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On the (Middle) Iranian borrowings in Qur'ānic (and pre-Islamic) Arabic

Johnny Cheung (Leiden University)

0. Introduction

It has long been recognized that the holy book of the Muslims, the Qur'ān, was replete with religious concepts, imagery and allusions from outside the “pagan” Arabian heartland in which many non-Arabic forms and expressions had found their natural place. Many of the Muslim commentators on the Qur'ān had no hesitation to consider a foreign provenance for especially those cases where the strange morphology of the forms would not fit in any paradigm of Classical Arabic grammar. It is only following the influential works of the pre-eminent scholar, the Jewish convert Abū 'Ubaydah (728 - 825 CE) from Basra and Imām al-Shāfi' (767 - 820 CE), the founder of one of the main Schools of the Fiqh, that a fairly dominant view took hold that the holy Qur'ān was free of foreign elements. This view was based on Sūrah 41: 44 primarily: *wa law ja'alnāhu qur'ānan a'jamiyyan la-qālū lawlā fuṣṣilat āyātu-hu a'jamiyyun wa 'arabiyyun qul hu wa lillaḏīna āmanū hudan wa šafā'un* ‘And if We had made it a non-Arabic Qur'an [i.e. a Qur'ān in 'ajamiyya], they would have said, “Why are its verses not explained in detail [in our language]? Is it a foreign [recitation] and an Arab [messenger]?” Say, “It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure.””¹.

The argument was, of course, that the only way the Arabs could have understood the Qur'ān, if it were in their native, Arabic tongue. Another argument against the presence of foreign elements in the Qur'ān was that, as the Qur'ān was the most perfect and final manifestation of divine revelations, God would have naturally chosen the most perfect of languages, i.e. Arabic, which would surely not be lacking vocabulary in expressing religious concepts. The reply to the argument that the Qur'ān contains forms that are incomprehensible to ordinary Arabic speakers, was simply that, because the Arabic language was so rich and vast, a mere mortal being would not be able to grasp its entirety.

Even so, the evidence of the early philologists was so strong, that for the proponents of a “foreign free” Qur'ānic reading, the similarities between some of the Arabic forms and their foreign counterparts were just coincidental, or at least, Arabic happened to use those forms first in the Qur'ān, which is the position of the celebrated Persian historian and theologian al-Ṭabarī (839 - 923 CE) in his famous *Tafsīr* of the Qur'ān.

The more pragmatic argument was later suggested by the Egyptian scholar and Qur'ān exegete al-Suyūṭī (1445 - 1505 CE), viz. that indeed the Qur'ān was in plain Arabic, but the ancient Arabs merely assimilated words from other civilisations in such a way they have become part (“perfected”) of the Arabic language. Al-Suyūṭī also attempted to classify those originally non-Arabic elements of the Qur'ān in several groups, according to language, viz. borrowings from Ethiopic, Persian, Greek, Indian, right down to “Zanji” and Berber.

¹ The English translation of all the quoted passages of the Qur'ān is from *Sahih International*, www.quran.com.

² Even after the downfall of the Parthian-speaking Arsacids, Parthian was still extensively used in the Iranian realm under the successive, Persian oriented, Sassanian dynasty.

Many of these assumptions were little more than guesses based on a certain resemblance in form or meaning.

It is only with better understanding and discoveries of those languages among the European scholars that we are now able to assign an extraneous provenance on a firmer philological footing. A comprehensive overview of the modern researches on the foreign forms in Qur'ānic Arabic was published by Arthur Jeffery in 1938 (repr. 2007): *The Foreign Vocabulary Of The Qur'ān*. It is from this publication that I have collected my Qur'ānic forms of probable Iranian origin. Since Jeffery we now have at our disposal a panoply of relevant Middle Iranian texts, which have been edited and published together with auxiliary tools, such as dictionaries. I will therefore assess these forms, from my background as an Iranist, whether they may be genuinely qualified as Iranian, and in which way they may have arrived in the Qur'ānic texts. It must be emphasized though that the so-called "Iranian" source is mainly from Middle Persian (as attested in Pahlavi and Central Asian Manichean texts) and Parthian² (chiefly preserved in Manichaean texts).

Not only from Jeffery, but also Ciancaglini's most recent publication on Iranian loanwords in Syriac (Ciancaglini 2008) will be extensively consulted too.³

I have assessed the forms according to 3 main criteria:

1. Qur'ānic forms that have come from Iranian, via a different language, most often from Aramaic.
2. Qur'ānic forms that have probably come *directly* from Iranian for phonetic reasons. This also includes forms that were probably borrowed from an Iranian source, but the Iranian form itself is clearly of non-Iranian origin.
3. Forms that somehow vaguely resemble an Iranian form, but whose origin or analysis is obscure.

Most often, the list consists of items of a luxurious nature, such as fine cushions and fabric, but remarkably enough, also a few, though important, religious terms are featured as well.

1. The Iranian Loanwords from Jeffery (1938)

The order of the forms is according to their appearance in Jeffery (1938).

- *ibrīq* 'water jug', pl. *abārīq*

This formation is attested only once, in Sūrah 56:18, which describes a sumptuous scene from the blissful hereafter: *bi akwābin wa abārīq wa ka'sin min ma'īnin* 'with vessels, pitchers and a cup from a flowing spring'. This corresponds closely to Syriac *'bryq* / *ābrēqā* / 'pitcher'.

² Even after the downfall of the Parthian-speaking Arsacids, Parthian was still extensively used in the Iranian realm under the successive, Persian oriented, Sassanian dynasty.

³ Prof. Harry Stroemer points out that Iranian forms may also have entered Arabic via Ethiopia, where Aramaic was used as a *lingua franca* as well (next to Classical Ethiopian).

Arabic *ibrīq* is generally considered a borrowing from Persian, from which we can only find New Persian *ābrēz* ‘urn, water-pot (for pouring water over the head)’. Etymologically related is the Zoroastrian festival of *ābrēzagān* ‘the pouring of water’. As for the shortening of the vowel to Arabic *i-* in the postulated first part **āb* ‘water’, this seems to be frequent, as noted by Siddiqui (1919: 69), except if it fits in a morphological Arabic paradigm. It has been postulated and accepted most recently in Ciancaglini (2008: 98) that the formation is to be derived from a slightly different compositional variant **āb-rēg*, i.e. *āb* ‘water’ + ? **rēg* ‘pour(ing), flow(ing)’ or ‘leaving’, which is however not attested in either Middle Persian or later. In addition, the apparent adaptation with final *-q*, also presupposes borrowing from Middle Persian (or Parthian), which still has preserved final *-g*⁴. Morphologically comparable forms with *rēg* are rare in Middle Persian, perhaps only *wirēg* ‘escape, flight’ (+ pref. *wi-* ‘away, out’), derived from the root **raič-* ‘to leave behind, remain’. However, there is no evidence at all for a comparable, nominal formation **raika-* from the near-homonymous root **raič* ‘to pour, flow’ (with a velar stop), in the Iranian languages. (New) Persian *-rēz* is also attested in a few compounds: *ātiš-rēz* ‘pouring out fire, incendiary’, *jur’a-rēz* ‘a vessel with a spout’.

Another possibility, which I will advocate here, is that *ibrīq* has entered Qur’ānic Arabic via an Aramaic intermediary. Syriac *’bryq* and Persian *ābrēz* are undoubtedly connected. The New Persian formation *ābrēz* regularly derives from early MP **ābrēž* < **āb-rēj*, ultimately from Old Persian **āp-* ‘water’ + **raiča-* ‘to pour’. The modern dialect of the Central Iranian village of Narāq seems to have preserved this formation as *ōvrēja* ‘waterfall’ (< **āp-raiča-ka-*, cf. Zoroastrian festival *ābrēzagān*), Asatrian 2011: 609. This final voiced sibilant, **ž* [ʒ] or affricate **j* [dʒ], is unknown in the Syriac phonological inventory. The affricate **j* may have been adapted as the stop *g* in Syriac, e.g. *kw’g* ‘lord, master’, (< New Persian *xw’ājah* ‘id.’), *swrng’n* ‘colchicum’ (< New Persian *sūrinjān* ‘wild saffron’), *kgl* ‘bald’ (< (Middle ?) Persian **kajal*, cf. New Persian *kačal* ‘id.’), Ciancaglini *ibid.*: 82. A slight phonological complication does arise here, as we should logically expect Syriac *’bryg*, rather than *’bryq* with a voiceless *-q*. This may be ascribed to contamination with the semantically similar *dwlq* ‘bucket’.

- *arā’ik* ‘couches’, pl. of *arīkah*

The term *arā’ik* is attested 6 times in the Qur’ān. All the passages describe the luxurious reward for the faithful in the hereafter. An Iranian origin has been suggested, cf. New Persian *awrang* ‘throne’, despite the fact this is both phonologically and semantically not very convincing. The additional meaning ‘throne’, which is also cited by Arabic lexicographers, is absent in the Qur’ānic passages. There is currently no convincing etymology for *arā’ik*.

- *istabraq* ‘silk, brocade’

This term is attested 4 times in the Qur’ān. *Istabraq* is mentioned as part of the depiction of Paradise where the believers are wearing fine clothes and other luxury items. It has long

⁴ One of the diagnostic features that distinguishes New Persian from Middle Persian (or Parthian) is the loss of postvocalic *-g* in non-monosyllabic forms.

been recognized by Arab philologists that *istabraḡ* is a borrowing from Persian, cf. Persian *istabrah*. The formation looks like a borrowing from a much older phase of Persian, viz. Middle Persian *stabrag* ‘shot silk’ (derived from *stabr* ‘firm, sturdy’). Arabic *istabraḡ* is probably a direct borrowing from Middle Persian, rather than via Syriac *’estabr(a)gā* ‘silk dress, brocade’ (as it would have become Arabic †*istabraḡ*). On the Arabic *-q* and (Middle) Persian *-g*, see further section 2.1. (below).

- *amšāj* ‘mixtures’⁵, pl. of *mašj*

This formation is attested only once, in

Sūrah 76: 2 *innā xalaqnā ’l-insāna min nuṭfatin amšājin nabtālī-hi faja’alnā-hu samī’am baṣīran* ‘Indeed, We created man from a sperm-drop mixture that We may try him; and We made him hearing and seeing.’

Jeffery cites as the origin of *amšāj* the suggestion of Zimmern (1914: 40): ultimately from Akkadian *manziqu* ‘clear wine’. The connection is, in view of the context of the Qur’ānic passage, hardly tenable, as *amšāj* clearly refers to the act of creation. The motif of mixing resulting in (pro)creation has a clear resonance in Iranian traditions. The following passages from Manichaean creational texts, may serve as examples:

§3 *’dy’n ’c ’myg cy p[n](j r)[wšn u] (p)nj k’rw’n ’hrmyng’n zmyg ’w(d) [’sm’n] (k)[y](rd)*. ‘then they created from the mixture of the five *Lights *and of the five diabolical armies Earth and *Heaven.’ (ed. Sundermann 1992: 62 f.);

§900-915 *’wn ps’c dwdy nwyst ’z ’wyn mzn’n ’wd ’sryšt’rn ’b’ryg’n nr’n ’wd m’yg’n ky ’z ’sm’n ’(w) zamy(g) qpt hynd ’wyš’n(z) hmgwng ’wzm’h ’wd mrz’yyšn hmwwc’n kw ’wzm’h’nd ’wd mrz’nd ** ’wd ’gnyn h’’mhn’m gwmyxs’nd ’wd ’wzd’h’g zhg ’zyš z’y’nd* ‘Then again, Greed began to teach the remaining male and female Giant-demons and Arch-demons, who had fallen from the Heaven on the Earth, lust and coition in equal measure, so that they became lustful and had sex; and (that) together, they mingled with conjoined limbs and gave birth to dragon-offspring.’ (ed. Hutter 1992: 83 f.).

The form *’myg /āmēg/* ‘mixture’ in the first passage (in Parthian) is the abstract nominal derivative of the verb *āmēž-*, whereas in the latter passage (in Middle Persian) *gwmyxs’nd* is the 3pl. subjunctive of the verb *gumēz-* ‘mingle, mix’.

