Socio-Historical Analysis of Islamic Sermon: The Genesis of ḥuṭbat Al-Ǧumu'ah (Friday's Sermon)

By Youssef Sbai

Abstract- In this article we will try to show the process of transformation that underwent the Arab oratory, the ḥatābah, from its genesis up to the construction of the cultual model of ḥuṭbat salāt al-ǧumu’ah (sermon of Friday’s canonical prayer) spread today among Muslims. Our brief socio-historical analysis of ḥuṭbah goes from the period called Ġâhilliyah (pre-Islamic, up to 610 AD) to the dominion of the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258 AD). We will see how the ḥuṭbah in Ġâhilliyah was situated in a precise space-time framework and had specific socio-cultural functions, how its producers had definite roles and its development possessed well-known characteristics. The arrival of Islam sacralized this social practice, turning it into a religious rite, and so the ḥuṭbat al-ǧumu’ah was born. The death of the prophet of Islam in 632 AD caused a charismatic emptiness that generated a conflict of a symbolic order (Pace, 20042). The protagonists of the discord used the ḥuṭbah as a communicative tool to launch their own theological-political invectives. With the Umayyad hegemony (from 661 AD to 750 AD), this practice entered a period of great transformations.

Keywords: khutba, sociology of religions, discourse analysis, sociology of communication, symbolic interaction.

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Socio-Historical Analysis of Islamic Sermon: The Genesis of ḥuṭbat Al-Ḡumu‘ah (Friday’s Sermon)

Youssef Sbai

"Without the use of history and without a historical sense of psychological issues, the social scientist can not adequately formulate those kinds of problems that should today be the orientation points of his studies" (Mills, 2014, page 153).

Abstract- In this article we will try to show the process of transformation that underwent the Arab oratory, the ḥaṭṭāb, from its genesis up to the construction of the cultural model of ḥuṭbat ṣalāt al-Ḡumu‘ah (sermon of Friday’s canonical prayer) spread today among Muslims. Our brief socio-historical analysis of ḥuṭbah goes from the period called Ġāhilliyah (pre-Islamic, up to 610 AD) to the dominion of the Abbasid dynasty (750-1258 AD). We will see how the ḥuṭbah in Ġāhilliyah was situated in a precise space-time framework and had specific socio-cultural functions, how its producers had definite roles and its development possessed well-known characteristics. The arrival of Islam sacralized this social practice, turning it into a religious rite, and so the ḥuṭbat al-Ḡumu‘ah was born. The death of the prophet of Islam in 632 AD caused a charismatic emptiness that generated a conflict of a symbolic order (Pace, 20042). The protagonists of the discord used the ḥuṭbah as a communicative tool to launch their own theological-political inductives. With the Umayyad hegemony (from 661 AD to 750 AD), this practice entered a period of great transformations. It became the most remarkable communication tool used by antagonistic groups, with the aim of convincing, dominating and discrediting rivals. Subsequently, during the period of the ad-dawlah asid dynasty (750-1258 AD), great socio-cultural transformations took place: firstly because of the encounter of Arab-Muslim civilization with other civilizations, such as the Persian civilization and the Greek one, from which a great movement of translation of philosophical works, in particular Greek, was born. Secondly, new non-Arabian peoples entered the dār al-Islâm, bringing their symbolic patrimony: new adaptations of the ḥuṭbah were necessary, mainly due to the contamination of new cultures.

Keywords: khutba, sociology of religions, discourse analysis, sociology of communication, symbolic interaction.

1. Al-Ḥaṭṭāb in Ġāhilliyah (Pre-Islamic Period)

We should initially specify the synonyms of the keywords we will use in our search. This is certainly not the place to deepen the reflection on the difficulties of translation and interpretation of Arabic terms into English and the problematic of finding precise synonyms. We will therefore choose the English terms that we consider more semantically effective to transmit the concepts we investigated.

We have chosen the word ‘prayer’, for example, to translate the term ḥuṭbah, knowing that it is a term that indicates a solemn and canonical discourse, aware that the word ḥuṭbah would have many more meanings and that it is also used to indicate other discursive genres. This choice is due to the diffusion of the common sense among Muslims to indicate with the term ḥuṭbah the speech that the imam pronounces at noon in the mosque during the Friday worship and which takes the official name of ḥuṭbat al-Ḡumu‘ah. Based on the above, we propose below a list of English words that we consider most appropriate to translate the Arabic terms:

- ḥaṭṭāb: rhetoric (mastery)
- ḥuṭbah: sermon (practice)
- ḥaṭṭāb: oratory
- ḥāṭṭāb: speech
- ḥaṭṭīb: orator; preacher
- maw’īrah: preach
- dars: catechism

With regard to the birth of rhetoric and prayer it is possible to provide precise geographical and chronological indications. From the geographical point of view, we refer to the vast territory occupied by the Arab tribes which constitutes the Arabian Peninsula (Figure 18). On the chronological axis, however, we refer to the era called Ġāhilliyah, which began about one hundred and fifty years before the birth of Islam and ended at the beginning of the seventh century AD.

La ḥaṭṭāb had deep roots in the history of Arab civilization, as a social practice, and was considered, together with poetry, one of the most effective and one of the most influential means of mass communication in the society of that time. (al-Ġâbîz, 1998).

Before taking up the study of this social practice it is necessary to take a look at the socio-cultural dynamics that influenced its development and its diffusion. The first factor was the tribal socio-political system (al-Hachimi, 1969), within which relations were regulated. Each tribe had its own well-defined territory (Fig. 19) and its own social structure within which the life of its members took place.

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1 Our traduction from Italian language
Fig. 1: The position of the Arabian Peninsula

Fig. 2: The map of the Arab tribes of the Arabian peninsula before the birth of Islam


3 Da Wikimeda Commons, file "Map of Arabia 600 AD.svg", autore murraytheb, pubblicodominio (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_of_Arabia_600_AD.svg).
a) *Ar-râwî*, the bearer-transmitter of collective memory

During the period of Gâhîlîyyâh, Arabic literary transmission was oral: it relied on memory and not on writing (al-Bustâni, 2014, p.29). This aspect gave birth to a very particular figure called *ar-râwî* (the narrator and conservator of collective memory) (Daif, 200812). This sort of actor had a specific field of action, his own status and a respective role within and outside the tribe. The *ruwât* were divided into three categories: the narrator poets, the narrators of the poets and *ḥujâtâb* and the narrators of the tribe (al-Asad, 1962). The first category contained the highest class of intellectuals, called masters: they were literary producers, and at the same time they narrated both their own poems and those of others. The second category are the *ruwâ t* literary producers. They could be narrators of a specific *ḥâfîb* or poet, or narrators of several authors; they were practically disciples of the masters and knew their production by hear and could then transmit it to the inside and outside of the tribe (ibidem). The third category, on the other hand, was composed of the *ruwât* of the tribe, who were the keepers of its collective memory, as well as being profound connoisseurs of its poems and its *ḥujâb*. From the point of view of mass communication, both poetry and *ḥâjâbah* were the most widespread media: they contained the history, events, glories, conquests and genealogies of the tribes. The *ruwât* of the tribe were, de facto, a polyvalent container, because they preserved the patrimony, poetic-literary and historical heritage of the tribes.

