

Makin, Al

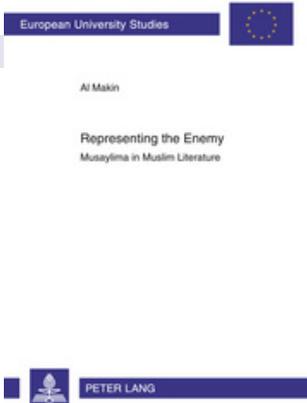
Representing the Enemy

Musaylima in Muslim Literature

Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, Bruxelles, New York, Oxford, Wien, 2010. XVI, 315 pp., num fig. and graphs
European University Studies. Series 27: Asian and African Studies. Vol. 106

Print: ISBN 978-3-631-60862-3 pb. (Softcover)
SFR 78.00 / €* 68.95 / €** 70.80 / € 64.40 / £ 52.00 / US\$ 83.95

Order online: www.peterlang.com



Book synopsis

This work claims that Musaylima served as a prophet for his own people in Yamama in more or less the same way as the Prophet Muhammad in Mecca and Medina. However, unlike Islam, Musaylima's religious movement did not survive. Here, a complete story of Musaylima – his claim of prophethood, *qur'ān* (reading), religious activities, followers, opponents, and defeat – is reconstructed. A critical reading of the sources that contain the accounts of Musaylima is performed. Additionally, this study reveals that the remaining fragments of Musaylima's *qur'ān* bear substantial similarities to the early Meccan verses of the *Qur'ān* – in terms of diction, style, and pattern.

To formulate the findings of this study, there was more than one prophet in the sixth-seventh century of the Arabian peninsula, as Umayya b. Abī Ṭālib, Abū 'Āmir, Tulayha, Sajah, Aswad, and Musaylima claimed prophethood. There was more than one *qur'ān*, as Musaylima also revealed his own *qur'ān*. It is possible that other prophets also did so. There was more than one mosque (*masjid*), since the followers of Abū 'Āmir established their own, as did those of Abū Qays. So did the followers of Musaylima. There was more than one Abrahamic *Hanīf* monotheistic movement in the Hijaz and around the region, as some figures assumed the same mission.

Contents

Contents: Musaylima – Early Islamic Biography – Prophethood – False Prophet – Middle Eastern Studies – History of Early Islam – Yamama – Early Islamic literature – Critical Study of Early Islamic Sources.

About the author(s)/editor(s)

Al Makin earned his BA from the State Institute of Islamic Studies, Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia (1996), his MA from McGill University, Montreal, Canada (1999), and his Ph.D. from Heidelberg University, Germany (2008). Between 2009 and 2010 he was a research fellow at the IKGf (International Consortium for Humanities) «The Dynamics in the History of Religions between Asia and Europe», Ruhr University Germany. He is currently a lecturer at the State Islamic University Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta, Indonesia.

Our prices are recommended retail prices and are exclusive of shipping costs. We reserve the right to alter prices. We supply to libraries at a discount of 5%.

* incl. VAT - only applies to Germany and EU customers without VAT Reg No

** incl. VAT - only applies to Austria



Al Makin

Representing the Enemy

Musaylima in Muslim Literature



PETER LANG

PROLOGUE

This book is about Musaylima, another claimant to prophethood during the Prophet Muḥammad's lifetime. Whereas Muḥammad centered his religious activities in both Mecca and Medina, Musaylima served as a prophet for his people, the tribe Ḥanīfa in Yamāma. However, unlike Islam which survives until today, Musaylima's cult disappeared a long time ago.

The following study is, indeed, a new departure compared to the many studies that have dealt with the themes on early Islam, Muḥammad and the Qurʾān. The story of Musaylima can be seen here as a fresh window onto the history of the Arabs in that period, providing a vision that is different from those that others have offered. Interestingly, Musaylima's followers—none of whom survived—have left no record that has come down to us. In fact, our knowledge of this figure comes from accounts that Musaylima's enemies, namely the early Muslims, have narrated.¹ As such, studying him involves studying early Muslim sources but adopting a rather different perspective, reading as much between the letters as the lines. This becomes clear when one poses the question about how Muslim narrators have represented Musaylima, their nemesis. Certainly, the point of departure in this study is Musaylima, the focus here is not Muḥammad, Islam, or the Qurʾān, although these three subjects will play critical roles in our inquiry.

¹ Interestingly enough, the story of Musaylima is not dead, but very much alive today. Although Musaylima was defeated once and for all since fifteen hundred years ago, his figure has endured in many genres of Muslim literature until the present day. In fact, many consider the danger that Musaylima represented to still be threatening for Muslims; it is as if he were still challenging The Prophethood, the miracles, and the Qurʾān that Muḥammad revealed. Thus, this study of Musaylima is relevant in the present day context with regard to Muslim theological doctrines.

So far, scholars of *sīra* literature (biographies of the Prophet Muḥammad), *tārikh* (historiography), *ṭabaqāt* (biographies of early Muslim prominent figures), *ḥadīth* literature (tradition), and *tafsīr* (Qurʾānic exegesis) have treated the story of Musaylima as if it were of secondary importance. In the works of these scholars, Musaylima is a relatively unimportant figure, and plays no significant role in the history of late sixth and early seventh century Arabia. His role is a marginal one when compared to those of Muḥammad, his Companions, and the caliphs. In short, the figure of Musaylima has been neglected, ignored and overlooked for one and a half millennia. However, I would argue that he was indeed an important figure, a fact that becomes apparent if we appreciate the unique role that he played in that period in central Arabia. The claim that he made to be a prophet can be compared to Muḥammad's own. In this regard, Musaylima's story can perhaps serve as a piece of the 'puzzle' for those who have sought to explain the enigmatic birth of Islam in at least two respects. Firstly, Musaylima was a contemporary of Muḥammad, both of whom sought to carry out more or less the same mission, that is, prophet to the Arabs. Secondly, Musaylima's story can be used as a clue that gives us valuable insights into the history of early Islam. This enables us to illuminate the accounts of the earliest stage of Islam in comparison to Musaylima's cult, helping us relate some religious traditions—e.g. Arab pagan tradition, Judaism, and Christianity—to the emergence of Arabian prophethood.

Unfortunately, no material evidence whatsoever has yet been found to confirm of Musaylima's existence as a historical person. Nor does any non-Arabic source support this assumption. In fact, Musaylima—in all genres of Muslim literature—was quickly transformed into the mere 'concept' of an enemy, which has endured in Muslim literature ever since. It is even tempting to say that his existence or non-existence is immaterial.

At the very least, his story helps us to understand the tactics said to have been adopted by Muḥammad—and later caliphs—in facing his rival prophets. To accomplish this, I will present comparisons between the Qurʾān revealed by Muḥammad and that of Musaylima, between Islam and Musaylima's cult, and between the basic teachings of Islam and those of Musaylima. So far, no careful study of this subject has been performed.² As such, the following study

² So far, many have studied early Islam and attempted to reveal the influences of Christianity and Judaism. On the influences of Christianity on Islam, see, for instance, Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment* (London: Cass, 1968); Günter Lüling, *Der christliche Kult und der vorislamischen Kaaba als Problem der Islamwissenschaft und christlichen Theologie* (Erlangen: Lüling, 1977); idem, *Die Wiederentdeckung des Propheten Muḥammad, Eine Kritik am "christlichen" Abendland* (Erlangen: Lüling, 1981); idem, *Über den Urkoran, Ansätze zur Rekonstruktion der vorislamisch-christlichen Strophenlieder im Koran* (Erlangen: Lüling, 2004). On the influences of Judaism on Islam, see, for instance, Charles Torrey, *The Jewish Foundation of Islam* (New York: Ktav Publication House, 1967); Abraham I. Katsh, *Judaism in Islam, Biblical and Talmudic Backgrounds of the Koran and Its Commentaries* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Pr., 1980). John E. Wansbrough sharpens this stance by employing the terms—e.g., Haggadic or Masoteric that Jewish studies have commonly used — to view early Islamic

on Musaylima will shed new light on the picture of early Islam, the history of the early Qurʾān; and the relation of Islam to indigenous Arab paganism.

Sources

In unearthing the story of Musaylima, we will explore it across the following genres of Muslim literature: 1. *sīra*; 2. *maghāzī* (the Prophet's campaigns); 3. *tāriḫ*; 4. *ṭabaqāt*; 5. *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of the revelation of the Qurʾān); 6. *tafsīr*; 7. *iʿjāl al-Qurʾān* (inimitability of the Qurʾān); 8. *dalāʾil al-nubuwwa* (proofs of prophethood); and 9. *rijāl al-ḥadīth* (biographies of the transmitters of *ḥadīth*). To illustrate this point: the story of the visit of Musaylima to Medina and his letter to Muḥammad can be found in *sīra*, *ṭabaqāt*, *ḥadīth*, *tāriḫ* and *maghāzī* literature, whereas only *tāriḫ* literature preserves the stories of his defeat at the Battle of Yamāma. Thirty-three fragments of Musaylima's Qurʾān are preserved by *tāriḫ*, *iʿjāl*, and *dalāʾil* literature, while *tāriḫ*, *sīra*, *ṭabaqāt*, and *rijāl al-ḥadīth* literature record the only information concerning Musaylima's followers and opponents. Unfortunately, we have no single early source that places a complete life of Musaylima at our disposal.

Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 385/995 or 388/998) reports in his *Fihrist* that Hishām b. Muḥammad al-Kalbī (120/737-204/819) composed a book entitled *Kitāb Musaylima al-Kadhḥāb*.³ There is no clue, however, as to whether this work covered the whole life of Musaylima, nor his tribal origins, or only the later story about his defeat as told in *tāriḫ* literature. Nor is there any indication

tradition. See his *Qurʾānic Studies, Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977). However, most of the arguments presented in these studies have been more inferential than evidential, as there is so far hardly any convincing evidence that suggests direct influence by either older religion on Islam. Thus, the relationship between Islam and the two older religions may very well be an indirect one. See, for instance, Sidney Griffith, "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qurʾān: the "Companions of the Cave" in Surat al-Kahf and in Syriac Christian Tradition" in *The Qurʾān in its Historical Context*, ed. Gabriel Said Reynolds (London: Routledge, 2007) 109-137. Griffith compares the story of 'the seven sleepers' contained in the Christian Syriac sources and that of the Qurʾān. There, she argues that the Qurʾān did not literally borrow the story from these sources, but rather the Scripture shows a response to it, where the Arab audience whom the Scripture addressed was already familiar with the story. This study, therefore, suggests an indirect relationship between the Qurʾān and these sources with regard to the same story that both evoke.

For sure, the distance spanning—in terms of place and time—between the two older Semitic religions and Islam was significantly wide. The comparison, however, should be made between Islam and the cults which emerged at the time and space close to this religion. In this regard, I would like to argue that some Arab prophets—whose names we will discuss in chapter eight below—may have blended certain indigenous Arab pagan traditions with the elements of Judaism and Christianity. Islam and Musaylima's cult were born in this milieu. Thus, comparing Islam and Musaylima's cult is more relevant than comparing Islam and two older religious traditions directly.

³ Ibn Nadīm, *Fihrist*, ed. Gustav Flügel (Beirut: Maktaba Khayyād, n.d.) 97; Albrecht Noth, *Quellenkritische Studien zu Themen, Formen und Tendenzen Frühislamischer Geschichtüberlieferung, Teil 1: Themen und Formen* (Bonn: Selbstverlag des Orientalischen Seminars der Universität Bonn, 1973) 31.

whatsoever that later Muslim scholars based their accounts on any parts of al-Kalbī's work. Given this fact, we will have to reconstruct the story of Musaylima, on the basis of various scattered and fragmentary reports.

It is noteworthy that all of these sources treated Musaylima as an antagonistic figure. Almost no writer treats him fairly as an independent subject or a person. His presence in the story is regarded as a threat to the main figures, i.e., Muḥammad, his Companions, or the caliphs. Additionally, later Muslim and Western scholars have perpetuated this attitude in their works where they have dealt with *sīra* and *tārīkh*.⁴

It is interesting that Abdullah al-Askar's account of Yamāma⁵ pays special attention to the political role that Musaylima played in Central Arabia. Al-Askar counts him among those who used the sentiment of regionalism in Yamāma to support their religious and political movement. Still, this sentiment, according to al-Askar, gave rise to many religious and political leaders in the region, ranging from Hawdha b. ʿAlī, Musaylima, the Kharijite Najda b. ʿĀmir, to later Wahhabi leaders. However, Askar still positions Musaylima as a mere antagonistic character who acted as an obstacle to the religious mission of the main character, the Prophet Muḥammad. Musaylima's prophethood, likewise, is also seen as a mere rebellious movement against Medina.

The latest endeavor to unearth the story of Musaylima has been that of Kister,⁶ whose work on the sources has guided me towards further reading. Basing himself on an abundance of early Muslim material, Kister offers a more complete story of Musaylima—ranging from his birthplace, pedigree, prophethood, failed miracle, and verses, to his defeat by Muslim forces at the Battle of Yamāma. Kister, in this regard, presents many stories that were left untold by previous studies. However, the style that Kister employs in telling the story of Musaylima is too close to the prevailing view and ignores many vital issues with regard to the figure of Musaylima, his *qurʾān*, and his rivalry in prophethood with Muḥammad, not to mention how the stories about him have evolved or have been condensed at the hands of later Muslim transmitters over a period of centuries. The following questions remain unanswered, e.g.: How do we position Musaylima's image in the production of Muslim li-

⁴ Margoliouth, however, has paid special attention to the relationship between Muḥammad and Musaylima. See D. S. Margoliouth, "The Origin and Import of the Names Muslim and Ḥanīf," *JRAS* 35 (1903); idem, *Mohammed and the Rise of Islam* (London: G. P. Putnam's Son, 1906) 81. Musaylima is also dealt with briefly in several encyclopedia articles, e.g., F. R. Buhl, "Musaylima," *EP*; W. M. Watt, "Musaylima" in *EP*; Kister, "Musaylima" in *EQ*. Eickelman has tried to treat Musaylima independently in an article, without however providing much in the way of sources or analysis. See Dale F. Eickelman, "Musaylima, An Approach to the Social Anthropology of Seventh Century Arabia" *JESHO* 10 (1967).

⁵ Abdullah al-Askar, *al-Yamama in the Early Islamic Era* (Reading: Ithaca, 2002).

⁶ Kister, "The Struggle against Musaylima and the conquest of Yamama" *JSAI* 27 (2002). See also a review on Kister's work by Sellheim, "Zu M. J. Kister's Struggle against Musaylima" in *DWO* 35 (2005): 158-168.

terature? In what context has the story of Musaylima been told? How reliable are these sources? How can we differentiate between less reliable and more reliable sources? Since exegetical tendencies and mythological elements were never absent from early story telling, the evolution and condensation of the story from one generation to another requires an explanation. One also fails to find answers to the following questions in both al-Askar's and Kister's works: Which Musaylima is being narrated? Whose version is being told, and by which transmitter? What is the meaning behind the myth and mythologizing? My study will therefore try to fill the above gaps left by both Kister and al-Askar.

Methodological Issues

The following are some of the critical questions that have led me to this inquiry: Is it possible for Muslim narrators to fairly represent Musaylima, their enemy?⁷ To what extent has the distortion been involved in that representation, and over a long period of time? How reliable is the information provided by these narrators who regard the subject as an enemy? In addressing these questions, I consider the possibility that the negative image attributed to Musaylima has resulted from certain acts of communication, between him and Muḥammad, Abū Bakr, and Khālid b. al-Walid, as preserved by Muslim literature. Indeed, numerous genres of Muslim literature have always portrayed Musaylima as an enemy, so much so that he literally earned the label of *'aduww Allah/the enemy of God*. This study will also deal with the reports that maintain Musaylima's negative image in detail.

Later scholars in Islamic studies have of course raised critical methodological questions, particularly as to the reliability of these *riwāyas* (reports)—be they contained in *ḥadīth* collections, *tārīkh*, *sīra*, or *tafsīr* literature—in telling the stories that are assumed to have happened one or two centuries prior to the writing. Some have subscribed to the view that Arabic literature—originating in the second century after the Hijra and yet containing information relating to events that took place one or two centuries earlier—is mere mythological and exegetical materials.

⁷ The key word 'representation' here refers to the term that Edward Said uses in his *Orientalism* in analyzing the representation of the 'East' by the 'West.' See his *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Book, 1979) 49-73. The other key word 'enemy' is taken from the portrayal of Musaylima available in Muslim literature (see chapter eight below). Additionally, the word 'representation', indeed, has played a vital role in the discussion of hermeneutics, in which Gadamer provides many examples in the works of art—including pictures, dramas, plays, and many others which are seen as nothing but an attempt of representation of certain reality (note also some related words *Darstellung/mimesis/imitation*). See Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Hermeneutik I, Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986) 118; *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall (New York: Continuum, 2003) 113; see also Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987). In short, this study is devoted to the image of Musaylima which resulted from the representation by his enemies.

As such, many scholars have taken a skeptical view of the reliability of these Arabic sources.⁸ If one adopts this skeptical attitude regarding these sources, the following question may be raised: How can one plausibly reconstruct the history of the late sixth or early seventh century of the Arabian peninsula while ignoring the narratives of the indigenous people? Against this backdrop, Patricia Crone has attempted to present non-Arabic sources,⁹ whose more profound insights Robert Hoyland in turn illuminates.¹⁰ Christoph Luxenberg also attempts to read the text of the Qurʾān from the perspective of Syriac language.¹¹

Some have also called on scholars whose aim is to discover the history of the Arabs in that period to present material evidence that can be used as a foundation for their arguments.¹² However, the material evidence—e.g., manuscripts, monuments, graffiti, and coins—is not abundant, and very limited when compared with the large amount of stories preserved by *sīra*, *tārikh*, *ḥadīth*, and *tafsir* literature. Needless to say, one also needs to interpret material evidence, and no one can do so without basing his interpretation on the pre-assumption-history constructed in his mind.¹³ In fact, each

⁸ To mention just a few names: I. Goldziher, J. Schacht, P. Crone, M. Cook, J. Wansbrough, and G.H.A. Juynboll. However, it is not necessary to present each view in detail here, as many have already done so. See, for instance, the many summaries provided by Fred M. Donner and Gregor Schoeler in the introductions of their works below. See also the analysis provided by Herbert Berg, *The Development of Exegesis in Early Islam: The Authenticity of Muslim Literature from the Formative Period* (Surrey: Curzon Press, 2000). The view of these scholars will be discussed at the appropriate place in this study.

⁹ Patricia Crone and Micheal A. Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of Islamic World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

¹⁰ Robert G. Hoyland, *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1997).

¹¹ Christoph Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran* (Berlin: Das Arabische Buch, 2000). Recent journalistic works have paid great attention to this work and Lüling's *The Ur-Koran*. In this vein, the hypothesis that both Luxenberg and Lüling have proposed was used for the purpose of criticizing Islam and present-day Muslim society. In response, many scholarly articles—included in *The Qurʾān in Its Historical Context*, ed. Reynolds—revisit the supposed Syriac influences on the Arabic Qurʾān.