Arabic *amšāj* may have been borrowed directly from an unattested Parthian *ka-*formation **āmēžag*, from which New Persian *āmēzah* ‘mixed’ has originated. The *š* of the Arabic form is a fairly straightforward adaptation of the typical Parthian sound, voiced *ž*, which is absent in the Classical (Qur’ānic) Arabic phonemic inventory. The corresponding Persian formation (Middle Persian **āmēzag* > New Persian *āmēzah* ‘id.’) has been borrowed in Arabic as well, on which see *mizāj* (below).

- *barzax* ‘barrier, partition; [*Lisān al-’Arab*] the interval between the present life and that which is to come’, [*al-Šihāh, Asās Zamāxšarī*] from the period of death to the resurrection’, pl. *barāzix*.

This term is attested twice in the Qur’ān:

⁵ Jeffery assigns the meaning ‘mingled’, but from the context, the abstract meaning ‘mixtures’ is probably more suitable.

Sūrah 23: 100 *la'allī a'malu ṣāliḥan fī-mā taraktu kallā inna-hā kalimatun huwa qāilu-hā wa-min wa rāyi-him barzaxun ilā yawmī yub'aθūn* 'So that I may do good in that which I have left behind!' No! It is but a word that he speaks, and behind them is *Barzax* until the Day when they will be resurrected.';

Sūrah 55: 20 *bayna-humā barzaxun lā yabyiyāni* 'Between them is *Barzax* [so] neither of them transgresses'.

The connection with the traditional Iranian unit of distance, the *parasang* (Persian *farsax*, Middle Persian *frasang*, etc.), is semantically not quite fitting, as it does not explain how this mundane measurement could have acquired these eschatological overtones.

Actually, the Arabic form *barzax* looks like a Parthian compound **bwrz-'xw* /burz-axw/ 'the High, Exalted World, Existence', mirroring the opposite term *dwj-'xw* 'hell' (with pref. *dōž-* 'dys-'). The concept 'xw originally refers to an existence beyond this world without being qualified as "bad" or "good". Unfortunately, **bwrz-'xw* has not yet been found in our limited Parthian corpus of texts and inscriptions, although *bwrz* and 'xw are attested, separately, in Middle Persian and Parthian. Of course, 'xw does occur in compounded formations, e.g. Manichaean Middle Persian *rwšn'xw* 'world of light' and Parthian *dwj-'xw* 'hell' (also borrowed into NP *duzāx*). The form *burz* is also found in Manichaean Middle Persian, and is considered a Parthian loanword with the figurative meaning of 'exalted, lofty'. The denominative verb *burzīdan* 'to praise, honour' is also derived from *burz*. Incidentally, Arabic *barz*⁶ with the meaning 'intelligent, respectable; dignified' points to borrowing from Parthian *bwrz* 'high, lofty', possibly via Persian.

Alternatively, especially in view of Sūrah 55: 20, *barzax* could also reflect a Parthian rendering **bwrz'x(w)* /burzāxw/ of Avestan *barəzāhu* loc pl. 'in the heights', which is attested in the famous Yasht dedicated to the deity Mithra. In the following passage, Yasht 10.45, the abode of Mithra, the deity that upholds the contract, "is set in the material world as far as the earth extends, unrestricted in size, shining, reaching widely abroad, for whom on every height, in every watchpost, eight servants sit as watchers of the contract.". This abode is a place, "where is no night or darkness, no wind cold or hot, no deadly illness, no defilement produced by evil gods". (transl. Gershevitch 1967: 95 ff., 99).

Considering the fact that, in the Qur'ān, the meanings of *barzax* allude to some sort of '(a means of) separation of two seas' and also to an existential matter, Arabic *barzax* may well reflect *two*, conflated, (near-)homonymous Parthian formations, **bwrz'x(w)* 'an unsurmountable passage, height' and 'the Existence beyond, *Jenseits*', respectively.

There is one phonological difficulty remaining, the apparent mismatch of the vocalism of Arabic *barzax* and its Parthian source **burzāxw*, together with Arabic *barz* ~ Parthian *burz*. Arabic *-a-* in the first syllable of *barzax* may reflect the older sub-phonemic pronunciation *-ə-* (prior to its later labial "colouring"), i.e. Parthian [bərzāxw] and [bərz] respectively.⁷

⁶ *Barz* is usually classified under the Arabic root *b-r-z* 'to come, go out' in lexicographical works.

⁷ The Old Iranian, so-called "vocalic" **r* (in the proto-form **brza(nt)-* of Parthian *burz*) would have regularly developed into **ər*, after which the *schwa*-vowel received its phonemic realization *i* or *u*, depending on the consonantal environment.

- *junāh* ‘guilt, sin, crime’.

There is little doubt that this technical form, which is attested 4 times in the Qur’ān, has been borrowed from Persian, surprisingly enough, seemingly from New Persian *gunāh*. New Persian *gunāh* first appears in the verses of the celebrated 9th century Samanid poet Rūdakī, and it is the regular continuation of Middle Persian *wināh* ‘sin, guilt’ (< Old Persian *vināθa*-caus. ‘to harm, injure’, from the root **nas* ‘to perish, ruin’).

Persian *gunāh* must have developed, at the latest around 6th century CE (cf. Hübschmann 1895: 162), i.e. prior to its appearance in the Qur’ān a century later. Actually, this form *gunāh* is also mentioned in the late-Sassanian *Pazand* literary language, which had been used solely for the exegesis of the holy Avestan texts. The *Pazand* language often provides us with clues of the Persian chancellery language that was spoken prior to the arrival of Islamic-Arabic dominance. One can wonder whether it is possible to pinpoint more accurately when and, perhaps, also where originally the development of **wi*- > **gu*- had occurred. In front of certain consonants, this development already dates back to Middle Persian, e.g. the formations prefixed with **wi*- in *gumēz*- ‘to urinate’, *gumān* ‘doubt’ (in front of *-m*), and forms with initial **wr*° such as *gurg* ‘wolf’ (**warka* < **wrka*-), *gurdag* ‘kidney’ (**warta* < **wrt(k)a*-).

As the Manichaean texts from Central Asia, in which we still find the Middle Persian form *wn’h*, date back to around 4-5th century CE, the Persian form *gunāh* was likely borrowed into pre-Islamic Arabic in the 5-6th cent. CE. This formation is attested notably in the *Mu’allaqāt* of al-Ḥārith b. Ḥiliza (o. 580 CE), in the stanza: *a’alaynā junāhu kindat an yaynama yāzī-humu wa minnā al-jazā’u* ‘Was it ours, say, the blame of it all, when Kindah took your booths for a spoil, that of us you claim it?’ (transl. Blunt 1903: 48). On *-h* for Persian *-h*, see 2.3. (below).

- *jund* ‘host, army, troop, force’

This Arabic form is considered to be a borrowing from Persian *gund*, although it is well established in the Middle Aramaic dialects, e.g. Syriac *gwd’* /*guddā*/, Mandaic *gwnd’*, *gwd’*, Judaeo-Babylonian Aramaic *gwnd’* ‘troop of soldiers’ (Sokoloff 2002: 269 f.). It is attested in a *restricted* number of apparently neighbouring languages: Middle Persian *gund*, Parth. *gwnd*, Class. Armenian *gund* (< Parth.), also Byzantine Greek *gounda*.

The old connection with Sanskrit *vr̥nda*- ‘host, group, troop’, first postulated by the German orientalist De Lagarde (1884), used to be accepted by a number of prominent scholars, such as Bailey (1955: 73), Horn (1895: 179, no. 805) and Mayrhofer (1976: 249 f.). It is rather telling though that this suggestion was rejected by many of them in their later publications, as summarized by Rossi 2002: 140 ff.

There are indeed some serious problems with the assumption of an Iranian or Indo-Iranian origin of Arabic *jund* ‘army’, Middle Persian *gund* ‘army, troop; gathering’ (New Persian *yund* ‘assembled; crowd’ < East Iranian), etc. as pointed out by Ciancaglini (2008: 135). The Aramaic forms are both frequent and of an early date, which, if they were of Iranian origin, would have to go back to an *Imperial Aramaic* borrowing from Old Persian (or Arsacid Parthian). An Parthian or Old Persian form **gunda*- makes the proposed connection with Sanskrit *vr̥nda*- impossible. Skt. *vr̥nda*- would have called for an Old Persian correspondence **vr̥nda*- or **vunda*- (with loss of vocalic *r*, similar to *kunav*- pres.

stem ‘make, do’ < **krnaw*). Not to mention, the sheer isolation of Middle Persian / Parthian *gund* within the Iranian languages is rather suspicious. Also postulating a Semitic origin, which was suggested by Szemerényi 1980: 232 f., from Semitic *gunn*, cf. Akkadian *gunnu* ‘elite troops’, is fraught with phonological difficulties as well, as the suggested “hypercorrect dissimilation” of **nn* > **nd* is without parallel in (Middle) Persian (or Parthian).

The most plausible explanation may be given by Rossi, *l.c.*: 147 ff. He still assumes an Iranian origin, but he considers the ‘host, army’ meaning of *gund* to be secondary. The meaning would have developed from older ‘globular, round mass’, and thus we can envisage an Old Iranian term **gunda-*, cf. Avestan *gunda-* ‘lump of dough’, Khwarezmian *γwndyk* ‘ball’, Middle Persian *gund* ‘testicle’ and in many other Iranian languages. The semantic shift is comparable to the meaning of the English military term *corps* ‘an army unit’, which has developed from, ultimately, Latin *corpus* ‘body; mass; flesh (of the body, fruit)’.

- *ḥūr* beautiful maidens in the hereafter (usually as *ḥūr ‘īn* in the Qur’ān).

One of the enchanting aspects of the afterlife as described in the Qur’ān is that the deceased righteous will be paired to beautiful *ḥūr*, which is mentioned 4 times in the Qur’ān. The traditional etymology is that *ḥūr* derives from *ḥawira*, *ḥār*, cf. Syriac *ḥawwar* ‘to whiten’, Mandaic *ḥauar* ‘id, wash (off)’, Hebrew *ḥiwēr* ‘to be white’.

It has long been noted (cf. Haug 1872: LXI; Berthels 1924: 263 ff.) though that this Qur’ānic imagery clearly recalls the Zoroastrian depiction of the righteous soul meeting a beautiful girl in paradise, provided that he has performed good deeds during his life. This motif is well attested, notably, in two ancient pre-Islamic Avestan texts, the fragmentary *Hādōxt nask* and the book *Vidēvdād*:

i. *Hādōxt nask* 2:11 *āaṭ hē paiti aoxta yā huua daēna, azəm bā tē ahmi yum humanō huua cō hušīiaoθana hudaēna yā hauua daēna x’āēpaiθe.tanuuo, cišca θβaṃ cakana auua masanaca vaṇhanaca sraianaca hubaoiḍitaca vərəθrajaštaca paiti.duuaēšaiiantaca yaθa yaṭ mē sadaiehi* ‘Thus she, being his own *Vision* [i.e. *daēnā*, s.v. *dīn*], answered him: “Lo, I am you, young, with good thoughts, good words, good deeds, and good *Vision*, i.e. the *Vision* of your own body. Everyone has loved you for this greatness, goodness, fairness, well-scentedness, victorious might and antidote against hostility, in which you appear to me”⁸;

ii. *Vidēvdād* 19.30 *hāu srīra kərəta taxma huraoḍa jasaiti spānauuaiti niuuauuaiti pasuuaiti yaoxštəuuaiti hunarauuaiti hā ashāunəṃ uruuānō tarasca harəṃ bərəzaitīm āsənaoiti tarō cinuuatō pərətūm vīḍāraieiti haētō mainiiauuanəṃ yazatanəṃ* ‘there comes that beautiful one, strong, fair of form, accompanied by two dogs at her sides. She comes over the high Hara and takes the souls of the just over the Činvadbridge, to the ramparts of the spiritual *yazatas*’.

On the other hand, had the deceased person behaved badly during his earthly life, he would have seen the outcome in the appearance of an ugly hag.