Each tribe had one *šâ'îr* (poet) and one *ḥâfîb* (al-Ḡâbîz, 1998; vol. 1, p. 241). In several cases the *šâ’îr* could be *ḥâfîb* and viceversa, but generally who produced more poems was named *šâ’îr*, and who concentrated his intellectual activity on *ḥâjâbah* was appointed *ḥâfîb*. We consider it important that the *ḥâfîb* often also held other positions: the tribe leader or the prince, the judge or the military leader (al-Bustâni, 2014, p.29), but rarely the poet. This fact alludes to the use of the *ḥâjâbah* by these categories of social actors to transmit their ideas and to convince their listeners. The poet and the orator, in fact, were the spokesmen of the tribe, the transmitters of its culture, of its traditions, its social norms and above all of its collective pride and glories. Therefore, this actor was the protagonist of social episodes such as quarrels between tribes, glorifications (al-Asfâhâni, 1905, volume 15, page 51), councils, guides (al-Ḡâbîz, 1998; vol. 1, p. 401), the incitement of the warriors before the battles (al-Qâli, 1926, volume 1, page 92), the invitation to peace and truces (al-Ḡâbîz, 1998, volume 1, page 384). Furthermore, the *ḥâfîb* was the essential protagonist in various social events such as marriages, funerals, the celebration of alliances, the advent of the delegations, the visit to royal families or princes, ceremonies and especially in the ‘aswâq. From another perspective, the very prestige of the tribe depended on them: having an excellent poet and an excellent *ḥâfîb* meant having an authoritative spokesman and an excellent transmitter of the values of the tribe. As Muhammad Kurd Ali wrote (2012): "Sometimes two or three generations passed without the tribe had a good poet and an influential *ḥâfîb*: in this case the tribe lost its position of prestige among the tribes.”

b) The *ḥâfîb* role

In all the aforementioned moments, the success or failure of the tribe depended on the eloquence of the *ḥâfîb*. He had to emphasize and transmit the prestige of his tribe, be convincing through rhetoric and its registers, extalt the *fâhîr* (the deeds of his heroes), remember the *nâfasab* (genealogy), practice the *hiğâ* (swearing against the opponents in war) and perform *ri‘â* (mourning the fallen).

c) The social position of *ḥâfîb*

The literary production focused on the exaltation of the deeds and courage of their heroes (*fâhîr*), and on the generosity of their own tribe. At the same time, it focused also on the denigration of the enemies, for whom the literary genre of the *hiğâ* was used insisting above all on two defects considered by the Arab symbols of meanness: avarice and cowardice. The *šâ’îr* and *ḥâfîb* were considered means of communication to flatter the tribe, but above all to flatter the chiefs. At the same time, they were as feared as they were requested: it was enough actually not to reward well a speaker, or a poet and his tongue could become more dangerous than a sharp sword. As a result, these two actors were well rewarded and enjoyed a very prestigious social position. They were often close friends of the caliphs, governors and tribal chiefs. They were much more important than the warriors themselves (Zaydan, 1902, Volume 3, page 27). Both poetry and *ḥâjâbah* had great influence on the society of the time, like our contemporary media. It is said of many wars and battles arisen from a *ḥâjâbah* or a poem, such as the battles of war named Ḥarb al-Fiğâr (War of the Sacrilege) (580-590 AD).

d) The social ground of the *ḥâjâbah*

The moment of the enunciation of the *ḥâjâbah* was a social moment with precise conventions, oratory and representation rules (al-Ḡâbîz, 1998).

The *ḥâjâbah* had the habit of enunciating their *ḥâjâbah* riding a horse during solemn ceremonies; it was also obligatory to wear a turban and make conventional gestures using a stick. Instead, there were a series of behaviors that discredited the authority of *ḥâfîb*, such as

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4 Plural of *râwî*, the narrators.

5 They were fairs that lasted several days and had different functions; later in this chapter we will dedicate a specific study to them.
shaking, stuttering, showing fatigue and having a trembling voice. It was instead strongly advised not to touch the mustache, the chin or the lower part of the clothes. Among the virtuous behaviors, the appreciated ḥāṭib had a strong tone of voice, a correct pronunciation, a great persuasive capacity, self-control, vitality and ability to fight tiredness (al-Ḡāḥib, 1998). The physical position of ḥāṭib had a symbolic meaning that conveyed the nature of the event: in marriages ḥāṭib enunciated the ḥuṭab sitting, on the contrary, he stood up during the ḥuṭab of the truces, and rode his animal when it came to utter ḥuṭab in exceptional events, such as during aswâq (literary markets) (al-Ḡāḥib, 1998, vol.3, p.6). Moreover, as al-Ḡāḥib wrote, the ḥuṭab of this period did not prepare their ḥuṭab, but they improvised it.

e) The audience

The habit of gathering on certain occasions around a ḥāṭib, to listen to his discourse concerns the social and communicative aspect that the ḥuṭab and ḥāṭib played in Arab civilization in this remote epoch.

f) The skills of ḥāṭib

To be successful, personal preparation and gifts were necessary for the speaker to succeed: a beautiful presence, a loud voice, a good pronunciation, self-control, a fluent speech and a persuasiveness such as to convince anyone of his own reasons, regardless of the subject matter.

g) Considerations on the social position of the poet and of the ḥāṭib

As for the social position of ḥāṭib with respect to the poet, Shawqi Daif wrote that the field of action of ḥāṭib was larger than that of the poet. They shared the same position during the quarrels and glorifications or in the incitements during the battles. However, during special ceremonies, such as the reception of the royals, the ḥāṭib was the undisputed protagonist, as indeed when he welcomed princes or delegations, in marriage ceremonies or engagements, but above all in the pacification ceremonies between tribes in war (Daif, 1943). Nevertheless, the historical-literary narrative has preserved a number of poetic works much more considerable than the number of prose texts, and this is an explanation of why abu al-Abbâs al-Qalaqšandi (756-821) wrote these words in his work Subâh al-Aṣâ (The morning of al-Aṣâ):

“And know that the Arabs were very concerned with prose and poetry and they produced more prose than poetry, but the fact is that more poetry was preserved […] because the ḥāṭib gave its speech to the Kings, to the governors, during the campaigns, to reconcile the tribes or during the marriage ceremonies. At the end of such occasions, only people with a good memory remembered the ḥuṭab, unlike the poetry that was transmitted and preserved (al-Qalaqšandi, 1922, vol.1, pp. 253-254).

h) Al-aswâq al-adabiyyah (the literature markets)

As previously mentioned, different circumstances offered the ideal socio-cultural context for the ḥuṭab, but the al-aswâq al-adabiyyah, literally translated with “literary markets”, was the place where they spread.

