

AL-TAHANNUTH

AN INQUIRY INTO THE MEANING OF A TERM

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The expression *taḥannuth* mentioned in some traditions in connexion with the first revelation of the Prophet was variously interpreted by Muslim philologists and commentators of *ḥadīth*. Several meanings have been attached to it by modern scholars. A re-examination of the material seems to give us a clue for elucidation of the meaning of *taḥannuth* and the ideas connected with it. This may also be helpful towards understanding the circumstances of the 'Call to Prophecy' of Muḥammad.

I

The word *al-taḥannuth* occurs in the famous tradition recorded in the *Sīra* of Ibn Ishāq concerning the 'Beginning of the Prophethood'.¹ The tradition is quoted on the authority of 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr b. Qatāda al-Laythī² and reported by Wahb b. Kaysān.³ 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr related the tradition in the presence of 'Abdullāh b. al-Zubayr and other people; among them was Wahb b. Kaysān. 'The Prophet—says the tradition—used to sojourn (*yujāwiru*) on Mt. Ḥirā'⁴ for a month every year. That was the *taḥannuth* which Quraysh used to practise in the period of the Jāhiliyya (*wa-kāna dhālika mim mā taḥannatha bihi Qurayshum fi 'l-Jāhiliyyati*). The Prophet used to sojourn during that month every year, feeding⁵ the poor who called on him. After the conclusion of that month of sojourn, before entering his house, he would go to the Ka'ba and circumambulate it seven times or as many times as it pleased God. Then he would go back to his home. When the month came in which God wished to grant him His grace (*karāma*), in the year when God sent him and it was the month of Ramaḍān⁶ the Prophet went out to Ḥirā' as was his custom for his sojourn (*li-jiwārihi*). With him was his family.'

¹ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. al-Saqqā, al-Abyārī, Shalabī, Cairo, 1936, I, 251; see A. Guillaume (tr.), *The life of Muḥammad*, London, 1955, 105.

² See Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, VII, 71 (died A.H. 67; he was the Qāṣṣ of the people of Mecca); al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāz*, I, 50 (records that he died A.H. 74); *idem*, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, Cairo, 1368/1948-9, III, 190. The date of his death given by F. Buhl, *Das Leben Muḥammeds*, second ed., transl. H. H. Schaefer, Heidelberg, 1955, p. 134, n. 24, as A.H. 98 seems to be an error; see A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammad*, zweite Auflage, Berlin, 1869, I, 339.

³ See Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb*, XI, 166 (died A.H. 126 or 129); al-Suyūṭī, *Is'āf al-mubatta'*, Cairo, n.d., 41 (gives the date of his death as A.H. 127).

⁴ For the location of the place see Muḥammad Ḥamidullāh, *Le Prophète de l'Islam*, Paris, 1959, I, 64: 'situé à un kilomètre à peine de l'emplacement de la maison de Muḥammad le Mount Nur présente . . .'; and see 'Arrām b. al-Aṣṣbagh, *Aṣmā' jibāl Tihāma*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Ḥārūn, Cairo, 1956, (*Nawādir al-makhtūṭāt*, VIII, 419); al-Fāṣī, *Shifā' al-gharām*, Cairo, 1956, I, 280-1.

⁵ In the translation of Guillaume: '... the apostle would pray in seclusion and give food to the poor . . .'

⁶ See al-Ḥalabī, *Insān al-'uyūn*, I, 272 (the discussion as to whether it happened in Ramaḍān, or in the month of Rabī' al-awwal or in the month of Rajab). And see Ibn al-Jauzī, *Ṣifat al-safwa*,

The tradition giving an account of the same events in al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*⁷ is told on the authority of 'Ā'isha. The chain of the *isnād* includes Yaḥyā b. Bukayr⁸—al-Layth⁹—'Uqayl¹⁰—Ibn Shihāb (i.e. al-Zuhrī)—'Urwa b. al-Zubayr—'Ā'isha. The tradition¹¹ contains the expression *taḥannatha*, but differs in many respects from the tradition of Ibn Ishāq. The passage we are concerned with runs in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* as follows :

'... Then he was made to cherish solitude and he sojourned alone in the cave of Ḥirā' and practised *taḥannuth* a number of nights before he returned to his family ; and he used to take provisions for it (i.e. the sojourn). Then he would go back to Khadija and take provisions for a similar (period of sojourn). So things went on till the Truth came upon him (*ja'ahu 'l-ḥaqqu*)¹² when he was in the cave of Ḥirā'.'¹³

Hyderabad, 1355/1936-7, I, 27, and al-Majlisī, *Bihār*, xviii, 189 inf. (stating that it happened in Rajab) ; J. Fück, 'Sechs Ergänzungen zu Sachaus Ausgabe von al-Birūnī's "Chronologie orientalischer Völker"', in J. Fück (ed.), *Documenta Islamica inedita*, Berlin, 1952, 97 (Rabī' al-awwal or Rajab).

⁷ Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Cairo, n.d., I, 5—*Bāb kayfa kāna bad'u 'l-waḥyi ilā rasūli 'llāhi*.

⁸ In fact Yaḥyā b. 'Abdullāh b. Bukayr : see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, xi, 237 ; al-Dhahabī, *Tadhkirat al-kuffāz*, II, 420 ; al-'Aynī, *Umdat al-qārī*, Cairo, 1308/1890-1, I, 56.

⁹ See al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh Baghdād*, XIII, 3-14 ; al-Dhahabī, *Mizān al-i'tidāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥ. al-Bajāwī, Cairo, 1963, III, 423, no. 6998 ; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, VIII, 459 ; al-'Aynī, op. cit., I, 56.

¹⁰ See al-Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. 'Abd al-Rahmān al-Mu'allamī, Hyderabad, 1962, I, 410 ; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, VII, 255.

¹¹ See the rendering of the tradition in Richard Bell, 'Mohammed's Call', *Moslem World*, xxiv, I, 1934, 13.

¹² In the tradition of Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, Beirut, 1960, I, 194, l. 16, *ḥattā fajī'ahu 'l-ḥaqqu* 'till Truth came upon him suddenly'. Likewise, Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *'Uyūn al-athar*, Cairo, 1356/1937-8, I, 84, l. 4 from bottom ; al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamidullāh, Cairo, 1959, I, 105, l. 6 ; al-'Aynī, op. cit., I, 63, l. 4 from bottom ; al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, Tehran, 1380/1960-1, xviii, p. 227, n. 6 ; al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ*, I, 211, l. 4 ; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Kāmil*, Cairo, 1357/1938-9, II, 31 ; etc. The importance of this expression may be stressed as it is opposed by the expression *fa-zannantuhā faj'ata 'l-jinnī*. See Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, Hyderabad, 1950, 171, l. 5 ; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*, Hyderabad, 1319/1901-2, I, 96, l. 6 from bottom ; *idem*, *al-Durr al-manthūr*, Cairo, 1314/1896-7, VI, 369, l. 6.