¹² Nabia Abbott, *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri I* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957); Fred M. Donner, *Narratives of Islamic Origins, The Beginning of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: Darwin Press, 1998).

¹³ Pre-assumptions of certain construction of history have played a central role for many of those who have interpreted material evidence. Let us take two contrasting arguments which different writers have built upon material evidence. On the one hand, basing themselves on the examination of material evidence, Nevo and Koren defend the skeptical approach in treating the Early Muslim literature. According to the two, due to insufficient evidence, one cannot prove the historical person of Muḥammad and the authenticity of the Qurʾān, among other things. See Yehuda D. Nevo and Judith Koren, *Crossroads to Islam, The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2003). On the other hand, Azami 'apologetically' uses some material evidences to guard the beliefs of Islamic orthodoxy concerning the reliability of Early Muslim sources; at the same time he rejects any critical questions that both Western and Muslim scholars have posed regarding the authenticity of these sources. See, M. M. al-Azami, *The History of the Qurʾānic Text, from Revelation*

finding—be it a lengthy narrative contained in a poem or a few unclear words carved in stone—will never replace the role played by the other, as each contributes in its own way to the reconstruction of certain events.¹⁴

Others, however, have tried to appreciate the way in which Muslim scholars themselves have established traditional methodological tools to examine the authenticity of certain reports.¹⁵ In this regard, they have developed certain tools of analysis to read closely the sources written by early Muslim scholars. By doing so, scholars have been able to date the sources and to extend certain stories back to their originators.¹⁶

With regard to my own attitude toward the sources that Muslim scholars wrote one or more centuries after the event, I adopt an open-minded view. I attempt as much as possible to be critical regarding the authenticity of these sources, but not agnostic to the values that they may offer.¹⁷ To illustrate, I question the reliability of every report that I present in this study: these reports can be dated and traced back to their originators. I anticipate at least two probabilities: certain parts of reports that contain exegetical elements can perhaps be detected. However, I do not reject the other probability that certain reports may somehow preserve the key ideas of certain older messages, as other reports corroborate it. In this regard I will pay attention to each *matn* and *isnād* of the reports that I cite. I will anticipate every possibility that I can imagine, without fully committing either to the ideas of those who take for granted the reliability of early Muslim sources or of those who reject the values that these sources may contain. Indeed, due to the careful analysis of *matn* (content) and *sanad* (transmission), we are able to trace all accounts of Musaylima, including which part of the story deserves to be dated earlier and which part is suspected to have originated later. As such, it is plausible to describe the way in which early Muslim literature has told the stories of Musaylima, leading us to reconstruct the history of Musaylima itself. Thus, it is possible to discover the skeleton of the fossilized Musaylima.

to Compilation, A Comparative Study with Old and New Testaments (Leicester: UK Islamic Academy, 2003).

¹⁴ See Jeremy Johns, "Archeology and the History of Early Islam: the First Seventy Years" *JESHO* 46 (2003).

¹⁵ To name just a few of them, N. Abbott, F. Rahman, F. Sezgin, M. M. Azami, G. Schoeler, H. Motzki, F. Donner, and U. Rubin. The view of these scholars will be discussed at the appropriate place in this study.

¹⁶ This effort has recently been attempted by Gregor Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Muhammads* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1996); Harald Motzki, "The murder of Ibn Abi Ḥuqayq: On the Origin and Reliability of Some Maghāzi-reports" in *The Biography of Muhammad, The Issue of the Sources* (Leiden: Brill, 2000); Amin Kamaruddin, "The Reliability of Ḥadith-Transmission: A Re-examination of Ḥadith-Critical Methods," *Ph.D. Dissertation*, Bonn University, 2005; Andreas Görke, "The Historical Tradition about Hudaybiya, a Study of 'Urwa b. al-Zubayr's Account'" in *The Biography of Muhammad*.

¹⁷ See also Sebastian Günther, "Assessing the Sources of Classical Arabic Compilations: The Issue of Categories and Methodologies" *BJMES* 32 (2005): 80.

Nevertheless, two different methodological attitudes to the sources will inevitably affect our assumption concerning the existence of Musaylima. On the one hand, anyone who rejects all reports that Muslim narrators told and claims that they are mere mythical inventions in effects reject Musaylima's existence, making him a mythical figure invented by Muslim narrators. By contrast, anyone who takes for granted that all stories of Musaylima are reliable will be working below a scholarly standard, even by the measurement of traditional *ʿulūm al-ḥadīth*. Having subscribed to an open-minded view, I will regard each report as a unique one with its own special text and context, so much so that I avoid applying generalizations of certain theories to all reports. Not only will I apply the standard “*was es eigentlich gewesen war*” at the level of Musaylima, but I will also do so at the level of the transmitters delivering their reports.

In my study I will make use of many of the theories held by scholars not directly concerned with the field of Islamic studies, such as Derrida,¹⁸ Foucault,¹⁹ Habermas,²⁰ Barthes,²¹ and Greenblatt.²² This means that I am always prepared to broaden the perspective that I will employ in understanding certain texts and contexts. I will also anticipate as many possibilities as I can imagine while reading certain texts. This approach in the field of Islamic Studies is not at all new, as many—e.g., Susanne Enderwitz,²³ Navid Kermani²⁴ and Matthias Vogt²⁵—have already set the examples prior to this study. The following section is devoted to the consequences of employing a certain approach in seeing early Islam.

¹⁸ On deconstructing certain texts while reading them and by anticipating any contexts involved.

¹⁹ On anticipating the power-relation that exists within certain texts.

²⁰ On the theory of communicative action.

²¹ On the theory about the ‘death of the author.’

²² On his sharp critical insights into Shakespeare’s works.

²³ See her “From Curriculum Vitae to Self-narration: Fiction in Arabic Autobiography” in Stefan Leder, ed., *Story-Telling in the Framework of Non-fictional Arabic Literature* (Wiesbaden: Harrasovitz, 1998). In this regard, Enderwitz employs postmodern literary criticism in approaching Arabic autobiography. See also her *Unsere Situation schuf unsere Erinnerungen: Palästinensische Autobiographien zwischen 1967-2000* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2002) 23-32.

²⁴ In his *Gott ist Schön, Das ästhetische Erleben des Koran* (München: C. H. Beck, 1999), Kermani offers later theories of aesthetics in understanding the poetic style that the Qurʾān employs.

²⁵ *Figures de califes entre histoire et fiction, al-Walid b. Yazid et al-Amin dans la représentation de l'historiographie arabe de l'époque abbaside* (Beirut: Ergon Verlag Würzburg, 2006). Vogt examines the image of al-Walid and al-Amin as portrayed by Muslim literature. Vogt finds that there is an interplay between reality and fantasy in the way in which Muslim narrators tell the stories about the caliphs. In doing so, Vogt employs current literary theories developed by R. Barthes, W. Iser, P. Ricoeur and many others.

Understanding *Nubuwwa*: The Consequences of Approaches

In viewing the history of early Islam, adopting a certain approach has consequences. Take the early concept of *nubuwwa* (prophethood)—which certainly plays a vital role in dealing with our theme Musaylima—as an example. In this regard, a few key words can perhaps be presented, that may help us explain the concept of prophethood in a somewhat novel way:

<i>kāhin</i> (soothsayer) ²⁶	<i>sajʿ</i> (rhymed prose)
<i>sāḥir</i> (magician) ²⁷	<i>siḥr</i> (magic)
<i>shāʿir</i> (poet) ²⁸	<i>shiʿr</i> (poetry)
<i>nabī</i> (prophet) ²⁹	<i>nubuwwa</i> (prophethood)
<i>rasūl</i> (messenger) ³⁰	<i>risāla</i> (messengerhood)

One may venture to say that in dealing with the theme of Islamic prophethood, one cannot deny the importance of these ten key words. The way in

²⁶ See, for example, T. Fahd “Kāhin and Kihāna” in *EP*; Devin J. Stewart, “Soothsayer” in *EQ*; Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse: History and Theory of ʿArūd* (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 106 and elsewhere.

²⁷ See, for example, Gabriel Mandel Khan, “Magic” in *EQ*. This keyword plays a considerable role with regard to the theory of *Iʿjāz* in later Muslim literature; see chapter ten.

²⁸ See, for example, Alan Jones, “Poetry and Poets” in *EQ*. For a more specific discussion on the relation of the Qurʾānic verses and the phenomena of *kāhin*, *shāʿir* and *sāḥir*, see, for instance, Matthias Radscheit, *Die koranische Herausforderung: Die taḥaddīe-Verse im Rahmen der Polemikpassagen des Korans* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 1996) 37.

In addition, Zwettler argues for a different understanding of *kāhin*, *shāʿir*, and *nabī* with regards to their role in the pre-Islamic society. See his “A Mantic Manifesto” in James L. Kugel, *Poetry and Prophecy, the Beginning of a Literary Tradition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990) 77-80 and elsewhere. To illustrate, Zwettler maintains that *shāʿir* played a secular role, whereas *kāhin* played a religious one. *Nabī* and *rasūl*, on the other hand, are placed somewhere else, as both proclaimed prophethood and revelation received from God.

Frolov, however, observes the continuation, if not the evolution, of the genres of *sajʿ*, *rajaz* and *shiʿr*. See his *Classical Arabic Verse* 98 and elsewhere.

