Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations 19 (2008): 130-132

Muslim scripture. The aim, as Cuypers expresses it, is to be able to read the text without later interpretation imposed upon it, an approach that has an objective, 'scientific' outcome as its goal. This is first reflected in the translation of the name of the *sūra* being analysed, as reflected in the title of the book: it is, Cuypers suggests, not the traditional *table dressée* (the set table), but a festive meal, an important symbol of the overall theme of the *sūra* (one of the alliances between different religious communities) and an interpretation that 'indicates the distance between the qur'anic text and its interpretation' (p. 20, my translation).

Accomplishing an analysis of the composition of the Qur'an is laborious, and Cuypers' book illustrates that point. *Sūra* 5 is fairly short—120 verses—but it takes some 400 pages to both present and analyse every compositional element. Given the goal of finding the structural relationship between elements of the text, the analysis must take into account portions of the text on many levels—first, the element (syntagme), then the segment, the piece and the part, followed by the larger portions, called the passage, the sequence, the section and then the book, with intervening levels of the sub-part, sub-sequence and sub-section. The relationships between those varying-sized portions are examined for symmetry—deemed to be the fundamental principle of Semitic rhetoric—which can appear in formats that are parallel (ABD/abd), concentric (ABCD/x/dcba) or mirror-image (ABCE/dcba). Synonymity, antithesis, homophony, paronymy, assonance and homography can all be at play between the elements and thus the analysis must be alert to all possibilities.

Whether rhetorical criticism holds the key to the secrets of textual composition is an open question: the certainty with which its practitioners approach their task is not always convincing. To me, the value of this book lies in its detailed analyses of the content of the *sūra*. Regardless of whether one agrees with the theoretical structure used to frame the analysis or with the divisions into which the text is proposed to fit, Cuypers' ability to bring to the forefront the thematic concerns of inter-religious community relations contained in the chapter means that the book will be a significant resource for future scholarship, especially given its frequent insights into qur'anic parallels to the biblical text.

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Defending the 'People of Truth' in the Early Islamic Period: The Christian Apologies of Abū Rā'iṭah
Sandra Toenies Keating
History of Muslim–Christian Relations 4
Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2006
378 pp., hb. €123.00/US$166.00, ISBN 9004148019

Abū Rā'iṭa al-Takrītī was a member of the Syrian Orthodox Church. He flourished towards the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth, and probably passed most of his life in what is now Iraq. He is best remembered today as one of the earliest Christians to have written in Arabic. From his pen, there survive around a dozen works. These are concerned, first, with the defence of Christianity against Islam, and, second, with the defence of Syrian Orthodox Christology against heretics, most notably Chalcedonians. Abū Rā'iṭa's corpus was first published and translated (into German) only in 1951, by Georg Graf in the *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*. The present volume offers an introduction to the life of Abū Rā'iṭa, as well as editions and English translations of those of his works related to Islam. (The author states in her introduction that she is currently preparing a second volume that will include the remainder of his works.)

Keating's introduction examines what little is known of Abū Rā'iṭa's life, in the context of the challenges of Islam and the rise of a Christian literature in Arabic. Six works are then offered. The first is Abū Rā'iṭa's treatise confirming the truth of the Christian religion (Graf VIII). This work is a systematic apology for Christianity, against the claims of Islam. Its arguments are sociological, philosophical and scriptural. Unfortunately, it has suffered much in the course of transmission and is incomplete at its end. The second is his treatise on the Trinity (Graf I). This offers a philosophical defence of the doctrine of the Trinity against Muslim objections. The third is his treatise on the Incarnation (Graf II), which provides a philosophical defence of the doctrine of the Incarnation and seeks to show that it is not inconsistent with God's nature. The fourth work is a short florilegium of Old Testament citations defending the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation (Graf VI). The fifth is a very short work that seeks to establish that Christianity is attested by miracles (Graf X). The sixth and last work included is a short treatise that claims to be a record of a Christological debate between Abū Rā'iṭa, a Melkite and a Nestorian (Graf XI)—included here because it took place in the presence of a Muslim official.