⁸ Cf. Piras 2000: 53: ‘Allora a lui rispose la sua *daēnā*: «invero io sono la *daēnā* della tua propria persona, o giovane dai buoni pensieri, dalle buone parole, dalle buone azioni e dalla buona *daēnā*. Chiunque ti ha amato per questa grandezza, per la bontà, la bellezza, la fragranza, la vittoriosità e la controffensiva, così come mi apparì;’.

Consequently, some scholars sought an Iranian origin for *ḥūr*, including Jeffery. None of the suggested Iranian connections are semantically or phonologically without problems. However, the connection with MP *hūrust* ‘well grown’ (preferred by Jeffery) is the most attractive. According to the 9th century *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* (the well-known Zoroastrian “Divina Commedia”), the maiden is described as *hūrust* ‘well grown’, with *frāz-pēstān* ‘prominent breasts’, *dēr... angušt* ‘long fingers’ and *hūdōšagtar nigērišn abāyišnīgtar* ‘a most pleasing and fitting appearance’.

Several of these traits are also alluded in the Islamic tradition. In Sūrah 78: 33, we find a reference to *kawā’iba atrāban* ‘full-breasted [companions] of equal age’ that describes those *ḥūr*. The *Ardā Wirāz Nāmag* (and the Avestan texts) mentions the “sweet smell” that emanates from this maiden in the afterlife, even this trait is mentioned by the Hadith transmitter Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī 52: 53 *wa law anna amratan min ahli al-jannati aṭṭala’at ilā ahli al-arḍi lā ḍā’at mā bayn-humā wa la mala’t-hu rīḥan, wa la naṣīfu-hā ‘alā ra’si-hā xayr-min al-dunyā wa mā fī-hā*. ‘And if a houri [in the text: *amratan*] from Paradise appeared to the people of the earth, she would fill the space between Heaven and the Earth with light and pleasant scent and her head cover is better than the world and whatever is in it.’ (transl. Muhsin Khan, <http://sunnah.com/bukhari>).

The meaning of *ḥūr* as “the White ones” might be considered a folk etymology. However, if Arabic *ḥūr* were from Middle Persian *hūrust*, the final *-st* would necessitate an explanation. The typical Qur’ānic expression *ḥūr īn* may give us a clue. This *īn* is difficult to analyze within Arabic morphology, and many Islamic Qur’an exegetes have struggled to interpret this form, which seems like a derivation of ‘*ayn* ‘eye’. The plural forms of ‘*ayn* are ‘*uyūn* and ‘*yūn*. According to the 13th century lexicographer Ibn Manẓūr (*Lisān al-‘Arab* XIII: 302b), *īn* would be the plural of a putative feminine adjectival formation ‘*aynā*’ ‘large-eyed’, but the interpretation appears to be contextual, rather than rooted in linguistic reality.

The form *īn* is clearly the *lectio difficilior*, which would, no doubt, have been “grammatically” corrected in profane texts, such as in the famous poem of the Jahiliyya poet ‘Abīd b. al-Abraṣ (VI:24): *wa awānisin miṯli al-dumā ḥūri al-‘uyūni qad istabaynā* ‘And many damsels fair as statues, with large black eyes, have we taken captive’ (Lyall 1913: 29).

In short, the expression *ḥūr īn* is probably one word. This formation **ḥūrīn* would go back to an Iranian exocentric compound **hūrōyī*/_m ‘of good growth’ (the exact pronunciation of the final nasal is uncertain), which is etymologically related to Middle Persian *hūrust*. This **hūrōyī*/_m would have been the Middle Persian development of the learned Avestan term (acc. sg.) **hūrauḍīm*, which has also been borrowed into Parthian, e.g. as the name of the ruler ΥΡΩΔΗΣ /*hūrōdēs*/ (57-38 BCE), frequently attested on coins.

This expression appears as *huraōim* in the Zoroastrian catechism *Pursišnīhā* ‘Questions’, in *Question* 43. The spelling *huraōim* is considered to be “wrong” by modern philologists, and has therefore been emended to “correct” Avestan **huraōiḍīm*, as by Bartholomae in his *Altiranisches Wörterbuch*, and subsequently accepted in the critical edition of Jamaspaspa-Humbach 1971: 64 f. In fact, more likely, *huraōim* merely reflected the late (Middle) Persian pronunciation, with its typical loss of old post-vocalic *-d*. Again, *huraōim* appears in the context of maintaining the Good Religion (*dēn*).

In the whole borrowing process from MP to (pre-Islamic) Arabic, **hūrōyī*/_m would have been rendered as **ḥūrūīn*, to which secondarily a singular (collective) formation

**ḥūr'īn* was created, comparable to sec. sg. *baydaq*, *baydaq* 'pawn (in chess)' (from *bayādiq* < Middle Persian *payādag* 'on foot; foot-soldier' = New Persian *piyādah*).

As for remaining phonological peculiarities, the realisation of voiceless pharyngeal *ḥ* and the appearance of '*ayn*', see 2.2., 2.3.

- *dīn* 'Religion, profession of faith'

Arabic *dīn* is mentioned in the Qur'ān numerous times. The term with this meaning is clearly a loanword from Middle Iranian, either Middle Persian or Parthian *dēn* 'id.' (an old learned borrowing from Avestan *daēnā-* f. 'vision; belief'), possibly via Aramaic, cf. Syriac *d'yn*, *dyn* 'religion'. The homonym *dīn* 'debt' is, however, of Semitic origin.

- *kanz* 'treasure'

The term *kanz* is frequently attested in the Qur'ān, including a denominative verb *kanaza* 'to hoard, accumulate, pile up (money, treasure); hide (money)'. It is generally recognized as a borrowing, ultimately from Old Iranian **ganza-* 'treasure', cf. Elamite Old Persian *gān-za-um*, *kān-za-*, *qa-an-za*, Middle/New Persian *ganj* (+ suff. **-čī*), Sogdian *γzn* 'treasure', etc. This 'treasure' term has been widely borrowed: e.g. Aramaic (Syriac *gazzā*, Biblical Aram. *ganzē*, Egyptian Aram. *gnz'*, Mandaic *ginza* 'treasure'), Achaemenid Babylonian *ganzabaru*, Armenian *ganza-pah* 'treasurer', Greek *gáza* 'royal fortune' (4th century BCE) and (late) Sanskrit *gañja-* 'treasury'.

The initial *k-* does not correspond to any of the borrowed forms in Aramaic, Greek, etc. There are rare examples of Arabic *k* reflecting Persian *g*, but these forms are usually late, at least post-Qur'ānic, notably the musical terms *dukāh*, *sikāh*, *jārkāh* (< New Persian *du-gāh* 'second note', *si-gāh* 'third note', *čār-gāh* 'fourth note'), cf. Tafazzolī 1986: 232. These three terms may well have been copied directly from a Persian music sheet into Arabic.⁹ This explanation however can hardly apply to a widely borrowed word such as Old Iranian **ganza-*. Perhaps, the *k-* of the Arabic form rather shows contamination with a semantically similar related form *kanna* 'to hide' (*kann* 'sheltered place, refuge; nest; house').

- *rizq* 'bounty, provision'

The term *rizq* is very frequent in the Qur'ān and is often in the context of a reward. This form is ultimately from early Middle Persian *rōzīk* 'daily bread, sustenance', which was subsequently borrowed into Syriac as *rwzyq'* /*roziqā'*/ 'daily bread; military ration' (Ciancaglini 2008: 255). The Arabic formation appears to be borrowed via Aramaic when we consider the semantic shift to 'military ration', which can have (more) easily become 'bounty, provision'. It may have been interpreted as a verbal form **ruziqa* 'to be given in support, endowed' in Arabic and, subsequently modeled after *rafada* 'to bestow, support' (abstract *rifd* 'gift, support').

- *rawḍah* 'well watered meadow', 'luxurious garden', pl. *rawḍāt*.

The term *rawḍa* is attested twice in the Qur'ān:

⁹ In older New Persian manuscripts the distinguishing marks (the additional dots below, the stroke above) for the typical Persian phonemes *č* {چ}, *g* {گ} are most often left out and simply written as *j* {ج} and *k* {ک}.

Sūrah 30: 15 *fa'ammā 'ladīna 'amanū wa 'amilū 'l-ṣāliḥāti fa-hum fī rawḍatin* 'And as for those who had believed and done righteous deeds, they will be in a garden [of Paradise], delighted.'

Sūrah 42: 22 *tarā 'l-zālimīna muṣfiqīna mimmā kasabū wa huwa wāqī'um bihim wa 'llaḍīna 'amanū wa 'amilū 'l-ṣāliḥāti fī rawḍāti 'l-jannāti la-hum mā yaṣā'ūna 'inda rabbihim ḍālika huwa al-faḍlu al-kabīru* 'You will see the wrongdoers fearful of what they have earned, and it will [certainly] befall them. And those who have believed and done righteous deeds will be in lush regions of the gardens [in Paradise] having whatever they will in the presence of their Lord. That is what is the great bounty.'

Jeffrey suggests an Iranian origin, citing Avestan *raoḍah-*, Middle/New Persian *rōd* 'river'. The eminent iranist Eilers (1962: 205) postulated a Middle Persian *ka*-formation **rōḍay* 'riverlet, flood plain' from which Arabic has supposedly borrowed. Even if we overlook the assumed, rather complicated semantic shifts from 'riverlet, little canal' > **irrigated field* in order to arrive at 'well watered meadow' for Arabic *rawḍa*, it also raises two major phonological problems.

In the first place, the long *ō* would have become *ū* in Arabic, rather than diphthong *aw*, cf. Arabic *būstān* < Persian *bōstān* 'garden', while fricative *ḍ* would rather correspond to the Arabic dental fricative {ذ}. *Rawḍah* 'well-watered place/meadow' may have risen as a secondary formation from the postulated preform **rūḍ* in Arabic, i.e. according to the derivational pattern of *rūḥ* m. 'breath' / *rawḥ* m. 'refreshment', *rawḥah* f. 'journey / errand in the evening' or *sū*' m. 'evil' / *saw'ah* 'disgraceful act, atrocity'.

It is not easy to imagine how the relatively uncomplicated, Persian dental fricative sound should have given rise to this so-called "emphatic", voiced *-ḍ-* {ض} in Arabic. Although the modern standard realization of this *ḍ-* is a voiced pharyngealized dental stop or fricative, the historical pronunciation may be different. According to the normative description of the famous grammarian Sibawayh (8th century CE), this sound was "between the front part of the side edge of the tongue and the molars next to it"¹⁰ (transl. al-Nassir 1993: 44). This would suggest some sort of a lateral fricative, perhaps [ḍ^l], "a lateral or lateralized velarized voiced interdental fricative" (Versteegh 2006: 544a). For a possible explanation of *ḍ* in *rawḍah*, see 2.2.

- *zarābī* (pl.) 'rich carpets', (sg.) *zirbiyyah, zarbiyyah*

A Persian origin was first suggested by Georg Hoffman to Fraenkel (1886: 93) in a letter, from *zēr-pā* 'under the foot' (= Middle Persian *ēr-pāy*), but, the suggested semantic shift is difficult to explain. Jeffery adds that not *zēr* 'under', but rather *zar(r)* 'gold' might be the first element. Indeed, in Iranian, we encounter Sogdian *zyrnpδ'k*, New Persian *zarrīnpāyah* 'golden-legged', which, however, can hardly refer to a carpet. Jeffery himself rather prefers the possibility that it has an Ethiopic origin, cf. Ge'ez *zārbet* 'carpet, tapestry' ("from Ar[abic]. *zurbiyya* 'carpet' ", Leslau 1991: 643), which was entertained by Noeldeke (1910: 53), but both the Ge'ez and Arabic forms are isolated.