As-sûq (the plural is aswâq), in addition to the socio-economic function, had a significant socio-cultural dimension. These were markets or fairs during which merchants exposed their different consumer goods: food, livestock, clothing, etc. Immersed in this context, the poets and ḥuṭab presented their own intellectual production in front of the public. Due to this, it emerges that al-aswâq al-adabiyyah were the most important opportunities to reach the general public and constituted an unparalleled fly-wheel. The audience in places was not composed, therefore, only by the merchants and their clients, but also by the elite and the intellectuals of the society of those times, or by the tribal chiefs, the sages, the poets, the ḥakawâṭ (storytellers), ḥuṭab, the rich etc. Consequently, the success of a ḥāṭib depended on the outcome of his performance in this space, which we can consider as a ‘theater of competitions’ for the ḥuṭab.

i) Sûq ‘Ukâz

The most famous literary market in the period of Ġâhilliyyah was without doubt the Sûq ‘Ukâz. It was an annual event that lasted twenty days and that the Arabs organized in the south of Mecca, at the beginning of the month Du-al-Qi’dah, the eleventh month of the Arabic calendar (lunar calendar, which was adopted at the arrival of Islam and became the Islamic calendar). During Sûq ‘Ukâz, consumer goods such as honey, wine, clothing, dates and animals were traded. It was also an opportunity to find a bride or a groom, but it was above all an opportunity for poets and ḥuṭab to spread their literary productions (ar-Rashid, 1977) in front of the best poets and ḥuṭab of the time. Below is reported what it says al-Ḥûf about the importance of this sūq:

“The poet sang his poetry from the confines of the world and no one noticed it or gave it importance until it was enunciated to the experts of the Quraiš, in the sūq of Mecca. If they liked them, he would have been cited and sung anywhere from then on and would have been written and attached on the walls of the ka‘bah becoming a source of pride and honor for the poet.

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6 The literal translation is ‘the market’, but as we can read in the paragraph it is rather a fair during which various commercial, social and literary activities were organized.

7 It is an ancient building that is located inside the Masjid al-Harâm Sacred Mosque, in the center of Mecca, in Saudi Arabia, and which is the most sacred place in Islam.
and his tribe. And if they had not liked it, he would have been forgotten "(al-Ṭūfî, 19522, p. 129).

This attitude was not reserved only for poets, but also for ḥūrabā’.

The Quraĩṣ, actually, developed a well-determined strategy to maintain supremacy over the Arab tribes, maintaining the monopoly of the religious management of Mecca on the one hand and sponsoring al-‘aswâq al-‘adābiyyah (literary markets) on the other (al-Wardi, 2013). Thanks to the ḥūbah and poetry, this event boosted the diffusion of the eloquence of the Quraĩṣ and the socio-cultural contamination between the different tribes (al-Afghani, 19742).

As already mentioned, this sūq lasted twenty days, after which the Arabs moved to another location called Sūq al-Miḡânnah, where they spent another ten days. Then they moved towards Sūq Ḍū-al-Mağâz, where they spent eight days, and soon after the period of ḥajj (the pilgrimage) began.

j) The most famous ḥūrabā’ of Ġâhîlîyyah

ShawqiDaif (200812) lists the excellent names of the speakers of the Ġâhîlîyyah, Below some:
- QurṣīnSa’īdah al-lyâdî;
- QaisibnḤāriḡahibnSanânah;
- ‘UtbahibnRâbî‘ah;
- Suhailibn ‘amr al-A’lam;
- Nufailibnu ‘abdi al-’Uzzah;
- abū ‘Amrāra-Ṭā‘ī;
- HānîibnuQubaisah;
- Sa‘dībnuar-Râbî‘.

k) Development factors of the ḥūbah

The ḥūbah developed thanks to the following factors: freedom of expression, contexts of conflict and truce, places of confrontation such as literary markets and social events like as weddings and funerals.

l) Types of ḥūbah in the Ġâhîlîyyah

We can say that the ḥūbah of Ġâhîlîyyah was a practice much more widespread than poetry and that it was used in well-defined social circumstances; the scholars established different types of ḥuğab (al-Qalaqšandi, 1922): ḥuğab al-wafadât (orations of ceremonies), ḥuğab al-ḥarbîyyah (speeches of war), ḥuğab iṣâbār dâl al-bayn (discourse of reconciliation) and other types, like the ḥuğabs of funerals and marriages. The literary markets were an annual occasion to expose their production to the criticism of the experts, and the influence of the ḥājiḥabah was evident to the point that it triggered wars and allowed reconciliations. All this leads us to think that the ḥājiḥabah was a widespread social practice and that its producers were influential people on the one hand, and they enjoyed great respect on the other.

m) The turn of ḥuğab in the Ġâhîlîyyah

The available literary heritage teaches that in the sixth century after Christ, more precisely in the period close to the birth of Islam, a great social change emerged in the Arabian Peninsula (Said, 2012). Several tribes began to move from nomadism to a sedentary lifestyle. In this way many populations of Yemen moved north, particularly to the actual Iraq and aṣ-Ṣam (the Levant: Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and Palestine). These Arab tribes settled on the borders with the Byzantine and Persian empires, with which they sometimes established loyalties or distrust. This transformation had a relapse on society providing an incentive for the formation of a system of individuals, instead of a tribal and patriarchal society (Abdesselem, 1977). In the ancient period of Ġâhîlîyyah, in the fourth and fifth centuries, collective values, such as pride, were reflected in the culture of patriarchal society; however, in the second half of the sixth century, the society began to address issues related to the importance of the individual in social life and its role as a citizen (ibidem). These social dynamics were influenced the literary production of that time, especially the ḥaṭâbah (Said, 2004). We have elements to suppose that at the end of the sixth century AD, a type of ḥuğab was born. It was different from the one diffused in the Arab society of the fourth and fifth centuries, and it will prepare the ground for the ḥuğab of the era of Islam. To deepen this concept, we will examine a model of ḥaṭīb represented by Qurṣ ibn Sa‘īdah al-lyâdî (about 500-600 AD), that was ḥaṭīb of the lyâd tribe (Said, 2012). Qurṣ was a poet and a ḥaṭīb with admirable eloquence, but he is considered by all the classics9 of Arabic literature, one of the most illustrious ḥuğab of Ġâhîlîyyah, since he produced more ḥuğab than poems. The most significant datum of his khatibitc production is the total lack of any indicator of his tribal belonging, lyad: this new practice consecrates him as a pioneer in breaking the custom of the ḥuğab. His tribal membership was only part of his name and a fact for tribal genealogy experts. This behavior was a sign of a new, gradual direction of belonging to wider circle not mentioned in classical literature which Mohammed Said (2004) called “social integration”. One could therefore assert that the sixth century has seen a socio-cultural wind of change, which we will call “culture of change”. The ḥuğab of Qurṣ indeed shows that a new culture was born, different from that of the traditional tribe. Qurṣ did not stop announcing a political-social project that would allow people to live as individuals and not as singles belonging to a tribe. The pathos of his oratory aimed to

8 The pilgrimage was a pre-Islamic religious practice that was confirmed by Islam with variations in rituals.

empower the individual, beyond his tribal belonging, and to remind him of his end, death, using different forms of rhetoric. His statements were full of metaphors related to the end, the departure, the afterlife where the ancestors were. Furthermore, the new rhetoric in Quss production aimed the objective of drawing the attention of the listeners to the natural phenomena that surrounded them.