I would argue, however, that it is hard sometimes to present a clear-cut division of *kāhin*, *sāḥir*, *shāʿir*, *rasūl*, and *nabī* in terms of their mixed roles in pre-Islamic society. Aswad and Sajāh, for instance, are obviously known as *kāhin* and *kāhina*—as well as tribal leaders—who claimed prophethood. Musaylima, in this vein, also attempted to assume his role to serve as both mouthpiece of his people and their leader. Thus, he claimed to be *kāhin*, *nabī*, *rasūl* and *shāʿir* all at once. Umayya b. Abī Salṭ (on whom see chapter eight) may serve here as another example, of someone who is perceived as a *shāʿir* and who also proclaimed prophethood. Nowhere is he experienced as a political leader, however. Nor is he a *sāḥir*. However, he is said to have shown miracle with regard to the surgery of his breast by two birds (see chapter eight). Of course, there were a number of professional *shāʿirs* in the pre-Islamic period, such as al-Aʿshā from the tribe Ḥanīfa, who neither claimed prophethood nor assumed tribal leadership. For the classification of pre-Islamic poets, see, for instance, Frolov, *Classical Arabic Verse* 224, ref. cited.

²⁹ Although the word *nabī* stemmed from Arabic root, *nbʿ*, many scholars have related it to other Semitic roots, such as Hebrew, Aramaic, or even Manichean tradition. See Jeffery, *The Foreign Vocabularies of the Qurʾān* (Baroda: Oriental Institute, 1938) 276-277; T. Fahd, “Nubuwwa” in *EP*.

³⁰ See, for instance, A. H. Mathias Zahniser, “Messenger” in *EQ*.

which we order them may influence the way in which we denote their meanings. In the following discussion I would like to present four possible orderings of these words together with the different implications these orderings have on the early concept of prophethood.

To present the first possible order:

Fig. 0.1

<i>25 nabīs and rasūls risāla/nubuwwa</i>	: Muḥammad
<i>kāhin, sāḥir, shāʿir sajʿ, siḥr, shiʿr</i>	: Musaylima

This order may represent a theological and doctrinal perspective that has matured along with the growth of Islamic theological orthodoxy since, the third or fourth centuries after the Hijra in Muslim scholarship. The arguments for this ordering can be found in particular in the *iʿjāz*, *dalāʿil*, and *nubuwwa* literature.

Looking at the above diagram, several *nabīs* and *rasūls* located above the line are those whose names are 25 *rasūls* and *nabīs* from Adam to Jesus and whom, according to Islamic doctrine, the prophethood of Muḥammad sealed. Furthermore, according to this point of view, each *nabī* or *rasūl* is always sent by God throughout the history of humankind. As a result, there is a certain tendency put different epochs of human history alongside each other by classifying each as either obedient to God's *nabīs* and *rasūls* or disobedient to them.³¹

The keywords located under the line in the above diagram—*kāhin*, *sāḥir*, and *shāʿir*—can therefore to be interpreted as misguided practices of the pre-Islamic Arabs, and the reason why the true Prophet was sent to guide them to the right path.

The above stance leads to the denial of any possible religious affinity between local practices of *kihāna* and prophethood and present them as entirely different in nature.³² Thus, the following argument

³¹ See, for instance, Muḥammad Rashīd Riḍā, *al-Waḥy al-muḥammadi, thubūt al-nubuwwa bi al-qurʿān wa daʿwat shuʿūb al-madaniyya ilā al-islām dīn al-ukhuwwa al-insāniyya wa al-salām* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿa Nahḍa, 1375/1956) 51.

³² See, for instance, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Nubuwwāt wa mā yataʿallaq bihā*, ed. Aḥmad Ḥijāzī al-Saqā (Cairo: Maktaba al-Kulliyat al-Azhariyya, n.d.) 51. Abū Bakr Muḥammad al-Ṭayyib b. al-Bāqillānī, *Kitāb al-bayān ʿan al-farq bayn al-muʿjizāt wa al-karāmāt wa al-ḥiyal wa al-kihāna wa al-siḥr wa al-nārinjāt*, ed. and English summary by Richard J. McCarthy (Beirut: al-Maktaba al-Sharqiyya, 1958), see in particular p. 93, and for the English summary p. 24. See also, Muḥammad Ḥasan Hitū, *al-Muʿjiza al-qurʿāniyya, al-iʿjāz al-ʿilmi wa al-ghaybi* (Beirut: Muʿassasa al-Risāla, 1409/1989) 18. Interestingly, the story of al-Walid b. Mughira (see chapter eight) and ʿUtba b. Rabiʿa in the *sira* literature is taken to serve as an example of the negation of any relation between *waḥy* (prophetic revelation) and *kihāna*. See, for instance,

states more or less that prophethood did not stem from *kihāna* and has nothing to do with it. Neither does it fit into the *shāʿir* tradition.³³

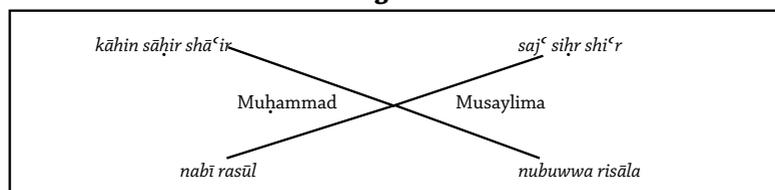
Rather, the Prophethood of Muḥammad is perceived to have gone beyond the local milieu and even human history, due to the universality of the message. It therefore differs from the local religious beliefs and traditions of Arabs contemporary to the Prophet.

This view has certain consequences for Musaylima, whose prophethood, of course, is excluded from the list of true *rasūls* and *nabīs*, and yet whose declaration is placed in the misguided path of those known as *kāhin*, *sāḥir*, and *shāʿir*, of whom still practiced the local religious customs, uttered *sajʿ*, *shiʿr*, and produced *siḥr*.

Within a very different scholarly tradition, some Western works also adopt this point of view, emphasizing the shifting values between the pre-Islamic *jāhili* period and the emergence of Islamic prophethood, and asserting that Islam entirely reformed the old values while introducing new values and concepts. This argument can perhaps best be seen in the works of Goldziher,³⁴ Micheal Zwettler,³⁵ Isutzu,³⁶ and Watt.³⁷

The second possible order of our key words can be presented as follows:

Fig. 0.2



ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Abd al-Muʿṭī ʿArafa, *Qaḍīyyat al-īʿjāz al-qurʿānī wa atharuhā fi tadwīn al-balāgha al-ʿarabiyya* (Beirut: ʿĀlam al-Kutub, 1405/1985) 67-68.

³³ Not only can this tendency be found in Islam, but this also existed in early Jewish traditions. See, for instance, Alan Cooper, “Imagining Prophecy” in James L. Kugel, *Poetry and Prophecy* 26-44. In the much earlier Greek tradition, the demarcation between secular singer and divine mantis is also maintained. See Gregory Nagy, “Ancient Greek Poetry, Prophecy, and Concepts of Theory” in *Poetry and Prophecy* 56-64.

³⁴ Reference to Goldziher’s view, see Zwettler, “A Mantic Manifesto” 106. See also ref. by Watt below.

³⁵ M. Zwettler, “A Mantic Manifesto” in James L. Kugel, *Poetry and Prophecy* 106 and 107.

³⁶ Toshihiko Izutsu, *God and Man in the Koran: Semantics of the Koranic Weltanschauung* (Tokyo: The Keio Institute of Cultural and Linguistic Studies, 1964) 28. See also his, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qurʿān* (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1966) 16, 29, 30, and elsewhere.

³⁷ Watt, in this regard, contrasts the pre-Islamic tribal values of Arabs—i.e., *muruwwa* (manliness)—with Islamic values. Watt, however, pays less attention to *ḥanafīyya*. See Watt, *Muḥammad at Mecca* 16-29, see also excursus C. In the words of Watt, “it is generally accepted that the archaic pagan religion was comparatively uninfluential in Muḥammad’s time” (p. 23).

This second order may represent the point of view of historians who pay special attention to the local milieu of Mecca, Medina and Yamāma, which are considered to be the locations where the two prophethoods emerged. The historical affinity among all these words is evident. The words at the top of the diagram—*kāhin*, *sāḥir*, and *shāʿir*, i.e. those who produced *sajʿ*, *siḥr*, and *shiʿr* are therefore perceived as belonging to local traditions, which, to some extent, had to do with the history of prophethood. *Kāhins* who delivered *sajʿ*—as a part of local cult practices—and *shāʿir* who uttered *shiʿr*—as a part of local oral tradition—can be regarded as constituting the milieu from which the concept of *nabī* and *rasūl* emerged.

In this regard, the prophethoods of Muḥammad and Musaylima are perceived to have occurred in the context of the sixth-seventh century Arabian peninsula, i. e., Ḥijāz and Yamāma. This view was first espoused by the Meccan poets, whose story is still well preserved in the early works of *sīra* literature, which tell us that they regarded Muḥammad as being not different from themselves.³⁸ We can also find certain parallels of this view in the modern study of Islam. The roles of *nabī* and *rasūl* in the traditional community are seen as an evolution of those of *kāhin*, *sāḥir*, and *shāʿir*.³⁹ As they are described in the Islamic literature as part of *jāhiliyya* tradition, the modern studies have called for re-examination of this tradition from which some Arab prophets emerged.

Early genres of Muslim literature, such as *sīra*, *tārīkh*, *ḥadīth*, and *tafsīr*, preserve some materials which may serve as windows into the local Arab traditions prior to Islam. Most Islamicists have so far relied on these sources to explain the history behind the birth of Islamic prophethood, among them Wellhausen, Hawting, Kister, and Rubin, to name just a few. Early Muslim historians also realized these historical roots of Islamic prophethood. Instead of rejecting them, they tried to explain them in their own way. Al-Masʿūdī, whose case will also be discussed below, is among the best examples of this.