¹³ According to the tradition of al-Bukhārī the Prophet returned to his wife Khadija, his heart fluttering, asked her to wrap him up, told her about the revelation, and found comfort in her words. She took him to Warāqa b. Naufal, her cousin, and he assured the Prophet that the revelation had been a true one and that it had been the *Nāmūs* sent down upon Moses. According to a tradition reported on the authority of Mūsā b. 'Uqba and Sulaymān al-Taymī (al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*, I, 93 ; al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāḥib al-ladunniya*, I, 213 ; and cf. al-Majlisī, *Bihār al-anwār*, xviii, 228) Khadija went with the Prophet to 'Addās, a servant (*ghulām*) of 'Utba b. Rabī'a. He was a Christian from the people of Niniveh and she asked him about Jibril. He shouted *Quddūs, quddūs, quddūs*. He asked her : 'O, Lady of the women of Quraysh, how is Jibril mentioned in this country of the worshippers of idols ?' She urged him to tell her about Jibril and he stated that Jibril was the trustee (*amīn*) of Allāh over the Prophets. He is the angel-guardian (*sāhib*) of Mūsā and 'Isā. And cf. al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 111.

According to a version recorded by al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 105-6, Khadija asked Abū Bakr to go with the Prophet to Warāqa. (The tradition is reported on the authority of Ibn Ishāq—Abū Maysara ['Amr b. Shurahbīl al-Hamdānī al-Kūfī—see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, VIII, 47].) This tradition is reported also by : al-Suhaylī, *al-Rawd al-unuf*, Cairo, 1914, I, 157 (on the authority of Yūnus b. Bukayr—Ibn Ishāq) ; al-Diyārbakrī, *Ta'rīkh al-Khamīs*, I, 282 ; al-Ḥalabī, *Insān al-'uyūn*, Cairo, 1354/1935-6, I, 275 ; Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *'Uyūn al-athar*, I, 83.

It is evident that this tradition is of importance : it states that the first believer was Abū Bakr.

The differences between the two traditions are crucial: according to the tradition of Ibn Ishāq the sojourn of Muḥammad on Mt. Ḥirā' was in accordance with the custom of Quraysh to practise *tahannuth* for a month every year; according to the tradition of al-Bukhārī the Prophet was made to like solitude.¹⁴ Whereas the tradition of Ibn Ishāq states that he went out with his family,¹⁵ i.e. Khadija—the tradition of al-Bukhārī maintains that the Prophet went out alone and used to come back at certain intervals¹⁶ in order to get provisions.¹⁷

(There is even a tradition stating that the Prophet reported his apprehensions in connexion with the summons he heard to Abū Bakr, who was his companion—al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*, I, 95.)

This tradition stands in opposition to the Shi'ī version that the first believer was 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. 'The first who prayed with the Prophet was 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib' (al-Majlisī, op. cit., xxxviii, 202, 203—the chapter '... *annahu sabaqa 'l-nāsa fi 'l-islāmi wa 'l-īmāni*', pp. 201–88; Ibn Shahrāshūb, *Manāqib al-Abī Ṭālib*, Najaf, 1956, I, 288–303; al-Ya'qūbī, *Ta'rikkh*, Najaf, 1964, II, 18–19; al-Karājaki, *Kanz al-fawā'id*, lithograph, 1322/1904–5, 117–28; al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī, *al-Amālī*, Najaf, 1964, I, 265, 267; and see al-Suyūṭī, *al-La'ālī al-maṣnū'a*, Cairo, al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyya, n.d., I, 322–4). 'I am al-Ṣiddīq al-akbar,' states 'Alī, 'whoever says it after me is merely a liar or forger; I prayed with the Prophet seven years' (al-Majlisī, op. cit., xxxviii, 204). 'When the revelation was sent down on the Prophet he came to the *maṣjid* and stood up praying; 'Alī passed by the Prophet—and he was nine years old—and the Prophet summoned him: "O, 'Alī, come to me (*aqūb*)" ...' (ibid., 207). 'I was the first of people who embraced Islam: the Prophet received his call on Monday and I prayed with him on Tuesday; I remained with him praying for seven years till a group embraced Islam', says 'Alī (ibid., 209—cf. Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, op. cit., I, 92; see al-Nasā'ī, *Khaṣā'is Amīr al-Mu'minīna*, Cairo, 1308/1890–1, 2–3; see the discussion about the first to embrace Islam in al-Tirmidhī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*, Cairo, 1934, XIII, 177; and see Ibn al-Athīr, *Jāmi' al-uṣūl min aḥādīth al-rasūl*, Cairo, 1952, IX, 440, no. 6412; Ibn Abī 'l-Ḥadīd, *Sharḥ nahj al-balāgha*, ed. Muḥammad Abū 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1959, IV, 116 et seq.); 'Alī states plainly on the minbar of al-Baṣra that he is *al-Ṣiddīq al-akbar*, that he believed before Abū Bakr and embraced Islam before Abū Bakr did (al-Mufīd, *Irshād*, Najaf, 1962, 21).

The tradition in favour of Abū Bakr maintains that he was the first one to embrace Islam (al-Suyūṭī, *Ta'rikkh al-khulafā'*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyi al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamid, Cairo, 1952, 33). He even believed in the mission of the Prophet in the time of Baḥīrā, the monk (ibid.). There is, in fact, a tendency towards harmonization: the first *man* who embraced Islam was Abū Bakr; the first *boy* was 'Alī (ibid., 34). The tradition of al-Jāhīz that Abū Bakr was the first to embrace Islam (al-Jāhīz, *al-Uthmāniyya*, ed. 'Abd al-Salām Ḥārūn, Cairo, 1955, 3; and see there other versions about the first who embraced Islam: Zayd b. Ḥāritha, Khabbāb b. Aratt; 'Alī is not mentioned) is fiercely denied by al-Iskāfī (ibid., 286 et seq.). Of interest is the tradition recorded by al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Mūdiḥ auḥām al-jam' wa 'l-tafriq*, Hyderabad, 1960, II, 321, on the authority of Maymūn b. Mihrān: 'Abū Bakr believed in the Prophet in the time of Baḥīrā, the monk; Abū Bakr was the match-maker who arranged the Prophet's marriage with Khadija, and all that before 'Alī was born'. And see the chapter '*Awwalu 'l-nāsi imānan bi-'Ulāhi wa-rasūlihi*' in Ibn Sayyid al-Nās, *Uyūn al-aḥar*, I, 91 et seq.; and 'Abd al-Razzāq, *al-Muṣannaf*, MS Murād Molla, 604, f. 67b inf.; the traditions that 'Alī was the first who embraced Islam are opposed by the tradition of al-Zuhrī that the first was Zayd b. Ḥāritha.