These data place us in front of a new type of ḥuṭbah that shows very specific characteristics. Firstly, death was no longer the symbol of courage and loyalty to the tribe or symbol of the sacrifice for the pride of the group to which he belongs, but Quss recalled death in its spiritual dimension. To emphasize this concept, he referred to past generations, the passing of time, to the fact that those who die do not return. All these references were new to the Arab culture of that time and were not present in the ḥuṭbah of earlier times. Secondly, he used the elements of nature, to emphasize the splendor of its phenomena: the sky, the stars, the moon, the sun, the rain, the light, the darkness, the animals, etc., their beauty, their greatness, their splendor; all this was part of his language in order to convince the participants. The same communication strategy was adopted by one of his contemporaries called al-Ma’mûr al-Ḥârî (Safwat, s.d.). Finally, Quss ḥuṭbah contained new rules of social justice beyond tribal membership, without forgetting that he was also a judge to whom different tribes referred (Ibn Ḥâlib, 2009). This invitation to social justice out of the context of the tribe was a new fact in the Arab political culture of the time. From another perspective, the religious dimension in Quss literary production acquired a new element: the appearance of monotheism in the khatabic discourse, a simple monotheism. In this perspective we cannot but focus on the presence of monotheistic religions in the pre-Islamic Arabian Peninsula. Many scholars (Beaucamp & Robin, 1999-2000; Fisher, 2011; and others) agree on the presence of Christianity in the following territories: in the archipelago of Bahrain, in Palestine, in Syria, in Mesopotamia, in southern Arabia, especially in Najran, and in Hegiaz, while the presence of Judaism was more significant in Yaqrib (later Medina). It is interesting to note that Christians and Jews usually appeared in Mecca as individuals, so it seems that a Christian or Jewish community in Mecca has never existed. However, Jews in pre-Islamic Arabia were long considered as a minority group, because of their distinct Jewish habits and customs with respect to local Arab culture. Through close contacts with the Jews some Arabs became familiar with Jewish religious customs, ideas, ethical concepts and homiletic tradition, and some Hebrew and Aramaic terms were learned by those Arabs (Wang, 2016). As a result, some scholars consider our ḥāṭib Quss a Christian religious (Cheikho, 1888). Other scholars, however, consider him a ḥanâfî, a traditional monotheist (al-Mas‘ûdî, 2012), given the lack of rhetoric and Christian indicators in his ḥuṭbah on one side, and given the spread of Hanafism among many Arabs of the time on the other.

On the other hand, Quss was a traveler ḥâṭib: his travels included Šâm, ‘Ukâz (suburb of Mecca) and Najran (southern Arabia). Therefore, his continuous movement was a habit that allowed him to meet different tribes and populations and visit different places, but above all to participate in literary markets. If we add this to the lack of feeling of belonging to one’s own tribe, it becomes legitimate to raise questions about the social status of Quss: was he a religious, a rebel, or an intellectual who preached a change? Or was he all these things together? Surely it was not the ideal type of ḥâṭib of the tribe in the traditional sense of the Ġâhilîyyah but became the ḥâṭib of a cause.

In our opinion, this type of ḥâṭib did not belong to any specific religious circle: his ḥuṭbah emphasize many aspects of monotheism, such as death and life in the afterlife, but at the same time they transmit unanswered questions that allude to a state of mind in constant search for an exhaustive answer. For the first time the ḥuṭbah was used to get the crowd reflect on death through a spiritual approach, to look at nature through meditation, to face the cycles of human life, to think of a life of different dimension, without giving directives or rules though. The news brought by ḥuṭbah also concerned the discursive practice. It was Quss who used for the first time in Arab history a stick in his oratory performances, in order to extend the gestures that accompanied the enunciation. Another primacy of Quss was the formulation of the famous expression ‘amnâ ba’d, literally "after all" (al-’Askari, 1987) which will become a rhetoric of all ḥuṭbah until today. All these features were not exclusive of Quss. On the contrary, this model has become an oratory style of many ḥuṭabā’ of the last decades of the sixth century, especially those coming from the Yemeni tribes who emigrated to the north, i.e Waki ibn Salâmah, Ri‘ab ibn al-Barâ Ašanni and Baḥîrâ Rahib. These data allow us to say that the ḥuṭbah had an impressive effect that allowed it to broaden its argumentative boundaries and its socio-cultural and political functions. These expansions were connected to a new vision of the individual’s position within the group and his responsibilities towards himself. This new vision was a point of contact among these populations, the Byzantines and the Persians in the Šâm, in Iraq. Quss and his fellows were interpreters of this transformation and were mediators who belonged to a multi-culture. This is not a religious discourse framed within a system of beliefs, but rather the picture of the “messianic discourse” similar to that born in the Middle East before the arrival of Christianity, as described by Albert Soued (2000). We can consider these ḥuṭabā’ as intellectuals who, concerned themselves with the interests of society, its culture and the reproduction of its knowledge. At the same time, they represented the
projection of the sociocultural needs of their society: both they and the poets turned their journeys and the spread of the word into tools to transmit a new culture and they played the role of promoters of change.

Quss lived a very long life and in spite of his advanced age, he continued to move from one side of the Arab world to another. Arabic literature (ibn Kašīr, 2010; vol. 2, al-Ǧâhîzī, 1998) reports an episode of great importance in which a young Mecca citizen (he must have been between 10 and 20 years)\(^\text{10}\) describes Quss riding his camel Awrak while inflames the crowd with his ḥuṣbah in the annual literary market of ‘Ukâd on the outskirts of Mecca. In 610 AD this boy will become Muhammad, the prophet of Islam. At this point, the ḥuṣbah already had a form, a rhetoric and rules and will be handed down in this way during the period of Islam.

n) Consideration

So far, we can say that the ḥuṣbah of Ǧâhilîyyah went through two precise periods. The first lasted for a hundred and fifty years before the arrival of Islam until fifty years later (from 400 to 550 AD approximately). In this period the ḥuṣbah had characteristics related to the glory of one’s tribe and one’s own people. In the second period (from about 550 to 610), however, the ḥuṣbah entered a new dimension related to the person as an individual. This transformation occurred in those places where several Arab tribes settled down, and between groups of people who abandoned nomadism and settled permanently. This new life allowed them to have very intense relations with local people who belonged to different cultures and religions, especially Judaism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism (Hoyland, 1997).

\(^{10}\) In one ḥadîth reported by ibn Kašīr, Muhammad said:

"Where the yad delegation arrived in Medina, the prophet asked them, What did Quss do? And they said he was dead. Then he said: I saw him one day in the market of ‘Ukâd on a red camel, he said a speech, extraordinary and precise, and I did not remember it. Then a member of the delegation said, I remember him. The prophet was so pleased to hear the reply of that ḥuṣbah: ‘O people, come and know that who dies disappears, and what is to come will come, the night passes, the sky is illuminated, the sea is immense, the stars bright, the balanced mountains, the running rivers. Do you know that a story is in heaven, and experiences are on earth, because those who leave do not return? Are they pleased about the afterlife or have they been ignored and sleepy? I swear an oath that will be respected’."
considered a sect by the Arabs of that time (Peace, 2004).