This view will dramatically change the traditional Muslim image of Musaylima, who shared the same milieu with that of the Prophet Muḥammad, namely the Arabian peninsula of the sixth century. The difference is that Islam, brought by Muḥammad, has survived and has become a foundation of many great kingdoms and nations in history, whereas the cult of Musaylima

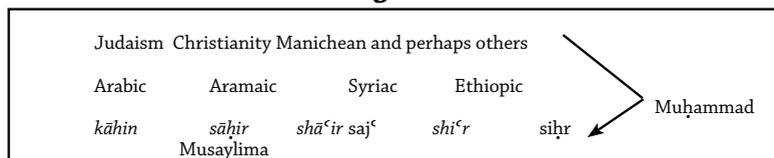
³⁸ For a detailed discussion of the Meccan poets' accusation that The Prophet Muhamad produced the same *shiʿr* as they did, see, for instance, Irfan Shahid, "Another Contribution to Koranic Exegesis: The Sura of the Poets (XXVI)" in *JAL* 14 (1983): 10, 16, -21.

³⁹ Interestingly, studies on the Biblical prophets began the analogy between the role of prophet and that of poet over a century ago. See, for instance, Edward B. Pollard, "The Prophet as a Poet" *BW* 12 (1898) 328: "In several respects are poet and prophet one. Each is concerned with truth. The poet is not one who deals in fancies merely. Real poetry is the expression of that which is deepest and truest in life. He deals with the sublimely real. Imagination is not fancy, but is twin to faith." See also the same analogy employed by Fazlur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam, Philosophy and Orthodoxy* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1957) 62.

perished. Yamāma, moreover, became a political part of the caliphal regions of Medina, Damascus, and Baghdad respectively (see chapter six below).

To move to the third possible ordering our key words:

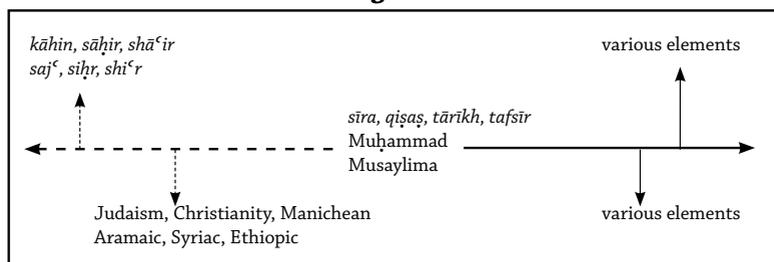
Fig. 0.3



Like the second diagram, this third one suggests that it is not necessary to divorce the emergence of prophethood from its historical aspects. The difference is that one is tempted to relate the Arab prophethood to the pre-conditional contacts between the local traditions with those of the neighbourhoods. The prophethood, according to this view, emerged from this plural and complex environment. A considerable number of Western scholars have devoted their study in this direction, including Richard Bell, Abraham I. Katsh, Moshe Gil, Arthur Jeffery, and Günther Lüling. However, due to the very limited sources at our disposal, we cannot say anything more than inferential with regards to the prophethood of Musaylima. Which foreign influences contributed to his claim and mission are merely speculation. Watt, for instance, observes that Christianity might have influenced Musaylima. This assumption is based on the fact that the neighboring tribes of Ḥanifa—such as Taghlib and Bakr—were Christian and one of Musaylima’s stanzas contains elements of Christianity (see chapter nine below).

Let us now turn to the fourth possible ordering:

Fig. 0.4



The above diagram results from the skeptical attitude towards the Muslim sources by scholars such as J. Wansbrough and P. Crone. The point of entry into the concept of prophethood, according to this approach, is not at the time of Muḥammad. Instead, this approach emphasizes a critical stance toward the reliability of the sources written one or two centuries after the death of Muḥammad. The concept of his prophethood, according to this per-

spective, was mostly developed as early as the second century after the death of the Prophet. One should therefore ask whether the concept of prophethood reflects the historical past (marked with a dotted line in the above diagram) or rather the position of scholars of the second century after Hijra or beyond (marked with a straight line). To put it differently, the formation of the doctrine of prophethood was not accomplished during the lifetime of the Prophet, but was rather defined or redefined by later literature such as *ḥadīth*, *sīra*, *qiṣaṣ*, *tārīkh*, and *tafsīr* works. The concept of prophethood then underwent further evolution under the influence of various foreign elements and along with the growth of Muslim literature.

This skeptical approach, however, is not always desirable in reading the story of Musaylima, for the following reasons: If one doubts all of what Muslim literature tells us about Musaylima, one has to seek alternative sources. This would yield us little in terms of concrete results. The Muslim sources must be treated as the only contemporary witness to Musaylima, unless manuscripts written by Musaylima's followers are one day found. In addition, if one rejects the accounts of Musaylima provided by Muslim writers, but fails to find alternative sources, one could conclude that Musaylima was a mere mythical or fictional figure, and that he was not a historical person at all. This figure, according to this point of view, was merely invented by the second century of Muslim literature and beyond. However, if one rejects the historical Musaylima, one must also reject the rest of the Arab figures contained in the sources originating from the same period. Nothing remains and all of these stories about them become mere fiction.

There is, however, a certain lesson to be taken from the skeptical approach in reading the story of Musaylima. If one can critically consider the production of early figures such as the Prophet Muḥammad, as removed from the process of myth-making, then this can also be used to interpret the story of Musaylima. Certain parts of his story were reinvented at a later time and contain some changes. As we have seen elsewhere in this study, the story of Musaylima sometimes grew, shrunk, diminished or was totally denied. Consequently, it is difficult to deny the existence of Musaylima, if we admit that of his contemporary, Muḥammad. Neither can we deny some development and mythologization of the stories.

The Triumph of Orthodoxy

However, in later Muslim literature, where Islamic orthodoxy prevails, the connection between *kihāna* and *nubuwwa* have been ignored. Accordingly, in Muslim source, Islamic prophethood is divorced from its original milieu, whereas critical stance in acknowledging the affinity between the two important concepts is silenced. The following section, however, traces the roots of the two terms *nubuwwa* and *kihāna*.

To begin with, the root *khn*, according to Ibn Manẓūr, is linguistically related to *khbr*. Furthermore, *khbr*, in this context, means ‘news’, which is usually related to certain facts. In effect, two activities—predicting future events and revealing secrets (*asrār*)—are associated with this. Simply put, these sayings were oracles, which were often delivered by *kuhhān* (sing. *kāhin*/soothsayer). In doing so, they also composed *sajʿ* (rhymed prose). Ibn Manẓūr also informs us that from pre-Islamic time to the period of early Islam, two Jewish tribes—Qurayza and Nāḍir—were known for their *kuhhān*. The label of *kāhin*, however, also designated other professions. The Arabs called those who mastered certain skills or certain types of knowledge *kāhin*, i.e. doctors (*ṭabībs*) and *munajjims* (astrologists) were also called *kāhin*.⁴⁰

In view of the explanation of Ibn Manẓūr, the word *kāhin* seems to have narrowed from a broader designation. One of the meanings, soothsaying, is still perserved in the early *ḥadīth* literature, wherein such soothsaying is prohibited. The main reason for this is to stress the disconnection between *kihāna* and *nubuwwa*. The Prophet is reported to have said: “*īyyākum wa sajʿ wa al-kuhhān*” (Beware of rhymed prose and soothsaying).⁴¹ By inferring from this, it becomes clear that both activities are connected; a *kāhin* produces *sajʿ*, and both the person and his product seem to have been banned at the same time. In another tradition, the Prophet even prohibits using certain forms of *sajʿ* while praying (*duʿāʾ*).⁴²

In addition, references to soothsayers who uttered rhymed prose (*sajʿ*)⁴³ can still be found in the Qurʾān and in the later exegetical literature. However, the description provided by both sources stresses that the Scripture is neither any sort of *sajʿ* nor any sort of *shīʿr*. This denial is unsurprising though, as the Prophet Muḥammad himself is said to have faced the accusation of being a *kāhin*, or even *majnūn* (possessed by *jinn*).⁴⁴ Not only does the Qurʾān speak of the Prophet Muḥammad’s situation, it also tells us that the same accusation had been made against previous prophets, such as Moses and Jesus (see chap-

⁴⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, “*kahana*” in *Lisān*.

⁴¹ Ibn Manẓūr, “*kahana*” in *Lisān*. Numerous traditions contain prohibition to visit and to believe in *kāhin*; see al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000) *k. ṭibb*, 46/vol. 3, 1191-1192; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000) *k. Masaʿa* 9/vol. 2, 669; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan* (Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000) *k. ṭibb* 21/vol. 2, 657; al-Nasāʾi, *Sunan* (Liechtenstein: Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000) *k. buyūʿ* 91/vol. 2, 757; Ibn Maja, *Sunan* (Liechtenstein, Thesaurus Islamicus Foundation, 2000) *k. Tijāra* 9/314; al-Dārimī, *Sunan* (Dimashq: Bāb al-Barīd, 1349) *k. buyūʿ* 34/vol. 2, 255. A tradition also says that *kāhins* will not enter paradise; see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.) vol. 3, 14.

⁴² Ibn Manẓūr, “*sajaʿa*” in *Lisān*. Al-Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, *k. Daʾawāt* 20/vol. 3, 1289; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* vol. 6, 217, cf. Wensinck, *Concordance* vol. 2, 431.

⁴³ See G.R. Hawting, “Pre-Islamic Arabia and the Qurʾān,” in *EQ*, 255.

