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The Rise of Historical Writing
Among the Arabs

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CHAPTER ONE

The Rise of History Among the Arabs and Its Development During the First Three Centuries A.H.

I.

Among the Arabs, historical writing has been an integral part of general cultural development.¹ Its links with the dis-

¹ For some general works on historical writing among the Arabs, see Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, *Die Geschichtsschreiber der Araber und ihre Werke* (Göttingen, 1882); Carl Brockelmann, *Geschichte der arabischen Literatur* (Weimar and Berlin, 1898-1902); Supplement (Leiden, 1937-1942); 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1943-49); Johann Fück, *Muḥammad ibn Isḥāq: literarhistorische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt am Main, 1925); Josef Horowitz ["The Earliest Biographies of the Prophet and Their Authors," *Islamic Culture*, I (1927), pp. 535ff.; II (1928), pp. 22ff., 164ff., 495ff.;] translated by Ḥusayn Naṣṣār as *AL-Maḡhāzī al-ūlā wa-nu-āliḥihā* (Cairo, 1949); D. S. Margoliouth, *Lectures on Arabic Historians* (Calcutta, 1930); H.A.R. Gibb, "Ta rikh," in *ET*, Supplement (Leiden, 1938), pp. 233ff. [reprinted in his *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, edited by Stanford J. Shaw and William R. Polk (Boston, 1962), pp. 108ff.]; Régis Blachère, *Histoire de la littérature arabe* (Paris, 1952-66); Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography* (Leiden, 1952); [2nd ed. (Leiden, 1968). See also Ignazio Guidi, "L'Historiographie chez les sémrites," *Revue biblique*, VI (1906), pp. 509ff.; Israel Friedländer, "Muhammedanische Geschichtskonstruktionen," *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Orients*, IX (1910), pp. 17ff.; Émile Amar, "Prolégomènes à l'étude des historiens arabes par Khālī ibn Alibak as-Safādī," *Journal asiatique*, 10th Series, XVII (1911), pp. 251ff.; XVIII (1911), pp. 5ff.; XIX (1912), pp. 243ff.; Rudi Paret, *Die legendäre Maḡhāzī-Literatur: arabische Dichtungen über die muslimischen Kriegszüge zu Muhammads Zeit* (Tübingen, 1930); G. Richter, *Die Geschichtsbild der arabischen Historiker des Mittelalters* (Tübingen, 1933); translated by M. Saber Khan as "Medieval Arabic Historiography," *Islamic Culture*, XXXIII (1959), pp. 240ff.; XXXIV (1960), pp. 139ff.; Ilse Lichtenstädter, "Arabic and Islamic Historiography," *Muslim World*, XXXV (1945), pp. 126ff.; Zeki Velidi Togan, "Kritische Geschichtsauffassung in der islamischen Welt des Mittelalters," *Proceedings of the Twenty-Second Congress of Orientalists*, edited by Zeki Velidi Togan (Istanbul, 1953-57), I, 76ff.; translated by M. S. Khan as "The Concept of Critical Historiography in the Islamic World of the Middle Ages," *Islamic Studies*, XIV (1975), pp. 175ff.; Julian Obermann, "Early Islam," in

cipline of *ḥadīth* and with belles-lettres are particularly strong and deserve special attention. Moreover, the rise of Islam, the subsequent creation of an empire, the clash of various views and cultural currents, and the development and experiences of the new Islamic community, or *umma*, are all of vital concern to us if we are to understand the earliest stages in the development of historical writing in this milieu.

