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## DOSSIER THÉMATIQUE 1 LE CORAN EN CONTEXTE(S) OMEYYADE(S)

1 Anne-Sylvie BOISLIVEAU, Mathilde BOUDIER et Éric VALLET  
Le Coran en contexte(s) omeyyade(s) : introduction

22 GUILLAUME DYE  
Quelques questions sur les contextes du Coran

34 Hassan BOUALI  
Enjeux politiques et processus de légitimation autour du Coran dans la seconde moitié du VII<sup>e</sup> siècle

▶ 49 Steven C. JUDD  
Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ b. Yūsuf and the Umayyad Qur'ān in Syrian Historiography

60 Hassan CHAHDI  
La canonisation des variantes de lecture coraniques en question : remarques sur la mémorisation intégrale du Coran et les critères de sélection des *qurrā'*

77 DOSSIER THÉMATIQUE 2  
HISTORIOGRAPHIE DE LA FISCALITÉ ANTIQUE

157 VARIA

## AL-ḤAĠĠĀĠ B. YŪSUF AND THE Umayyad QUR'ĀN IN SYRIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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### ABSTRACT

Al-Ḥaġġāġ b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) is remembered in the historical sources for his role as the tyrannical Umayyad governor of Iraq. However, he also played an important part in 'Abd al-Malik's effort to standardize the Qur'ān, which complicated his historical portrayal. This paper examines how Syrian scholars, beginning with Ibn 'Asākir, confronted al-Ḥaġġāġ's simultaneous villainy and religious significance as part of their efforts to claim the codification of the Qur'ānic text as an Umayyad achievement.

#### KEYWORDS

al-Ḥaġġāġ b. Yūsuf,  
'Abd al-Malik,  
Ibn Mas'ūd,  
Ibn 'Asākir,  
Qur'ān,  
history of the Qur'ān,  
Syrian historiography.

### AL-ḤAĠĠĀĠ B. YŪSUF ET LE CORAN OMEYYADE DANS L'HISTORIOGRAPHIE SYRIENNE

Les sources historiques évoquent al-Ḥaġġāġ b. Yūsuf (m. 95/714) en tant que tyrannique gouverneur omeyyade de l'Iraq. Cependant, il a également joué un rôle important dans les efforts de 'Abd al-Malik pour standardiser le Coran, ce qui complique la manière dont est brossé son portrait historique. Cet article examine comment les savants syriens, à commencer par Ibn 'Asākir, firent face tant à la mauvaise réputation d'al-Ḥaġġāġ qu'à son importance sur le plan religieux, dans le cadre de leurs efforts pour revendiquer la codification du texte coranique comme réalisation omeyyade.

#### MOTS-CLÉS

al-Ḥaġġāġ b. Yūsuf,  
'Abd al-Malik,  
Ibn Mas'ūd,  
Ibn 'Asākir,  
Coran,  
histoire du Coran,  
historiographie syrienne.

Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ b. Yūsuf (d. 95/714) is a crucial and complicated figure in the history of early Islam. He was instrumental in consolidating ‘Abd al-Malik’s control over both the Ḥiǧāz and Iraq and in neutralizing the threat posed by assorted Ḥārīǧite rebels. He also played a significant role in articulating and enforcing the caliph’s religious vision, possibly even in standardizing the Qur’ān itself. Simultaneously, however, he is also remembered as a brutal, ruthless tyrant who went so far as to abuse esteemed Companions of the Prophet. His conduct was so egregious that some of the pious debated whether or not al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ was spending eternity in Hell.

My own interest in al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ is a byproduct of my earlier research on his successor and protégé, Ḥālid al-Qasrī (d. 126/743). Unlike al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, Ḥālid has been the subject of significant historiographical discussion. In particular, Stefan Leder argues that the standard tale of Ḥālid’s downfall, preserved principally by al-Ṭabarī but also by others, contains dramatic elements akin to a “novel” [1]. In my work on the Syrian historian Ibn ‘Asākir (d. 571/1176), I found an alternative version of Ḥālid’s story. His demise was still a morality tale, but the themes and details were different and painted Ḥālid in a better light. Significantly, Ibn ‘Asākir’s version of Ḥālid’s tragedy was adopted by later Syrian historians as well, suggesting an alternative, Syria-centric historiography [2]. At the time, I took a cursory look at how Ibn ‘Asākir treated other Umayyad governors of the East, namely al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ and Ziyād b. Abīhi (d. 53/673), to sense whether his biography of Ḥālid was an anomaly or part of a larger revisionist project to rehabilitate Umayyad administrators of Iraq.