⁴⁴ See, for instance, Issa J. Boullata, “The Rhetorical Interpretation of the Qurʾān: *Iʿjāz* and Related Topics,” in A. Rippin, ed., *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qurʾān* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 139-140.

ter seven). In other words, earlier prophets had faced the same challenges from their own people that the Prophet Muḥammad encountered. The parallels between the prophethood of Muḥammad and those of earlier Biblical prophets is maintained by at least two remarkable points: the blatant attempt to disconnect the mission of the Prophet from the local *kihāna* and to assert that previous prophets were also accused of being *kuhhān* and *shu'arā'*.

Why did the Meccans accuse the Prophet of being a *kāhin*? This question leads us to speculate about the accusers, who were both the audience of the Qur'ān and those whom the Prophet addressed in his sayings. It is obvious that the audiences were familiar with the concepts of *kāhin*, *sāhir*, *shā'ir*, and *majnūn*. Thus, according to the contemporary customs and traditions they embraced, they perceived that those who uttered divine sayings and taught moral lessons were simply *kuhhān*. In short, this somehow describes their knowledge, if not their worldview,⁴⁵ and indicates that the knowledge and practices of *kihāna* were still prevalent among the Arabs. Whereas the Prophet is positioned as the speaker and the Meccans as the audience, one may then pose another question: Did the speaker and the audience hold certain common view? Or did the speaker completely reform the audience's worldview and offer something entirely new? If so, how far was the break and shift in terms of tradition and worldview between the speaker and the audience? Was the speaker's new re-formulation of the old worldview totally independent from that of the audience? I do not wish to burden the reader with my conjecture, so I will simply leave these questions unanswered.

Having consulted the lexicon of Ibn Manẓūr, let us now turn to the views of early Muslim historians, as the matter of prophethood is undoubtedly a part of history. They seem to have realized the puzzling and yet challenging connection among the following three elements: local Arab tradition, Biblical prophets, and Islamic prophethood. Explaining which aspects of these three elements should be connected to the prophethood of Muḥammad and which aspects should be disconnected from it seems to have become their central task. What is also clear is that most of the local elements, such as *kihāna*, should be disconnected from *nubuwwa*, whereas the Biblical prophets should be connected to it. What remains puzzling is how to establish the connection between the Biblical prophets and the Prophet, if the local setting is denied. It is also hard to imagine the gap between them in terms of time and place; the Biblical prophets lived in the distant past and most of them did not live in the Ḥijāzi region. The local Arab prophets serve here as a historical bridge con-

⁴⁵ According to T. Fahd, however, the role of *kāhin* at the time of The Prophet had already declined. It is therefore scornful enough to have been accused as a *kāhin*. See Fahd, "Divination" in *EQ*. However, one may object to this suggestion, by arguing that the accusation of being a *kāhin* and *shā'ir* was not necessarily intended to be contemptuous. Rather, it simply represents the worldview of the accusers, and perhaps of the accused one. The contemptuous implication seems to have resulted from later development of Muslim literature, after the image of *kāhin* having been blackened.

necting the Prophet and Biblical prophets; this is the position that the early Muslim historians have taken. To be clear, in the midst of the local *kihāna*, there were some Arabs who, according to early Muslim historians, still held God's religion and who were placed in the *fatra* period.⁴⁶

Ch. Pellat is right in noting that although Ibn Qutayba presents a heading entitled: "the men who had religion before the mission of the Prophet," he makes no explicit mention of *fatra*.⁴⁷ It is al-Mas'ūdī in his *Murūj* who presents a special heading entitled: "Mention of those who lived in the period between Jesus and Muḥammad."⁴⁸ Moreover, his discussion covers several figures, who deserve our serious attention at least in three respects. First, they are said to have embraced the true religion. Furthermore, some lived immediately prior to the emergence of Islam. Finally, others are also reported to have witnessed the true prophethood of Muḥammad. By presenting these figures, al-Mas'ūdī performed the task of building a historical bridge between the Biblical prophets and the Prophet. It is therefore useful to present the following figures:

1. Khālīd b. Sīnān al-ʿAbbāsī⁴⁹ is described in the early Muslim literature as being among those who held the "true religion," and who is sometimes described as a prophet. His daughter, according to a report, visited the Prophet Muḥammad while reading Q. 112 (on the oneness of God), a reading that, according to her, her father used to recite.
2. Riʿāb b. Shannā,⁵⁰ a former Christian, once heard a voice from the sky, saying that "the best people in earth are three: Rāʿīb b. Shannā, monk Baḥīra, and a man who will come (the third person mentioned was Muḥammad)."
3. Asʿad Abū Karb al-Ḥamīrī,⁵¹ who converted to Islam, also practiced "the true religion."

⁴⁶ See Ch. Pellat, "Fatra," in *EI*².

⁴⁷ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif*, ed. Tharwat ʿUkāsha (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub, 1960) 58.

⁴⁸ *Murūj al-dhahab wa maʿādan al-jawhar*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥy al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥāmid ([Cairo]: al-Maktaba al-Tijāriyyah al-Kubrā, 1377/1958) vol. 1, 65-75.

⁴⁹ See also Ch. Pellat, "Khālīd b. Asʿad," in *EI*²; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 62. See also Jawād ʿAlī, *al-Mufaṣṣal fī tārikh al-ʿarab qabl al-islām* (Beirut: Dār al-ʿIlm al-Malāyin, 1970) vol. 6, 84; Al-Jāhīz, *Kitāb al-ḥayawān*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1408/1988) vol. 4, 476. It should be noted the differences between *kihāna*, *nubuwwa*, *ḥanīfa*, and *fatra*. *Kihāna* refers to many local Arab practices, which, according to Ibn Khaldun, were a form of proto-*nubuwwa*. *Nubuwwa* is meant to be prophethood, claimed by those who admit to have received revelation from God. *Ḥanīfa* designates to a certain practice of asceticism, which, according to Tor Andrae, originally refers to non-Judeo-Christian tradition. *Fatra*, a term introduced by later Muslim historians, means a period between The Prophethood of ʿĪsā and Muḥammad.

⁵⁰ See also Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 58.

⁵¹ Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 60.

4. Quṣṣ b. Sāʿida al-ʿIyyādi⁵² was among the Arabs upon whom God bestowed wisdom. The Prophet, in confirming this, once said, “God poured His mercy to Quṣṣ.”⁵³
5. Zayd b. ʿAmr b. Nufayl,⁵⁴ a cousin of ʿUmar b. Khaṭṭāb, is also reported to have been an adherent of the *ḥanīf* religious tradition prior to the Prophet. Due to his piety, Zayd is reported to have avoided some pagan practices, entering the Kaʿba secretly at nights in order to distance himself from the idols which surrounded it. Some reports also tell us that he refused to eat the meat of animals slaughtered in the name of idols. According to these sources, he moved to al-Shām and stayed there until his death. Zayd’s *ḥanīf* tendency seemed to resemble those of Abū ʿĀmir, ʿUmayya b. Abī Saḷḷ, and Abū Qays Shirma b. Abī Anas from the tribe Najjār of Anṣār whom we will discuss below.
6. As for Abū Qays,⁵⁵ he practiced in the same way as ʿUmayya b. Abī Saḷḷ and Abū ʿĀmir b. Sayf did, wearing a hair mantle like a monk, avoiding any practices of paganism, and building a mosque—an indication that he was also an adherent of the religion of Abraham. Abū Qays Shirma, however, is distinguished from other *ḥanīf* figures, in that he eventually converted to Islam.

The following figures are also reported to have directly witnessed the prophethood of Muḥammad. Warāqa b. Nawfal⁵⁶—a cousin of Khadija, the first wife of the Prophet—and ʿAdās—a freed man of ʿUtba b. Rabīʿah—are reported to have foretold the prophethood of Muḥammad. Similarly, a monk named Baḥīra⁵⁷ is also reported to have read the sign of the seal of prophethood located between the two shoulders of Muḥammad prior to the prophethood.

More interestingly, ʿAbdalla b. Jahsh al-Asādī—whose former wife, Umm Ḥabība bt. Abī Sufyān b. Ḥarb, later married the Prophet—is also said to have

⁵² See also Ch. Pellat, “Kuss b. Sāʿida al-ʿIyyādi,” in *EP*; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 61; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* (Beirut: Maktaba al-Maʿārif, 1966) vol. 2, 229-238; A. Sprenger, *Das Leben und die Lehre des Mohammeds nach Bischer Grösstenheils Unbenutzeten Quellen* (Berlin: Nicolai’sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1861) vol. 1, 102-107.

⁵³ See also Al-Jāhiz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, ed. ʿAlī Abū Muḥim (Beirut: Dār Maktaba al-Hilāl, 1407/1988) vol. 1, 253.

⁵⁴ A. Sprenger, *Das Leben* vol. 1, 119-124; Kister, “A Bag of Meat: A Study of an Early *Ḥadīth*,” *BSOAS* 33 (1970): 267-275; See also, Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 59; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 238-243; Al-Dhababī, *Tārīkh al-islām wa wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-l-aʿlām*, ed. ʿUmar ʿAbd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-ʿArabī, 1410/1990) vol. *al-Sira al-nabawīyya* 85-92.

⁵⁵ Frants Buhl, *Das Leben Muhammads*, tr. Hans Heinrich Shaeder (Heidelberg: Quelle und Meyer, 1955) 98; Sezgin *GAS* vol. 2, 294; Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 61.

⁵⁶ See C.F. Robinson “Waraka b. Nawfal” in *EP*; Kister, “Al-Taḥānūt, an Inquiry into the Meaning of a Term,” *BSOAS* 31 (1968), 224 n. 13. Ibn Qutayba, *al-Maʿārif* 59; Sprenger, *Das Leben* vol. 1, 124.