Rather, the term *zarābī* may be a qualifying adjective for a special type of Persian carpets, used notably in trade, a *zar(r)ābī* 'gold coloured (one), with a golden sheen', which

¹⁰ *Wa min bayn awwal ḥāfati 'l-lisān wa mā yallihā min al-aḍrās muxraju 'l-dād.* (ed. Harun, vol. 4: 433).

was already suggested by Eilers (*ibid.*: 205). The composition of this formation is comparable to *sīm-ābī* ‘silver-coloured’, as in *čādur-i sīmābī az rōy-i ‘arūs-i ‘ālam barkašīdand* ‘They lifted the silver-coloured veil from the face of the world’s bride’ (Sindbād-nāmah).

- *zūr* ‘falsehood’.

Zūr is attested several times and is clearly a borrowing from Middle Persian *zūr* ‘id., deceit’ (< Old Persian *zūra-* ‘id.’), perhaps directly as well. Although *zūr* is attested in Syriac, it is only encountered as part of a rare compound *zwlgrd* ‘falsified document’ (Ciancaglini 2008: 172 f.).

- *sijjīl* ‘lumps of baked clay (?)’.

The term is attested three times in the Qur’ān and it refers to a punishment from God, viz. the precipitation that is coming down on the town of Lūt and the army of the Elephant respectively, as in

Sūrah 11: 82 *falammā jā’a amru-nā ja’alnā ‘āliya-hā sāfila-hā wa amṭarnā ‘alay-hā hijāratan min sijjīlin mandūdin* ‘So when Our command came, We made the highest part [of the city] its lowest and rained upon them stones of layered hard clay’. This quite obscure term has traditionally been considered a foreign word, a borrowing from Persian *sang* ‘stone’ and *gil* ‘clay’. Indeed, an idiomatic expression *sang-u gil* ‘stone and clay’ has found its way in Classical Persian literature, notably in ghazal 48 of the famous 14th century Shirāzi poet Ḥāfiz: *sang-u gil-rā kunad az yumn-i naẓar la’l-u ‘aqīq har kih qadr-i nafs-i bād-i yamānī dānist* ‘Everyone who has known the value of the breath/soul of the Yemeni wind, will turn the stone and clay into ruby and cornelian’. It is, however, both late and rarely found in other Classical works.

The assumed disappearance of the velar nasal of *sang* in the Arabic formation *sijjīl* would be unusual. Formally similar loanwords borrowed from Persian, such as *zinjār* ‘verdigris’ (< Persian *zangār* ‘id.’, Eilers 1971: 622), *zanj* ‘black (African) person’ (< *zang* ‘id.’), do show the preservation of the nasal. Arabic *sij*° may actually go back to the (Middle) Persian (infrequent) variant *sag* or *sig*, which is attested in Pahlavi as {sk}¹¹ ‘stone’ (MacKenzie 1971: 73) and in Manichaean Middle Persian as adjectival {sygyn} ‘stony, of stone’ (Durkin-Meisterernst 2004: 312), hence Arabic *sijjīl* from an unattested, Middle Persian idiom **sig (u) gil* ‘stone and clay’.

- *sirāj* ‘lamp, torch’.

The Arabic form is attested four times in the Qur’ān, as in Sūrah 71: 16 *wa ja’ala ‘l-qamara fī-hinna nūran wa ja’ala ‘l-šamsa sirājan* ‘And made the moon therein a [reflected] light and made the sun a burning lamp?’. It is clearly a loanword, ultimately from Parthian. Parthian *čirāy* has been widely borrowed, into: e.g. Armenian *črag*, Persian *čirāy*, Sogdian *cr’γ*, Syriac *šrāḡā*. The Arabic form may have come from Syriac (cf. Eilers 1962: 205). The final *-j* of the Arabic form does presuppose an older voiced stop **-g*, as a fricative *-γ* would rather be transcribed with the corresponding Arabic fricative *ḡayn* (غ). As noted by Ciancaglini (2008: 265), the spelling of the Parthian form *čirāy* is both {cr’γ} and {cr’g}, pointing to the

¹¹ This form goes back to Old Persian *θikā-* ‘pebble’.

existence of both *čirāy* and *čirāg* (and accordingly, both being borrowed into Syriac). The origin of the Iranian term, however, is unknown.

- *surādiq* ‘awning, tent cover’, pl. *surādiqāt*.

This term is mentioned once, in Sūrah 18: 29, where it refers to the fire, *aḥāṭa bi-him surādiqū-hā* ‘whose awning shall enwrap’¹² the wrongdoers. It has an Iranian origin, pointing to a preform **srādag*, for which we can envisage a connection with Middle Persian *srāy* ‘house, hall’ (New Persian *sarāy* ‘house, royal court’). In view of the preservation of intervocalic *-d-*, *surādiq* cannot have been borrowed from (late) Middle Persian, but it is either a loanword from an unattested Parthian *ka*-formation **srādag*, or from *early* Middle Persian **srādak* (based on the historical Pahlavi spelling {sl’d}). The Armenian loanword *srahak* ‘curtain’ further confirms the existence of such a West Iranian formation with relation suffix *-ka) **srādag*. The Arabic formation is not necessarily a direct borrowing from Iranian, possibly via Mandaic *sradqa* ‘canopy, awning’, cf. Drower - Macuch (1963: 336 f.), Widengren (1960: 101).

- *sirbāl* ‘garment’, pl. *sarābīl*.

This form is attested three times in the Qur’ān. According to the pre-Islamic sources, *sirbāl* would have meant a kind of body garment, i.e. a shirt, a shirt of mail. *Sirbāl* has generally been acknowledged to be connected to (New/Middle) Persian *šalwār* ‘trousers’. However, this cannot be the direct source of the borrowing, but it suffices to point out that it has been widely adopted in Aramaic, cf. Syriac *šarbālā* ‘wide trousers’, Mandaic *šaruala* ‘baggy trousers’ (Drower - Macuch: 446), Biblical Aramaic *srbly-hwn* ‘their tunics’ (Daniel 3:21), and Hebrew *šrbl* ‘garment, cloak, trousers’. The source of *sirbāl* needs therefore be sought in the Jewish tradition, as inferred also from the similar imagery of the Day of Judgment in the Qur’ān and in the Biblical book of Daniel:

i. Sūrah 14: 49-50 *wa tarā al-mujrimīna yawma-iḏin muqarranīna fī al-aṣfādi sarābīluhum min qatirānin wa tayšā wujūha-humu al-nārūn* ‘And you will see the criminals that Day bound together in shackles, their *garments* of liquid pitch and their faces covered by the Fire.’;

ii.a. Daniel 3: 21 ‘Then these great men were bound in their *mantles*, their turbans, and their [other] garments and clothes, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.’;

ii.b. Daniel 3: 27 ‘[the entourage of Nebuchadnezzar] ... saw these great men, upon whom the flames had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their *mantles* changed ...’. (transl. King James)

The Persian form *šalwār* is ultimately a borrowing from a “Scythian” source, cf. Greek gloss *sarābara* “loose trousers worn by the Scythians” (e.g. in Antiphanes’ play *The Scythians*). For a recent discussion of *sarābara*, see Brust 2005: 584 f.

- *sard* ‘chain armour, links of armour’

The form is attested once in:

Sūrah 34:11 *ani i‘mal sābiyātīn wa qaddir fī al-sardi wa a‘malū šāliḥan innī bimā ta‘malūna*

¹² More freely translated by *Sahih International* as ‘whose walls will surround them’.

baṣīrun ‘Make full coats of mail and calculate [precisely] the links, and work [all of you] righteousness. Indeed I, of what you do, am Seeing’.

The term is no doubt identical to *zarad* ‘armour, cuirass’. The Qur’ānic variant with *s-* arose, perhaps due to contamination with the semantically similar *sābiyātīn* ‘coats of mail’. Arabic *zarad* itself is ultimately from West Iranian **zrad* (< Old Iranian **zrad-/zrād-*, Avestan *zrāḍa-* ‘armour’), but certainly not from Middle Persian *zrēh* ‘id.’. It must have been borrowed from an early West Iranian source, perhaps via Aramaic, cf. Syriac *zarḏā*, Talmudic-Aramaic *zrd* ‘id.’ (also borrowed into Armenian: plural *zrah-k* ‘id.’).

- *sundus* ‘fine silk’.

Although this word is a cultural Wanderwort, of, ultimately, non-Iranian origin, it is remarkable that in the three attestations in the Qur’ānic passages, 18:31, 44:53, 76: 21, *sundus* is mentioned together with *istabraq*. The *direct* source of the Arabic form *sundus* must have been Iranian, being absent in Aramaic. It is indeed attested in the Middle Iranian languages, viz. Parthian/Middle Persian *sndws* as a borrowing in a Manichaean Sogdian text. The ultimate origin of this fabric is probably Anatolian, cf. Greek *sánduks* ‘a Lydian red fabric; a woman’s cloth’.

- *siwār* ‘bracelet’, pl. *asāwir*

The formation is frequently mentioned in the Qur’ān, being always in the plural. With the exception of one passage, it is usually found in passages alluding to the luxurious life of the believers in Paradise, e.g.

Sūrah 22: 23 *inna allāha yudxilu alladhīna amanū wa-‘amilū al-ṣāliḥāti jānnātin tajrī min taḥti-ha al-anhāru yuḥallawna fī-hā min asāwira min ḍahabin wa-lū’lū’an wa-libāsu-hum fī-hā ḥarīrun* ‘Indeed, Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearl, and their garments therein will be silk.’. According to the Muslim sources, *siwār* was considered to be of Persian origin, apparently because of its superficial resemblance to *dastwār* ‘bracelet’ (Lane: 1465). There can be little doubt though that in fact, *siwār* is ultimately from Akkadian, cf. Old Akkadian (pl.) *šewirū*, (Old Babylonian) *šawiru* ‘bracelets’, as already asserted by Zimmern (1914: 38). This term seems to have entered Arabic directly, rather via an Aramaic dialect (with the typical development of *w > y*), e.g. “common” Aramaic *šyr*, Mandaic (pl) *š’yry*, Judaeo-Babylonian Aramaic *šērā* {שִׁירָה} (Sokoloff 2002: 1140).

- ‘*abqarī*’ A kind of rich carpet’

This form is attested only once, in the same textual passage with *ḥūr īn*:

Sūrah 55: 76 *muttaki’na ‘alā rafrāfin xuzrin wa ‘abqariyyin ḥisānin* ‘reclining on green cushions and beautiful fine carpets.’.

The mediaeval philologists had the greatest difficulties explaining this formation, which could be either a place of the *Jinn* where wonderful things were taking place, or merely an “Arab’s” approving term of something excellent. It was only in modern times, when the Assyrian scholar-priest Addai Sher considered ‘*abqarī*’ to be of Iranian origin, viz. from a

Persian compound *āb-kār* ‘something splendid’ (Sher 1908: 114), with *āb*¹³ ‘lustre, splendour’ and *kār* ‘work, deed’. Jeffery points out that *āb-kār* is rather an artificial formation that can be constructed *ad hoc*, not to mention, it is phonologically somewhat problematic. A better explanation of the formation is to consider the segment *-qarī* as the Persian productive agent suffix Persian *-gar* ‘maker, doer’ with the relational suffix *-ī*, cf. *dēbā-garī* ‘embroidery’ (< *dēbā-gar* ‘brocade-maker’), *kuft-garī* ‘gilding; steelwork inlaid with gold’ (< *kuft-gar* ‘gilder, gold-beater’, with *kuft* ‘beating’). The element ‘*ab*’ may indeed reflect a Persian form ‘lustre, splendour’: (Middle) Persian **ābgarī* ‘that what is made by a lustre-maker’. Actually, being overlooked by Jeffery, **ābgar* ‘lustre-maker’ as a compound is similar to *āb-dār* ‘glancing, dazzling’ (*-dār* ‘keeper, holder’). Again, **ābgarī* would be a qualifying adjective for a specific kind of tapestry. The initial ‘*ab*’ would need an explanation though, see below. For Arabic *q* and Persian *g*, see 2.1.

- *‘ifrīt* ‘demon’ (also dialectal *‘afirīt*), pl. *‘afārīt*

This form is attested only once, in

Sūrah 27: 39 *qāla ‘ifrītun mina al-jinni ‘anā ‘ātīka bihi qabla ‘an taqūma min maqāmi-ka wa innī ‘alay-hi laqawīyyun ‘amīnun* ‘A powerful one from among the jinn said, “I will bring it to you before you rise from your place, and indeed, I am for this [task] strong and trustworthy.”’.

