, clad in dyed cloaks as far as the loins, ranging widely with the help of swift horses and slender camels in times of peace and disorder. No man ever grasps a plough-handle or cultivates a tree, none seeks a living by tilling the soil, but they rove continually over wide and extensive tracts without a home, without fixed abodes or laws."

F. Ammianus Marcellinus (fourth century A.D.) on the Saracens

*Disyrt: no Arab gods*

(Sira, 1:77 = G. 701)

"Amr ibn Luhayy left Mecca for Syria on business. When he got to Moab in Transjordan, then inhabited by the Amalekites... he saw them worshipping idols, and said to them, 'What are these idols I see you worshipping?' They said: 'These are idols that we worship. We ask them for rain, and they make it rain; we ask them for victory, and they give us victory.' He said to them: 'Do you think you could spare me one to take back to the land of the Arabs for them to worship?' So they gave him an idol called 'Hubal'. He took it back to Mecca and set it up there, telling people to worship and venerate it."

J. Importing a god

(Baladhuri, 1:9)

"Murattī' [of the tribe of Kinda]... married a woman of Hadramawt; her father imposed on him the condition that he should take no further wife in addition to her, and that she should give birth only in the abode of her own people. But Murattī' didn't observe the condition. So they made Af'a ibn al-Husayn the jurhumite their judge—the Arabs were in the habit of doing so. At the hearing the fact that the condition had been imposed was established, and Af'a gave the verdict 'the condition is binding'. He was the first to use this maxim. So the Hadramitis took the woman and the son she had had by Murattī'."

I. Legal procedure

(Sam'ani, 4:264f)

"An Arab went to visit one of the kings of Zafar—a town of Himyar in Yemen. The king said to his visitor 'thībī', so the Arab jumped. The king said 'thībī' to him again, and again he jumped. The king was amazed by this, and asked 'what's going on?'; he was told that 'thībī' means 'jump' in Arabic, whereas it means 'sit' in Himyarite. So the king said: 'Don't you know that whoever comes to Zafar speaks Himyarite?'"

H. The non-Arab south

(2) Arabic sources

*Arabs  
Muhammad  
Arabs*

"This is the monument of Umrū' al-Qays b. 'Amr, king of all the Arabs; who sent his troops to Thaj, and ruled both sections of al-Azd, and Nizar, and their kings; and chastised Madhig, so that he successfully smote, in the irrigated land of Nagran, the realm of Shammār; and ruled Ma'add; and handed over to his sons the settled communities, when he had been given authority over the latter on behalf of Persia and of Rome. And no king had matched his achievements up to the time when he died, in prosperity, in the year 223, the 7th day of Kislul...."

L. The Nemara inscription (A.D. 328)

3. "Not one chief of ours ever died a natural death, nor was any slain man of ours ever left where he lay unavenged." "No fire of ours was ever doused against a night visitor, nor has any casual guest alighting found fault with us." (Samaw'al in Arberr, Arabic poetry, 30, 32)

*Arabs  
Arabs*

2. "Since the time of 'Ad we've thought well of capturing kings, killing them and fighting them." (Hamasā/Freytag, 195)

1. "The days of a man are numbered to him, and through them all the snares of death lurk by the warrior as he travels in perilous ways." "His doom shall spring upon him at its appointed time, and his way is towards that meeting though he makes no tryst therefor."

*Arabs  
Arabs*

K. Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry

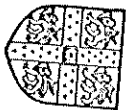
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A LITERARY  
HISTORY OF THE ARABS

BY  
REYNOLD A. NICHOLSON



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'Amr b. Kulthûm belonged to the tribe of Taghlib. His mother was Laylâ, a daughter of the famous poet and warrior

Muhallib. That she was a woman of heroic

records a deed of prompt vengeance on the part of 'Amr that gave rise to the proverb, "Bolder in onset than 'Amr b. Kulthûm" 3 :—

One day 'Amr b. Hind, the King of Hira, said to his boon-companions, "Do ye know any Arab whose mother would disdain to serve mine?" They answered, "Yes, the mother of 'Amr b.

<sup>1</sup> Vv. 54-59 (Lyalî); 56-61 (Arnold).

<sup>2</sup> See Nôideke, *Fünf Mu'allagat*, i, p. 51 seq. According to the traditional version (*Aghani*, ix, 179), a band of Taghlibites went raiding, lost their way in the desert, and perished of thirst, having been refused water by a sept of the Banu Bakr. Thereupon Taghlib appealed to King 'Amr to enforce payment of the blood-money which they claimed, and thence 'Amr b. Kulthûm to plead their cause at Hira. So 'Amr recited his *Mu'allaga* before the king, and was answered by Hârib on behalf of Bakr.

<sup>3</sup> Freytag, *Arabum Proverbia*, vol. ii, p. 233.

Kulthûm." "Why so?" asked the king. "Because," said they, "her father is Muhallib b. Rabî'a and her uncle is Kulayb b. Wâ'il, the

most puissant of the Arabs, and her husband is the chief-tain of his tribe." Then the king sent to 'Amr b. Kulthûm, inviting him to pay a visit to himself, and asking him to bring his mother, Laylâ, to visit his own mother, Hind. So 'Amr came to Hira with some men of Taghlib, and Laylâ came attended by a number of their women; and while the king entertained 'Amr and his friends in a pavilion which he had caused to be erected between Hira and the Euphrates, Laylâ found quarters with Hind in a tent adjoining. Now, the king had ordered his mother, as soon as he should call for dessert, to dismiss the servants, and cause Laylâ to wait upon her. At the pre-arranged signal she desired to be left alone with her guest, and said, "O Laylâ, hand me that dish." Laylâ answered, "Let those who want anything rise up and serve themselves." Hind repeated her demand, and would take no denial. "O shame!" cried Laylâ. "Help! Taghlib, help!" When 'Amr heard his mother's cry the blood flew to his cheeks. He seized a sword hanging on the wall of the pavilion—the only weapon there—and with a single blow smote the king dead.