The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East, edited by Julian Obermann (New Haven, 1955), pp. 237ff.; B. Spuler, "Islamische und abendländische Geschichtsschreibung: Ein Grundsatz-Betrachtung," *Saeculum*, VI (1955), pp. 125ff.; Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri* (Chicago, 1957-72), I, 5ff.; Joseph de Somogyi, "The Development of Arabic Historiography," *JSS*, III (1958), pp. 373ff.; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums* (Leiden, 1967-), I, 235ff.; Ignaz Goldziher, "Historiography in Arabic Literature," in his *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Joseph de Somogyi (Hildesheim, 1967-73), III, 359ff.; Hamida Murtaza, "The Origin of the Muslim Historiography," *Journal of the Pakistan Historical Society*, XVI (1968), pp. 198ff.; Albrecht Noth, "İsfahān-Nihāvand: eine quellenkritische Studie zur frühislamischen Historiographie," *ZDMG*, CXVIII (1968), pp. 274ff.; K. Jahn, "Universalgeschichte im islamischen Raum," in *Mensch und Weltgeschichte: Zur Geschichte der Universalgeschichtsschreibung*, edited by A. Randa (Salzburg and Munich, 1969), pp. 145ff.; Walther Braune, "Historical Consciousness in Islam," in *Theology and Law in Islam*, edited by Gustave E. von Grunbaum (Wiesbaden, 1971), pp. 37ff.; D. M. Dunlop, *Arab Civilization to A.D. 1500* (London, 1971), pp. 70ff.; Gernot Rotter, "Abū Zur'a ad-Dimaṣqī (st. 281/894) und das Problem der frühen arabischen Geschichtsschreibung in Syrien," *Die Welt des Orients*, VI (1971), pp. 80ff.; Albrecht Noth, "Der Charakter der ersten grossen Sammlungen von Nachrichten zur frühen Kalifenzeit," *Der Islam*, XLVII (1971), pp. 168ff.; *idem*, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen frühislamischer Geschichtsschreibung*, I: *Themen und Formen* (Bonn, 1973); *idem*, "Die literarisch überlieferten Verträge der Eroberungszeit als historische Quellen für die Behandlung der Unterworfenen Nicht-Muslims durch ihre neuen muslimischen Oberherren," *Studien zum Minderheitenproblem im Islam* (Bonn, 1973), I, 282ff.; Gernot Rotter, "Formen der frühen arabischen Geschichtsschreibung," in *Deutsche Orientalistik am Beispiel Tübingens*, edited by Gernot Rotter (Tübingen and Basel, 1974), pp. 63ff.; Nisar Ahmed Faruqi, "Some Methodological Aspects of the Early Muslim Historiography," *Islam and the Modern Age*, VI (1975), pp. 88ff.; Tarif Khalidi, *Islamic Historiography: the Histories of Mas'ūdī (Al-Baḡdādī, 1975)*; Claude Cahen, "Notes sur l'historiographie dans la communauté musulmane médiévale," *REI*, XLIV (1976), pp. 81ff.; John Wansbrough, *The Secularian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978). On related literary developments in early Islamic times, see William Marçais, "Les Origines de la prose littéraire arabe," *Revue africaine*, LXVIII (1927), pp. 12ff.; Ruth Stellhorn Mackensen, "Arabic Books and Libraries in

Although it was in early Islamic times that historical writing appeared among the Arabs, elements of cultural continuity oblige us to turn our attention back to the pre-Islamic heritage. Both nomadic and other more settled societies existed in the Arabian peninsula in the period of the Jāhiliya; and although the satisfactory information available to us is meager and generally the product of later times, we will consider it briefly here by way of introduction to the present study.