It has generally been accepted since Karl Vollers (1896: 646) that *‘ifrīt* is of Iranian origin, from a Middle Iranian past participle, Middle Persian/Parthian *āfrīd* ‘created’. The apparent semantic shift of the Arabic form is curious though, as one has to assume that it was originally an elliptic expression for **dīw ‘afirīt* ‘demon’s creation’, or just ‘creature’ (“Geschöpf”), as explained by Eilers 1971: 620. It may have just meant ‘creature, (something) created’ originally, which would have later acquired a negative connotation, especially due to its association with the *jinn* (as it is the case in this Sūrah). Semantically, one can also consider the pejorative overtone the originally ecclesiastic Latin term *creātūra* ‘creature, that which has been created’ has acquired in modern English *creature*, French *créature*, etc.

Still, a series of assumptions has to be made in order to arrive at the Qur’ānic meaning of *‘ifrīt*, not to mention, the final *-t* of the Arabic also suggests that it should have been borrowed from early Middle Persian or Parthian **āfrīt*. The apparent “shortening” of the long initial *ā-*, as in *‘abqarī*, is morphologically determined. For the initial *‘ayn*, see 2.2.

In fact, there is also a well-known Zoroastrian spirit or force called *āfriti-* in Avestan, often accompanied by the honorific *dahma* (known in Pahlavi Persian as *dahmān āfrīn*, *dahmān*) that symbolizes benediction to the faithful. This Avestan term, which would have been passed on into Middle Persian or Parthian as a typical learned borrowing, is more likely the ultimate source of Arabic *‘ifrīt*.

The context and association of *‘ifrīt* with the legendary Jewish king Solomon (Sulaymān) is puzzling and has not yet been explained satisfactorily. The only conceivable way this negative association of *āfriti-* / *‘ifrīt* has occurred is through a Jewish intermediary, i.e. a Babylonian Talmudic source, which frequently refers to the magic skills of Solomon, together with his dominion over spirits and animals, and the famous encounter with the

¹³ Persian *āb* ‘lustre, splendour’ is etymologically unrelated to homonymous *āb* ‘water’.

Queen of Sheba (all of which are alluded to in the Qur'ān). In addition, Jewish communities were well established in the Parthian and Sassanian empires for centuries, and were therefore intimately familiar with most Zoroastrian tenets and rituals, cf. Elman (2010). The attitude against Zoroastrianism in the Talmud only turned negative in the second half of the 5th century CE.

- *firdaws*, pl. *firādīs* 'paradise'.

There are two attestations in the Qur'an for *firdaws*,

Sūrah 18: 107 *inna 'llaḏīna āmanū wa 'amilū 'l-ṣāliḥāti kānat lahum jannātu 'l-firdawsī nuzulan* 'Indeed, those who have believed and done righteous deeds - they will have the Gardens of Paradise as a lodging;'

Sūrah 23: 11 *allaḏīna yariṯūna al-firdawsa-hum fī-ha xalidūn* 'Who will inherit al-Firdaus. They will abide therein eternally.'

The ultimate origin of this Arabic form is evidently Iranian, from Old Iranian **paridaiza*-, cf. Avestan *pairi-daēza*- 'enclosure', Khwarezmian *prδyzk* 'garden', New Persian *pālēz* 'garden (for growing fruit, produce)'. The Old Iranian formation first entered Greek when the 4th century BCE historian Xenophon cited the Achaemenid expression *parádeisos* twice in his *Anabasis*, in reference to a royal domain for hunting wild animals or growing seasonal produce. The Iranian prefix **pari*- 'around', has apparently been replaced by the more recognizable Greek prefix *pará* 'at, next to' in the Greek version (especially since the Greeks were aware that such "parks" were often located next to big residential settlements, rather than inside).

Parádeisos acquired the religious connotation of the 'garden (esp. of Eden)' in the Greek Septuagint (*LXX*) translation of the Hebrew Scriptures (ca. 3-2nd century BCE), which was subsequently adopted by Hellenistic Christians for "paradise", on which see further Brust 2005: 506 ff. This Greek form has been widely borrowed in Aramaic, e.g. Syriac *pardaysā* 'paradise, garden (of Eden)', Mandaic *pardasa*, *pardisa* 'pleasure-garden; pleasance, paradise', Biblical Aramaic *prds* 'garden, park', Judeo-Babylonian Aramaic *par^edēsā* 'orchard, vineyard', also Hebrew *pardes* 'orchard, park', Achaemenid Babylonian *pardēsu* '(royal) park'.

It has long been recognized that the Arabic plural formation *firādīs* closely resembles the Greek source *parádeisos*. This suggests that Arabic may have borrowed *firādīs* directly from Greek, i.e. as a Christian term. This was rejected by Jeffrey: "It seems, however, merely a coincidence that this plu. form (which is not uncommon in borrowed words ...) is so close in sound to the Greek word, and it is unlikely that it came directly into Arabic from Greek."¹⁴. On account of the meaning of 'paradise', Jeffery seeks a Christian

¹⁴ Cf. Goutas (2007: 847): "The same observation applies to Greek loanwords in pre-Islamic Arabic, i.e., in the Qur'ān, in the earliest poetry, and in whatever prose from the first two Islamic centuries can be confidently assumed to reflect pre-Islamic usage. One major characteristic of such borrowings is that they are not, as far as can be determined, directly from Greek but through the intermediacy of Aramaic or Persian. In other words, just like Arabic loanwords in Greek, they are not the direct result of the contact between Greek and Arabic speakers, but the result of the Hellenization of the Near East after Alexander and the eventual permeation of such culturally significant terms into the Arabic represented by our earliest sources."

origin for the Arabic form, “probably Syriac”. For the Arabic outcome -aw- see 2.4.

- *al-majūs* ‘Zoroastrians, Magians’

This reference to the Zoroastrians is attested only once, viz. in

Sūrah 22: 17 *inna ’llaḏīna ’āmanū wa-’llaḏīna hādū wa ’l-ṣābi’īna wa ’l-naṣārā wa ’l-majūsa wa ’llaḏīna ašrakū inna allāha yaḥsilu bayna-hum yawma al-qiyāmati inna allāha ’ala kulli šay’in šahīdun* ‘Indeed, those who have believed and those who were Jews and the Sabaeans and the Christians and the Magians and those who associated with Allah - Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, over all things, Witness.’. There was no doubt at all among the early Muslim scholars that this religious term was Persian and in fact, it clearly reflects Old Persian nominative *maguš* ‘Magian priest’, which has been subsequently borrowed in Aramaic, e.g. Judaeo-Babylonian *am^ogūšā*, Syriac *mgušā* ‘id.’. Arabic may have borrowed this religious term from Old Persian, via an Aramaic dialect, or even *Imperial* Aramaic (i.e. the *lingua franca* in the region during the Achaemenid period).

- *mizāj* ‘tempering, mixture (in a cup)’

The term *mizāj* (pl. *mizājah*) is attested 3 times and refers to the admixture in the cup of the believers:

Sūrah 76: 5 *inna ’l-abrāra yašrabūna min ka’sin kāna mizāju-ha kāfūran* ‘Indeed, the righteous will drink from a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of Kafur,’

Sūrah 76: 17 *wa-yusqawna fī-hā ka’san kāna mizāju-hā zanjabīlan* ‘And they will be given to drink a cup [of wine] whose mixture is of ginger’

Sūrah 83: 25-27 *yusqawna min raḥīqin maxtūmin (26) xitāmu-hu miskun wa-fī ḏālika falyatanāfasi ’l-mutanāfisūna (27) wa-mizāju-hu min tasnīmin* ‘They will be given to drink [pure] wine [which was] sealed. (26) The last of it is musk. So for this let the competitors compete. (27) And its mixture is of Tasneem,’

The admixture consists of the strongly scented¹⁵ camphor (*kāfūr*), ginger (*zanjabīl*) or musk (*misk*) in these passages (in the last Sūrah, it has been further diluted with *tasnīm*, the drink in Paradise *par excellence*). Camphor, ginger and musk were expensive luxuries that had several usages already during the Sassanian period and were continued afterwards in the Islamic era, e.g. for making perfumes, medicinal purposes, or in funeral rituals. Although Jeffery does cite several Aramaic (and Hebrew) forms, viz. Syriac *mizag* ‘cup of mixed water and wine (for the Eucharist)’, Biblical Aramaic *m^ezag* (Hebrew *mozag*) ‘cup’¹⁶, he leaves out, oddly enough, the fact that this formation is no doubt ultimately of Iranian origin (as it is the case with *amšāj*, q.v.). More specifically, it reflects a Middle Persian *ka-*formation **āmēzag* ‘mixed’ (> New Persian *āmēzah* ‘id.’). *Mizāj* does not appear to have been borrowed directly from Iranian, but more likely via an Aramaic intermediary (perhaps Syriac), as it shows a highly specialized meaning of the Persian formation, and, in addition, no trace of the initial vowel *ā*^o (unlike *amšāj*, q.v.).

- *misk* ‘musk’

¹⁵ Smell plays an important role in the heavenly Garden described in the Qur’ān, see Rustomji 2009: 70 f.

¹⁶ We can also mention *mzg* ‘to mix or dilute (of wine with water)’, cf. Sokoloff 2002: 651 f.

Misk is attested once in the Qur'ān. Its intense smell is prized since Antiquity and, therefore, it must be heavily diluted in order to give its pleasant aroma and scent. The musk itself is extracted from the pouch-like gland of the musk deer. In the Qur'anic passage, it seals the *tasnīm* offered to the faithful in Paradise, on which see above, s.v. *mizājī*.

The origin of the term *misk* is clear, being from Iranian, notably (Middle, New) Persian *mušk* 'id.' This formation is usually connected to Skt. *mušká-* 'testicle, scrotum', presumably named after its resemblance. An Indian (or South-Asian) origin is a priori likely, especially since the musk deer is found in South Asia (including Vietnam, parts of Siberia and Mongolia). This formal correspondence between the Persian and Sanskrit forms is semantically problematic. Within Iranian, Persian *mušk* has no other cognate forms (all the attested New Iranian and Indian terms are considered borrowings from Persian), whereas Skt. *mušká-* and its later continuations do not have the additional meaning of 'musk' (the term *kasturīka-* is used instead < Greek), as pointed out by Brust 2005: 468 f. It may be concluded that the shift of the original meaning of *'scrotum, testicle' to 'musk' has probably occurred only in Persian, but not in Sanskrit. From Middle Persian *mušk*, the meaning (and its usages) must have spread to other languages, such as Arm. *moušk*, Greek *mósxos* and Late Latin *muscus* (> French *musc*, Engl. *musk*, etc.). Evidently, it has also been borrowed in Aramaic, cf. Syriac *mwšk*, Judaeo-Babylonian *mwšqwn* 'musk' (Sokoloff 2002: 650b), Mandaic *ṭabīa d-mišk* 'musk deer' (Drower - Macuch 1963: 173). The Arabic form *misk*, with *-i-*, appears to go back to a Persian variant *mišk*, with *u > i* in front of *š* in a closed syllable, cf. Hübschmann 1895: 139.

- *namāriq* 'cushions', sg. *numruq*.

This term, attested once in the Qur'ān, is found in an early Sūrah 88: 15 *wa namāriqu maṣfūfatun* 'and cushions lined up' (in the description of Paradise). As mentioned by Jeffery, the famous 9th century philosopher al-Kindī noted it as a loanword from Persian, although it was not considered as such by al-Jawālīqī or al-Suyūṭī. It is fairly frequently mentioned in the early poetry as the cushion on a camel's back. Similar to *zarābī*, *numruq* is also a qualifying adjective, with the meaning 'the soft one', cf. Persian *narm* 'soft'. In this case, it may rather go back to an unattested Parthian formation **namrag* < Parth. *namr* 'gentle, mild', suffixed with **-aka*, cf. Shaked 1995: 77. The *namāriq* are for seating only, according to the descriptions of the Basran scholar al-Asma'ī and the Persian historian al-Ṭabarī. There is also an exact correspondence in another (East) Iranian language, Khwarezmian *nmrk* 'soft'. In addition, Shaked 1986: 75 cites an Aramaic attestation, viz. *nmrqyn* (the context is unclear to me). On the velar *-q* see 2.1.