¹⁴ The expression *ḥubbiba ilayhi al-khalā'* etc. is explained by Ibn Ḥazm, *Jawāmi' al-Sira*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Asad, A. M. Shākir, Cairo, n.d., 44, that nobody did order him to do it, nor did he see anybody do it whom he could imitate; it was merely Allāh who wanted him to do it and he remained there (i.e. in the cave) for days and nights.

¹⁵ See the combined tradition in al-Maqrīzī, *Imtā' al-asmā'*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, Cairo, 1941, I, 12, l. 10: *wa-ḥubbiba ilayhi 'l-khalā'u fa-kāna yakhlū bi-ghāri Ḥirā'a kamā kāna yaf'alu dhālika muta'abbidū dhālika 'l-zamāni fa-yuqimu fihi 'l-layliya dhawā'i 'l-ādad thumma yarju'u ilā aḥlihi fa-yatazawwadu li-mithlihā yatahannathu bi-Ḥirā'a wa-ma'ahu Khadijatu*. But see the discussion of the contradictory traditions in al-Ḥalabī's *Insān al-'uyūn*, I, 274.

¹⁶ On these periods see e.g. al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāhib*, I, 211.

¹⁷ On the kinds of provisions see al-Ḥalabī, op. cit., I, 271; and see Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir

Furthermore, the cave where he retired for solitude, according to the tradition of al-Bukhārī, is not mentioned in the tradition recorded by Ibn Ishāq. The information about the feeding of the poor is missing in the tradition of al-Bukhārī. Consequently other differences occur stemming from the fundamental divergences between the two traditions: according to the tradition of Ibn Ishāq, Khadija sent messengers to look for the Prophet: they went out and reached the upper part of Mecca in their search for the Prophet. They were, of course, sent by Khadija from the mountain of Ḥirā' where they both sojourned. After the talk of Khadija with the Prophet she descended from the mountain, went to Waraqa, and told him the story of the Call to Prophecy. According to the tradition recorded by al-Bukhārī, the Prophet sojourned in solitude in the cave and went to Khadija at Mecca after receiving the Call, and she went with him to Waraqa.

II

The explanation of the word *tahannuth* is differently given in the two traditions. In the tradition of Ibn Ishāq it is glossed by *tabarrur*; in the tradition of al-Bukhārī it is glossed by *ta'abbud*.¹⁸ Ibn Hishām replaces it by *tahannuf*, i.e. professing the Ḥanīfiyya, performing the actions of a Ḥanīf.¹⁹ There are other traditions in which the expression *tanassaka* is mentioned instead of *tahannatha*.²⁰ Al-Balādhurī in his report about the revelation, recorded on the authority of 'Ā'isha,²¹ glosses *tahannuth* as *al-ta'abbud wa 'l-tabarrur*. It is evident that al-Balādhurī referred to the glosses of the two different traditions.²²

al-Maḡdisī, *al-Bad' wa'l-ta'rikh*, ed. Huart, iv, 141: he sojourned at Ḥirā' with provisions of dates and milk feeding people.

¹⁸ According to Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, Cairo, 1348/1929-30, I, 18, the word *tahannuth* was glossed *ta'abbud* by al-Zuhrī.

¹⁹ Abū Dharr considers this explanation as unnecessary. See his commentary, Brönnle, Cairo, 1911, 75.

²⁰ Al-Dhahabī, *Ta'rikh al-Islām*, I, 74: *wa-kāna yakhruju ilā Ḥirā'a fī kullī 'āmin shahran min al-sanati yansuku fihī*; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Wāḥid, Cairo, 1964, I, 390: *wa-kāna yakhruju ilā Ḥirā'a fī kullī 'āmin shahran min al-sanati yatanassaku fihī, wa-kāna min nusuk Qurayshin fī 'l-jāhiliyyati, yuṣ'imu man jā'ahu min al-masākin*. This expression is used as well in the MS of the *Sīra* in the Qarawiyūn library at Fez, no. 727, as mentioned by A. Guillaume, *New light on the life of Muhammad (Journal of Semitic Studies. Monograph No. 1)*, [1960], p. 29, ll. 5-7: 'The word used of Muḥammad's devotions, is *nasak*, and it is said that members of Quraysh who practised such devotions in the pagan era used to feed any of the poor who came to them'. And see al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*, I, 94, *kāna rasūlu 'Ulāhi ṣallā 'Ulāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama yakhruju ilā Ḥirā'a fī kullī 'āmin shahran min al-sanati yatanassaku fihī* . . . (but feeding the poor is not mentioned here).

²¹ *Anṣāb al-aṣhrāf*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīdullāh, Cairo, 1959, I, 105, no. 191: . . . *fa-yataḥannathu fihī wa-yamkuthu al-layālīya qabla an . . .*; in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Muslim, Cairo, 1334/1915-16, I, 97, . . . *al-layālīya ulāt al-'adad*; and the *Tafsīr* of al-Ṭabarī, Būlāq, 1329/1911, xxx, 161, and the *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq, MS Murād Molla, 604, f. 67a, inf., have (like al-Bukhārī) *āhawāt al-'adad*. A version recorded by 'Abd al-Razzāq deserves mention: the Prophet started to practise *tahannuth* and he was made to like solitude after some of his daughters were born (*wa-ṭafiqā rasūlu 'Ulāhi ṣallā 'Ulāhu 'alayhi wa-sallama ba'da mā wulidat lahu ba'ḍu banātihī yataḥannathu wa-hubbiba ilayhi 'l-khalā'u*—op. cit., f. 67a, l. 6 from bottom).

²² Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, Beirut, 1960, I, 194, records a tradition on the authority of 'Ā'isha, but does not, however, gloss the term *tahannuth*.

The obscure expression *taĥannuth* caused some difficulties to the philologists, lexicographers, and commentators of *ḥadīth*. The famous scholars Ibn al-A'rābī and Ibn 'Amr al-Shaybānī stated that they did not know the expression *taĥannuth*.²³ The explanation commonly given was that *taĥannuth* means 'to remove sin (*ḥinḥ*) from oneself'; some other examples of similar verbs having the form *tafa'* with a cognate are quoted (*ta'aththama*, *taḥarraja*, *taḥawwaba*).²⁴

In the tradition of al-Bukhārī *taĥannuth* is glossed by *ta'abbud*. *Ta'abbud* has a wide range of meanings and commentators are at pains to define the *ta'abbud* of the Prophet. Al-Qaṣṭallānī states that the Prophet performed three devotional practices ('*ibādāt*): seclusion (*khalwa*), *taĥannuth*, and the watching of the Ka'ba (*al-nazar ila 'l-Ka'ba*). Comparing the expression in the tradition of Ibn Ishāq, *ya'takifu shakra Ramadāna*, in which there is no clear definition of the kind of *ta'abbud*, with the expression of the tradition of 'Ā'isha, al-Qaṣṭallānī remarks that 'Ā'isha assigned the idea of *ta'abbud* exclusively (*bi-mujarradihā*) to seclusion because withdrawal from people, and especially people living in falsehood (*man kāna 'alā baṭīlīn*), is a kind of '*ibāda*. Finally al-Qaṣṭallānī quotes an anonymous opinion that the *ta'abbud* of the Prophet was meditation (*tafakkur*).²⁵

The discussion of the term in al-Qaṣṭallānī's *Irshād* does not add much to our understanding of the meaning of the expression. *Taĥannuth* is identified with *ta'abbud*; *ta'abbud* is identified with *khalwa*, which was, however, the cause or means of *ta'abbud*. Further, *taĥannuth* is stated to be one of the three '*ibādāt*, and lastly *ta'abbud* is stated to be contemplation.