Inscriptions and carvings in southern Arabia attest to the emergence of four kingdoms during the period extending from 1200 B.C. to 527 A.D. These kingdoms all followed similar paths of development. They began as theocracies ruled by a priest-king, or *mukarrrib*, exercising both religious and temporal power, and then gradually evolved into secular kingdoms ruled by families of warriors and landowners.² These kingdoms left inscriptions which, based on what we have learned so far, are datable to the period extending from the eighth century B.C. to the seventh century A.D. These inscriptions record a variety of actions, such as acts of charity and the Umayyad period.³ *AJSL*, LII (1935-36), pp. 245ff.; LIII (1936-37), pp. 239ff.; LIV (1937-38), pp. 41ff.; Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Rome, 1947); C. A. Nallino, *La Letteratura araba des origines à l'époque de la dynastie umayyade*, translated by Charles Pellat (Paris, 1950); Régis Blachère, "Regards sur la littérature narrative en arabe au Ier siècle de l'hégire (= VIIIe s.J.-C.)." *Semítica*, VI (1956), pp. 75ff.; Franz Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant* (Leiden, 1970). For some of the events which will frequently reappear in this book, the following works offer important historiographical discussions: Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur ältesten Geschichte des Islams*, published in his *Skizzen und Vorarbeiten*, VI (Berlin, 1899), pp. 3ff.; M. J. de Goeje, *Mémoire sur la conquête de la Syrie*, 2nd ed. (Leiden, 1900); W. Sarasin, *Das Bild Alis bei der Herrschaft der Sunna* (Basel, 1907); W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford, 1953); *idem*, *Muhammad at Medina* (Oxford, 1956); Erling Ladewig Petersen, *Alī and Mu'awya in Early Arabic Tradition* (Copenhagen, 1964); Elias S. Shoufani, *Al-Riddāb and the Muslim Conquest of Arabia* (Toronto, 1972); Fred M. Donner, "The Bakr b. Wa'il Tribes and Politics in Northeastern Arabia on the Eve of Islam," *Sudāia Islāmīca*, LI (1980), pp. 5ff.; *idem*, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981).¹

² Jacques Ryckmans, *L'Institution monarchique à l'Arabie méridionale* (Louvain, 1951), pp. 25ff.

piety, submission of tax payments, irrigation projects, the building of walls and fortifications, and military campaigns.³ Although some of these inscriptions are religious in nature, others are essentially efforts to record human actions and perpetuate the memory of important deeds.⁴ In these inscriptions we at first find a confused method of dating events; but later on a fixed calendar beginning with the year 115 B.C. was introduced, leading to a fixed system of dating.⁵ This development, along with the interest in recording human actions, may have inspired the emergence of some measure of historically minded thinking. Al-Hamdānī lends credence to this possibility when he refers to royal documents and Himyarite records that were preserved and consulted again later,⁶ and to the *zabūr*, the documents and genealogical records which some families and clans preserved.⁷

³ *Repertoire d'épigraphie sémitique*, vols. V-VII, edited by J. Ryckmans (Paris, 1929-50), nos. 2695, 2706, 2789, 2975, 2999, 3021, 3391, 3943.

⁴ Ryckmans, *L'Institution monarchique*, pp. 71ff., 77; RES, nos. 3858, 3943; *Corpus inscriptionum semiticarum*, Part IV (Paris, 1889-1931), no. 6215; G. Ryckmans, "Inscriptions Sub-Arabes," *Le Muséon*, XLV (1932), pp. 294f.; Sidney Smith, "Events in Arabia in the 6th Century A.D.," *BSOAS*, XVI (1954), p. 431.

⁵ Ryckmans, *L'Institution monarchique*, p. 282.

⁶ In his account of a Yemenite scholar, al-Hamdānī says that the man was "the heir to whatever written accounts of their learning that the kings of Himyar had stored away in their treasures," and that "he read the old *zabūr* of the Himyarites and their ancient inscriptions in their *musnad* alphabet." See his *Al-ʿIḥḥ*, vol. I, edited by Oscar Löfgren (Uppsala, 1954), p. 5. He also mentions that genealogies of the descendants of al-Hamyasa "were recorded in the treasures of the Himyarites, as were the genealogies of the kings descended from 'Amr ibn Hamdān"; *ʿIḥḥ*, X, edited by Muhibb al-Dīn al-Kharīb (Cairo, 1368/1949), p. 30.