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## *The Seven Odes*

THE FIRST CHAPTER  
IN ARABIC LITERATURE

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MU'ALLAQA OF 'AMR

*of the  
parting  
glance*

Ha, girl! Up with your bowl give us our dawn-draught  
and do not spare the wines of El-Andarina,  
the brightly sparkling, as if saffron were in them  
whenever the mull'd water is mingled with them,  
that swing the holy desirous from his passion  
when he has tasted them to gentle mellowness;  
you see the skinflint miser, when the cup's passed him,  
suddenly holds his prized property in derision.

O Umm Amr, you've withheld the beaker from us—  
from right to right it should have been running—  
and yet your friend, whom you deny the dawn-draught,  
O Umm Amr, is not the worst of the trio,  
and of a surety the Fates will overtake us  
predestined for us, as we for them are predestined.

Pause yet before the parting, litter-borne lady,  
and we'll declare you the truth, and you'll declare it  
touching, a day of malice, with thrusts and hackings,  
whereby the hearts of your cousins were gladdened.  
Pause, and we'll ask you whether you caused this rupture  
the wrench being so near, or to betray the trusty.

She shows you, when you enter privily with her  
and she's secure from the eyes of the hateful foemen,  
arms of a long-necked she-camel, white and youthful  
fresh from the spring-pastures of sand and stone-land,  
a soft breast like a casker of ivory  
chastely guarded from adventurous fingers,  
the flanks of a lithe, long, tender body,  
buttocks oppressed by their ponderous cargo.

I called to mind my youth, and was filled with yearning  
when I beheld her camels urged on at evening;

THE RECIDIDE

Yamama hove in sight, and towered above us  
like swords lifted in the hands of the unsheathers,  
and no she-camel that's lost its foal, and quavers  
the cry of longing, ever grieved as I grieved,  
nor any grey-haired mother, whose evil fortune  
left her, of nine sons, not one unburied.  
Truly today and tomorrow and after tomorrow  
are pledgings of a destiny you know naught of.

Father of Hind, don't be so hasty with us;  
give us a breather, and we'll tell the truth to you,  
how we take the banners white into battle  
and bring them back crimson, well-saturated;  
we'll tell you of the days long and glorious  
we rebelled against the king, and would not serve him.  
And many's the tribal champion, crowned with  
the crown of rule, protecting those who flee to him,  
we have left our horses standing over,  
their reins on their necks, one foot on tiptoe;  
the dogs of the tribe whined because of us  
and we lopped the thorn-bristles of our neighbours.  
When we move our war-mill against a people  
at the encounter they become as grist to it;  
its cushion reaches to east of Nejd, and  
the grain it grinds on is all Kudā'a;  
truly hatred upon hatred is spreading  
against you, disclosing our hidden sickness.  
Ma'add knows, we are inheritors of glory  
which we defend with our spears, till all behold it;  
when the tent-poles of the tribe are fallen  
upon the furniture, we defend our neighbours;  
of old we repel their enemies from them  
and bear for them what they load upon us.  
When the ranks stand far from us, we thrust with  
lances, and strike with swords when they are upon us,

with tawny lances of Khart, very supple  
and slender, or shining, uplifted sword-blades;  
with these we split the heads of the warriors  
and slit through their necks like scythed grasses—  
you might fancy the heroes' skulls, riding them,  
were camel's-loads flung down on the pebbles.  
We hack their heads off without compassion  
and they don't know how to defend themselves from us;  
it is as though our swords, flailing between us,  
were bladders buffered by playing children;  
it is as though our and their accoutrements  
were dyed or smeared over with purple pigment.  
Whenever a tribe is impotent to thrust forward  
because of the fear of what well might happen  
we plant a veritable Mount Rahwa, razor-sharp,  
for a defence, and ourselves march foremost  
with youths who deem death in battle a glory  
and with greybeards long tested in warfare  
a match for the whole of men, all together,  
wagering their sons against our sons.  
Upon the day that we tremble for our children  
girding our loins we surge early to onslaught,  
but on the day we do not tremble for them  
we sit about in knots in our tribe-assemblies,  
led by chiefs of the Banu Jusham bin Bakr  
with whom we trample on plain and rugged upland.

With what purpose in view, Amr bin Hind,  
do you give heed to our traducers, and despise us?  
With what purpose in view, Amr bin Hind,  
should we be underlings to your chosen princelet?  
Threaten us then, and menace us; but gently!  
When, pray, were we your mother's domestics?  
Be sure, that before your time our lances  
baffled our enemies' efforts to soften them;

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Some things  
must happen

when the spear-vice bit into them, they resisted  
and drove it back like a stubborn, shoving camel,  
a stubborn camel; bend them, and with a creaking  
they strike back at the straightener's neck and forehead.  
Have you been told, regarding Jusham bin Bakr,  
that they ever failed in the ancients' great engagements?  
We are heirs to the glory of Alkama bin Saif:  
he mastered for us the castles of glory.  
I am heir to Muhalhil and his better,  
Zuhair, a fine treasure indeed to treasure,  
heir to Artâb, and Kulthûm, the whole of them,  
by whom we attained the heirloom of the noblest,  
heir to Dhul Bura, of whom you've heard tell,  
our defence, through whom we defend the shelterers,  
and, before him, Kulalb the Striver was one of us:  
so what glory is there we are not possessed of?  
When we tie with a rope our train-camel of battle  
or we break the bond, or the neck of the beast tethered to her.  
We shall be found the firmest men in duty  
and the truest of men to the oath once taken.  
We on the morn the fire in Khazâz was kindled  
gave succour beyond every other succourer;  
we are they who kept to Dhu Urâîâ  
while the huge, milk-rich camels chawed dry fodder.  
We are the just rulers over obedience,  
we are the just chastisers of rebellion;  
we promptly abandon that which disgusts us,  
we lay hold eagerly of what pleases us.  
We kept the right wing in the great encounter  
and on the left wing stood our blood-brothers;  
they loosed a fierce assault on their nearest foemen,  
we loosed a fierce assault on our nearest foemen;  
they returned with much booty and many captives,  
we returned leading the kings in fetters.  
So beware, you Banu Bakr, beware now:

have you not yet the true knowledge of us?  
 Do you not know how the squadrons thrusted  
 and shot their bolts, ours and yours together?  
 We were caparisoned in helmets, and Yemeni jerkins,  
 we were accoutred with swords straight and bending,  
 our bodies were hung with glittering mail-coats  
 having visible puckers above the sword-belt  
 that being unbuckled from the warrior  
 reveals his skin rusted from the long wearing,  
 mail-coats that ripple like a pool of water  
 when the furrowing wind strikes its smooth surface.  
 Short-haired are our steeds on the morn of terror,  
 known to us, our weanlings, won from the enemy;  
 them we inherited from the truest of fathers,  
 them we shall bequeath dying to our sons.  
 All the tribes of Ma'add have known right well  
 when tents were built in their valley-bottoms  
 that in every scant year we are the protectors,  
 we the bountiful givers to them that beg of us,  
 we the defenders of those near to us  
 whenever the white swords leave their scabbards,  
 we the benefactors when we are able,  
 we the destroyers when we are set upon,  
 we the drinkers of the purest water  
 that others perforce drink sullied and muddy.  
 Hol Carry from us to the Banu Er-Tammah  
 and the Du'mi: 'How have you found us?  
 You came and alighted as guests among us  
 and we promptly received you, lest you reproach us;  
 hospitably we received you, and that promptly—  
 just before dawn, with a stone well-pounded!'

Upon our tracks follow fair, noble ladies  
 that we take care shall not leave us, nor be insulted,

litter-borne ladies of Banu Jusham bin Bakr  
 who mingle, with good looks, high birth and obedience.  
 They have taken a covenant with their husbands  
 that, when they should meet with signal horsemen,  
 they will plunder mail-coats and shining sabres  
 and captives fettered together in irons.  
 When they fare forth, they walk sedately  
 swinging their gait like swaying tipplers.  
 They provender our horses, saying, 'You are not  
 our husbands, if you do not protect us.'  
 If we defend them not, may we survive not  
 nor live on for any thing after them!  
 Nothing protects women like a smiting  
 that sends the forearms flying like play-chucks.  
 Ours is the world, and all who dwell upon it,  
 and when we assault, we assault with power.  
 When kings deal with their peoples unjustly  
 we refuse to allow injustice among us.  
 We are called oppressors; we never oppressed yet,  
 but shortly we shall be starting oppressors!  
 When any boy of ours reaches his weaning  
 the tyrants fall down before him prostrating.  
 We have filled the land till it's too strait for us,  
 and we are filling the sea's back with our vessels.  
 So let no man act foolishly against us,  
 or we shall exceed the folly of the foolhardiest.

*Redepressed affliction, her legs,  
 & made of her  
 to back of her  
 cowardly*

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IBN KHALDŪN

# THE MUQADDIMAH

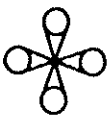
*An Introduction to History*

TRANSLATED FROM THE ARABIC BY

FRANZ ROSENTHAL

IN THREE VOLUMES

II



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[ 1 ] *Both Bedouins and sedentary people are natural groups.*

IT<sup>2</sup> SHOULD BE KNOWN that differences of condition among people are the result of the different ways in which they make their living. Social organization enables them to co-operate toward that end and to start with the simple necessities of life, before they get to conveniences and luxuries.<sup>3</sup>

Some people adopt agriculture, the cultivation of vegetables and grains, (as their way of making a living). Others adopt animal husbandry, the use of sheep, cattle, goats, bees, and silkworms, for breeding and for their products. Those who live by agriculture or animal husbandry cannot avoid the call of the desert, because it alone offers the wide fields, acres, pastures for animals, and other things that the settled areas do not offer.<sup>4</sup> It is therefore necessary for them to restrict themselves to the desert. Their social organization and co-operation for the needs of life and civilization, such as food, shelter, and warmth, do not take them beyond the bare subsistence level, because of their inability (to provide) for anything beyond those (things). Subsequent improvement of their conditions and acquisition of more wealth and comfort than they need, cause them to rest and take it easy. Then, they co-operate for things beyond the (bare) necessities. They use more food and clothes, and take pride in them. They build large houses, and lay out towns and cities for protection. This is followed by an increase in comfort and ease, which leads to formation of the most developed luxury customs. They take the greatest pride in the preparation of food and a fine cuisine, in the use of varied splendid clothes of silk and brocade and other (fine materials), in the construction of ever higher buildings and towers, in elaborate furnish-

desert life  
basic necessities  
of agriculture

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 80 f.      <sup>3</sup> Cf. pp. lxxxii and 85, above.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. G. E. von Grunebaum, "as-Sakkāki on Millicu and Thought," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LXV (1945), 62.



ings for the buildings, and the most intensive cultivation of crafts in actuality. They build castles and mansions, provide them with running water,<sup>5</sup> build their towers higher and higher, and compete in furnishing them (most elaborately). They differ in the quality of the clothes, the beds, the vessels, and the utensils they employ for their purposes. Here, now, (we have) sedentary people. "Sedentary people" means the inhabitants of cities and countries, some of whom adopt the crafts as their way of making a living, while others adopt commerce. They earn more and live more comfortably than Bedouins, because they live on a level beyond the level of (bare) necessity, and their way of making a living corresponds to their wealth.

It has thus become clear that Bedouins and sedentary people are natural groups which exist by necessity, as we have stated.