The mention of the word '*takafa* in connexion with *taĥannuth* does not, by itself, lend more definition to the obscure expression *taĥannuth*. It is noteworthy that the expression '*takafa* is used for *taĥannutha* in the traditions recorded by Abū Nu'aym²⁶ and al-Suyūṭī,²⁷ stating that the Prophet vowed to sojourn with Khadija for a month at Ḥirā'.

The identification of *ta'abbud* with *taĥannuth* raised consequently the question of the religious basis of this devotion, the *ta'abbud* of the Prophet.

²³ Al-Kirmānī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, Cairo, 1932, I, 32; Abū 'Amr read the word *yataĥannafu* (ibid.); al-'Aynī, '*Umdat al-qāri*', I, 58.

²⁴ Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Mufradāt*, Cairo, 1324/1906-7, 132, s.v. *ḥnḥ*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Fath al-bārī*, I, 18; al-Kirmānī, op. cit., I, 32; al-Zarkashī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, I, 6; al-Zamakhsharī, *al-Fā'iḳ*, ed. al-Bajāwī and Abu 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, Cairo, 1945, I, 250; Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya*, s.v. *ḥnḥ*; *L'A* and *T'A*, s.v. *ḥnḥ*. It is noteworthy that beside the definition 'removing sin from oneself, keeping away from sin' there is also a definition 'acting so (*yaf'alu fi'lan*) as to cause sin to be removed' (*al-Nihāya*, *T'A*, *L'A*, etc.). And see al-'Aynī, '*Umdat al-qāri*', I, 58. (*Taĥannutha* means as well 'to commit a sin' and belongs to the *addād*. See Ibn al-Dahhān al-Naḥwī, '*al-Addād*', in *Nafā'is al-makḥḥūjāt*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥasan Āl Yāsīn, Baghdād, 1964, 96; and see al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāhib*, I, 210, l. 20.)

²⁵ Al-Qaṣṭallānī, *Irshād al-sāri*, Cairo, 1326/1908-9, I, 172; and see Ibn Zāhira, *al-Jāmi' al-laṭif fi faḍli Makkata wa-ahliḥā wa-binā'i 'l-bayti 'l-sharīf*, Cairo, 1921, 342.

²⁶ Abū Nu'aym, *Dalā'il al-nubuwwa*, 171, l. 3, *anna rasūla 'Ulāhi nadhara an ya'takifa shahran huwa wa-Khadijatu bi-Ḥirā'a*.

²⁷ Al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manḥūr*, VI, 369, l. 5.

Opinions varied about whether the *ta'abbud* was according to the *sharī'a* of Ibrāhīm or Mūsā or 'Īsā or Nūh or Ādam or according to the *sharī'a* of some of his predecessors, or whether he did or did not follow before his Call any other *sharī'a*.²⁸

On the form of his *ta'abbud* at Ḥirā', Sirāj al-Bulqaynī could plainly state that the manner of the *ta'abbud* was not specified in the traditions which he had perused.²⁹

III

Modern scholars have been divided in their opinions as to the origin of the term *taḥannuth* and its meaning, and have reached a number of divergent conclusions.

Sprenger collected a good deal of material about the beginning of the revelation³⁰ and took great pains to analyse the various traditions. He considered *taḥannuth* as a 'Kraftausdruck' repeated by the men of *ḥadīth* in almost all versions of this tradition. 'Ein unverdaulicher Ausdruck' sums up Sprenger's view of the word.³¹ He based his opinion about the character of the sojourn of the Prophet on Mt. Ḥirā' on a passage of Bal'ami's translation of al-Ṭabarī. Sprenger refutes the possibility of devotional practices of the Meccans at Ḥirā' as incompatible with the spirit of the Jāhiliyya and supposes that Ḥirā' served as a summer resort for these Meccans who could not afford to spend the summer in al-Ṭā'if or Wādi 'l-Qurā. Muḥammad dwelt in the hot month of Ramaḍān in a cave at Ḥirā'. One may imagine—continues Sprenger—that he might have pitched a tent in front of the cave; of course, he could not find there a place for his wife and children: the cave was too small.³²

Nöldeke rendered *taḥannuth* by 'living a solitary life'.³³ Pautz—quoting the tradition of Ibn Ishāq with the gloss *tabarrur*—renders it by 'Andachtsübungen'.³⁴

Grimme renders the gloss of Ibn Ishāq, *al-tabarrur*, by 'fromm sein'. He also records the gloss of Ibn Hishām, *taḥannuf*, explaining it by 'sich für sündig halten' and follows it by a question mark. Quoting the gloss *ta'abbud*

²⁸ See al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāḥib*, I, 210; al-Jāhiz, *al-Uḥmāniyya*, 305, ult. (al-Iskāfī); al-Māwardī, *A'lām al-nubuwwa*, Cairo, 1935, 173-4; al-'Aynī, *'Umdat al-qārī*, I, 72.

²⁹ Al-Ḥalabī, *Insān al-'uyūn*, I, 271; on al-Sirāj al-Bulqaynī see al-Sam'ānī, *Ansāb*, II, p. 317, n. 7.

³⁰ A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Moḥammad*, zweite Auflage, I, 330-49.

³¹ *ibid.*, 330: 'In Traditionen kommen nicht selten Kraftausdrücke und obsolete Worte vor, und diese werden gewöhnlich in allen, dem Sinne nach auch so verschiedenen Versionen einer und derselben Erzählung festgehalten: die Kraftausdrücke, weil sie den Ueberlieferern gefielen, die obsoleten, unverständlichen Worte, weil sie sie nicht verdauen konnten und darunter etwas mysteriöses suchten, und auch weil sie sich darauf etwas einbildeten, mit solchen gelehrten Brocken um sich werfen zu können. Ein solcher unverdaulicher Ausdruck ist in dieser Tradition *taḥannuth*'.