I was intrigued to find evidence of a pattern of interpretation that might suggest an alternative Syrian memory of these pivotal figures. In general, Syrian sources treated these Umayyad loyalists less harshly than did the Iraqi-authored chronicles. They placed less emphasis on military aspects of the eastward expansion and on the legendary cruelty with which these governors dispensed their duties. The Syrian sources, sometimes subtly sometimes not, tried to reclaim these leaders as Syrian elites and emphasized

their connections to Damascus and their personal qualities, especially their appreciation for poetry and *adab* in general, as well as their acts of generosity.

Because of the combination of his notorious image and his role in preserving the Qur’ān, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ presented a special challenge for later historians. The standard historical chronicles, written largely in ‘Abbāsīd Iraq and heavily influenced by al-Ṭabarī, tend to emphasize al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s stringent demands for loyalty and his vindictive treatment of those who defied or even questioned him. This is not surprising, given that Umayyad viceroys in Iraq are typically treated unkindly in ‘Abbāsīd historiography. What makes al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s case distinct from other Umayyad governors is the role he played in ‘Abd al-Malik’s religious reforms, including his efforts to standardize readings of the Qur’ān. It is not my intention to explore in depth the nature of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s involvement in establishing, or at least preserving, the Qur’ān codex. Accounts of his contributions range from adding *i’rāb* to reordering verses and suras to altering the consonantal structure (*rasm*) of the text itself [3]. Most accounts of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s role at the very least indicate an effort to purge non-‘Uṭmānic readings and some suggest an Umayyad bias behind this effort. For present purposes, clarifying exactly what al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ did to the text of the Qur’ān is less important than the simple recognition that he did something to it and that his intervention was remembered as being significant.

To evaluate Syrian memories of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s Qur’ān project, whatever it may have been, I will begin with a general discussion of the distinctions between Syrian and Iraqi historiography. I will then turn to al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s portrayal in Syrian sources, paying special attention to how these sources, explicitly and implicitly, address his role in preserving or standardizing the Qur’ān. Finally, I will turn to the Umayyad context of these memories, specifically addressing how these accounts connected al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ to ‘Uṭmān, the progenitor of the Syrian dynasty and the original codifier of the Qur’ān.

Syrian historiography, such as it is, developed relatively late and did not serve as a direct response to or refutation of earlier ‘Abbāsīd/Iraqi historical works. The grand narrative of early Islamic history

[1] LEDER 1990, p. 72-96.

[2] JUDD 2013, p. 17-37; JUDD 2017, p. 139-155.

[3] For details about what al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ may have actually done to the text, see SINAI 2014; HAMDAN 2011, p. 795-835.

was crafted by Iraqis during the ‘Abbāsīd era, utilizing the chronicle format, the most influential manifestation of which lies in al-Ṭabarī’s (d. 310/923) *Ta’rīḥ*. The earlier work of Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt (d. 240/854-5), which some purport to have a less anti-Umayyad bias, does not offer the same compelling, flowing narrative found in al-Ṭabarī’s opus [4]. Al-Ṭabarī’s work became the model and often the principal source for later chronicles. Modern scholarship on the early Islamic period has been built largely on the foundations laid by al-Ṭabarī [5]. While some efforts have been made to disrupt this narrative and appeal to a broader array of sources, al-Ṭabarī’s vision of early Islamic history and of the Umayyad period remains the default position. Consequently, characters like al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ and the other Umayyad governors contending with unruly Kufans are not presented in a positive light.