[ 2 ] *Bedouins' names*  
*The Arabs are a natural group in the world.*

We have mentioned in the previous section that the inhabitants of the desert adopt the natural manner of making a living, namely, agriculture and animal husbandry. They restrict themselves to the necessary in food, clothing, and mode of dwelling, and to the other necessary conditions and customs. They do not possess conveniences and luxuries beyond (these bare necessities). They use tents of hair and wool or houses of wood, or of clay and stone, which are not furnished (elaborately). The purpose is to have shade and shelter, and nothing beyond that. They also take shelter in caverns and caves. The food they take is either little prepared or not prepared at all, save that it may have been touched by fire.<sup>7</sup>

For those who make their living through the cultivation

<sup>5</sup> Cf. also p. 339, below.

<sup>6</sup> As a sociological term, "Arab" is always synonymous with "Bedouin, nomad" to Ibn Khaldūn, regardless of racial, national, or linguistic distinctions.

<sup>7</sup> Ibn Khaldūn was familiar with this phrase for "preparing food in the open fire" through the *ḥadīth* literature. Cf. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Geography*, p. 206.

of grain and through agriculture, it is better to be stationary than to travel around. Such, therefore, are the inhabitants of small communities, villages, and mountain regions. These people make up the large mass of the Berbers and non-Arabs.

Those who make their living from animals requiring pasturage, such as sheep and cattle, usually travel around in order to find pasture and water for their animals, since it is better for them to move around in the land. They are called "sheepmen" (*shāwīyah*), that is, men who live on sheep and cattle. They do not go deep into the desert, because they would not find good pastures there. Such people include the Berbers, the Turks and their relatives, the Turkomans and the Slavs,<sup>8</sup> for instance.

Those who make their living by raising camels move around more. They wander deeper into the desert, because the hilly<sup>9</sup> pastures with their plants and shrubs do not furnish enough subsistence for camels. They must feed on the desert shrubs and drink the salty desert water. They must move around the desert regions during the winter, in flight from the harmful cold to the warm desert air. In the desert sands, camels can find places to give birth to their young ones. Of all animals, camels have the hardest delivery and the greatest need for warmth in connection with it.<sup>10</sup> (Camel nomads) are therefore forced to make excursions deep (into the desert). Frequently, too, they are driven from the hills by the militia, and they penetrate farther into the desert, because they do not want the militia<sup>11</sup> to mete out justice to them or to

<sup>8</sup> Though the Arabic text need not be understood as saying that there exists a relationship between the Slavs and the Turks, it is the most natural construction to understand it that way. It has been shown that Muslim Geographers did not always mean precisely Slavs when they spoke about the *Saqābiyah*. (Cf. A. Zeki Validi Togan, *Ibn Fadlān's Reisebericht*, pp. 295 ff.) However, the above statement should not be taken too literally, and the term used for "relatives" (*khawān* "brethren") may perhaps be translated as "companions" or the like, implying no real relationship.

<sup>9</sup> Tall, pl. *tuḥā* "hills." The expression reflects the situation in north-western Africa rather than in Arabia.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. p. 265 and 2:353, below, and *Iḥār*, II, 396 f.

<sup>11</sup> Bulaq, apparently by mistake, has "to humiliate them" for the rest of the sentence.



punish them for their hostile acts. As a result, they are the most savage human beings that exist. Compared with sedentary people, they are on a level with wild, untamable (animals) and dumb beasts of prey. Such people are the Arabs. In the West, the nomadic Berbers and the Zanātah are their counterparts, and in the East, the Kurds, the Turkomans, and the Turks. The Arabs, however, make deeper excursions into the desert and are more rooted in desert life (than the other groups), because they live exclusively on camels, while the other groups live on sheep and cattle, as well as camels.

It has thus become clear that the Arabs are a natural group which by necessity exists in civilization.

God is "the Creator, the Knowing One."<sup>12</sup>

[ 3 ] *Bedouins are prior to sedentary people. The desert is the basis and reservoir of civilization and cities.*

We<sup>13</sup> have mentioned that the Bedouins restrict themselves to the (bare) necessities in their conditions (of life) and are unable to go beyond them, while sedentary people concern themselves with conveniences and luxuries in their conditions and customs. The (bare) necessities are no doubt prior to the conveniences and luxuries. (Bare) necessities, in a way, are basic, and luxuries secondary and an outgrowth (of the necessities). Bedouins, thus, are the basis of, and prior to, cities and sedentary people. Man seeks first the (bare) necessities. Only after he has obtained the (bare) necessities, does he get to comforts and luxuries. The toughness of desert life precedes the softness of sedentary life. Therefore, urbanization is found to be the goal of the Bedouin. He aspires to (that goal).<sup>14</sup> Through his own efforts, he achieves what he proposes to achieve in this respect. When he has obtained enough to be ready for the conditions

and customs of luxury, he enters upon a life of ease and submits himself to the yoke of the city. This is the case with all Bedouin tribes. Sedentary people, on the other hand, have no desire for desert conditions, unless they are motivated by some urgent necessity<sup>15</sup> or they cannot keep up with their fellow city dwellers.

Evidence for the fact that Bedouins are the basis of, and prior to, sedentary people is furnished by investigating the inhabitants of any given city. We shall find that most of its inhabitants originated among Bedouins dwelling in the country and villages of the vicinity. Such Bedouins became wealthy, settled in the city, and adopted a life of ease and luxury, such as exists in the sedentary environment. This proves that sedentary conditions are secondary to desert conditions and that they are the basis of them.<sup>16</sup> This should be understood.

All Bedouins and sedentary people differ also among themselves in their conditions (of life). Many a clan is greater than another, many a tribe greater than another, many a city larger than another, and many a town more populous (*'umrān*) than another.