b) The sacralization of ḥuşbah

In 622 AD, before the hostility of the Quraši tribes, Muḥammad organized the emigration to the city- oasis of Yqrib, later named Medina, a decision also due to the fact that the tribes of the oasis had proposed him to assume the super partes role of hakam (referee) (Lo Jacono, 2011). There is no doubt about the importance of this event in the story of the Prophet Muhammad and his first disciples, an importance manifested in considering it a significant turning point: so, 622 AD becomes the first year of the Islamic religious calendar. Therefore, in Yqrib the fracture with the social environment of origin - Mecca - took on a social and religious significance in different senses. One of these is the conception of the city-community of believers ('ummah) in the vision of a universal ethic against the principle of particularistic ethnic identification. In this new environment the prophet rewrote the rules of "social play" starting from an ethnic-religious order founded on the extra-ordinary (the divine law) and guaranteed by the charismatic gift the prophet received (Pace, 2004). Unfortunately, we do not have certain information on how to insert the Friday rite into the new Islamic socio-religious order. In a narration by Murtaḍāāţ-Zubāīdī in his encyclopedia Tāg al-ārūs (The Crown of the Bride), he states that the Arabs of Quraši, in the pre-Islamic period, honored the day of Friday, which was called Yawm al-'Urûbah (The day of Arabism), and during that day they gathered around Ka'b ibn Lu'ayy to hear one of his ḥuşbah, he is told to have changed the name of this day to ḍum'ah (Friday) (al-Âlîsî al-Âbaqâchī, sd: vol. 1, p. 273). Another narration, instead, reports that the first Muslims of Yqrib, even before emigration, changed the name of this day. Observing that the Jews celebrated the Sabbath and the Christians on Sunday, they asked their leader, Sa'dībnuZurârah, to make a speech after the Friday prayer.

At this point, it is worthwhile to analyze the transformation of the ḥuşbah from social practice to the sacred rite of the Islamic religion in the light of the interpretative tools of the social sciences. The new rules related to worship can be summarized in this order:

- The recommendation to emphasize the importance of participation in the rite of ṣalāt al-ġum'ah in Sacred Scripture12 as a symbol of belonging to the 'ummah: a worshipper who abstains for three Fridays without a legitimate reason is a munāfīq (hypocrite).

- Insert the ritual in a relevant space-time frame: the noon prayer and the Friday prayer in a sacred place, that is in the mosque.

- Define the normative framework of this rite and above all the value of silence - which is a duty during the ḥuşbah - and of the purification in order to participate (al-gusl);

There are other norms of minor importance and object of discord among the religious-schools. Friday worship in practice is one of the socio-religious consequences of ḥiğrah (emigration) from Mecca to Medina.

Despite the enormous religious importance of this cult, the historical-religious narrative has not transmitted to us the ḥuşbah al-ġum'ah of the prophet, which should be more than five hundred pieces. Within the large Muslim family there is in fact a very heated debate on why these homiletic productions have not been preserved, as on the contrary tens of thousands of kadīt (sayings of prophet) the have been preserved. We have generalized ḥuşabs such as the famous "ḥuşbah of the farewell pilgrimage", called ḥuşbah ḥaṣṣat al-wadā', but not those of Friday. This fact requires a deepening, but we do not consider this the place to do it. We limit ourselves to reporting a narrative considered doubtful (kadīt marū' ) which tells that in the first ḥuşbah on Friday, Muḥammad said (al-Baiḥaqī, 2010; ṣadīq nº 809):

"Oh, people, give priority to benevolence and know that death does not warm and separate the person from his flock remains without the shepherd, to whom the Lord will ask, without the need for interpreter: 'Have we not sent you a messenger who has transmitted our word and have we not given you our gifts? What have you prepared for this day [of the judgment, n.d.r.]? '. The person will look to the right and left and will not find anything ... ".

The first observation we can make is that the speech is addressed to all people and no longer addressed the tribes. This alludes to the new sense of the Islamic message, which becomes a universal message. Another important fact is the reconfirmation and strengthening of the conception, already internalized earlier in Mecca, which concerns the monotheistic creed and the trust in the prophecy of Muḥammad.

c) The ḥeṣrābāb after the death of Muḥammad

The Umayyad dynasty seized power after a long conflict between ʿĀli ibn Ṭâlib, son-in-law of the prophet, and Muʿawiyah ibn ṣaḥâb (also called Banī ʿUmayyah). The latter, after the assassination of ʿĀli, proclaimed himself caliph in 661 AD and moved the capital to Damascus. Despite the hegemony of the Umayyad dynasty, there were territories controlled by
sympathizers of rival groups. The antagonistic groups, on the other hand, were very active with multiple instruments. One of these was the ḥunabah. Both the Shiites and the Ḥawārīg (separatists) and the Umayyads engaged their best ḥunabah to persuade the populations of their right to govern and to respond to the opponents. This fact gave a very strong push to perfecting the eloquence of the ḥunabah. Moreover, the enunciation of the homiletic product was performed by the caliph himself in the mosque of the capital or by his governors in other cities; consequently, we assume that the population was very interested in participating not only in professing the cult, but also because it was the only means of weekly communication between the caliph and the population.

Returning to the ritual of worship on Friday, it is very important to know that the arrival of Islam in the new territories - Syria, Iraq and Egypt - brought with it the cult of Friday with the ritual frame that had emerged in the Arabian peninsula: above all the continuous placement of the ritual in a habitual space-time frame, the use of the minbar, the use of a stick by the preacher, the beginning of the sermon with precise religious formulas, dressing in a certain way, etc. The respect for these consensual norms provided and preserved the model of worship, but the ḥunabah as a religious product went through transformations in its social dimensions. These transformations become evident when we analyze the homiletical production of the ḥunabah of the three antagonistic groups.

d) The Umayyad ḥunabah: the genesis of the ḥunabat al-ḡumu’ah of the State

The first difficulty faced by the researcher in this matter is the abundance of ḥunabah enunciated above the minbar, but the classics of Arabic literature that transmitted them did not specify if they were ḥunabat al-ḡumu’ah (Friday sermon) or ḥunab related to other occasions. Instead, the historian of Arabic literature Shawqi Daif, addressing this problem wrote: “The Umayyad ḥunabah announced sermons on Friday and in the two annual festivals, such as the ḥunab of Ziyâd and al-Ḥaggāṭ (governor and military leader. We also note that most of the caliphs were ḥunabah” (Daif, 1943). Let us now see examples of the Umayyad ḥunabah, announced by the minbar, to realize how these political actors transformed a religious practice into a means of communication to convince the population to submit to the caliph, and how they religiously legitimized their power.

Ziyâd ibn Abîth, governor of Basra on behalf of the caliph Mu’awiyyâh ibn abûSufiân, enunciated a ḥunabah from above the minbar, beginning his sermon without ḥamdâlah (religious formula introducing ḥunabah), so critics called it al-ḥunabah al-baṭrâ’), literally “the maimed ḥunabah”. This critique indicates that al-ḥamdalâh was considered an essential part of ḥunabah.

The context of this prayer was characterized by strong rebellions in Iraq, both by the Shiites and the Ḥawārīg. The governor treated his homiletic speech very well and began to describe the behavior of the citizens of Basra, which was a behavior “deviating from what Allah recommended”:

“People, we have become your governors and we govern you with the power Allah has given us”. To govern the citizens, for Ziyâd, is not an administrate or political fact but rather religious in the name of Allah. Therefore, it is as if he had said: "Whoever obeys us in truth obeys God and deserves heaven, and whoever disobeys us has disobeyed Allah and deserves the punishment of hell”. Consequently, the ‘citizens-faithful’ had a moral obligation to respect this pact, imposed demagogically.

It was the first time in the history of Islam, in our opinion, that the ruler proclaimed himself a delegate of Allah and superimposed the religious sphere on the political sphere openly. This message was transmitted to the faithful in the mosque by the minbar. The ḥunabah became the instrument of the transmission of official Islam, the Islam of the state.