⁷ Al-Hamdānī says, concerning the genealogies of the La'wis, "The genealogies of the La'wis are based on solid documentation (*muḡayyadāt al-ḡuḡūl*) . . . I have taken them on their authority related from an ancient record (*zabūr*) in the handwriting of Ahmad ibn Mūsā"; *ʿIḥḥ*, X, 111. Elsewhere he says that he has taken the genealogy of Banū La'wa "that was related on their authority in their own time in the town (Rayda) and based on the records (*zabūr*) they possessed. This genealogy has been compared with what Hishām ibn Muhammad ibn al-Ḥā'ib al-Kalbī and other genealogists have related"; *ʿIḥḥ*, X, 119f. He also says, "The Marwānids of the Yemen . . . act according

Yemenite accounts found in the primary literary sources, however, are generally of a legendary character, to such an extent that even the events of the sixth century A.D., which was then the relatively recent past, are muddled.⁸ In these sources we find, in place of any reliable accounts, narrators like Wāḥib ibn Munabbih (d. 114/732) and Ubayd ibn Shārya,^a who furnish us with a fanciful romantic story of the history of the Yemen which is an amalgamation of popular fables and *Isra'īlīyāt*, or tales of the ancient Israelites.^b In this way they attempted to glorify the Yemenite Arabs, ascribing to them glorious achievements in war, craftsmanship, language, literature, and even religion—all in order to prove that they had surpassed the Arabs of the north in such achievements, or that they were in no way inferior to them in these respects.⁹ They set forth these accounts of their own past in a style which resembles the style of the stories in the *ḥayyām al-ʿarab*, the "Battle-Days" of the Arab tribes, including a very ample measure of forged verse to strengthen the impression made by the story. This is a phenomenon which calls for further attention. Its causes appear to be associated with the circumstances in

to the genealogies that their ancestors set down and preserved by transmission from one illustrious ancestor to the next"; *Iktilāʿ*, X, 30f. [On the *zabūr*, see *ET*, IV, 1184f. (J. Horowitz).]

⁸ In the opening section of his *Iktilāʿ* (I, 4), al-Hamdānī criticizes the historical accounts about the Yemen and says, "I found most people stumbling about in lost confusion, as the blackest darkness surrounded them in the dead of the night." He considers the lack of precision in chronicling events to be an element contributing to this confusion.

^a [On Wāḥib ibn Munabbih, see Chapter Three below. Ubayd ibn Shārya was an oft-quoted transmitter of reports who supposedly died in the mid-first century A.H. Abbott (*Studies*, I, 9ff.) discusses him in detail and considers him to be a historical figure, but other scholars have raised serious doubts as to whether he was any more than a fictitious character to whom many folkloric tales were attributed. See F. Krenkow, "The Two Oldest Books on Arabic Folklore," *Islamic Culture*, II (1928), pp. 234ff.; *ET*, III, 937 (Franz Rosenthal).]

^b [On this literature, see *ET*, IV, 211f. (G. Vajda).]

⁹ Ibn Hishām, *Kitaḥ al-ḥijāb fi mulūk Ḥimyar wa-l-Yaman*, edited by F. Krenkow (Haydarabad, A.H. 1347), pp. 35, 47f., 52f., 74, 86f., 110, 162.

which the Arabs found themselves in the early Islamic period. Political circumstances and geographical factors certainly exerted an influence in this, since partisan feeling and rivalry between the northern Arabs (Muḍar) and southern Arabs (Yemen) were most particularly responsible for such reports of the past as these. These Yemenite narratives may in turn have been partly responsible for the partisan spirit which arose among the genealogists of the north.¹⁰ The remoteness of southern Arabia may have deterred the learned men of the north from traveling to Yemen and gathering information directly from the area.¹¹ Moreover, these early narrators, or *ḥayyāt*, were more nearly storytellers than they were historians. Thus, the accounts of Yemen that have come down to us are of little value and devoid of historical conception. Yet, from another point of view, it is likely that the idea of fixed dating (the calendar) among the Yemenites had an influence in the establishment of a fixed calendar (the Hijra dating system) among the Muslims.¹²

In the north of the peninsula, the Lakhmid kings had "books" preserved in the churches of al-Ḥira, which contained accounts of the Arabs of the city, their genealogies, and biographies of their rulers. Similarly, they were familiar with many Persian accounts of the Iranian past.¹³ But although

¹⁰ Al-Hamdānī (*Iktilāʿ*, I, 4) considers the partisan feelings, or *isābihiya*, of the genealogists of Iraq and Syria to be one of the factors that contributed to the confusion over the genealogy of the Yemenites, and says that "the method of the genealogists of Iraq and Syria is similar, in that they abbreviate the genealogies of Kahlān and Mālik ibn Ḥimyar in order to make the number of their ancestors correspond to the number ascribed to the sons of Ismāʿīl." [i.e., they compress Yemenite lines of descent to avoid conceding that the great families of the south are of greater antiquity than those of the north.]