It has thus become clear that the existence of Bedouins is prior to, and the basis of, the existence of towns and cities. Likewise, the existence of towns and cities results from luxury customs pertaining to luxury and ease, which are posterior to the customs that go with the bare necessities of life.

[ 4 ] *Bedouins are closer to being good than sedentary people.*

The<sup>16</sup> reason for it is that the soul in its first natural state of creation is ready to accept whatever good or evil may ar-

<sup>13</sup> Ibn Khaldūn is probably thinking of political exile and retirement in the country such as he experienced himself when writing the *Muqaddimah*.

<sup>14</sup> The pronouns are as ambiguous in Arabic as they are in English, and, were it not for the context, would be understood to mean the opposite of what they are intended to mean.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 66 f.

<sup>12</sup> Qur'ān 15:86 (86): 96:81 (81).

<sup>13</sup> But contrast below, p. 266.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 81 f.

rive and leave an imprint upon it. Muhammad said: "Every infant is born in the natural state. It is his parents who make him a Jew or a Christian or a Magian."<sup>17</sup> To the degree the soul is first affected by one of the two qualities, it moves away from the other and finds it difficult to acquire it. When customs proper to goodness have been first to enter the soul of a good person and his (soul) has thus acquired the habit of (goodness, that person) moves away from evil and finds it difficult to do anything evil. The same applies to the evil person when customs (proper to evil) have been first to affect him.

Sedentary people are much concerned with all kinds of pleasures. They are accustomed to luxury and success in worldly occupations and to indulgence in worldly desires. Therefore their souls are colored with all kinds of blame-worthy and evil qualities. The more of them they possess, the more remote do the ways and means of goodness become to them. Eventually they lose all sense of restraint. Many of them are found to use improper language in their gatherings as well as in the presence of their superiors and womenfolk.<sup>1, 226</sup>

They are not deterred by any sense of restraint, because the bad custom of behaving openly in an improper manner in both words and deeds has taken hold of them. Bedouins may be as concerned with worldly affairs as (sedentary people are). However, such concern would touch only the necessities of life and not luxuries or anything causing, or calling for, desires and pleasures. The customs they follow in their mutual dealings are, therefore, appropriate. As compared with those of sedentary people, their evil ways and blame-worthy qualities are much less numerous. They are closer to the first natural state and more remote from the evil habits that have been impressed upon the souls (of sedentary people) through numerous and ugly, blameworthy customs. Thus, they can more easily be cured than sedentary people.

<sup>17</sup> Cf., for instance, al-Bukhārī, *Sahih*, I, 341; *Concordance*, I, 7b, ll. 5 f. Cf. also p. 306, below.

This is obvious. It will later on<sup>18</sup> become clear that sedentary life constitutes the last stage of civilization and the point where it begins to decay. It also constitutes the last stage of evil and of remoteness from goodness. It has thus become clear that Bedouins are closer to being good than sedentary people. "God loves those who fear God."<sup>19</sup>

[ 5 ] *Bedouins are more disposed to courage than sedentary people.*

The<sup>20</sup> reason for this is that sedentary people have become used to laziness and ease. They are sunk in well-being and luxury. They have entrusted defense of their property and their lives to the governor and ruler who rules them, and to the militia which has the task of guarding them. They find full assurance of safety in the walls that surround them, and the fortifications that protect them. No noise disturbs them, and no hunting occupies them. They are carefree and trusting, and have ceased to carry weapons. Successive generations have grown up in this way of life. They have become like women and children, who depend upon the master of the house. Eventually, this has come to be a quality of character that replaces natural (disposition).

The Bedouins, on the other hand, live separate from the community. They are alone in the country and remote from militias. They have no walls and gates. Therefore, they pro-

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 67 f.

vide their own defense and do not entrust it to, or rely upon others for it. They always carry weapons. They watch carefully all sides of the road. They take hurried naps only when they are together in company or when they are in the saddle. They pay attention to every faint barking and noise. They go alone into the desert, guided by their fortitude, putting their trust in themselves. Fortitude has become a character quality of theirs, and courage their nature. They use it whenever they are called upon or an alarm stirs them. When sedentary people mix with them in the desert or associate with them on a journey, they depend on them. They cannot do anything for themselves without them. This is an observed fact. (Their dependence extends) even to knowledge of the country, the (right) directions, watering places, and crossroads. The reason for this is the thing we have explained. At the base of it is the fact that man is a child of the customs and the things he has become used to. He is not the product of his natural disposition and temperament.<sup>25a</sup> The conditions to which he has become accustomed, until they have become for him a quality of character and matters of habit and custom, have replaced his natural disposition. If one studies this in human beings, one will find much of it, and it will be found to be a correct (observation).

"God creates whatever He wishes."<sup>25</sup>

[ 6 ] *The reliance of sedentary people upon law destroys their fortitude and power of resistance.*

Not everyone is master of his own affairs. Chiefs and leaders who are masters of the affairs of men are few in comparison with the rest. As a rule, man must by necessity be dominated by someone else. If the domination is kind and just and the people under it are not oppressed by its laws and restrictions, they are guided by the courage or cowardice that they possess in themselves. They are satisfied with the ab-

<sup>25a</sup> Cf. n. 21 to Ch. V, below.  
<sup>25</sup> Qur'ân 3:47 (42); 5:17 (20); 24:45 (44); 28:68 (68); 30:54 (53); 39:4 (6); 42:49 (48).

*Reliance upon Law Destroys Fortitude*

sense of any restraining power. Self-reliance eventually becomes a quality natural to them. They would not know anything else. If, however, the domination with its laws is one of brute force and intimidation, it breaks their fortitude and deprives them of their power of resistance as a result of the inerness that develops in the souls of the oppressed, as we shall explain.