Shawqi Daif in his encyclopedia “The art and its tendencies in Arab prose” (1943) wrote that this ḥunabah of Ziyâd alludes to the cultural contamination that the
Another example of Umayyad ḥ̣urubah is represented by the ḥ̣urbah of al-Ḥaġāġ,13 pronounced from the minbar of the mosque of Kufa during the caliphate of 'abd al-Mâlik. His famous ḥ̣urubah was enunciated on his first entry as governor in the city of Kufa. It is a settlement ḥ̣urbah, in which it presents and clarifies his politics to the citizens. In this period Kufa was the head quarters of supporters of the murdered caliph 'Ali ibn Ṭâlîb (later to be called Shiites), but the most respected charismatic figure was Hussain, 'Ali ibn Ṭâlîb son, who was killed by the Umayyads in a place called Karbalâ (1), later became a sacred place for the Shiites. The arrival of al-Ḥaģāģ, therefore, took place in a period of conflict and rebellion of the Shiites against the Umayyads. The new governor, as soon as he reached the gates of Kufa with his thousands of warriors, he ordered them to camp and decided to enter the city alone. But before leaving, he devised a very specific strategy to realize his goal: to scare the citizens of Kufa and convince them to submit to the Umayyads. When al-Ḥaģāģ went to play his part in the mosque of Kufa, implicitly asked the citizens to take seriously what they would see happen before their eyes and how they would hear with their ears (Goffman, 1997). First, al-Ḥaģāģ decided to wear Bedouin clothes, to put a turban covering his face, and to ride his bareback camel (Ibn Qutaibah, 1925, Vol. 2, p. 224; al-Gâhîzî, 1998, Volume 2, page 308). In addition to the the, the language he used in his ḥ̣urbah was also typical of the Bedouin: he cited many poems composed by Bedouins and unknown to the citizens of Kufa (Daïf, 1943). Also the way of speaking and gestures during the performance were consistent with the role played: "When he climbed on the minbar he talked softly, almost you could not hear his voice, then he raised his voice and drew his hand from the long sleeve and pointed with his hand and shouting out loud, until he frightened those who sat at the back of the mosque" (Mubarrad, 1999, p. 173). All the elements, of the "representation", using a Goffmanian word, were coherent, from the "facade" to the "setting" up to the "manner" (Goffman, 1997), to perfect his discursive production in order to frighten and convince his public. Al-Gâhîzî reports the commentary of a great mystic, Mâlik ibn Dinâr, a contemporary of al-Ḥaģâģ, who said: "I was hearing al-Ḥaģâģ preach and tell what Iraqis suffered and it occurred to me that he was the righteous and they were the transgressors, and this is due to his eloquence and his marvelous rhetoric" (al-Gâhîzî, 1998, Volume 1, page 394).

All these background details provided the scenario and improvisation desired by the new governor during his settlement to intrigue citizens, but above all to scare them. The inhabitants of Kufa, in fact, were civil persons and enjoyed great wealth; the literary narrative informs us that every inhabitant traveled around the city with many servants and relatives, in some cases up to thirty and more. The presence of an unknown Bedouin was a frightful and unusual fact. With this 'equipment' al-Ḥaģâģ entered the mosque and climbed the minbar. Then he remained, for a long time, sitting without saying anything in front of the curiosity and the fear of the faithful who were entering. The scenario did not comply with the rules: the lack of an indicator of the charge of this actor, the Bedouin clothing, the turban covering the face, and then the long silence, were unusual practices. One of the faithful tried to throw stones at him, but he was stopped by his relatives, as al-Gharavi says (2008; vol.6) in his encyclopedia. Only once the mosque was crowded, he stood up and said:

"I am the son of transparency and the climber of the mountains, once I remove the turban you will recognize me".

Once again, the new governor did not respect the norms: he began his elaboration without muqaddimah and without any religious expression. He also used two metaphors in the same sentence: son of transparency, in the sense that he was not afraid to identify himself or even to remain hidden; climber of the mountains, alluding to a strong and courageous person who, besides possessing great physical strength, also possesses great courage. The impression he conveyed, in the mosque from the top of the minbar, was that of a man of transparency, strength and courage. Surely not of a man of faith or religion.

In his speech, he immediately went straight to the point using again a series of metaphors to help the faithful's understanding and above all to specify the desired senses:

إلى والله لأرى أبصاراً طاهرة وأعناقًا مطابلة، ورؤوساً قد أبتعت وحان فطاتها! ولي صاحبنا

"I swear to you that I am seeing envious looks, long necks, mature heads ready to be collected, and I will be the collector".

Let's analyze the three al-Ḥaģâģ metaphors. The envious eyes could have two meanings: the first could be the curiosity of the participants in seeing the

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13 al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf (661 - 714) was an Arab general, the most important general at the service of the first caliphs of the first Umayyad period, for whom he led various war operations against 'Abd Allah ibn al-Zubayr and eventually defeated him. Later he was sent by the Umayyads to pacify Iraq, of which he was governor for twenty years. A skilled strategist and administrator at the same time, he managed to expand the territory of Islam in India and Central Asia, but he gained a bad reputation due to his cruelty and numerous brutalities he was capable of. [Wikipedia, entry Al-Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Hajjaj_ibn_Yusuf, consulted on December 8th, 2017 at 4:50 pm].
The religious practice in which the young person is submerged by the blood of his sacrifice. They are tired of their long vigils. Allah reads, whenever one of them reads a verse describing heaven cries with a strong desire to enter, and whenever one of them reads a verse describing hell cries as if he hears the screams of punishment, this is their state both day and night ... until they see the arrows thrown, the spears flying and the swords out of the scabbard. At that moment the battalion goes to the promise of Allah and the young man performs his duty until his legs turn around the neck of his horse, until the blood paints his face and the wild beasts do not eat his body, and until the birds rest on his remains: the same message.

As we can see, the ُعَبَّارة emphasizes the religious dimension in a transgressive way. The model of the young ُغَلَامُ ُحَمَّار يُعْبَر also well defined in this construction as a warrior monk, and whoever wants to be on the right path must follow this pattern. It is an invitation to a series of religious actions of great spirituality on the one hand and emphasizes the sacrifice on the other. The ُعَبَّار describes the young kharigite who goes towards Allah that they are young sages as the elders, their gaze is far from evil, they do not engage in futile things, their bodies are consumed by a constant religious practice, they are tired of their long vigils. Allah looks at them at night as they bend over the Quranic readings, whenever one of them reads a verse describing heaven cries with a strong desire to enter, and whenever one of them reads a verse describing hell cries as if he hears the screams of punishment, this is their state both day and night ... until they see the arrows thrown, the spears flying and the swords out of the scabbard. At that moment the battalion goes to the promise of Allah and the young man performs his duty until his legs turn around the neck of his horse, until the blood paints his face and the wild beasts do not eat his body, and until the birds rest on his remains: the same message.