³² *ibid.*, 295-6.

³³ Th. Nöldeke, *Geschichte des Qorans*, bearbeitet von F. Schwally, Leipzig, 1909, I, 84: '... als er noch in den Bergen ein einsames Leben führte (*taḥannathu*)'.

³⁴ O. Pautz, *Muhammads Lehre von der Offenbarung*, Leipzig, 1898, 16; and see *ibid.*, 17, '*yataḥannathu*, "andächtig war"'.

of the tradition of al-Bukhārī he asks whether it did not mean a kind of service at the temple (‘eine Art Tempeldienst’) like the later *Mujāwir*.³⁵

Tor Andrae renders *taĥannuth* (like Pautz), by ‘einsame Andachtsübungen’ and finds similarity between these practices and the practices of Syrian Christianity.³⁶

Buhl does not differ from Andrae in his rendering of the expression.³⁷ He defines it, however, more precisely: ‘eine asketische Observanz, die die Mekkaner im Monat Ramaḍān auf dem Berge Ḥirā’ vollzogen haben und die im Fasten und sexueller Enthaltensamkeit bestand’.³⁸

Hirschfeld suggests that *taĥannuth* is nothing but the Hebrew *teḥinnoth* ‘prayers’, a word very common among the Jews to express voluntary devotions apart from official liturgy. ‘There is little doubt’, says Hirschfeld, ‘that Muḥammad heard this word often in Medina before he framed his report of the affair and employed it readily on account of its strange and sacred character.’³⁹

Lyall accepts Hirschfeld’s suggestion about the Hebrew origin of the word *taĥannuth*, rejects the connexion between *taĥannuf* and *taĥannuth*, and thinks that ‘the proposal to take *taĥannuth* as a private formation, doing that by which a sin is expelled, appears to be unnecessary’.⁴⁰

Caetani is inclined to accept Hirschfeld’s suggestion; he remarks, however, that it may be a more modern expression used in the legendary story about the Call to Prophecy in the second part of the first century of the Hijra, although it cannot be excluded that the word was known in the time of Muḥammad in Mecca and might denote retirement into solitude and prayer.⁴¹

W. M. Watt gives a compound version of the views quoted. He suggests that Muḥammad’s going to Ḥirā’ ‘might be a method of escaping from the heat of Mecca in an unpleasant season for those who could not afford to go to al-Tā’if’⁴²: ‘Judaeo-Christian influence, such as the example of monks, or a little personal experience’, continues Watt, ‘would show the need and desirability of solitude’.⁴³ ‘The precise meaning and derivation of *taĥannuth*’, says Watt, ‘is uncertain, though it is evidently some sort of devotional practice. The best suggestion is perhaps that of H. Hirschfeld, that it comes from the Hebrew *teḥinnot* or *teḥinnoth*, meaning prayers for God’s favour. The meaning may have been influenced by the Arabic root, however. *Hinth* is properly the

³⁵ H. Grimme, *Mohammed*, Münster, 1892, I, p. 10, n. 1.

³⁶ Tor Andrae, *Mohammed, sein Leben und Glaube*, Göttingen, 1932, 34–5.

³⁷ F. Buhl, *Das Leben Muhammads*, 134: ‘um sich Andachtsübungen hinzugeben...’; see *ibid.*, p. 68, n. 167.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 88, n. 244.

³⁹ H. Hirschfeld, *New researches into the composition and exegesis of the Quran*, London, 1902, 19.

⁴⁰ Ch. J. Lyall, ‘The words Ḥanif and Muslim’, *JRAS*, 1903, 780.

⁴¹ L. Caetani, *Annali dell Islam*, Milano, 1905, I, 222, ‘Introduzione’, § 208, n. 2.

⁴² W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca*, London, 1953, 44: this opinion of Watt’s is reminiscent of the proposition of Sprenger mentioned above, which is not, however, referred to by Watt.

⁴³ *op. cit.*, 44. There seems to be some connexion between the proposition of Tor Andrae and the opinion of Watt; Tor Andrae is not mentioned.

violation of or failure to perform an oath, and so more generally sin; and *tahannuth* is accordingly said to mean "doing some work so as to escape from sin or crime". The use of the word *tahannuth* here is probably a mark that the material is old and in this respect genuine.⁴⁴

In his article '*Hanīf*' Watt repeats the assertion that *tahannuth* is almost certainly from Hebrew and means devotional exercises.⁴⁵

Bell remarks that *tahannuth* is explained as meaning 'worship'. The real meaning of the word, says Bell, is uncertain, but is probably something like 'bemoaning of sin'.⁴⁶ Bell, doubting the truth of the story, argues as follows: 'That *tahannuth* was a Quraish practice may well be doubted, because of the character of the Meccans as depicted in the Koran, the absence of any record of such a practice in pre-Islamic Arabia, and the fact that the Koran makes no reference to any such practice. In fact, the ascetic note in such a practice was entirely alien to Mohammed's nature, and the accompanying fasts, so often imaginatively decked out even by Western scholars, as predisposing the future prophet to seeing visions at this stage, have no support whatever in the early parts of the Koran. Fasting was not introduced until the Medinan period, and then as an imitation of Jewish practice. . . . The whole story is the invention of a later age. It is founded probably on Christian ascetic practice'.⁴⁷

Chelhod, stressing the ambivalence of the root *hnf*, compares it with *hnth*, remarking that it is probable that *hnth* is derived from *hnf*. The meaning of *hnth* is perjury; *tahannuth* means refusal ('rejet') of paganism.⁴⁸

None of the opinions about the meaning of *tahannuth* quoted above seems entirely satisfactory. Sprenger's proposition about Ḥirā' as 'summer resort' for the Prophet was rejected by Caetani, who considered the whole story of little historical value.⁴⁹

The opinion of Nöldeke about Muḥammad's life of solitude in the mountains fits the tradition of al-Bukhārī and corresponds to the idea of *khalā'*, seclusion; *khalā'* cannot, however, be rendered by *tahannuth*. Neither does it agree with the tradition of Ibn Ishāq, where it is explicitly stated that the Prophet went out to Ḥirā' with his family.

Fasting—as assumed by Buhl—cannot be accepted; sources do not mention fasting by the Prophet at Ḥirā' at all.⁵⁰ Further: the tradition of al-Bukhārī on which Buhl relied states explicitly that the Prophet used to come back in order to take provisions for his sojourn. According to the tradition of Ibn Ishāq the Prophet went out to Ḥirā' with Khadija and thus the idea of sexual abstention seems to be excluded.

⁴⁴ op. cit., 44; Watt quotes in a note the contrasting opinion of Caetani.

⁴⁵ *EI*, second ed., s.v. *hanīf*.

⁴⁶ R. Bell, 'Mohammed's Call', *Moslem World*, xxiv, 1, 1934, p. 13, n. 1.