¹¹ Al-Hamdānī, *Iktilāʿ*, X, 30. About the northern chroniclers, he says that "they have made very few journeys to see their counterparts living in Yemen; and in the path followed by their learned men they encountered naught but some leavings from departed caravans"; *Iktilāʿ*, I, 4.

¹² Al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Shamāʾir fi ʿilm al-taʾrīkh*, edited by C. F. Seybold (Leiden, 1894), p. 9.

¹³ Al-Ṭabarī, *Taʾrīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (Cairo: Ḥusayniya Press, A.H. 1336),

some historians in later periods made use of these books and accounts in their own works, we find nothing which indicates that the Arabs of al-Hira themselves had any clear conception of history.

The Arabs of the north had oral accounts of stories about their gods, and also accounts of their social affairs and their great exploits. The principal part of these accounts are concerned with their raiding expeditions and battles (*ayyām*) and their genealogies. These accounts are intimately related to the organization, views, and customs of society, as is reflected most prominently by the ideas of *murūmān*, the totality of the bedouin virtues, of *nasab*, noble family origin, and of *hasab*, the distinction of great deeds and exploits, since individuals were expected to know their ancestors and the noble deeds which they had performed. As the *ayyām* were thus the subject of special concern in tribal society, the tribes had tales and narratives of their past deeds. These tribal accounts circulated both orally and in the form of prose. In the oral accounts, however, poetry plays a fundamental role, since it either appears throughout the story or comes at the end, depending on whether or not the poet has taken part in the events described. This poetry does not carry the story forward, but rather gives it vitality and authority. And, with the passage of time, it came to be considered the solid evidence which confirmed the validity of the story. As Ibn Fāris puts it, "Poetry is the register (*dāwān*) of the Arabs, through which genealogies are preserved and great deeds are displayed, and from which language is learned."¹⁴

¹⁴ II, 127 [edited by M. J. de Goeje et al. (Leiden, 1879-1901), I, 770]; Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh*, edited by Mustafā al-Saqqa et al. (Cairo, 1355/1936), I, 321 [edited by Ferdinand Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1858-60), I, 1, 191]; Hājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn an asāmī l-kutub wa-l-funūn*, edited by Şereferun Yalçakaya and Kılışlı Rifat Bilge (Istanbul, 1941-43), I, 35.
¹⁵ Al-Tibrizī, *Sharh al-ḥamāsa* (Cairo, 1335/1916), I, 3; al-Suyūṭī, *Al-Muzḥir fi 'ulūm al-lughā*, edited by Ahmad Jād al-Mawlā et al. (Cairo, n.d.), II, 470.

The *ayyām* stories had originated in evening tribal gatherings (*maǧālis*), and were an orally transmitted assemblage of collective tribal accounts. They were the common property of the tribe, and remained so until the second/eighth century, when these accounts were gathered and compiled in written form. At the same time, however, we must bear in mind that the political and social currents of the early Islamic period exerted a distinct influence on the *ayyām* literature. Accounts of the "Battle-Days" are chronologically confused, and generally reflect partisan tendencies and represent the views of only one side. Moreover, they lack coherence and order, and embody no concept of history. Nevertheless, they do contain certain historical facts. Their fundamental importance is that they persisted through the early Islamic period, and their style affected the early stages of historical writing, especially in Iraq.