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In this period al-Haggâ was governor in Kufa on behalf of the Umayyad caliph and his archenemy was Šabîb ibn Zayd, head of the Khawarigites, who entered the city with a thousand warriors together with his wife Gazâlîh, who headed two hundred women warriors. The Khawarigite warriors entered the mosque of Kufa and Šabîb brought up Gazâlîh on the minbar, from which he enunciated a ħûbah (Kahhala 19845, pp. 7-8). The Khawarigite women were warriors, intellectuals and activists. In other words, they shared all the areas with men. The ascent of this woman warrior on the minbar of the mosque of Kufa was a great affront and at the same time a message of superiority of the kawarigites: one of their women dared to preach from the minbar defying al-Haggâ in his city, in his mosque, and above all she enunciated a ħûbah from the top of his minbar.

This episode leads us to reflect on the existence of women ħûbâ in the history of Islamic civilization. The information on this topic is scattered in the classics and represents an object of research of enormous importance along with another theme: women caliph in the history of the Islamic world.

j) The Shiite ħûbah in the Umayyad period

The classics of Arabic literature do not give much importance to the Shiite literary production of the Umayyad period, and consequently the khatibitic productions of this group are rare. Another reason for this scarcity could be the fierce repression they suffered by the Umayyads and the effects on their activities, which became increasingly secret and far from public space.17

We limit our research, therefore, to the description of the ħûbah of Hussain ibn 'Ali, nephew of the prophet. It is a ħûbah that Hussain announced on the day of his assassination and that became a model of ħûbah for the Shiite ħûbâ. The ħûbah begins with a mugaâddimah in which the ħîfût praises Allah and prays for Muḥammad citing verses from the Qur'an and hadîth of the prophet. He then asks his opponents to listen to him and let him speak. Then he uses a series of blood descendants from the prophet: "descendant of the prophet", "nephew of the prophet", "nephew of Hamza" (uncle of Muḥammad) and "son of the prophet's daughter". The goal of using these indicators was to emphasize two factors: the first was to convince them of the immense importance of being the prophet's nephew, so he did not hesitate to mention a hadîth which tells about himself and his brother Hussain who are the best among the young people of paradise;18 the second concerned Hussain's right to rule on the basis of the request of Kufa citizens, who had given him their written bay'ah (solemn act of recognition of the status of Caliph).

The other Shiite Ĥababâ, on the other hand, used their explanations to spread their criticism to the "deviated" works from the Islam of the Umayyads, who subtracted ħîlâfât (the caliphate) from the hands of its legitimate owner 'Ali ibn Ṭâlib, heir of the prophet and bearer of the sacred guided message, and of the hidden imams (at-Ţabarî, 1967, vol 2, p.1961).

g) Considerations on ħûbah in the Umayyad period

To conclude our brief analysis of the ħûbah of this time frame we can list its most important transformations as follows:

- The ħûbah is done in the name of the caliph;
- The ħûbah contains the pleading of the caliph and the curse of the rivals;
- The ħûbah becomes a means of spreading official Islam;
- The ħûbah becomes a means of communication between the caliph and the people;
- The ħûbah is a tool to spread the reasons for the rebellions;
- Practice the ħûbah in a mosque has the symbolic meaning of local political authority.

On the other hand, the homiletical production of the three groups is characterized by distinct and well-evident rhetorical forms:

- Umayyad ħûbah: Obeying the caliph is part of obedience to Allah; the rebellion against the caliph is a disobedience to Allah; the Umayyads govern thanks to the power that Allah has given them; the communication strategy is based on political pragmatism with the use of the stick and the carrot;
- Shiite ħûbah: The ruling is legislimized by the blood lineage of the prophet; the Umayyads have stolen what does not belong to them. The communication strategy is based on belonging to the descendants of the prophet;
- Khawarigite ħûbah: The Umayyads and Shiites have deviated from true Islam, therefore they are apostates and the only ruler is Allah. The communication strategy is based on the emphasis on the 'warrior monk' and on distinct and well-evident rhetoric.

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17 To find ħûtab of the Shiites we had to look in the books of this current. Even Shawqâ'î when he addresses the ħûtab of the Umayyad period in his encyclopedia he cites the names of the Shi'a ħûbâ and the characteristics of their ħûtab but in a few lines and without giving examples as, on the contrary, he does with the ħûtabs of the Hawârizî or the Umayyads;

18 This hadîth is cited in many encyclopaedias of the collection of the sayings of Muḥammad: Sunanât-Tîmîdî n° 3781; Musnad imâm Abînâd 5/391; Šabîb ibn Hibbân 15/143; al-Muğâm al-Ḳabîr Liṭâbârûnî 3/37, and many others. Tîmîdî classifies this saying as sahîh, ie authentic.
h) The school of ḥāfaqah

In the Umayyad period the teaching of ḥāfaqah was born. The most evident example is the activity of Hasan al-Baṣri, who taught various subjects, including ḥāfaqah. One of the teaching methods he developed consisted of asking a disciple to preach on a subject and then asking others to answer him, as he did with Wāsit Ibn ‘Atâa and ‘Amr Ibn ‘Ubayd when he asked them to make a ḥuṣbah to describe the one who performs a bad action (murtakib al-kabīrah) (Daif, 1943). When the disciples showed deficiencies, the teacher showed them the gaps and how to overcome them, as did Šābīb Ibn Šaibah when he said to his students: ‘People wonder about the introductions, but I am surprised at the conclusions, if the ḥāfa addresses an argument that lengthens the sermon he should not progress to the point of confusing listeners’ (al-Gāhīz, 1998, volume 1, page 112). Another teacher, Ḥalīl Ibn Saflān, told his followers: ‘Know that Allah blesses you, eloquence is not the speed of language and the abundance of information, but it is reaching meaning and focusing the demonstration’ (Ibn ‘abī Rabbūh, 1953). As you can see, the masters ḥuṣbaḥ aimed to convey to their students the communication strategies to be clear, concise and above all convincing.

This social practice of the ḥāfaqah, reached an importance that it had never had before during the Umayyad dynasty. This was due to the widespread political-religious conflict throughout the region. The actors of this scene did not rely only on their swords to subjugate, convince and delegitimize the enemies, but relied on the ḥuṣbah and the spread of their ḥuṣbaḥ. This intellectual production arrived where the weapons did not and produced what the sword could not do, to the point that the Arabs used this metaphor to indicate the skill of a speaker: “his tongue is sharper than a sword”.

i) The ḥuṣbah in the Abbasid period (750-1258 AD)

The ḥāfaqah has experienced great success and development in the early part of the Abbasid dynasty, from about 750 to about 940, and then began its decline until the fall of the dynasty in 1258.

The ḥāfaqah was considered the effective weapon, along with the sword, to stabilize the kingdom and convince people of “good rights”, to rule the ‘ummah, as they descended from Muhammad (Ali Mohammad, 2016). The day of the proclamation of the first caliph, abū l-Abbās, called as-Saffāḥ (the Bloodthirsty), 19 he pronounced a discourse that became famous in history because its hardness and oratory art. In fact, the first Abbasid caliphs were famous speakers as well as being brave fighters. The most famous were abū l-Abbās (al-Humaymah, 722 - al-Anbar, 754), abūGafar ‘abdAllāh ibn Muḥammad al-Mansūr (al-Humaymah, 712 approximately - Baghdad, 775) and Hārūn-Rašīd (Al Raay, 766 - Tus, 809). The ḥāfaqah reached its peak in this period, and as Hussein Ali al-Hindouwi wrote: “At the beginning of their dynasty Abbasids like the Umayyads gave a great importance to the ḥāfaqah and put it in the forefront of the defense of their kingdom”. 20 We can summarize the oratory characteristics of the homiletic productions of the first Abbasid caliphs in these points:

- The beginning of the discourse with divine praise, the witness of faith and the greeting to the prophet;
- An invitation to the faithful to fear Allah and to perform pious actions to gain the divine reward and to avoid his punishment;
- The memory that death could strike the faithful at any moment and that we must prepare ourselves for the afterlife;
- Warning people not to take care of the richness of terrestrial life because it does not last
- The warning to people not to listen to the whispers of Satan and the devil that embellish evil and wickedness and delay repentance until death does not surprise the faithful;
- The seduction of the faithful with what awaits them in paradise;
- The imploring to God for the preacher and for the faithful and for the perseverance of his gifts.