⁵⁷ A. Abel, “Baḥīrah” in *EP*; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 229-238.

read certain “Scriptures,” but apostatized from Islam and later converted to Christianity. Before his apostasy and conversion, ‘Abdalla is reported to have been among the Muslim immigrants to Abyssinia.⁵⁸

The theme of *fatra* also appeals to Ibn Kathīr. However, before dealing with this theme, he presents the following figures under a somewhat different heading entitled “mention of those who were known in the period of *jāhiliyya*”: Ḥātim al-Ṭa’ī,⁵⁹ ‘Abdalla b. Ja’dān,⁶⁰ Imru al-Qays,⁶¹ Umayya b. Abi Saḥb, Baḥīra, Quṣṣ b. Sa’ida, and Zayd b. ‘Umar. Given this fact, it is obvious that Ibn Kathīr places some figures, whom al-Mas‘ūdī had included in the *fatra*, in the *jāhiliyya* category. In reference to Ibn Kathīr’s *fatra*, he presents a heading which reads: “among the events during the period of *fatra*,” which covers the following: Ka’b b. Lu’ay, who used to collect his people on Friday (560 years before Muḥammad);⁶² the rediscovery of the Zamzam well;⁶³ the sacrifice of ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib’s son, namely ‘Abdalla (the Prophet Muḥammad’s father);⁶⁴ and the marriage of ‘Abdalla with Āmina (the Prophet’s mother).⁶⁵

In view of the new meaning of *fatra* provided by Ibn Kathīr, one may fail, however, to find a historical bridge connecting the local *kihāna* practice and the prophethood of Muḥammad. Ibn Kathīr turned the *fatra* period of al-Mas‘ūdī to that of *Jāhiliyya*. Specifically, Ibn Kathīr denied Umayya b. Abi Saḥb, Baḥīra, Quṣṣ b. Sa’ida, and Zayd b. ‘Umar among the *fatra* figures, instead of placing them among the *Jāhiliyya* ones. Thus, it is not hard to see the tendency in Ibn Kathīr to distance the prophethood of Muḥammad from the historical setting and local milieu.

Nevertheless, the concept of *fatra*, particularly with regards to that held by al-Mas‘ūdī, functions in the following way. Some attempts at distancing the prophethood of Muḥammad from the local *kihāna* are shown. However, the connection between these and the Biblical prophets is maintained. In order to connect them, the figures of certain native Arab prophets were raised. This suggests that *kihāna* has nothing to do with the prophethood of Muḥammad, which was shared by earlier local Arab prophets, whose mission was disconnected from the practices of *kihāna*, but connected to those of the

⁵⁸ *Murāj* vol. 1, 65-75. Watt, however, informs us that it was ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Jaḥsh, ‘Abdalla’s brother, who turned to Christianity. ‘Abdalla himself is said to have returned to Mecca and remained Muslim and finally died at the campaign of Uḥud. See Watt, “‘Abd Allah b. Djahsh,” in *EP*. Ref. cited.

⁵⁹ *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 212-217.

⁶⁰ *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 217-218.

⁶¹ *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 218-220.

⁶² *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 244.

⁶³ *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 244-248. See also a long discussion on the matter by G. R. Hawting in his “The Disappearance and Rediscovery of Zamzam and the ‘Well of the Ka’ba’,” *BSOAS* 43 (1980): 44-54.

⁶⁴ *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 248-249.

⁶⁵ *al-Bidāya* vol. 2, 249-251.

Biblical prophets. In this regard, not only does the connection between the three sound more historical, al-Mas'ūdī seems also to broaden the scope of prophethood, as not only applying to the Israelites but also to the Arabs.

What we have dealt with is the task of the Muslim historians. In a much later time and during the golden age of intellectualism, Muslim philosophers shed new light on this matter by universalizing the concept of prophethood. For example, the Muslim philosophers—al-Farabi and Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna)—boldly connected the concept of Islamic prophethood to the ancient elements of Greek theories, blended with Stoicism, neo-Platonism, and the eclectic Hellenism of the early centuries of the Christian era.⁶⁶ As a result of this, the discussion of prophethood goes beyond doctrinal Islam and Arabic traditions. It can perhaps be seen in the use of intellect (*ʿaql*) which served as a technical term that enabled the philosophers to explain the nature of divine revelation received by the prophets. Both al-Farabi⁶⁷ and Ibn Sīnā,⁶⁸ for instance, developed and exercised this concept of intellect which alone connects the human and divine Reality. Crudely put, there are two kinds of intellect: that of common humans and active intelligence. The prophets are granted a certain privileged capacity to acquire active intelligence, which enables them to communicate with the divine Reality and to receive revelations from God.⁶⁹

Whereas Muslim historians claim that prophethood also belongs to Arabs and is not an exclusive right of the Israelites, Muslim philosophers question the exclusivity of prophethood to the Islamic tradition, if not also to the Semitic tradition as a whole. The basis for this explanation of the prophethood lies in the role of the intellect, and this intellectual capacity has evidently been attained not only by the prophets but also by the philosophers. The Muslim thinkers shed new light on this matter by comparing sacred revelation and philosophical contemplation. As a result, Muḥammad is perceived as being both prophet and philosopher. This has one serious consequence, however, as Fazlur Rahman points out:

And if Muḥammad was a true philosopher, in promulgating his religion and law he must have but talked only in successful parables down to people. Conversely, since the Greek personalities in question and others were undoubtedly great philosophers and they did not, indeed, keep their philosophy to themselves, but formulated actual theories of state and law on its basis, surely, they were divinely inspired prophets?⁷⁰

The spirit of this creative free thinking in Islamic scholarship, however, was later banished by more orthodox modes of thought. In this regard, Fazlur

⁶⁶ See Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* 10.

⁶⁷ See the diagram presented by Rahman in his *Prophecy in Islam* 14.

⁶⁸ See the diagram presented by Rahman in his *Prophecy in Islam* 20.

⁶⁹ See Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* 30-31.

⁷⁰ Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* 59.

Rahman presents some major Muslim writers who wrote against such philosophers, including Ibn Ḥazm with his literal (*zāhiri*) approach, al-Ghazālī with his refutations of his predecessors,⁷¹ and Ibn Taymiyya, who is the most radical of the three.⁷² At the same time, this has served as a major obstacle, particularly for Muslims, in dealing with the matter of prophethood from historical and philosophical points of view; for the matter can now only be understood through doctrine in simplistic black and white terms. Ibn Taymiyya's concept of *ibāda* (service to God) and *tawḥīd* (oneness of God), for instance, have dominated the thoughts of many modern puritan Muslim thinkers. The purpose of human beings, according to this doctrine, is merely to serve and worship the one God, and not to engage in philosophical contemplation.⁷³ As far as the stance of this Islamic orthodoxy is concerned, no comparison can plausibly be made between prophethood and soothsaying, between the works of miracle and magic, between revelation and contemplation, and between Qur'ānic verses and poetry. As a result, previous attempts made by the earlier and more open-minded Muslim historians and philosophers have been silenced.

It is interesting to consider the stance of Ibn Khaldūn, who sheds new light on this matter by combining the philosophical and historical approaches. With regard to the former, he employs the role of intelligence to explain the ways in which the prophets and the soothsayers gained their heavenly knowledge from the divine world. Both, according to Ibn Khaldūn, gained their knowledge through the use of this special intelligence, which most ordinary humans are not able to achieve. The difference is that the soothsayers do not possess the ability to determine whether this heavenly information came from an evil or a virtuous spirit, and they are not able to achieve the high rank of prophethood. The prophets, on the other hand, have achieved the highest level of knowledge, in which they are prevented from any error (*iṣmah*). Ibn Khaldūn's historical awareness lies in relating soothsaying and prophethood to the stages of human epistemology in history. In fact, soothsaying is considered among the ranks of human efforts at seeking the truth (*min khawāṣṣ nafs al-insāniyya*). What is misleading in the cases of Umayya b. Abī Salṭ, Musaylima, Ṭulayḥa and Aswad—according to Ibn Khaldūn—is that they were clearly mere soothsayers, who sought to rise to the level of

⁷¹ See also W. Montgomery Watt, "al-Gazali" in *EP*, s.v.; Brockelmann, *GAL* vol. 1, 532-546, S. 1, 744-756; Sezgin, *GAS* vol. 1, 44, 493, 602, 638; vol. 2, 280, vol. 4, 43. See al-Ghazali's refutation of certain Muslim philosophers in his *al-Munqidh min al-ḡalāl*, trans. W. Watt as *The Faith and Practice of Al-Ghazālī* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2000); *Taḥāfut al-falāsifa*, trans. Sabih Ahmad Kamali as *Incoherence of the Philosophers* (Lahore: Pakistan Philosophical Congress, 1963).

⁷² See H. Loust, "Ibn Taymiyya" in *EP*; Brockelmann, *GAL* vol. 2, 125-127, S. 2, 119-26; Sezgin, *GAS* vol. 1, 519, vol. 2, 8, 162.

⁷³ Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam* 101 and 102.

prophethood.⁷⁴ It is hardly an exaggeration to conclude that Ibn Khaldūn, in this regard, embraces a certain evolutionism, viewing the *kihāna* as a crude aspect of the more developed *nubuwwa* in man's search for true knowledge.