The presence of poetry in the *ayyām* made them a subject of keen interest to philologists, genealogists, and historians (e.g., Abū 'Ubayda, al-Madā'inī, Ibn Qutayba, Abū l-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, and Ibn 'Abd Rabbih), and likewise, the *ayyām* eventually became an element in historical accounts. Ibn al-Athir tried to present accounts of the *ayyām* in historical sequence.¹⁵ Hājji Khalifa considers the *ayyām* to be a branch of history, saying, "The study of the *ayyām al-'arab* is a branch of learning in which one studies the momentous events and great ordeals which occurred among the Arab tribes . . . and it is appropriate that the above-mentioned field of learning be placed among the branches of history."¹⁶

For modern historians the importance of the *ayyām* ac-

¹⁵ Ibn al-Athir, *Al-Kāmil fi l-tārīkh* (Cairo, A.H. 1290), I, 209, 219, 220, 225ff. [edited by C. J. Tornberg (Leiden, 1851-71), I, 502ff.].

¹⁶ Hājji Khalifa, *Kashf al-zunūn*, I, 204. On the *ayyām*, see Werner Casel, "Ajjām al-'arab: Studien zur alarabischen Epik," *Islamica*, III (1930), pp. 1ff.; Ahmad al-Shā'ib, *Tārīkh al-maǧā'id*, 2nd ed. (Cairo, 1954), pp. 53ff.; ET, I, 218f. (E. Mirrwoch); [ET, I, 793f. (E. Mirrwoch)]; E. Meyer, *Der historische Gehalt der Ajjām al-'Arab* (Wiesbaden, 1970); Abd al-Jabbār al-Bayātī, *Kitāb ayyām al-'arab qabla l-Islām* (Baghdad, 1976).

counts lies in their persistence into early Islamic times, and in their style. The style of the *ayyām* stories is direct and full of vitality, a realistic approach in which prose is blended together with poetry. This style had its effect on the beginnings of historical writing among the Arabs, and its influence was particularly strong in the tribal milieu.

Tribal life is characterized by its adherence to tradition, and has only a confused and limited notion of time. This is because time, from the tribal point of view, is punctuated by great events which tribesmen customarily take as starting points for dating events or fixing matters of chronology; when an important event occurs, whatever preceded it is disregarded and subsequent events are dated according to it. In some times and places, like al-Ḥīra and Mecca, the tribes were in contact with other cultures. But their interest in these cultures was limited to their own immediate and particular affairs, and we have no evidence indicating the presence of other outside influences.

The era of the Jāhiliya left no written literature, and was rather a period of oral culture. Although its legacy in general contributed to the persistent interest in *ayyām* and in genealogies, and to the survival of a certain style in relating accounts, i.e., the pseudo-historical storytelling style, it is nevertheless devoid of any genuinely historical view of its subject matter.

II.

New views arose with the emergence of Islam. The Qur'ān expounded a serious conception of the past, called attention to the limitations of the Arabs' earlier recollections, and traced history back to the beginning of Creation. The Qur'ān stressed the lessons and warnings provided by the history of bygone times, and recalled the experiences of past nations and peoples in order to emphasize the spiritual and ethical precepts they involved. It set forth a universal view which conceived of his-

tory as a succession of prophetic missions—all essentially a single message preached by various prophets, the last of whom, Muḥammad, was the *khātam*, or "seal," of the prophets and messengers. This view made its influence felt by directing attention to the history of the prophets and to the *Isrā' ilayyāt*. Yet this universal conception of history was limited to the periods which preceded the rise of Islam; for later times, attention was focused on the history of Islam. The Muslims were the successors of the previous nations among whom past prophets had carried out their missions, and their own deeds and affairs were thus deserving of special interest. This point of view was buttressed by the famous *ḥadīth*, "My community will never agree on an error," a *ḥadīth* important in establishing the concept of communal consensus, or *ijmā'*. Finally, the Qur'ān stated that the Prophet's words were of divine inspiration, and that his life was an example for Muslims to emulate. Here we find an immediate motive for the study of the Prophet's words and deeds.

The Arabs of Islamic times felt that they were possessors of a message of great significance, and that they were passing through an important stage in history. The great conquests, for example, made them aware that they had an important role to play in history, and this recognition had a powerful impact on historical studies. It was in this era that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb established a fixed calendar, the Hijra dating system. This became a vital element in the rise of historical thought; and the temporal fixing of events, or rather their classification in chronological order, has been the backbone of historical studies ever since. 'Umar also initiated the *dīnār* system, or the recording of the names of warriors and their families according to tribe. This gave genealogies new importance and provided further incentive for studying them.