These characteristics, in the absence of sociological studies on this subject, could allude to the communication strategies and rhetoric adopted by the Abbasid caliphs to persuade people to respect a code of behavior desired by governors: people should not deal with collecting the wealth, the population had to be convinced of the correctness of the Abbasids and above all no rebellions were triggered. To describe the splendor of the khatabitic art of this period we hear what a great expert of the subject told us:

19 ‘His hardness was shown shortly thereafter. As the last desperate resistances in Egypt of the last Umayyad caliph were bent, the brave Marwān II, the neo-caliph, gathered at Nahr Abī Fuṣrus (the Yarkon River, near the present Jaffa) the members of the large Umayyad family, for a “reconciliation” banquet. The historians say that he instead suppressed the guests while feasting merrily with his faithful friends. Then he sent his emissaries to all the burial places of the dead Umayyad caliphs with the task of unearthing the corpses - with the only one exception of the “pious” ‘Umar Ibn ‘Abd Al-Azīz - to mercilessly insult the remains. Perhaps from all this derives the erroneous translation of his laqab, still frequently rendered as “the Bloodthirsty”, where the term actually means “bloody” but in the sense of the sacrificer who kills with his own hand the victims designated for a sacrifice to Allah , to then dissect the parts and distribute them to the participants to the rite. The fact of being inevitably “bloody” therefore has the precise meaning of “generous”: this is more if we take in to account that all the laqabs of the Abbasid caliphs have a laudatory and positive meaning and never grim or negative (“Wikipedia, entry) Abu l-Abbas al-Saffāḥ”, https: //it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abu_l-Abbas_al-Saffah, consulted on January 14th 2016 at 11:09).

Those who elaborated it [the ĥuṭbāh] and climbed above the minbar, and turned their mill among the population, were mostly the great men of letters, the masters of the word, because they were caliphs, princes, ministers, kings of knowledge, ethics, fiqh [religious jurisprudence], masters of linguistic purity, and eloquence, and in parallel were Arabs of language, rhetoric, goals, trends. And there are no characteristics that can characterize the ĥāṭābah and give it more life and strength than these characteristics of original Arab nobility (al-Khashab, s.d., p.560).

In this period, the Abbasids adopted the strategy of appointing ĥuṭbâb ʿ paid by the caliphate and the preacher of the army: his role was to encourage the soldiers to fight courageously for God’s glory, as the case of ṣalâḥ al-Dîn ʿAbd al-ʿAbbâs at-Ṭâbârî. In practice two types of ĥuṭbâb: saw the light: the ṣalâḥ of the army and the fixed ṣalâḥ of the mosque.

The second part of the Abbasid dynasty saw a slow decline to slowly reach a total stagnation. From 850 AD the influence of non-Arabs began to manifest itself in both the army and government buildings, and so the Persians (the Seljuks) and the Turks became the new rulers in the vast territories of the Abbasid empire. Their influence entered the palace of the Abbasid caliphs and consequently in the management of religion and homiletic production.

ar-Râḏî bi-llâh, last ṣalâḥ chaliph of ẓalât al-ġumû’ah

The first effect of these changes was the withdrawal of the caliph from the ṣalâfâbah in the great mosque. The last caliph who made the ẓalâf al-ġumû’ah was ar-Râḏî bi-llâh (907AD-940AD) but was in fact only an instrument in the hands of his vizirs and his courtiers. His effective power was barely reduced to Baghdad and the surrounding regions. Because of the scarce resources available to him, the caliph fell into the hands of a cruel but skillful and efficient vizir, ibn Râda, for whom the caliph created the title of amîr al-ummarāʾ (commander of the commanders). He de facto held the power, so much that his name was made in ẓalâf al-ġumû’ah, along with that of the caliph (Lo Jacono, 2003, p.259). In this way, the direct relations that the caliph and the governors had with the people were interrupted due to the enunciation of the ẓalâf; this weakened the influence of ẓalâf (al-Hindaoui, 2016). A second significant fact was the appointment of ẓalâb ʿ and non-Arab imams who, in the absence of a profound knowledge of language and knowledge, began to copy ẓalâf of great masters and repeat them every Friday from the minbar. This phenomenon spread for centuries, until the beginning of the nineteenth century (Ali Mohammad, 2016). As a result, the ṣalâfâbah weakened, and so the status and role of ṣalâb. Many of them read their ẓalâfs from written papers, in some cases elaborated by orators. This trend already began with Hârûn-Rašîd, when he asked al-ʿAṣmâʾī to make a ẓalâf al-ġumû’ah for his son al-ʿAmân (al-Hindaoui, 2016), but spread largely after 940 AD. On the other hand, many ẓalâb ʿ no longer struggled to prepare their elaborations, for example the ṣalâf of Bassora Muḥammad ibn Sulaimân al-ʿAbbâsî had a short ẓalâf that repeated every Friday (al-Ǧâhîz, 1998). On the other hand, the ṭâṣawwûf movement (mysticism) found more scope and many mystics introduced a mystical rhetoric in their speech, both in the one addressed to the rulers and in that addressed to the common people. These new figures were designated by the caliphs themselves and had the role of reminding the caliph of his religious and social responsibilities. The narrative of the literary heritage offers mention of many episodes during which these religious actors would have made the caliphs cry with their sermons, as they tried to do the following ẓalâb ʿ: Amr ibn ʿUbâd al-Muṭazîlî, Ṣâhîh ibn ʿabd al-ʿAfâlî and ibn as-Sammâq (ibidem). During the long period of the Abbasid dynasty, from 750 to 1258, the ẓalâf standardizes itself in different forms and styles still used today. These are multifunctional ẓalâfs, pronounced by the paid religious personnel and designated by the governor and enunciated in his honor. The goal of the ruler becomes to project the official Islam of the state through the ẓalâf. From the sociolinguistic point of view the new standard of ẓalâf is influenced by the diatopic variations of the local dialects. In this period a figure is born that today we would call ghost writer: the professionals of the oratory who prepare the ẓalâf on mandate. Today, however, this role is no longer covered by a person, but there are websites that offer a permanent archive to draw on.

Bibliography


21 This fact reminds us of the Greek practice, when ordinary people relied on judicial oratory professionals to prepare their hearings. It is important to add that during the Abbasid dynasty the translation of the works of Greek philosophers came to its peak; because of lack of specific studies we can not know, for the moment, if the figure of the professional speaker who writes the ẓalâf for the imams has been influenced by the Greek civilization.


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