'Umar forbade Sa'd (b. Abi Waqqâs) to exercise such (arbitrary power) when Zuhrah b. Hawiyah took the spoils of al-Jālinūs. The value of the spoils was 75,000 gold pieces. (Zuhrah) had followed al-Jālinūs on the day of al-Qādisiyah, killed him, and taken his spoils. Sa'd took them away from him and said, "Why did you not wait for my permission to follow him?" He wrote to 'Umar and asked 'Umar for permission (to confiscate the spoils). But 'Umar replied, "Would you want to proceed against a man like Zuhrah, who already has borne so much of the brunt (of battle),<sup>27</sup> and while there still remains so much of the war for you (to finish)? Would you want to break his strength and morale?" Thus, 'Umar confirmed (Zuhrah) in possession of the spoils.<sup>28</sup>

When laws are (enforced) by means of punishment, they completely destroy fortitude, because the use of punishment against someone who cannot defend himself generates in that person a feeling of humiliation that, no doubt, must break his fortitude.

When laws are (intended to serve the purposes of) education and instruction and are applied from childhood on, they have to some degree the same effect, because people then grow up in fear and docility and consequently do not rely on their own fortitude.

For this (reason), greater fortitude is found among the savage Arab Bedouins than among people who are subject to laws. Furthermore, those who rely on laws and are dominated by them from the very beginning of their education and instruction in the crafts, sciences, and religious matters, are

<sup>27</sup> Or, more generally, "who has shown himself so courageous."  
<sup>28</sup> Cf. al-Tabari, *Annals*, I, 2946.

thereby deprived of much of their own fortitude. They can scarcely defend themselves at all against hostile acts. This is the case with students, whose occupation it is to study and to learn from teachers and religious leaders, and who constantly apply themselves to instruction and education in very dignified gatherings. This situation and the fact that it destroys the power of resistance and fortitude must be understood.

Law should not be given before you are not prepared

It is no argument against the (statement just made) that the men around Muhammad observed the religious laws, and yet did not experience any diminution of their fortitude, but possessed the greatest possible fortitude. When the Muslims got their religion from the Lawgiver (Muhammad), the restraining influence came from themselves, as a result of the encouragement and discouragement he gave them in the Qur'an.<sup>29</sup> It was not a result of technical instruction or scientific education. (The laws) were the laws and precepts of the religion, which they received orally and which their firmly rooted (belief in) the truth of the articles of faith caused them to observe. Their fortitude remained unabated, and it was not corroded by education or authority. Umar said, "Those who are not educated (disciplined) by the religious law are not educated (disciplined) by God."<sup>30</sup> (This statement expresses) Umar's desire that everyone should have his restraining influence in himself. It also expresses his certainty that the Lawgiver (Muhammad) knew best what is good for mankind.

(The influence of) religion, then, decreased among men, and they came to use restraining laws. The religious law became a branch of learning and a craft to be acquired through instruction and education. People turned to sedentary life and assumed the character trait of submissiveness to law. This led to a decrease in their fortitude.

It has thus become clear that governmental and educational laws destroy fortitude, because their restraining in-

<sup>29</sup> *Tala'* "he recited." Cf. the term *matlu'*, p. 192 (n. 261), above, and p. 487 and 5:115, 284, below.  
<sup>30</sup> Cf. 3:306, below.

fluence is something that comes from outside. The religious laws, on the other hand, do not destroy fortitude, because their restraining influence is something inherent. Therefore, governmental and educational laws influence sedentary people, in that they weaken their souls and diminish their stamina, because they have to suffer (their authority) both as children and as adults. The Bedouins, on the other hand, are not in the same position, because they live far away from the laws of government, instruction, and education. Therefore, Abū Muhammad b. Abī Zayd,<sup>31</sup> in his book on the laws governing teachers and students (*Ahkān al-mu'allimīn wa-l-mu'allimīn*), said: "The educator must not strike a boy more than three times (in one punishment) as an educational measure."<sup>32</sup> (Ibn Abī Zayd) reported this remark on the authority of Judge Shurayh.<sup>33</sup> Certain scholar(s) argued in favor of the procedure mentioned, by referring to the threefold choking mentioned in the tradition concerned with the beginning of revelation.<sup>34</sup> This, however, is a weak argument. (The tradition about the) choking is not suitable proof, because it has nothing to do with ordinary instruction. God "is wise and knowing."<sup>35</sup>

[ 7 ] Only tribes held together by group feeling can live in the desert.

It should be known that God put good and evil into the nature of man. Thus, He said in the Qur'an: "We led him

<sup>31</sup> Cf. p. 223, above.  
<sup>32</sup> Cf. also 5:206, below. In the city of Ibn Khaldūn's ancestors, it was prescribed ca. 1100 that "an older child should not be struck more than five times, nor a small one more than three, and the severity of the blows should be according to the strength of the individual children to stand them." (E. Lévi-Provençal, "Le Traité d'Ibn 'Abdūn," *Journal asiatique*, CCXXIV (1934), 214; tr. by the same, *Séville musulmane au début du XI<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Islam d'hier et d'aujourd'hui, No. 2) (Paris, 1947), pp. 53 f.  
<sup>33</sup> Shurayh lived in the seventh century and is said to have been appointed judge of al-Kūfah by 'Umar. Cf. J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 228 f.  
<sup>34</sup> Cf. pp. 201 f., above. The story of the threefold choking is here understood as an educational measure, serving the purpose of teaching Muhammad how to read the writing revealed to him by Gabriel.  
<sup>35</sup> Qur'an 6:18 (19), 79 (79): 34.1 (1).

along the two paths." 36 He further said: "And inspired (the soul) with its wickedness as well as its fear of God." 37

Evil is the quality that is closest to man when he fails to improve his customs and (when) religion is not used as the model to improve him. The great mass of mankind is in that condition, with the exception of those to whom God gives success. Evil 38 qualifies in man are injustice and mutual aggression. He who casts his eye upon the property of his brother will lay his hand upon it to take it, unless there is a restraining influence to hold him back. The poet thus said:

*Injustice is a human characteristic. If you find  
A moral man, 39 there is some reason why he is not unjust.*

Mutual aggression of people in towns and cities is averted by the authorities and the government, which hold back the masses under their control from attacks and aggression upon each other. They are thus prevented by the influence of force and governmental authority from mutual injustice, save such injustice as comes from the ruler himself.