Considering these views and factors, and surveying the rise of historical studies, we notice that the first manifestations of

thus their sayings and activities also came to be included in the *ḥadīth*.¹⁷ Eventually, through the course of the first century A.H., interest broadened to include the activities of the entire Islamic community. These various considerations all manifested themselves in historical studies.

The study of the *maghāzī*, or military expeditions of the Prophet, began in Medina in conjunction with the study of *ḥadīth*. The scholars of *ḥadīth* continued to show interest in the *maghāzī*, but some of them, in studying the life of the Prophet, began to do so in a manner which moved beyond the limitations of the juridical aspects of the subject. The pioneers of *maghāzī* studies were scholars of *ḥadīth*, as is confirmed by the way in which the learned regarded the *maghāzī* authors. This also explains the importance of the *isnād*,^c the chain of authorities transmitting a report, in assessing the value of the *maghāzī*; this meant that the value of a *ḥadīth* or other account depended upon the reputation of the *ḥadīth* scholars or transmitters who figured in the chain of authorities. This point of view very early on gave rise to a critical attitude towards the *rumūṭ*, the sources who transmitted the information. It introduced the element of investigation and inquiry into the gathering of the various accounts, and laid a firm foundation for historical studies. On the other hand, narratives and popular tales about the *maghāzī* were also passed along by word of mouth. Storytellers, the *qasṣās*, went to great

¹⁷ See Joseph Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammedan Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1950), pp. 3ff.

^c [The development of the *isnād* and its evolution as a critical tool are still topics of considerable controversy. For some of the more important views, see Ignaz Goldziher, *Muslim Studies*, edited and translated by S. M. Stern and C. R. Barber (London, 1967-71), II, index; Leone Caetani, *Annali dell'Islam* (Milan, 1905-26), I, 29ff.; Josef Horowitz, "Alter und Ursprung des Isnād," *Der Islam*, VIII (1918), pp. 39ff.; Schacht, *Origins*, pp. 38ff.; J. Robson, "The Isnād in Muslim Tradition," *Transactions of the Glasgow University Oriental Society*, XV (1955), pp. 15ff.; Abbott, *Studies*, I, 8f.; II, 5ff., and frequently thereafter; M. M. Azmi, *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Indianapolis, 1978), pp. 212ff.; Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 107ff.]

such writing originated from two fundamental perspectives: the Islamic perspective, which arose among the scholars of *ḥadīth*, and the tribal perspective, or that of the *ayyām*. These two outlooks reflect the two great currents in early Islamic society: the tribal current represented by the enduring persistence of the tribal heritage, and the Islamic current embodied in spiritual principles and activities. Each of these two perspectives had a cultural center in which it was predominant: the Islamic perspective thrived in Medina, the abode of prophetic *sunna*, and the tribal perspective in Kufa and Basra, the two new garrison towns which were centers of tribal activity. All three cities were centers of vigorous cultural activity in early Islamic times. Each perspective developed its own school of historical writing, and each school exerted its own influence upon the other. In the end, however, the Islamic perspective prevailed as the viewpoint of the scholars of *ḥadīth* rose to a dominant position in historical writing, as we shall see later below.

III.

Men of learning considered it their natural role and essential task to devote their attention to the words and deeds of the Prophet, whether as sources of spiritual guidance, or as sanctions providing precedents applicable to jurisprudence, administrative organization, and the affairs of everyday life. Similarly, Muḥammad's military campaigns and the expeditions of his Companions were a matter of special interest and pride among Muslims in general, and were favored topics of conversation at evening gatherings. Interest in these events was further reinforced by the fact that participation in the campaigns and other activities of the Prophet was a factor in improving one's social status, and also a point considered in the determination of stipends in the *āyāt* registers. Before long, the Companions themselves came to be regarded as paragons for later generations to emulate in word and deed, and