⁴⁷ *ibid.*, 16; and see *idem*, *Introduction to the Qur'an*, Edinburgh, 1953, 104-5: 'it was apparently some sort of pious exercise expressing repentance or doing penance for sin'.

⁴⁸ J. Chelhod, *Introduction à la sociologie de l'Islam*, Paris, 1958, 137.

⁴⁹ Caetani, op. cit., 'Introduzione', § 208, n. 1.

⁵⁰ See Bell, art. cit., 16 (quoted in n. 46 above).

Hirschfeld's assumption about the derivation of the word *taĥannuth* from the Hebrew *tehinnoth* was convincingly refuted by Goitein: this Hebrew word, states Goitein, was used in that technical sense only in far later times.⁵¹

Grimme's rendering for *taĥannuth*, 'sich sündig halten', is not based on lexicographical grounds. *Ta'abbud* here cannot be connected with the later *mujāwir*, denoting 'service at the Temple'.

Whether the Prophet was influenced by Christian monks as suggested by Andrae or whether his 'crise mystique' was influenced by the *ḥunafā'* as assumed by Blachère⁵² cannot be discussed here.⁵³

It is doubtful whether *yujāwiru* can be translated 'to pray in seclusion', as was rendered by Guillaume,⁵⁴ or whether *tabarrur* may be rendered by 'religious devotion'.⁵⁵

Bell's assertion about the 'absence of any record of such a practice in pre-Islamic Arabia' is not accurate: there are some records of such *taĥannuth*. His opinion about the character of Quraysh cannot be discussed within the limits of the present article. The question of whether ascetic practices were alien to the Prophet or not may be preceded by a discussion of the question of whether *taĥannuth* is an ascetic practice.

IV

The expression *taĥannuth* occurs not only in the tradition about the Call of the Prophet. Stories in which this expression appears may be quoted here.

There is a significant tradition reported by Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb about an alliance made between a leader of al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna, a tribal group which entered the federation of the Aḥābīsh⁵⁶ and a clan of Quraysh. The leader, Khālīd b. al-Ḥārith b. 'Ubayd b. Taym b. 'Amr b. al-Ḥārith b. Mabdhūl b. al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna, came to Mecca. Every clan of Quraysh was eager to get him as its ally. Every clan invited him to be its guest or offered to give him one of its daughters in marriage. Khālīd did not want to give preference to any one of those clans. He asked for a delay of three days and 'he went out to Ḥirā' and practised *ta'abbud* three nights on the top of the mountain and went down'. He decided to be an ally of the (clan of the) first man whom he would meet. The first man was 'Abd 'Auf b. 'Abd al-Ḥārith b. Zuhra b. Kilāb. He tied his garment with the garments of 'Abd 'Auf, took his hand, and they continued until they entered the *masjid*

⁵¹ S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic history and institutions*, Leiden, 1966, p. 93, n. 2.

⁵² R. Blachère, *Le problème de Mahomet*, Paris, 1952, 37.

⁵³ See H. A. R. Gibb, 'Pre-Islamic monotheism in Arabia', *Harvard Theological Review*, LV, 4, 1962, 269-80.

⁵⁴ A. Guillaume (tr.), *The life of Muhammed*, 105.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*

⁵⁶ See Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *al-Muḥabbar*, ed. Ilse Lichtenstaedter, Hyderabad, 1942, 178 (al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt b. Kināna were included in the organization of the Ḥums), 267; al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, MS, f. 959a; Ibn al-Kalbī, *Jamharat al-nasab*, MS, f. 48b et seq.; W. Caskel, *Ġamharat an-nasab*, Leiden, 1966, II, 145; Watt, *Muhammed at Mecca*, 154 et seq.; al-'Isāmī, *Siimt al-nujūm al-'awālī*, Cairo, 1380/1960-1, I, 192 inf.

al-ḥarām (i.e. the Ka'ba—K); they stood at the House and the alliance was accomplished.⁵⁷

The expression occurring in this tradition is *ta'abbada*. It is exactly the expression used for glossing the word *taḥannuth* in some of the traditions of the Call to Prophecy. The setting in which *ta'abbud* takes place in this tradition deserves to be stressed. *Ta'abbud* is practised before making an important decision and is followed by a solemn ceremony at the Ka'ba. It seems to be quite clear that the expression *ta'abbada* in this tradition corresponds to the expression *taḥannatha* in the tradition of the Call to Prophecy and in the traditions about the practices of Quraysh mentioned below. In these traditions the *taḥannuth* is followed by a circumambulation of the Ka'ba several times before the *mutaḥannith* returns to his home.

Several traditions about the Ḥanīf Zayd b. 'Amr b. Nufayl are connected with Ḥirā'; in some of them *taḥannuth* or a similar expression occurs. Ibn Ishāq reports that Zayd was expelled from Mecca and sojourned at Ḥirā'.⁵⁸ Al-Balādhurī records that Zayd 'pitched a tent at Ḥirā' practising in it *taḥannuth*. He withdrew from Quraysh and they named him *al-Rāhib*. He died and was buried inside Mt. Ḥirā'.⁵⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb reports about him that he practised *taḥannuf* at Ḥirā'.⁶⁰ This tradition seems to have been recorded with a significant variant: *kāna yakhruju li'l-taḥawwub* (or *li'l-taḥayyub*). *Taḥawwub* is glossed by *al-ta'abbud wa'l-tajannub li'l-ma'tham* (*ta'abbud* and refraining from sin).⁶¹

The first man who practised *taḥannuth* at Ḥirā' is said to have been 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib. A tradition with the *isnād* al-Wāqidī—'Abdullāh b. Ja'far—Makhrama b. Naufal—al-Zuhrī relates that 'he was the first who practised *taḥannuth* at Ḥirā'. (*Taḥannuth*, says the gloss, is *ta'alluh* and *tabarrur*.) When the moon of Ramaḍān appeared he used to enter Ḥirā' and did not leave till the end of the month and fed the poor. He was distressed by the iniquity of the people of Mecca and would perform circumambulation of the Ka'ba many times'.⁶²

A tradition recorded by al-Balādhurī gives some information about

⁵⁷ Muḥammad b. Ḥabīb, *al-Munammaq*, ed. Khurshēd Aḥmad Fāriq, Hyderabad, 1964, 288: *fa-kharaja ilā Ḥirā'a fa-ta'abbada tilka 'l-thalātha fī ra'sihi thumma nazala*.