- *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*

The two angels *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* are mentioned once, in:

Sūrah 2: 102 *wa 'ttaba'ū mā tatlū 'l-šayāṭīnu 'alā mulki sulaymāna wa mā kafara sulaymānu wa-lākinna 'l-šayāṭīna kafarū yu'allimūna 'l-nāsa al-siḥra wa mā 'unzila 'alā al-malakayni bi-bābīla hārūta wa mārūta wa-mā yu'allimāni min aḥadin ḥattā yaqūlā 'innamā naḥnu fitnatun falā takfur fayata'allamūna min-humā mā yufarriqūna bi-hi bayna 'lmar'i wa-zawji-hi wa-mā hum biḍārrīna bi-hi min aḥadin 'illā bi'iṯni allāhi wa-yata'allamūna mā yaḍurruhum wa-lā yanfa'uhum wā-laḡad 'alimū lamani 'štarāhu mālahu fī 'l-axirati min xalaḡin wa-*

labi'sa māšaraw bihi 'anfusahum law kānū ya'lamūna 'And they followed [instead] what the devils had recited during the reign of Solomon. It was not Solomon who disbelieved, but the devils disbelieved, teaching people magic and that which was revealed to the two angels at Babylon, Harut and Marut. But the two angels do not teach anyone unless they say, "We are a trial, so do not disbelieve [by practicing magic]." And [yet] they learn from them that by which they cause separation between a man and his wife. But they do not harm anyone through it except by permission of Allah . And the people learn what harms them and does not benefit them. But the Children of Israel certainly knew that whoever purchased the magic would not have in the Hereafter any share. And wretched is that for which they sold themselves, if they only knew.'

The origin of these two angels is clearly not Arabic in origin a fact that was already recognized by the Muslim scholars, notably by the Baghdadi grammarian al-Jawālīqī (1073–1145). The whole passage was generally considered cryptic. The Qur'ānic exegetes resorted to other traditions, notably Judaism and Christianity, for a clarification. Subsequently, a narrative was developed that *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* were fallen angels who became attracted to an earthly woman. In the end, they were punished for their transgression and imprisoned in a well in Babylon, for all eternity (a comprehensive overview is given by Shahbazi 2003 and Vajda 1986). Although the etymological connection with the Zoroastrian deities (Avestan) *Hauruatāt-* and *Aməratāt-* as the protectors of the water and plants, first suggested by Lagarde (1866: 168 f.), has been established and mostly accepted by modern scholars, the occurrence of two originally Zoroastrian deities and its context in this Qur'ānic passage is unclear and no apparent cultural, religious link can be demonstrated.¹⁷

Several similar, alliterating forms were noted by iranists, e.g. Sogdian *hrwwt mrwwt* in a word-list glossing Middle Persian *'mwrđ'd* and *hrwd'd* (= Avestan *Hauruatāt-* and *Aməratāt-*), cf. Henning (1940: 16, 19), Armenian *Hauraut-Mauraut* (a flower used for Ascension Day celebrations), Slavic *Arioch* and *Marioch* (guardians of the earth). But generally, either the context is unclear or it requires a rather contrived effort to connect these forms to the Qur'ānic *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*, often based on non-canonical Qur'ānic stories and inventive explanations by Muslim scholars. As *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* are associated with Solomon, the story of these two characters in Sūrah 2: 102 may have been retold from (or merely alluded to) a third, syncretistic Jewish source in Aramaic garb, similar to *'ifrīt* (q.v.).

The most likely Iranian source of *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* is unknown. *Prima facie*, Sogdian *hrwwt mrwwt* is the best candidate, but how these two formations have developed from Old Iranian **harwatāt-* and **amrtāt-* respectively, is rather puzzling. We might postulate a rather *ad hoc* explanation of (dialectal ?) assimilation for Sogdian *hrwwt* (/hərwáwat/ ?) < **hrwt't* /harwátāt/, which has then influenced the formation *mrwwt*. Subsequently, Sogdian *hrwwt mrwwt* would have been passed on to Armenian and to the (Judaeo-) Aramaic dialect that served as the direct source of the Arabic formations *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*. Sogdian *hrwwt mrwwt* might have been adapted to **harwōt*, **marwōt* in this particular (Judaeo-) Aramaic dialect ?

¹⁷ Cf. Vajda (*ibid.*: 237a): 'it is still not clear how the synthesis of the Iranian features and the Jewish legend of the fallen angels took place, nor how the hypothetical version which had substituted Iranian names for the Semitic names of the heroes of the story came into Arabia as early as the beginning of the 7th century A.D.'

- *wardah* ‘rose-red’.

The form *wardah* is attested once, in

Sūrah 55:37 *fa-idā inšaqqati al-samā’u fakānat wardatan kal-dihāni* ‘and when the heaven is split open and becomes rose-colored like oil’. *Wardah* is no doubt an ancient loanword from Iranian, **warda-*, cf. Avestan *varəda-* (masc.) ‘rose’, Parthian *wār* (also Armenian borrowing *vard*). The Arabic form cannot have been borrowed directly from Persian, which has *gul*, but rather via Imperial Aramaic, cf. Syriac *wardā*, Talmudic Aramaic *wrd*, *wrd’*, Mandaic *warda* ‘rose, flower’. The (Middle, New) Persian continuation *gul* ‘id.’ of **warda-* has also entered Arabic too, as the synonym *jull*.

- *wazīr* ‘helper, assistant’, pl. *wuzarā*’

This term is attested twice, in

Sūrah 20: 29-30 *wa ’j’al lī wazīran min ahlī (30) hārūna axī* ‘And appoint for me [i.e. Prophete Mūsā] an assistant from my family - Aaron, my brother.’;

Sūrah 25: 35 *wa laqad ātaynā mūsā al-kitāba wa ja’alnā ma’ahu ’axāhu hārūna wazīran* ‘And We had certainly given Moses the Scripture and appointed with him his brother Aaron as an assistant.’.

It has long been assumed to be a loanword from Iranian, cf. Middle Persian *wizīr* {wcył} ‘decision, judgement’, since Lagarde (1877: 153, §2155), also generally accepted by iranists such as Horn (1895: 242 f.), Massé (1914: 80), Eilers 1962: 207 (and most recently Ciancaglini 2008: 166). Avestan would have preserved the agentive correspondence: *vīcira-* ‘deciding, making the decision (said of Ahura Mazda)’. Subsequently, the Arabic term would have been reborrowed in New Persian as *wazīr* ‘vizier, counsellor of state, minister’, also Syriac *wazīrā* ‘vizier’ (cf. Ciancaglini, *ibid.*), Mandaic *uazīr* (Drower - Macuch 1963: 155).

The alleged borrowing from Persian was also based on the assumption that the institution of *wazīr* was passed on from (Sassanian) Persian times, which was the thesis of Enger (1859: 240), and, subsequently, vigorously defended by the renowned Danish historian on Sassanian history, Arthur Christensen (1907). Christensen (*l.c.*: 33) equated the Islamic *wazīr* to the Sassanian aristocratic title of *wuzurg framādār* ‘grand commander’, whose function was kept until the 6th century CE, leaving no trace in the subsequent, Umayyad period. The *subordinate*, advisory role played by the *wazīr* (with its older meaning of ‘helper, assistant’, as attested in the Qur’ān) in the Arab-Islamic bureaucracy would be difficult to explain though, if *wazīr* were indeed a borrowing from a (unattested) pre-Islamic Sassanian Persian title **wizīr* ‘decider’ (only this abstract term *wizīr* ‘decision, judgement’ is attested). This rather anachronistic equation was rightly challenged by Barthold (1912: 258 f.) and Sprengling (1939: 331 ff.), but unfortunately, largely ignored by the iranists.

The German arabist Goitein (1942: 257) further discussed the semantic incongruence. Arabic *wazīr* had a modest (and general) function of a ‘helper, assistant’ originally and with this meaning it was widely in use in Khurāsān, during the Umayyad Caliphate. It was only during the ‘Abbasid dynasty that the *wazīr* was elevated to an important governmental function, when its founder al-Manṣūr (714 – 775 CE) appointed experienced yet dependent *wuzarā*’, usually freedmen, to instruct and supervise the young heir-apparents from his

own household. This appears to be a custom that has tribal Arab roots.

The discussion was expanded by the French expert of Islamic history, Sourdél (1959-1960), who considered Abū Salama Ḥafs b. Sulaymān al-Xallāl, an influential Iraqi freedman with ample powers (including the governorship of al-Kūfah), to be the first person to bear the *official* title of *wazīr*. Abū Salama was sent as a chief ‘Abbasid emissary to Khurāsān in 744/5 CE to win over the local population to the Shi‘a cause, and he was saluted as *wazīr āl muḥammad* ‘Helper of the House of Muhammad’ by his victorious army on which see Sourdél, *ibid.*: 65-70¹⁸. Sourdél also corroborated the case for an internal Arabic etymology for *wazīr*, viz. from the root *wazara* ‘to take upon oneself, carry a burden’ (*wizr* ‘load, burden’).

2. On the phonological adaptation of the Iranian borrowings in the Qur’ān

2.1. rendering the Iranian velars ^(*)k, g

One of the salient, phonological features of the discussed borrowings in the Qur’ān is the treatment of the Iranian velar stops in Arabic. In several instances it seems that Arabic *q* corresponds to Iranian *-g*. It is worth citing Shaked 1987: 259 here: “The maintenance of the letter *qōf* in the morpheme *-ak(a)*, *-akān(a)*, for example, cannot be considered an archaism, since in early Arabic borrowings (probably made toward the end of the Sasanian period) the Arabic letter *qāf* is consistently used for the same function”. Admittedly, this argument is not absolutely unassailable. The transition of the Old Persian intervocalic voiceless *p*, *t*, *k*, *č* to their corresponding voiced stops *b*, *d*, *g*, **j* (> *z*) in Middle / New Persian in around 3rd century CE was not a complete process (as can be seen in the sometimes differently spelled forms in the Manichaean texts of that era), and may not have reached all corners of the Persian speaking realm. Also, the use of *qāf* in such cases could have originally reflected a Syriac pronunciation of foreign {k}¹⁹, which was subsequently adopted in Arabic. Examples of *-q* corresponding to Syriac *-q* are: *qurbān* ‘offering, sacrificing’ (< Syr. *qurbānā* ‘id.’), *furqān* ‘salvation’ (< *purqānā* ‘id.’), *xandaq* ‘ditch’ (< *kandaq*²⁰ ‘id.’, of Iranian origin, Ciancaglini *ibid.*: 197). This would also mean that several of these Arabic form from the late Sassanian period with this “maintenance of the letter *qōf* in the morpheme *-ak(a)*, *-akān(a)*,” are merely indirect borrowings from Iranian, being passed on via Syriac and other Aramaic dialects. The Syriac (and other Aramaic) forms would then rather reflect the older stage of the Parthian or Persian forms, e.g. (post-Qur’ānic) *fustuq*, *fustaq* ‘pistachio’ (< Syriac (adj.) *pwstqy* / *pūstqāyā* / ‘of pistachio’, deriv. of *pstq* / *pistaq* / ‘pistachio’ < early

¹⁸ Goitein 1962: 425 f. later added that the gradual shift in meaning and function of *wazīr* was probably initiated by an important figure in Shi‘a hagiography, *al-Muxtār b. Abī ‘Ubayd* (622-687 CE), who led an early Shi‘a rebellion against the Umayyad Caliphs. He first adopted the title *wazīr āl muḥammad* to express his allegiance to the cause of Imām Ḥusayn and his family, thus echoing the choice of Mūsā to appoint his brother Hārūn as told in the Qur’ān. This title was subsequently transferred to Abū Salama Ḥafs b. Sulaymān al-Xallāl, which has thus contributed to the promotion of *wazīr*.