Aggression against a city from outside may be averted by walls, in the event of negligence, 40 a surprise attack at night, or inability (of the inhabitants) to withstand the enemy during the day. (Or) it may be averted with the help of a militia of government auxiliary troops, if (the inhabitants are otherwise) prepared and ready to offer resistance.

The 41 restraining influence among Bedouin tribes comes from their *shaykhs* and leaders. It results from the great respect and veneration they generally enjoy among the people. The hamlets of the Bedouins are defended against outside en-

36 Qur'an 90.10 (10). 37 Qur'an 91.8 (8). 38 Cf. Issawi, pp. 105 f.

<sup>39</sup> *Ighāṭ* is the term picked by translators of Greek texts into Arabic for *οὐρανοειδής*.

The verse is by al-Mutanabbī: cf. the appendix to the edition of his *Diwān* (Beirut, 1882), II, 650, and ar-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt*, I, 140.

40 That is, a general state of unpreparedness.

41 The remainder of this section was translated by R. A. Nicholson, *Translations of Eastern Poetry and Prose*, pp. 181 f.

emies by a tribal militia composed of noble youths of the tribe who are known for their courage. Their defense and protection are successful only if they are a closely-knit group of common descent. This strengthens their stamina and makes them feared, since everybody's affection for his family and his group is more important (than anything else). Compassion and affection for one's blood relations and relatives exist in human nature as something God put into the hearts of men. It makes for mutual support and aid, and increases the fear felt by the enemy.

This may be exemplified by the story in the Qur'an about Joseph's brothers. They said to their father: "If the wolf eats him, while we are a group, then, indeed, we have lost out." 43 This means that one cannot imagine any hostile act being undertaken against anyone who has his group feeling to support him.

Those who have no one of their own lineage (to care for) rarely feel affection for their fellows. If danger is in the air on the day of battle, such a one slinks away and seeks to save himself, because he is afraid of being left without support 44 and dreads (that prospect). Such people, therefore, cannot live in the desert, because they would fall prey to any nation that might want to swallow them up.

If this is true with regard to the place where one lives, which is in constant need of defense and military protection, it is equally true with regard to every other human activity, such as prophecy, the establishment of royal authority, or propaganda (for a cause). Nothing can be achieved in these matters without fighting for it, since man has the natural urge to offer resistance. And for fighting one cannot do without group-feeling, as we mentioned at the beginning. This should be taken as the guiding principle of our later exposition. God gives success.

43 Here the text has 'arabiyah "group feeling" though 'yah "group" would seem better.

44 Qur'an 12.14 (14).

45 Cf. R. Dozy in *Journal asiatique*, XIV 6 (1869), 152 f.

[ 8 ] *Group feeling results only from (blood) relationship or something corresponding to it.*

(Respect for) blood <sup>45</sup> ties is something natural among men, with the rarest exceptions. It leads to affection for one's relations and blood relatives, (the feeling that) no harm ought to befall them nor any destruction come upon them. One feels shame when one's relatives are treated unjustly or attacked, and one wishes to intervene between them and whatever peril or destruction threatens them. This is a natural urge in man, for as long as there have been human beings. If the direct relationship between persons who help each other is very close, so that it leads to close contact and unity, the ties are obvious and clearly require the (existence of a feeling of solidarity) without any outside (prodding). If, however, the relationship is somewhat distant, it is often forgotten in part. However, some knowledge of it remains and this causes a person to help his relatives for the known motive, in order to escape the shame he would feel in his soul were a person to whom he is somehow related treated unjustly. <sup>46</sup>

Clients and allies belong in the same category. The affection everybody has for his clients and allies results from the feeling of (shame) that comes to a person when one of his neighbors, relatives, or a blood relation in any degree (of kinship) is humiliated. The reason for it is that a client-(master) relationship leads to close contact exactly, or approximately in the same way, as does common descent. It is in that sense that one must understand Muḥammad's remark, "Learn as much of your pedigrees as is necessary to establish your ties of blood relationship." <sup>47</sup> It means that pedigrees

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 103 f. <sup>46</sup> Cf. Bombaci, pp. 446 f.  
<sup>47</sup> Cf. *Concordance*, II, 238b; Ibn Abi Zayd, *Riḍāh*, ed. L. Bercher (3rd ed.), p. 226, where 'Umar is credited with the saying: F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, p. 27 (n. 3). The phrase *wagala ar-raḥim (al-rahm)* has been understood to mean "to be kind and give presents to one's blood relatives." In the context where it occurs below, 2:145 (n. 761), one might think of such a translation, though it does not seem to be correct there. Here it would be impossible.

are useful only in so far as they imply the close contact that is a consequence of blood ties and that eventually leads to mutual help and affection. Anything beyond that is superfluous. <sup>48</sup> For a pedigree is something imaginary and devoid of reality. <sup>49</sup> Its usefulness consists only in the resulting connection and close contact. If the fact of (common descent) is obvious and clear, it evokes in man a natural affection, as we have said. If, however, its existence is known only from remote history, it moves the imagination but faintly. Its usefulness is gone, and preoccupation with it becomes gratuitous, a kind of game, and as such is not permissible. In this sense, one must understand the remark, "Genealogy is something that is of no use to know and that it does no harm not to know." <sup>50</sup> This means that when common descent is no longer clear and has become a matter of scientific knowledge, it can no longer move the imagination and is denied the affection caused by group feeling. It has become useless. And God knows better.