⁵⁸ Ibn Hishām, *al-Sira*, I, 246; al-Kalā'ī, *al-Iktifā'*, ed. H. Massé, Alger-Paris, 1931, I, 320; Ibn 'Asākir, *Taḥdhīb ta'rikh*, VI, 29, I. 9; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Sira al-nabawiyya*, I, 154-5 (but the words *fa-nazala Ḥirā'a* are omitted); and see Ibn 'Asākir, op. cit., VI, 34; Ibn Kathīr, op. cit., I, 162; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Khaṣā'is al-kubrā*, I, 24, I. 3 from bottom; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid, Cairo, 1956, I, 86, 90.

⁵⁹ Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashraf*, MS, f. 867b; and see Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, Beirut, 1957, III, 381: he was buried inside Ḥirā'.

⁶⁰ *Al-Munammaq*, 532, I. 3.

⁶¹ Abū 'Ubayd, *Gharīb al-ḥadīth*, ed. M. 'Abd al-Mu'īd Khān, Hyderabad, 1965, II, 21; and see the explanation of *taḥawwub* on the authority of Abū 'Ubayd in *L'A*, s.v. *hwub*, where the story of Zayd b. 'Amr is not, however, recorded.

⁶² Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, I, 84; see Daḥlān, *Sira*, I, 20 sup. (on margin of the *Sira Ḥalabiyya*); al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-mawāḥib*, I, 71: . . . *idhā dakhala shakru ramaḍāna ṣa'idahu wa-a'ama 'l-masākina . . .*

Qurashites who practised *taḥannuth* at Ḥirā' (the *isnād* is : Muḥammad b. Sa'd—al-Wāqidi—Talḥa b. 'Amr—Ibn 'Abbās): 'When the month of Ramaḍān began people of Quraysh—these intending *taḥannuth*—used to leave for Ḥirā' and stayed there a month and fed the poor who called on them. When they saw the moon of Shawwāl they (descended and) did not enter their homes until they had performed the circumambulation of the Ka'ba for a week. The Prophet used to perform it (i.e. this custom)'.⁶³

It is noteworthy that in both these traditions about *taḥannuth* at Ḥirā', the one about 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and the one about the people of Quraysh, two elements are emphasized : the feeding of the poor and the ritual practices of the circumambulation of the Ka'ba, a token of the veneration of the House. These are exactly the elements of *taḥannuth* as related in the tradition of Ibn Ishāq about the Call of Prophecy.

A group of traditions about *taḥannuth* is connected with the person of Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām and refers to his deeds in the period before he embraced Islam. A tradition (with the *isnād* al-Zuhri—'Urwa b. al-Zubayr—Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām) runs as follows : 'Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām asked the Prophet : What is your opinion about things which I used to do, practising thus *taḥannuth* (*a-ra'ayta umūran kuntu ataḥannathu bihā*) in the period of the Jāhiliyya, viz. doing good to my people, freeing slaves and giving alms ; shall I be rewarded for it ? The Prophet answered : You embraced Islam having the credit of the good (deeds of your past)'.⁶⁴

In another tradition recorded on the authority of Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām, Ḥakīm says about himself : 'I was a man of good luck in trade. I never bought a thing without gaining profit (scil. in selling). Quraysh used to send their merchandise and I used to send my merchandise (scil. separately). It happened sometimes that a man from among them (i.e. the Quraysh) asked me to allow him to share with me in his expenditures (scil. concerning the merchandise), aiming by it (scil. to benefit from) the good luck in (the profit of) my merchandise (I refused—K) and that (was) because of this, viz. whatever I got of profit I used to spend (*taḥannathu bihi*) it (partly ?) or wholly, intending by that (deed) the increase of wealth and (increase of) friendship (*al-maḥabba*) in the clan'.⁶⁵

⁶³ Al-Balādhuri, *Ansāb*, I, 105.

⁶⁴ Al-Bukhārī, *al-Adab al-mufrad*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb, Cairo, 1379/1959-60, p. 38, no. 70, under the heading *Bāb man waṣala raḥimahu fi 'l-jāhiliyyati thumma aslama* (and see the references given by the editor) ; al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *Jamharat nasab Quraysh*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥ. Shākir, Cairo, 1381/1961-2, I, 362, no. 637 (see the parallels recorded by the editor) ; *L'A, T'A*, and Ibn al-Athīr, *Nihāya*, s.v. *huth*, with a comment *ay ataḡarrabu ila 'llāhi ta'ālā bi-af'āln fi 'l-jāhiliyyati* ; al-Nabulūsī, *Dhakhā'ir al-mawārith*, Cairo, 1934, I, 198, no. 1790 ; and see Abū 'Awāna, *Musnad*, Hyderabad, 1362/1943, I, 72-3 (*taḥannuth* is glossed by *ta'abbud*, p. 72) ; in a variant of this tradition Ḥakīm, assured by the Prophet that he would receive the reward for his *taḥannuth* in the period of the Jāhiliyya, promises to do as a Muslim these deeds which he did as a pagan. These deeds in the Jāhiliyya are explained as freeing 100 slaves and driving 100 victims for sacrifice at Mecca (scil. to feed the people ; another version, *ibid.* : and providing 100 men with camels).

⁶⁵ Al-Zubayr b. Bakkār, *op. cit.*, I, 371, no. 645.

In a very similar passage Ḥakīm states: 'I used to make many profits and I used to distribute them among the poor of my people—and we did not worship anything (*wa-naḥnu lā na'budu shay'an*)—intending the (increase of) wealth and friendship in the clan'.⁶⁶ In this tradition the word *taḥannatha* is missing. But the phrase *fa-a'ūdu 'alā fuqarā'i qaumī* explains the action of *taḥannuth* and the motive of the deed is given in an explanatory phrase: *kuntu u'ālīju 'l-birra fi 'l-jāhiliyyati* 'I used to perform good deeds towards kinsmen in the Jāhiliyya'.

It is evident that the expression *taḥannatha* in the traditions of Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām denotes good deeds towards poor kinsmen, freeing of slaves, giving alms to the needy and poor. That is plainly indicated in the tradition of al-Bukhārī on the authority of Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām: the word *ataḥannathu* is followed by an explicative phrase: *min ṣilatīn wa-'atāqatin wa-ṣadaqatin*. *Taḥannuth* here is identical with the term *birr*. This is indeed confirmed by another version of this tradition; *L'A* s.v. *brr* records the tradition as follows: *a-ra'ayta umūran kuntu abrartuhā*. This expression is glossed: *ay aḥlubu biha 'l-birra wa 'l-iḥsāna ila 'l-nāsi wa 'l-taqqarruba ila 'llāhi ta'ālā*. The first part of this gloss is accurate; but the second part, *wa 'l-taqqarruba ila 'llāhi ta'ālā*, is a Muslim interpretation of a Jāhiliyya tradition.