¹⁹ As for the phonetic representation of Syriac {q} for the Greek velar {k} in loanwords, see Brock (2007: 822 f.).

²⁰ Shaked (1987: 259b f.) points out that *xandaq* “was probably borrowed not earlier than the 5th century A.D.”.

Middle Persian **pistak* > later Middle Persian *pistag* ‘id.’, Ciancaglini 2008: 235). Generally, the Iranian borrowings in Syriac have been transcribed fairly accurately and therefore, the transcription could reflect the different dates of the borrowings from Middle Persian or Parthian, including the date of the sonorization of final velars, cf. Ciancaglini (2008: 70 ff.).

On the other hand, is it conceivable that, in some instances, phonetically *q* reflects late Middle Persian (or Parthian) *g*? A priori this is certainly possible, especially since the realization of voiced stop [g]/[g̃] for {q} can be observed in many Arabic dialects around the Persian Gulf, including the conservative Bedouin dialects²¹. It is also for this reason that the reference of Sībawayh to the *majhūrah* character of the letter *qāf* has led to the conclusion that *qāf* was voiced, e.g. Schaade (1911: 20); al-Nassir (1993: 36 ff.); Edzard (2009: 2), as the overall majority of the consonants cited by Sībawayh has this trait too, such as ‘*ayn, bā’, jīm, yā’, dād, lām, nūn, rā’, dāl, zāy, zā’, dāl*.²² For this pronunciation we might even cite two prominent, post-Qur’ānic, examples, viz. *dihqān* ‘man of importance, grandee’ and *xānaqāh* ‘a Sufi convent’, which are the arabicized forms of Persian *dihgān* ‘farmer, Hüfner’²³, Middle Persian (Pahlavi) {d’hk’n}, {dhywk’n}²⁴ and *xānah-gāh*²⁵ (lit. ‘home-place’) respectively, besides the earlier discussed *istabraq*, ‘*abqarī, namāriq* (q.vv.).

In the other Qur’ānic borrowings, the Iranian voiced *g* is represented by *jīm: jund* (< Persian *gund*), *al-majūs* (< ultimately Old Persian *maguš*), *amšāj* (< Parthian **āmēžag*), *junāḥ* (< Persian *gunāh*), *sijjīl* (< Middle Persian **sig (u) gil*), *sirāj* (< Syriac **širāg* < Parthian *čirāg*), *mizāj* (< Syriac *mizag* < Middle Persian **āmēzag*). This treatment is similar to that of the -*g*- in the Middle and early New Persian forms (geographical, philosophical, local cultural terms, etc.) that must have entered Arabic *directly* (i.e. without a Syriac intermediary) in the early Islamic era.²⁶ The “hard” pronunciation of the *jīm* is still heard, most notably in Egyptian

²¹ This was already observed by the famous historian Ibn Xaldūn (1332 - 1406), as discussed recently by Heinrichs (2012: 144 ff.). An overview of the problem whether Arabic *qāf* was originally realized as voiced or voiceless is given by Edzard, *l.c.* Incidentally, the realization of the *qāf* in the modern Persian speaking world is equally diverse and may not be used to support the influence of a particular Arabic dialect on this.

²² In contrast, the sounds (all voiceless) that were defined as *mahmūсах* ‘whispered’, are *ḥā’, xā’, kāf, šīn, šād, tā’, sīn, θā’, fā’*.

²³ The authenticity of this form (in modern dictionaries) is not quite beyond any doubt, as it is mentioned only in late Indo-Persian lexicographical works, which were extensively consulted by Iranian compilers in the 19th century. Only the arabicized form *dihqān* can be found in the earliest Persian literature, notably in the 10-11th century epic *Šāhnāmah*.

²⁴ The interpretative transcriptions *dahigān, dehgān* were given by MacKenzie (1971: 24, 26).

²⁵ According to the Egyptian scholar al-Maqrīzī (1364 - 1442 CE), the institution of a *xānaqāh* was founded in the 5th century AH (Lane I: 818). This more or less coincides with the first attestations of both *xānaqāh* and *xānaqāh* in the poems of the famous Persian poet Xāqānī (1121- 1190 CE) from Tabriz.

²⁶ This concerns forms found in the works of ethnically Persian writers (historians, geographers, etc.) who were writing in Arabic. The historian al-Ṭabarī transcribes the following Persian names and terms as follows: *arjabad* ‘castellan’ (**arg(i)bad*, from Persian *arg* ‘citadel’ with productive suff. *-bad* ‘lord, master’), *Dārābjird* (*Dārābgird* a town in eastern Fārs Province), *Jurjān* (*Gurgān* Province), *Sijjīstān* (*Sagīstān* Province), *Yazdajird* (*Yazdigird*, name of 3 Sassanian kings), cf. Schaade (1911: 72 f.). The *qāf* on the other hand, was only used to represent voiceless (Persian) *k*.

Arabic²⁷ (as velar stop [g]), but also in Omani and Yemeni dialects (somewhat palatal like [j]), and historically also in Baghdād. The old Semitic voiced stop *g became more palatal early on²⁸, after which it was realized as affricate, the preferred (Qur’ānic/*fuṣṣḥah*) pronunciation during the time of *Sībawayh* (ed. al-Nassir 1993: 42).

The following scenario may explain the distribution and treatment of the velars of the Iranian borrowings in Arabic. It is to be interpreted purely in historical terms: every Iranian *k* would have regularly become Arabic *q* (or, less frequently, *k*), whereas every voiced *g* should have become *j*. This implies that forms such as *rizq*, *namāriq*, *istabraq*, *surādiq*, *‘abqarī* reflect a generally older “pre-lenition” phase of Parthian / Middle Persian: **rōzik*, **namrak*, **stabrak*, **srādak* and **āb-karī* respectively, directly or indirectly through Aramaic / Syriac transmission. In contrast, Arabic *j* in the borrowed Iranian forms comes from Old Iranian **g*, or from a later Middle Iranian “lenited” *g*: *jund* (< *gund*), *al-majūs* (< *maguš*), *amšāj* (< **āmēžag*), *junāḥ* (< *gunāḥ*), *sijjīl* (< v**sig (u) gil*), *mizāj* (< Syriac *mizag* < **āmēžag*), *sirāj* (< Syriac **širāg* < *čirāg*). Again, some of these forms could have been mediated to Arabic via Aramaic / Syriac.

But still, how should the post-Qur’ānic, arabicized forms *dihqān* and *xānaqāh* be accounted for? An Aramaic intermediary can hardly be invoked: in the case of *dihqān*, only Syriac *dhqn’* /*dahqānā*/²⁹ ‘chiefman or magistrate of a village; gentry’ is attested (Ciancaglini 2008: 148), which is usually considered as a borrowing from Arabic or Classical New Persian. One can argue that the *q* in these two instances just points to borrowing from an Arabic dialect whose *qāf* happens to be realized as [g]. But we could surely also expect alternatively spelt arabicized forms such as **dihjān*, **xānajāh* (notably) in the Arabic-written works of Persian writers. The reason that these writers chose voiceless *qāf* instead of *jīm* in *dihqān* and *xānaqāh* may be related to the rendition of Persian *g* in the presence of the aspirate *h*, becoming unvoiced [k] and probably also a back velar or (pre-)uvular [k̠]. Even in the modern, colloquial pronunciation of Iranian Persian, *h* (if it is pronounced at all) can inhibit voicing, e.g. *subḥānah* ‘breakfast’ can be realized as [sobu:n’e] or [sop^h:n’e].

2.2. Secondary, initial ‘ayn and emphasis

An initial, “prothetic” ‘ayn can be noticed in many Arabic forms borrowed from Iranian (and other languages). There are three Qur’ānic examples with this apparently secondary ‘ayn: *‘abqarī*, *‘ifrīt* and *ḥūr ‘īn*.

According to Eilers (1990: 178 f.), such a “prothetic” ‘ayn is quite frequent in Arabic, citing several examples: *‘araq* ‘sweat’ ~ *rāqa/rayq* ‘to flow; to glisten’ (cf. *rīq* ‘saliva’), *‘išq* ‘passion, burning desire’ ~ *šāqa/šawq* ‘to please, give joy; to fill with longing’ (*ištiyāq* ‘longing, yearning’), *‘atf* ‘to bend, incline’ ~ *ṭāfa/ṭawf* ‘to go about, circumambulate’. The presence of ‘a- in these examples seems to modify the general meaning, hence it may actually have been some kind of a pre-Arabic/Semitic semantically charged preformative originally. Besides, if it were a vocalic prothesis (in initial position), it is most often

²⁷ The Egyptian pronunciation [g] for *jīm* was recently discussed by Woidich - Zack (2009).

²⁸ Cf. Woidich - Zack, *l.c.*: 57.

²⁹ Tafazzolī (1994: 223) has mistakenly cited Syriac *dhgn’*, with voiced velar stop -g-.

introduced by a glottal stop (*hamza*).

Intriguingly, in certain designations for animals containing *r*, the prothesis begins with ‘*ayn*’ in several Semitic languages, e.g. ‘*uṣṣūr*’ ‘sparrow, small bird’ (cf. Hebrew *šippōr* ‘birds’), Ugaritic ‘*qšr*’ a kind of snake (cf. Arabic *qišr* ‘slough (of a snake)’), as cited by Lipiński 1997: 216. The thrill consonant does seem to trigger ‘*ayn*’³⁰ (or emphasis) in other cases as well, especially in some Arabic dialects, e.g. Ḥaḍramawtī *barra*’ < *barra*’ < *barran* ‘outside’, *ra’a* < *ra’a* ‘behold!’ (Lipiński, *ibid.*: 189 f.). This may also explain the initial ‘*ayn*’ of ‘*ifrīt*’, ‘*abqarī*’ and ‘*ḥūr īn*’. Other loanwords that would have been affected by this adaptation in Arabic are ‘*īrāq*’ ‘Lower Mesopotamia’ < Middle Persian *ērag* ‘south’ (derived from *ēr* ‘down, below; low’³¹), ‘*anbar*’ ‘store’ < early New Persian *anbār* (< Middle Persian *hambār* ‘id.’), ‘*askar*’ ‘army’ < Latin *exercitus* ‘disciplined body of men, army’ (via late Hellenistic Greek *exérkitos* ?) or from (Middle) Persian *laškar* ‘army’ (via Aramaic ?)³², ‘*araba*’ ‘cart, wagon’ < Greek *hárma*, (Ionic) *árma* ‘id.’³³. However, it has not affected *ibrīq* (see above), because it has been borrowed via Syriac ?

Lipiński (l.c.) further remarks that *r* “may also cause the change of a non-emphatic consonant in an emphatic one in modern Arabic dialects”, citing as examples *ra’s* > *rāš* ‘head’ (at Aleppo), *darb* > *ḍarb* ‘road’ (at Essaouira, Morocco). This may account for the emphatic consonant in the Arabic term *rawḍah* (as discussed above), being triggered by the initial *r*-.

2.3. Arabic *ḥ* for Persian *h*

The aspirate *h* in several Iranian, particularly Persian, forms, Arabic rather shows the pharyngeal realisation *ḥ*, as in the Qur’ānic borrowings *junāḥ* (< *gunāh*), ‘*ḥūr īn*’ (< Middle Persian **hūrōyī*’/’*m*), also (non-Qur’ānic) *tabaḥbaḥa* ‘to have it good, be prosperous’ (< Persian *bah bah* ‘bravo!’), *šāḥ* (besides *šāh*) ‘(Persian) king’ < *šāh* (Eilers 1971: 610). Perhaps this is on account of the unvoiced pronunciation of Persian *-h* in most positions of the word (voiced only between vowels or after a voiced consonant), which would have sounded most closely to voiceless *ḥ* to Arabic speakers.

2.4. *w* ~ *y* alternation ?

A striking example for such a fluctuation is the borrowing *firdaws*, which is ultimately from the Iranian-Greek expression *paradeisos* (see above). The only conceivable (Aramaic) language that could have mediated this expression to Arabic is Christian Syriac *pardaysā* ‘paradise, garden’. This would still leave the diphthong *-aw-* unexplained though, as this diphthong is not found in any of the Aramaic forms.