The earliest extant Syrian historical work remains Abū Zur’a’s (d. 281/895) *Ta’rīḥ*. Unfortunately, it includes very little about al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ. Abū Zur’a records his death date in two locations and mentions him in passing to note that the long-lived Companion Suwayd b. Ḡafala (d. 80/699) survived until the days of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ [6]. He also notes that ‘Abd al-Malik sent al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ to fight Ibn al-Zubayr and mentions his execution of Māhān Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥanafī without offering details [7]. Other sources suggest that Abū Ṣāliḥ’s punishment may have been related to Ibn al-Aṣ’at’s rebellion in 83/702 [8]. Aside from this, Abū Zur’a offers no interpretation of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ’s actions and no judgement of his character. Nor does he mention any connection between al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ and the preservation of the Qur’ān. This is not surprising, given that government officials are largely invisible in Abū Zur’a’s work, which focuses almost exclusively on *ḥadīth* scholars.

Arguably, the beginning of a truly Syrian historiography comes much later with the completion of Ibn ‘Asākir’s (d. 571/1176) *Ta’rīḥ madīnat Dimašq* in the 6<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike al-Ṭabarī and his emulators, Ibn ‘Asākir did not produce a chronicle, but rather a massive collection of biographies of prominent Syrians. His intent was to reclaim Syria’s place in

Islamic history and to emphasize the contributions Syrians had made. Significantly, his criteria for determining whom to include was flexible, allowing him to claim important figures as Syrians even if their ties to Syria were tenuous. Later Syrian scholars modeled their works on Ibn ‘Asākir and relied heavily on him as a source, though sometimes without attribution. The corpus of Syrian works to be discussed here includes Ibn al-‘Adīm’s (d. 660/1262) *Buḡyat al-talab fī ta’rīḥ Ḥalab*, al-Mizzī’s (d. 742/1342) *Tahqīb al-kamāl*, al-Ḍahabī’s (d. 748/1348) *Ta’rīḥ al-Islām* and *Siyar al-lām al-nubalā’*, al-Ṣafadī’s (d. 764/1363) *Kitāb al-Wāfī bi-l-wafayāt*, and Ibn Kaṭīr’s (d. 774/1374) *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya fī al-ta’rīḥ*. To an extent, the biographical format precludes a tidy narrative of events, allows for contradictions, and affects the content and themes attached to personalities and events. Hence, the Syrian historiographical tradition does not offer an obvious, direct rebuttal to the Iraqi narrative, but rather a sometimes subtle reinterpretation of individual characters in a different literary format.

Ibn ‘Asākir’s 89-page biography of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ provides the basic framework for Syrian memories of the Iraqi viceroy [9]. What is perhaps most striking about Ibn ‘Asākir’s biography of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ is his extensive effort to claim al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ as a Syrian at all. It is generally agreed that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ was a native of Ṭā’if, that he served as governor of the Ḥiḡāz, then spent 20 years as governor of Iraq, based first in Kūfa and then in Wāṣit, the city he founded [10]. Whatever time he spent in Syria must have been limited. Ibn ‘Asākir uses two strategies to claim al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ for Syria. First, at the beginning of his entry, he notes that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ visited ‘Abd al-Malik in Damascus [11]. This is a fairly standard technique by which Ibn ‘Asākir justifies including non-Syrians in his work. For instance, visits to Damascus provide the only Syrian connection to allow inclusion of a number of the Prophet’s Companions, including Ibn Mas‘ūd, who will be discussed later. Ibn ‘Asākir employs a second, less common method to include al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ as well. He notes that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ owned a number of houses in Damascus. He even notes the

[4] Regarding Ḥalīfa’s agenda, see WURTZEL 2015, p. 1-39.

[5] Stories of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ’s activities in the East fill a significant portion of al-Ṭabarī’s treatment of the years 75/694-95/714. Al-Ṭabarī, II, p. 873-1268.

[6] Abū Zur’a 1996, p. 88-89, 369, 344.

[7] Abū Zur’a 1996, p. 294.

[8] Al-Ṣafadī 2009, XXV, p. 82; Ibn Ḥaḡar 1907-1910, X, p. 25-26.