The sentence inserted in the tradition of Ḥakīm quoted above, *wa-naḥnu lā na'budu shay'an*, is significant. It indicates that his *birr*, or his *taḥannuth*, was not connected with ritual practices. A line is thus drawn between the *taḥannuth* of Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām, consisting of good deeds, and the *taḥannuth* of the leader of al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd Manāt of Kināna, Zayd b. 'Amr, and the *taḥannuth* of the Prophet according to the tradition of the Call as recorded by al-Bukhārī in which only the *ta'abbud* is mentioned. The *taḥannuth* of 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the *taḥannuth* of some groups of Quraysh, and the *taḥannuth* of the Prophet according to the tradition of Ibn Ishāq included two elements: *ta'abbud* and *tabarrur*. It consisted in feeding the poor and in the practice of veneration at the Ka'ba.

The traditions about Ḥakīm b. Ḥizām are apparently very early ones and the expression *taḥannuth* in these traditions is, no doubt, original. The argument of Sprenger⁶⁷ that the tradition is forged ('gewiss unecht') and fairly late ('ziemlich neu') is unfounded. If there were any doubt about the usage of the term *taḥannuth* in the tradition of the talk of Ḥakīm with the Prophet, the expression *taḥannuth* is evidently genuine in the story of his deeds towards his kinsmen. Here there was no need to put in the word *taḥannatha*.

There is also no reason to entertain doubts about the genuineness of the expression *taḥannuth* in the traditions about the practices of Quraysh at Ḥirā'. The feeding of the poor at Ḥirā' in the month of Ramaḍān belonged to the category of *birr*. The identity of *taḥannuth* with *birr* is plainly seen in a state-

⁶⁶ Al-Zubayr b. Bakr, op. cit., I, 367, no. 644; and see Ibn 'Asākir, *Tahdhīb ta'rikh*, IV, 414; al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. As'ad Ṭalas, Cairo, 1962, III, 32, I, 1-2.

⁶⁷ Sprenger, op. cit., I, 331, II, 16-20.

ment of Muṭahhar b. Ṭāhir where it is also seen that this was the Prophet's only purpose in practising *taḥannuth*: *wa-kāna Qurayshun yataḥannathūna bi-Ḥirā' fī Ramaḍāna wa-kāna rasūlu 'llāhi yaf'alu dhālika li-annahu min al-birri* 'Quraysh used to practise *taḥannuth* during the month of Ramaḍān and the Prophet did it because it was a kind of good deed towards his fellow men (*birr*)'.⁶⁸ The meaning attached to *taḥannutha* here fully corresponds to the meaning of the traditions of Ḥakīm, as pointed out above, and to the meaning of the tradition of the Call to Prophecy in the *Sūra* of Ibn Ishāq. Muḥammad's reinterpretation and revaluation of this simple meaning of the Jāhili term of *birr* were fully explained by H. A. R. Gibb: 'In its secular use the root (i.e. *birr*) indicates the paternal and filial relation, with its attitudes of affection, obedience and loyalty. To Muḥammad, as to all other prophetic teachers, the test of true belief lay in character and works. If the repeated insistence of the Koran upon good works were not enough, it would be conclusively proved by the comprehensive definition of *birr* in the noble verse *Sūra* 2, 172: not only belief in God, the Last Day, the angels, the Scripture and the prophets, but charity to all for the love of God, steadfastness in prayers, loyalty to the plighted word, and patience under all afflictions—these are the qualities that mark out the truly believing and the truly God-fearing. *Birr* is thus the crown of true belief, when the believer at last realizes and responds to the ever-presence of God in all his thoughts and conduct'.⁶⁹ In the light of this passage we can understand the essential changes in the Muslim interpretation of *birr* and consequently in the meaning of *taḥannuth* which is identical with *birr*. In the tradition of Ibn Ishāq about the Call it denotes thus merely good deeds, charity and giving alms to the poor.

A crucial question which remains to be answered is that of the sojourn on Mt. Ḥirā'. Why did these groups of Quraysh who practised *taḥannuth* perform it there? The answer can be gauged from the traditions quoted above including variants of *taḥannuth*. Ḥirā' was a *mansik*, a place of ritual practices of some groups of Quraysh; these practices were apparently connected with the veneration of the Ka'ba. This assumption is confirmed by such terms as *tamassaka*, *jāwara*, *i'takafa*, *ta'abbada*, and the significant sentence in all the traditions (except these of Ḥakīm) about the numerous circumambulations of the Ka'ba. The word *ta'abbada* in the tradition of Khālid b. al-Ḥārith of the 'Abd Manāt of Kināna indicates various practices (probably austerities, hardships, and perhaps some good deeds) connected with the cult of the Ka'ba. This assumption is further confirmed by an interesting interpretation recorded by al-Ḥalabī: 'The Prophet used to sojourn (scil. on Mt. Ḥirā') feeding the

⁶⁸ *Al-Bad' wa 'l-ta'rīkh*, ed. Huart, iv, 141.

⁶⁹ H. A. R. Gibb: *Studies on the civilization of Islam*, ed. S. J. Shaw and W. R. Polk, Boston, 1962, 191-2; and see the significant traditions about a peculiar kind of *birr* of the Jāhiliyya versus *tuqā* of Islam: Ibn Qutayba, *Tafsīr gharīb al-Qur'ān*, ed. Aḥmad Saqr, Cairo, 1958, 76; al-Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-manihūr*, i, 204; and see T. Izutsu, *The structure of the ethical terms in the Koran*, Tokyo, 1959, 210-12.

poor who called on him i.e. because it was a ritual practice (*nusuk*)⁷⁰ of Quraysh in the period of the Jāhiliyya, i.e. in this place the man used to feed the poor who came to him. It has been said that this was the *ta'abbud* of the Prophet in the cave of Ḥirā' .⁷¹ The tradition of *ta'abbud* of the Prophet on Mt. Ḥirā' has thus to be understood according to the quoted traditions: he followed an old custom of his predecessors and sojourned at Ḥirā' performing some ritual practices and deeds of charity towards the needy and the poor. That was the *taḥannuth* of the Jāhiliyya and the Prophet practised it before he received his Call to Prophecy.⁷² The discussion about what was the *shari'a* adopted by the Prophet for his *ta'abbud* before he received his revelation is, of course, an expression of a later Muslim attitude with regard to an ancient Jāhili term.

It was while Muḥammad was practising *taḥannuth*, which consisted, as we have seen, of the veneration of the Ka'ba and of doing charitable deeds towards one's fellow men on Mt. Ḥirā', that he received—according to Muslim tradition—his first revelation. In so doing he was following the ancient custom of Quraysh.

⁷⁰ In text, *min nsl*; this is an error—read *min nusuk*.

⁷¹ Al-Ḥalabī, *Inṣān al-'uyūn*, I, 271 inf., 272 sup.

⁷² See H. Birkeland, *The Lord guideth*, Oslo, 1956, 40-1: 'About 100 H. no Muslim doubted that Muhammad was a pagan before he was called by Allah at the age of 40'.