[ 9 ] *Purity of lineage is found only among the savage Arabs of the desert and other such people.*

This <sup>51</sup> is on account of the poor life, hard conditions, and bad habits that are peculiar to the Arabs. They are the result of necessity that destined (these conditions) for (the Arabs), in as much as their subsistence depends on camels and camel breeding and pasturage. The camels are the cause of (the Arabs') savage life in the desert, since they feed on the shrubs of the desert and give birth (to their young ones) in the desert sands, as has been mentioned before. <sup>52</sup> The desert is a place of hardship and starvation, but to them it has become familiar and accustomed. Generations of (Arabs) grew up in the desert. Eventually, they become confirmed in their character and natural qualities. No member of any other

<sup>48</sup> The correct vocalization *muṣtaḡhāh* is indicated in C and D.  
<sup>49</sup> Cf. p. 374, below. <sup>50</sup> Cf. F. Rosenthal, *op. cit.*, p. 242.  
<sup>51</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 104 f. <sup>52</sup> Cf. p. 251, above.

The Bedouins and  
 who live in  
 the mountains  
 are not mixed  
 with the  
 sedentary

nation was disposed to share their conditions. No member of any other race felt attracted to them. But if one of them were to find ways and means of fleeing from these conditions, he would not (do so or) give them up.<sup>53</sup> Therefore, their pedigrees can be trusted not to have been mixed up and corrupted. They have been preserved pure in unbroken lines. This is the case, for instance, with Mudar tribes such as the Quraysh, the Kinānah, the Thaqif, the Banū Asad, the Hudhayl, and their Khuzā'ah neighbors. They lived a hard life in places where there was no agriculture or animal husbandry. They lived far from the fertile fields of Syria and the 'Irāq, far from the sources of seasonings and grains. How pure have they kept their lineages! These are unmingled in every way, and are known to be unsullied.

Other Arabs lived in the hills and at the sources of fertile pastures and plentiful living. Among these Arabs were the Hinyar and the Kahlān, such as the Lakhm, the Judhām, the Ghassān, the Tayy, the Qudā'ah, and the Iyād. Their lineages were mixed up, and their groups intermingled. It is known that people (genealogists) differ with respect to each one of these families. This came about as the result of intermixture with non-Arabs. They did not pay any attention to preserving the (purity of) lineage of their families and groups. This<sup>54</sup> was done only by (true) Arabs. 'Umar said: "Study genealogy, and be not like the Nabataeans of the Mesopotamian lowlands. When one of them is asked about his origin, he says: 'From such and such a village.'" <sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the Arabs of the fertile fields were affected by the general human trend toward competition for the fat soil and the good pastures. This resulted in intermingling and much mixture of lineages. Even at the beginning of Islam, people occasionally referred to themselves by their places of residence. They referred to the Districts of Qinnasrīn, of Damascus, or of the 'Awāšim (the border region of northern

1, 238

<sup>53</sup> But see above, p. 252. <sup>54</sup> Cf. Issawi, pp. 106 f.  
<sup>55</sup> Cf. Ibn 'Abdrabbih, 'Iqd, II, 57; Ibn 'Abd-al-Barr, al-Intibāh 'alā qabā'il al-Fuzū'ah (Cairo, 1350/1931-32), p. 43.

Purity and Confusion of Lineage

Syria). This custom was then transferred to Spain. It happened not because the Arabs rejected genealogical considerations, but because they acquired particular places of residence after the conquest. They eventually became known by their places of residence. These became a distinguishing mark, in addition to the pedigree, used by (the Arabs) to identify themselves in the presence of their amirs. Later on, sedentary (Arabs) mixed with Persians and other non-Arabs. Purity of lineage was completely lost, and its fruit, the group feeling, was lost and rejected. The tribes, then, disappeared and were wiped out, and with them, the group feeling was wiped out. But the (earlier situation) remained unchanged among the Bedouins.

God inherits the earth and whomever is upon it.

[ 10 ] How lineages become confused.

The Bedouins  
 are not mixed  
 with the  
 sedentary  
 because they  
 live in the  
 mountains  
 and are  
 separated  
 from them

5.0 Introductory statement

5. Mon Oct 2 The rise of Islam: religion

Txt:

Lewis, ch. 2

5.1 Extracts on the Prophet

5.2

Tabari on the building of the Ka'ba

5.3

Muhammad and the pagans

This and the next seminar are about the life of the Prophet Muhammad (d. 632). His career fuses religion and politics. My general idea is to cover religion in this seminar, and politics in the next; but it won't work out so neatly. Our concern with religion is not with Islam at large, but simply with aspects of its earliest form that are relevant to our historical concerns—specifically, the sudden appearance of a state which made history in what looks like an unlikely part of the world.

Here again, the textbook gives you a survey, and the rest of the readings are from primary sources.

Reading 5.1: Here you get a chronology and two scriptural

passages which are crucial to Muhammad's message. I've also given you a near-contemporary English parallel—or rather, contrast—to think about. What's the same, and what's different, about the rise of monotheism in England and Arabia?

Reading 5.2: This is your friend Tabari again, here with accounts of how Abraham and his son Ishmael built the Ka'ba in Mecca. Abraham is, of course, the patriarch of the Biblical Book of Genesis. Through his elder son Ishmael, he was the ancestor of the Biblical Ishmaelites (by the time we're concerned with everybody equated them with the Arabs); while through his younger son Isaac he was the ancestor of the Biblical Israelites (and hence of the Jews). The Bible tells us how Ishmael was pushed out into the desert when Isaac was born, but says nothing about any building of the Ka'ba. What you get here is stories which fill out the Koranic passage you met in Reading 5.1. What's the message? In what ways can these accounts be described as mythical?

Reading 5.3: See the note I inserted on the title-page when I used this reading in another course. What are the key themes in these stories? If you were awarding a prize for political correctness, which side would get it?