[9] Ibn ‘Asākir 1995, XII, p. 113-202. It should be noted that there is an inexplicable lacuna in the printed edition

of the text. Pages 124, 126, and 128 are missing, but have somehow been replaced with the same numbered pages from volume III, which is Ibn ‘Asākir’s biography of the Prophet. I have not determined if the missing pages were inserted elsewhere in the 80-volume work. Nor can I offer a theory about how this shuffling of pages occurred. Nor have I been able to consult the manuscript itself for clarification.

[10] See DIETRICH 1986.

[11] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 113.

specific location of one, which was “the house with the prayer room (*zāwiya*) near the *qaṣr* of Ibn Abī al-Ḥadīd. [12]”. This level of specificity is unusual. It is unclear whether or not this specific location would have meant something to Ibn ‘Asākir’s contemporary readers. However, it represents a concerted effort to root al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ firmly in Damascus, to the point of including his exact address. It is important to note that Ibn ‘Asākir could easily have ignored al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s tenuous connections to Damascus and excluded him from the *Ta’rīḥ madīnat Dimašq* entirely. Instead, Ibn ‘Asākir opted to claim al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ as a Damascene and to tie his legacy to Syria. The fact that he devoted nearly 90 pages to al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ underscores his importance in Ibn ‘Asākir’s eyes.

It is not surprising, then, that Ibn ‘Asākir offers a less tyrannical image of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ than that found in earlier, Iraqi sources. I will forego a line-by-line summary and analysis of Ibn ‘Asākir’s entry and instead focus on his broader themes, providing occasional examples and contrasts to the traditional image of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. In general, his activities as governor of the East receive limited attention while his religious merits garner more emphasis. Incidentally, this is consistent with Ibn ‘Asākir’s treatment of other Iraqi viceroys.

Ibn ‘Asākir includes a number of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s sermons as governor, starting with his infamous *ḥuṭba* upon his arrival in Kufa, complete with references to heads ripe for the plucking and other threats [13]. Little context is offered, however, and the military campaigns that followed are omitted. Instead, Ibn ‘Asākir continues with reports of other sermons al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ gave. The sermon he offered after the battle against Ibn al-Aṣ‘aṭ at Dayr al-Ġamāǧim is followed by a series of reports in which Ibn ‘Awn and al-Aṣma‘ī offer explanations of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s sermon, focused largely on lexical details [14]. Next, Ibn ‘Asākir includes another sermon, this one given after al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ heard an improper *tabkīr* in the souq [15]. This series of sermons and scholarly interpretations of them shifts the focus away from al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s repression of Ibn al-Aṣ‘aṭ’s rebellion, arguably one of his more notorious deeds, and instead highlights his religious knowledge and erudition.

More detail is provided regarding his campaigns against the Ḥawāriǧ and Ibn al-Zubayr. The Ḥawāriǧ were objects of universal scorn whose ill-treatment required no justification [16]. Regarding Ibn al-Zubayr, Ibn ‘Asākir offers al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s explanation for his fall, again in a sermon, in which he compares his defeat at Mecca to Adam’s expulsion from paradise [17]. He also includes an account of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ being cursed by Ibn al-Zubayr’s mother, but follows this with another report claiming that her insult was aimed at al-Muḥtār instead, effectively neutralizing the first report’s insult [18]. More cleverly, Ibn ‘Asākir also includes a description of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s attack on Mecca, which he characterizes as a pilgrimage in which al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ circumambulated Ibn al-Zubayr rather than the Ka‘ba [19].

Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s brutality toward his foes is not ignored, but is not emphasized either. Ibn ‘Asākir mentions some of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s many executions and notes how many he allegedly killed and imprisoned [20]. However, he offsets these reports with stories in which al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ showed mercy to his foes [21]. This is consistent with Ibn ‘Asākir’s approach to rehabilitating other Umayyad figures, such as Ḥālid al-Qasrī, by coupling acknowledgment of tyrannical behavior with stories of kindness and appreciation for poetry and eloquence from those accused [22].