As for the present edition, the author basically reproduces Graf's labours. Very occasionally, she offers conjectural emendations to Graf's edition, providing in her notes the reading she has corrected. In her introduction, the author states (p. 69) that she was able to consult a number of important manuscripts that were inaccessible to Graf. These are Sbath 1017, 1041 and 1042, currently located in the Georg and Matild Salem Foundation in Aleppo. (This foundation houses some of the missing Sbath manuscripts, that is, those that did not make their way to the Vatican Library with the remainder of his collection. These manuscripts were bequeathed by Paul Sbath to his brother, and upon the latter's death found their way to their present location.) Very oddly, while the author states (p. 69) that variants from these manuscripts would be included in the notes to her edition, I was unable to identify a single instance where this was the case.

The author outlines in her introduction (pp. 65–67) some of the problems she faced as a translator of Abū Rā'iṭa: the need to strike a balance between faithfulness to his Arabic and the interpretation of his intention; the desire to preserve the distinctive character of the religious terminology he shared with Muslims; the wish to avoid obscuring the otherness of his language and thought. In the end, she opted for a method of translation that is largely literal, wherein there is a near one-to-one correspondence between the terms and structure of the English and the Arabic. She departs from this approach only when there is risk that a literal translation might obscure the author's intention. While one might debate the appropriateness of this manner of translation, it must be concluded that the author, in executing her translation, has faithfully followed the method outlined in her introduction and the translation does indeed reproduce something of the flavour of the original. It is clear where the text is clear. It is obscure where Abū Rā'iṭa is less than clear. Even the rhythm and cadence of the English capture something of Abū Rā'iṭa's stylized prose.

Unfortunately, in reproducing Graf's edition, a significant number of typographical errors have worked their way into the text. (I counted 14 in the first ten paragraphs of the first treatise—5½ pages of text.) These are *typographical* errors, it must be emphasized: the translation always presupposes the correct text. Fortunately, it is relatively easy for one even minimally proficient in Arabic to spot these errors, in that the resulting text is nonsensical. Supplying the correct reading is rather more difficult, and necessitates recourse to Graf's edition. Unfortunately, therefore, any reader of these texts will still need that work to hand.

And as for Graf's edition, it must be observed that it was by no means critical. Graf faithfully reproduced the text of his base manuscripts, including numerous scribal errors—corrections being relegated to footnotes. He occasionally provided variants from one or another manuscript, but not systematically. He made no effort to establish stemmata for the treatises. Indeed, this would have been quite difficult, in that there were a number of important manuscripts to which he did not have access. In sum, by today's standards, Graf's edition was far from rigorous. One cannot help but wonder, therefore, whether it might not have been more profitable to include here a proper, critical edition of Abū Rā'iṭa's works. It does not seem that such an edition would be too difficult to produce, because not too many manuscripts of these treatises are known, and those that are known are now easy to access. In a word, the manuscript tradition shows every sign of being relatively straightforward. Might we not hope for such an edition in the author's second volume of Abū Rā'iṭa's works? Perhaps accompanied by a list of corrections to the Arabic text of the present volume?

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Charlemagne, Muhammad, and the Arab Roots of Capitalism
Gene W. Heck
Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2006
Studien zur Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Orients, neue Folge, Band 18
381 pp., hb. US$88.00, ISBN 3110192292

Economic historians often describe the birth of capitalism, phoenix-like, in the Italian maritime trading communities of the Middle Ages: Amalfi, Venice, Pisa, Genoa. These men were Europe's first capitalist entrepreneurs, and they invented such essential tools as checks, *commenda* contracts (permitting the creation of joint investments and risk-sharing), insurance, etc. Yet in fact, commercial capitalism had already been flourishing for centuries in the Muslim Near East, and when Italian (and subsequently Catalan) merchants developed these tools of trade, they for the most part adopted (and adapted) the tools already used by centuries of Arab traders, whether in navigation, investment, banking, taxation, etc.

Gene Heck narrates the development of commerce in the first Muslim centuries and thereafter, emphasizing in particular its flourishing in Fatimid Egypt, which he presents as a business-friendly laissez-faire régime under which Egyptian merchants were able to forge business and commercial tools that allowed them to carry on commerce in large volume from India to Spain and the Maghreb. Fatimid monetary and fiscal policy,