It may be observed that notably Sabaic, a historically important South Arabian dialect spoken in Yemen, shows an apparent fluctuation between the semivowels *y* and *w* in

³⁰ Already stated by Fraenkel 1886: 233, certain emphatic sounds, which would also include *r*, may give rise to an initial ‘*ayn*’, rather than the usual glottal stop (*hamza*).

³¹ Cf. Schaefer 1997: 87a; Siddiqui 1919: 69. ‘*īrāq*’ has been assimilated to the root ‘*-r-q*’ ‘to take root’.

³² Cf. Shahîd 2008: 6.

³³ On the dialectal (Semitic) alternation of *b* ~ *m*, see also Lipiński (1997: 111). This alternation is especially noticeable in Palaeosyrian, Ethiopian and South Arabian, e.g. *Ḥa-lam^{ki}* for *Ḥalab* ‘Aleppo’, *ba* for *mā* ‘water’.

medial and final positions (Lipiński 1997: 115; Höfner 1943: 26), e.g. 'ty/'tw 'to come (back)' (Arabic *atā*), 'dw/'dy 'to move' (Arabic 'adā, 'adw), 'dwr/'dyr 'patrol' (Arabic *dawriyah*), *kyn/kwn* 'to be' (Arabic *kawn*), *rḏw(n) / rḏy* 'good will, satisfaction' (Arabic *riḏan*) (with additional examples from Beeston - Ghul et al. (1982)). Hence Arabic *firdaws* may have been borrowed very early from a Yemenite / Sabaic variant **frdws*, which would reflect a dialectal adaptation of (early) Syriac *pardaysā*?

A fluctuation of the diphthongs *ay ~ aw* is also attested in the highly archaic Andalusian Arabic, e.g. *fayḥah* 'fragrant emanation' (cf. standard Arabic *fawḥah*), *hawbah* 'gravity' (standard Arabic *haybah*). This fluctuation can be ascribed to the influence of an early Yemenite speech community in al-Andalus, cf. Corriente (1989: 94 f., 97). As shown by Corriente, early (pre-standardized) Andalusian Arabic shows a remarkable amount of features that is shared with (Old) South Arabian.

3. Conclusions

The Iranian forms (or forms assumed to be of Iranian origin) that can be found in the Qur'ān are not quite numerous, but they have indeed a clear "presence". Many of these forms may have entered Arabic via an Aramaic intermediary (usually Syriac, but also via *Imperial* Aramaic). The assessment of the forms can be summarized as follows:

1. forms that have probably been borrowed directly, are

- *istabraq* 'silk, brocade' (< early Middle Persian *stabrak* 'shot silk' (later Middle Persian *stabrag* > Syriac 'estabr(a)gā 'silk dress, brocade'),
- *amšāj* 'mixtures' (< Parthian **āmēžag*, cf. New Persian loanword *āmēžah* 'mixed'),
- *barzax* 'barrier, partition [in the hereafter]; interval between the present life and that which is to come' (< Parthian **bwrz'xw* 'Exalted World; Heights'),
- *junāḥ* 'guilt, sin, crime' (< early New Persian *gunāh* 'id.'),
- *ḥūr īn* beautiful maidens in the hereafter (< Middle Persian **hūrōyī*/_m {*huraōim*} 'of good growth',
- *zarābī* (pl.) 'rich carpets' (< Persian *zar(r)ābī* 'gold coloured (one), with a golden sheen'),
- *zūr* 'falsehood' (< Middle Persian *zūr* 'id., deceit'),
- *sijjīl* 'lumps of baked clay' (< Middle Persian **sig u gil* 'stone and clay'),
- *sundus* 'fine silk' (< Parthian/Middle Persian *sndws*),
- 'abqarī 'A kind of rich carpet' (< early Middle Persian **āb-karī* 'product of a lustre-maker'),
- *rawḏah* 'well-watered meadow' (< derived from Arabic **rūd* 'riverlet' < Persian *rōd* 'river'),
- *misk* 'musk' (< (early) New Persian *mišk*, variant of *mušk* 'id.').

2. Forms that have probably been borrowed indirectly, via an Aramaic dialect, are

- *ibrīq* 'water jug' (< Syriac *ābrēqā* < **ābrēg* < early Middle Persian **ābrēj*),
- *jund* 'host, army, troop' (Imperial Aramaic / Aramaic "dialect" (**gund*),
- *rizq* 'bounty, provision' (< Syriac *rwzyq* 'military ration; daily bread' < early Middle Persian *rōzīk* 'daily bread, sustenance'),
- 'ifrīt 'demon' (< Judaeo-Babylonian Aramaic ? < (learned) Middle Persian / Parthian **āfrīt* < Avestan *āfriti-* 'spirit, force of benediction'),
- *firdaws* 'paradise' (< (?) Sabaic **frdws* < Syriac *pardaysā* 'paradise, garden (of Eden)' < Greek *parádeisos* < Old Iranian **pari-daiza-* 'hunting domain; garden for growing produce'),

- *sirbāl* ‘garment’ (< Biblical Aramaic *srbly* ‘tunics’ < Old Iranian/Scythian **šarabāra*-, cf. Greek gloss *sarábara* ‘Scythian trousers’, Persian *šalwār* ‘trousers’),
- *sirāj* ‘lamp, torch’ (< Syriac **šrāgā/šrāgā* ‘id.’ < Parthian *čirāg/čirāy*),
- *sard* ‘chain armour’ (< Aramaic, cf. Syriac *zarḏā* ‘id.’ < (ultimately) Old Iranian *zrad-/zrād* ‘id.’),
- *al-majūs* ‘Zoroastrians, Magians’ (< Syriac *mgušā* or (Imperial) Aramaic **magūš* ‘id.’ < Old Persian *maguš* ‘Magian priest’),
- *mizāj* ‘tempering, mixture (in a cup)’ (< Syriac *mizag* ‘cup of mixed water and wine (for the Eucharist)’ < Middle Persian **āmēzag* ‘mixed’),
- *Hārūt* and *Mārūt* names of two angels in Babylon (< Judaeo-Aramaic **harwōt*, **marwōt* ? < ? Sogdian *hrwwt*, *mrwwt*)
- *wardah* ‘rose-red’ (< Aramaic *wrd*, cf. Syriac *wardā* ‘rose’ etc. < Old Iranian **warda*- ‘id.’).

3. Forms that may or may not have been borrowed directly are

- *jund* ‘host, army, troop, force’ (cf. Middle Persian/Parth. *gund* and Aramaic *gwnd* ‘id.’),
- *dīn* ‘Religion, profession of faith’ (cf. Middle Persian or Parthian *dēn* and Syriac *d’yn*, *dyn* ‘religion’),
- *surādiq* ‘awning, tent cover’ (cf. early Parthian / Middle Persian **srādak* and Mandaic *sradqa* ‘canopy, awning’),
- *kanz* ‘treasure’ (Old Iranian **ganza*-, cf. Biblical Aramaic *ganzē*, etc. ‘id.’),
- *namāriq* ‘cushions’ (early Parthian / Middle Persian **namrak* and Aramaic *nmrq-yn* ?).

4. Finally, the following forms are rather not of Iranian origin:

- sg. *arā’ik*, pl. *arīkah* ‘couch’ (of unknown origin),
- *siwār* ‘bracelet’ (< (ultimately) Akkadian *šewirū*, (Old Babylonian) *šawiru* ‘bracelets’),
- *wazīr* ‘helper, assistant; [later, in the ‘Abbasid period] vizier, minister’ (< Arabic *wazara* ‘to take upon oneself, carry a burden’).

Iranian borrowings in Arabic: (Middle) Persian or Parthian/non-Persian

Specific phonological criteria can be employed to assess the immediate origin of the Iranian borrowings:

- Parthian/Non-Persian *z* ~ Persian ^(*)*d*, notably *barzax* (< Parth. *burz* ‘high’ vs. Persian *bul* < early Middle Iranian **bərd*),
- Parthian/Non-Persian *-d* ~ Persian *-y*, notably *surādiq* (< Parthian/Non-Persian **srāda*- vs. Persian *s(a)rāy*), *ḥūr’īn* (Middle Persian ^(*)*hūrōyīn*/_n vs. Parthian *hūrōd*°)
- metathesis of *Cr* > *rC* in (later) Persian, but not in Parthian: *namāriq/numruq* (< Parthian ^(*)*namrag* ‘soft’ vs. Persian *narm*°),
- Parthian *ž* ~ Persian *z*, notably *amšāj* (< Parthian **āmēžag*, with *ž* > Arabic *š*), *mizāj* (< Middle Persian **āmēzag*, via Aramaic),
- **wi*- > *gu*-, in late Middle / New Persian, but not in early Middle Persian, Parthian: *junāḥ* (< late Middle / New Persian *gunāh* vs. Manichaean Middle Persian *w(y)n’h*, *wn’*, Parthian *w(y)n’s*).

The phonology and relative chronology of the Iranian loanwords in Qur’anic Arabic

The different treatment of the Iranian velars *k*, *g* (especially in final position) in the Qur'ān may be explained chronologically as, generally, Old and early Middle Iranian ^(*)*k* would have been adapted as *qāf* (sometimes also *kāf*) in Arabic, but Old Iranian ^{*}*g*, together with later, secondary Middle Iranian *g*, as *jīm*. The Arabic loanwords may also have been borrowed via Syriac (or another Aramaic dialect), which can reflect an older or more recent stage of Persian / Parthian (e.g. *rizq* < early Middle Persian *rōzīk*, via Syriac). Early, probably direct borrowings in Arabic that show a lack of lenition of the Old Iranian voiceless stops include *istabraq*, *'abqarī*.

The role of the liquid *r* probably accounts for two main phonetic peculiarities of the borrowed Iranian forms in the Qur'ān, viz. a secondary *'ayn* (in *'abqarī*, *'ifrīt*, *ḥūr 'īn*) and emphasis (in *rawdāh*).

Iranian *h*, which has often a voiceless realization, can also be represented by pharyngeal *ḥ* in Arabic, in the case of *junāḥ*, *ḥūr 'īn*.

Finally, the aberrant vocalism of *firdaws* may be ascribed to a direct borrowing from South Arabian dialects, notably Yemenite Sabaic, which shows a fluctuation between *y* ~ *w* in medial (diphthongal) position.

In short, the Iranian loanwords in the Qur'ān (again) confirm, linguistically and culturally, the early contacts between Arab speakers and Parthian-Sassanian Iran, dating back well before 3rd century CE (when the general lenition of post-vocalic voiceless stops in Middle Iranian had yet to take place). On the other hand, the Qur'ān probably contains some Iranian (Persian) forms that must have been borrowed quite close to the date of its composition, as illustrated most clearly by *junāḥ* (and possibly also by *zarābī*).

The social context of the Iranian borrowings

The Iranian forms in the Qur'ān are mainly from two semantic fields:

- items & products related to luxury and refinement, such as *ibrīq*, *istabraq*, *surādiq*, *sirbāl*, *sirāj*, *zarābī*, *sundus*, *'abqarī*, *namāriq/numruq*;
- intangible (spiritual, religious) ideas, such as *barzax*, *dīn*, *ḥūr ('īn)*, *junāḥ*, *zūr*, and (transmitted via a Jewish source ?) *'ifrīt*, *hārūt - mārūt*.

We may conclude from the Iranian borrowings in the Qur'ān that the contacts between the Jāhiliya Arabs and Iran at the eve of the Islamic era were fairly shallow, being mostly limited to the trade of luxury products. It is well-known that these (Bedouin) Arabs were also enlisted as irregular or auxiliary troops to the Sassanian armies, which is also confirmed by the borrowing of *jund* and *sard* into Arabic, but *no* courtly or military Iranian titles are mentioned in the Qur'ān. This occasional recruitment of Arab mercenaries, together with the diplomatic contacts between the local Arab rulers and the Sassanians may explain the hazy understanding from those pre-Islamic Arab tribes of the Iranian religious and moral customs as well.

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