Ibn ‘Asākir also emphasizes a consistent set of religious themes in his account of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. The sermons included typically focus on, or at least allude to, predestinarian doctrine [23]. For instance, the sermons that mention Ibn al-Zubayr ascribe his demise to fate [24]. Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ also consistently demands obedience to the caliph and, by extension, to himself. In one sermon that is repeated in several variations, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ asserts that, on the caliph’s authority, he can order congregants to use a particular door to the mosque and kill those who use another and that he can even order Rabī‘a and Muḍar to be divided if he wishes [25]. After encountering al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik drinking *nabīḍ* at breakfast, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ proclaims it *ḥalāl* because of the caliph’s action [26]. Even one of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s most controversial actions,

[12] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 113.

[13] See, for instance Al-Ṭabarī, II, p. 864-866; Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 130-132.

[14] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 133-139.

[15] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 139. The details are vague, but it appears that a *tabkīr* was omitted in the call to the *zuhr* prayer.

[16] For a recent discussion of the role of the Ḥawāriǧ in historical narratives of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ’s period, see HAGEMANN 2021, esp. p. 233-248.

[17] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 120-123.

[18] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 120-121.

[19] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 117-118.

[20] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 180-184.

[21] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 147-150.

[22] See Judd 2017, p. 139-155.

[23] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 140-143.

[24] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 123.

[25] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 159-160.

[26] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 155.

locking the famous Companion Anas b. Mālik in irons, is presented in terms of obedience to the caliph. He condemns Anas for joining ‘Alī, then Ibn al-Zubayr, then Ibn al-Aš‘at. However, when ‘Abd al-Malik orders Anas freed, al-Ḥağğāğ promptly complies, again underscoring his absolute loyalty [27].

Ibn ‘Asākir concludes his biography of al-Ḥağğāğ with a series of discussions among scholars about al-Ḥağğāğ’s ultimate fate. Some of these reports describe his relative poverty at his death, others describe his repentance during his final illness, and some enumerate how many he killed and imprisoned. Scholars debate whether or not he was a *kāfir*, whether he had been sent to hell for his sins, and so on [28]. These reports clearly use al-Ḥağğāğ as a venue for later theological musings about *kāfirs*, sinning Muslims, punishment in the grave and other issues. These obvious efforts to appropriate early scholars, such as Sufyān al-Ṭawrī, Ibrāhīm al-Naḥā‘ī, and Ibn Sīrīn, to support particular positions merit more attention than can be given here. Of particular interest are ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz’s ambiguous responses and Ibn Sīrīn’s dream vision of al-Ḥağğāğ telling him he was sent to hell to relive the death of each of his victims and then released because he was a Muslim [29]. Perhaps what is most striking about this is that there was actually a lively debate about whether or not one of the key figures in preserving the Qur’ān was spending eternity in hell.

Anecdotes that relate directly or indirectly to al-Ḥağğāğ’s role in standardizing the Qur’ān are interwoven into Ibn ‘Asākir’s account. In general terms, al-Ḥağğāğ is frequently praised for his eloquence and his intelligence [30]. His obsession with proper grammar and precision are also noted. In addition to the anecdote in which he preaches about proper *tabīr* after hearing errors in the souq, other stories also focus on grammar, sometimes specifically in a Qur’ānic context [31]. For instance, Ibn ‘Asākir offers several alternative versions of al-Ḥağğāğ’s decision to banish the scribe Yaḥyā b. Ya‘mar to Khurasan. In al-Ṭabarī’s well-known version, Yaḥyā is dispatched to Khurasan after pointing out one of al-Ḥağğāğ’s specific grammatical errors [32]. Ibn ‘Asākir includes three versions of the dispute. One focuses on an unspecified grammatical point. A second deals specifically with

Q 9:24 and whether it should be read as *aḥabba* or *aḥabbu* [33]. In the third, Yaḥyā refutes al-Ḥağğāğ’s rejection of al-Ḥusayn’s descent from the Prophet based on his maternal lineage by quoting a Qur’ānic reference to Jesus and Mary [34]. In each of these examples, knowledge of grammar and the Qur’ān are central and al-Ḥağğāğ’s unhappiness with Yaḥyā’s response leads to his punishment.