Equally interesting is the critical attitude of Rashīd Riḍā, a disciple of Muḥammad ʿAbduh, to both early orientalists and early Muslim sources regarding the pre-Islamic figures whom they relate to the prophethood of Muḥammad. These figures are present in *sīra* literature to lend weight to the idea that monotheism existed in the the pre-Islamic Arabs. What Riḍā refutes are the suggestions of some early orientalists, who subscribed to the view that Muḥammad had religious affinity to these figures, serving as their disciple. This leads to the conclusion that Christianity and Judaism directly influenced the prophethood of Muḥammad, for example by suggesting that the Prophet had been a mere disciple of Baḥīra. In fact, when Muḥammad, argues Riḍā, met Baḥīra during his travel to al-Shām, the former was only nine or twelve years-old.⁷⁵ In addition, Baḥīra, according to Riḍā, was neither Jewish nor Christian and embraced monotheism. By the same token, Warāqa b. Nawfal had no direct relation to the Prophet. It was Khadija who consulted Warāqa—who, at that time, was old and blind, and died not long afterwards—with regard to the first revelation that the Prophet received.⁷⁶ Quṣṣ b. Sāʿida, similarly, had died before the Prophet served as a messenger. The direct contact of the Prophet to both figures drawn from the early Muslim *ḥadīths* is questionable, since these sources, according to Riḍā, are unsound, or at least are indicating *qāṭiʿ* (defects in transmission).⁷⁷

Jawād ʿAlī, however, subscribes to an open-minded position in explaining the relation of *kihāna* and *nubuwwa*, particularly with respect to his historical awareness. ʿAlī has a particular chapter which reads “*al-anbiyāʾ al-jāhiliyyūn* (the pre-Islamic prophets).” The pre-Islamic prophets, according to ʿAlī, are as follows: (1) Hūd for the people of ʿĀd; (2) Ṣāliḥ for the Thamūd; (3) Khālid for the people of Qāṭiʿa b. ʿAbbās; (4) Ḥanzala b. Ṣafwān for the people of Rass; (5) Shuʿayb b. dhī Mahḍam for the people of Ḥaḍur. Surprisingly, Jawād ʿAlī includes (6) Musaylima among those who claimed prophethood and who is even described to have done so in Mecca before the Hijra.⁷⁸ Thus, ʿAlī still inherits the position of classical Muslim historians in presenting the prophethood of Muḥammad historically and in acknowledging a certain affinity to the Arab local tradition.

The spirit of Ibn Taymiyya's Puritanism, on the other hand, has also been inherited, if not sharpened, by some later Muslim thinkers. Let us take ʿIzza

⁷⁴ Ibn Khaldūn, *The Muqaddimah, An Introduction to History*, trans. Franz Rosenthal (New York: Pantheon Books, 1958) vol. 1, 202-207.

⁷⁵ Riḍā, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadi* 83.

⁷⁶ Riḍā, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadi* 84.

⁷⁷ Riḍā, *al-Wahy al-Muḥammadi* 85.

⁷⁸ *Mufaṣṣal* vol. 6, 84.

Darwaza as an illustration. His position is much more radical than that of Ibn Kathir in distancing the local historical elements from the emergence of Muḥammad's prophethood. In doing so, Darwaza seeks a literal answer from the Qurʾān alone. This can be seen in his treatment of the word *ḥanīf*, which, according to Darwaza, is treated here more or less in the same manner as the word *fatra*, in that both serve to connect the prophethood of Muḥammad to those of the previous prophets. Darwaza, by using his approach of cross referencing Qurʾānic verses—such as in Q. 2: 135; 3: 67-68; 6: 161; 22: 30-31; 30: 30-31—, perceives the *ḥanīf* followers to be no different from *ṣābiʿūn* in that both are described by the Qurʾān as adherents of the true religion of Abraham. Furthermore, they preserved the belief in the oneness of God (*tawḥīd*). As such, Darwaza oversimplifies the historical facts, in order to apply his principle of puritanism in the story of *ḥanīf*. Unsurprisingly, he goes further by stating that the *ḥanīfs* were neither Christians nor Jews, who, according to him, had deviated from the true religion.⁷⁹ The religion of Abraham, Darwaza argues further, is not contaminated by any elements of polytheism or paganism. Moreover, Darwaza also rejects any connection between the term *ḥanīf* as a religious tradition and the name of the tribe Ḥanīfa, to which Musaylima belonged.⁸⁰

As such, Darwaza stresses the purity of Islam and the Muslim identity which, according to him, differs from that of Jews and Christians. Of course, this claim has little historical basis, but rather an ideological one blended with a theological claim. What is also clear is that he distances his interpretation of Islamic history from extra-Islamic elements that may contaminate the 'true Islam'. Yet it leads Darwaza to deny the historical roots of Islam, if not the history of mankind. In this regard, one may question Darwaza: Where does he locate Islam in the longer history of mankind? Is the history of Islam not also a part of the history of humanity? Since only source is 'the Qurʾān,' one wonders: how can he tell about the history of mankind prior to the revelation of the Qurʾān, if the Scripture makes no explicit mention?

In short, seen from the perspective of Islamic orthodoxy, i.e. advocated by Ibn Taymiyya, Ibn Kathir, and Darwaza, the prophethood of Musaylima should be entirely rejected. Musaylima is seen as no more than a traditional Arab *kāhin*, who stood as an opponent to Prophet Muhammad. However, taking lessons from the perspectives of al-Masʿūdī, Ibn Qutayba, al-Farabi, Ibn Sinā, Ibn Khaldūn, and Jawād ʿAlī, the figure of Musaylima and his prophethood can be better appreciated. In this vein, the concept of prophethood is broadened; the relationship between *kihāna* and *nubuwwa* is acknowledged; and the extent to which the claim of prophethood made by Musaylima

⁷⁹ Muḥammad ʿIzzat Darwaza, *ʿAṣr al-nabī wa bayʿatuh qabl -l-biʿtha, ṣuwar muqtabasa min-l-qurʾān al-karīm wa dirāsa taḥlīlat qurʾāniyya* (Beirut: Dār al-Yaqāza al-ʿArabiyya, 1384/1964) 700, 701, 705.

⁸⁰ Darwaza, *ʿAṣr al-nabī* 705.

and his *kihāna* activities related to the birth of Islamic prophethood can be better explained. However, those who, e.g. Crone, Wansbrough, Nevo, and Karen, deem early Islamic sources as unreliable will deny Musaylima's very existence. The figure of Musaylima is only mythical.

Structure

This study is divided into eleven chapters as follows.

The first chapter focuses on the letter sent by Musaylima to Muḥammad. I pay a great deal of attention to various versions of the text (*matn*) and the chain of transmission (*isnād*).

The second chapter presents fifteen *ḥadīth* reports which tell us about the story of the 'emissary,' to whom Musaylima entrusted his letter to Muḥammad. This 'emissary' was later executed under the order of 'Abdalla b. Mas'ūd during the time of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān, the third caliph, due to this courier's role in leading the people of Ḥanifa to practice Musaylima's cult.

In the third chapter I re-read the letter of Musaylima, by placing the text in its context, in which the text was produced. The implication of each word in the letter with its historical role is anticipated. I also keep in mind the role of Ibn Ishāq who put the letter in the *Sira* and who was under the patronage of the second Abbasid caliph al-Manṣūr.

The fourth chapter presents Muḥammad's answer to Musaylima. I discuss the contents of the answer and argue that the response of Muḥammad to Musaylima reflects the attitude adopted by later caliphs in rejecting any claimants to prophethood after Muḥammad. The *al-khulafā' al-rāshidūn*, the Umayyads, and the Abbasids caliphs served as guardians of the *khātām* doctrine (the seal of prophethood), according to which no claimant after Muḥammad is allowed.

The fifth chapter presents the reports that relate the encounter between the two prophets, Muḥammad and Musaylima. Comparison between various versions of these reports are made.

The sixth chapter is devoted to various attempts by Muslim scholars to unearth the enigmatic identity of Musaylima to address the accounts of his pedigree, life, claim to prophethood, and role in the politics of Yamāma.

The seventh chapter traces some figures in Yamāma, including Musaylima's predecessors (Hawdha and al-A'shā), companions (*al-Rajjāl* and *Muḥkam*), and opponents (those who stood on the side of Khālid b. al-Walid' upon his arrival with his troops in Yamāma).

The eighth chapter problematizes negative labels attributed to Musaylima, e.g. the arch-liar (*al-kadhḥāb*) that can be found in both earlier and later Muslim literature. Here, I compare some accusations made against Musaylima with those made against many opponents of Muḥammad, some of whom also claimed to be prophets.

The ninth chapter analyzes thirty-three stanzas attributed to Musaylima preserved in various genres of Muslim literature. Comparisons are made between the style, pattern, and diction of these stanzas and those of selected Meccan verses of the Qurʾān. Some teachings of Musaylima's cult are drawn from these fragments of his qurʾān.

The tenth chapter addresses the implications of similarities between Musaylima's stanzas and the Meccan verses of the Qurʾān. I presents the way in which Muslim scholars have used Musaylima's stanzas to support the arguments of the inimitability the Qurʾān (*iʿjāz* doctrine). I also discuss the possible use of these stanzas to shed new light on the accounts of early Islam.

The eleventh chapter is devoted to the final battle between Khālid b. al-Walid and Musaylima Yamāma, which resulted in the defeat of Musaylima. This chapter also sheds new light on accounts behind the collection of the Qurʾān under the reign of Abū Bakr. I argue that this effort to collect the Qurʾān served as a monument for the Muslims' victory over Musaylima's force and his 'qurʾān'.

I conclude this study by proposing that it is possible—with a certain degree of caution—to detect distortions in the representation of Musaylima by his enemies in Muslim literature. I demonstrate that we are able to unveil the masks that have covered this figure by reclaiming his prophethood, qurʾān, cult, mosque, and the stories of his followers.