Ibn ‘Asākir also includes more specific references to al-Ḥağğāğ’s Qur’ānic mastery, including praise for his beautiful recitations and his love of the Qur’ān, a story of al-Ḥağğāğ freeing a prisoner who recited from the Qur’ān, and an account of Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥimānī learning the divisions of the Qur’ān after four months of sessions with al-Ḥağğāğ [35]. While Ibn ‘Asākir does not offer extensive details about al-Ḥağğāğ’s efforts to standardize Qur’ānic readings, he makes clear that the focus of his attention is on suppressing Ibn Mas‘ūd’s recension. Al-Ḥağğāğ labels Ibn Mas‘ūd as the leader of the *munāfiqūn* and threatens those who recite Ibn Mas‘ūd’s version with death [36]. To justify his edicts, al-Ḥağğāğ makes specific reference to Q 64: 16, which demands that believers listen and obey. Some versions of the sermon in which he dictates which mosque door to use also assert his right to impose his reading of the Qur’ān [37]. The exact nature of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s reading is not clarified, although there are hints that al-Ḥağğāğ’s concerns focus on grammar and proper *i‘rāb*, as well as divisions of the text. While details are unfortunately lacking, it is clear that al-Ḥağğāğ rejects Ibn Mas‘ūd’s reading emphatically, even angrily.

A perusal of Ibn ‘Asākir’s lengthy biography of Ibn Mas‘ūd offers context for al-Ḥağğāğ’s contempt for the noted Companion. Ibn Mas‘ūd’s connection to Damascus was exceptionally tenuous and is based only on an allusion to a visit at some point [38]. However, because Ibn Mas‘ūd was a Companion, Ibn ‘Asākir found this to be a sufficient pretext to include a lengthy, 144-page biography of him in his *Ta’rīḥ madīnat Dimašq* [39]. The biography consists mainly of accounts of Ibn Mas‘ūd’s encounters with Muḥammad and the resulting *ḥadīth* reports. Naturally, many variants and alternative *isnāds* for most accounts are included, contributing to the entry’s length. A fair number of these reports deal specifically with the Qur’ān and

[27] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 171-74.

[28] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 187-91.

[29] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 186, 201.

[30] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 117, for example.

[31] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 139.

[32] Al-Ṭabarī, II, p. 1131-1132.

[33] Q 9: 24: *Masākīnu tarḍawnahā aḥabba (aḥabbu)*

*ilaykum min allāhi.*

[34] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 151-52. Yaḥyā cites Q 6: 84-5.

[35] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 116, 194, 78-79, 116.

[36] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 160-161.

[37] Ibn ‘Asākir, XII, p. 160, 162.

[38] Ibn ‘Asākir, XXXIII, p. 52.

[39] Ibn ‘Asākir, XXXIII, p. 51-195.

emphasize the fact that Ibn Mas'ūd was the first to recite publicly in Mecca and that he received praise from the Prophet himself for his recitations [40]. The fact that he recited 70 suras is also mentioned repeatedly, as is his assignment to teach the Qur'ān to the Kufans [41]. With these reports, Ibn 'Asākir establishes Ibn Mas'ūd as a respected Companion with special expertise in the Qur'ān, which is consistent with how Ibn Mas'ūd is remembered in most sources.

For our purposes, the most interesting and significant portion of the biography addresses Ibn Mas'ūd's rift with 'Uṭmān. Other sources acknowledge a rift but, as Vadet notes in the *ET* article on Ibn Mas'ūd, the circumstances of their conflict are elusive [42]. For Ibn 'Asākir, there is no mystery about the cause of their estrangement. In a long series of reports, he connects the enmity between the caliph and Ibn Mas'ūd to 'Uṭmān's *maṣāḥif* project [43]. In these reports, Ibn Mas'ūd claims that he is the most knowledgeable about the Qur'ān and objects vehemently to 'Uṭmān's reliance on Zayd b. Ṭābit for his project. Ibn Mas'ūd claims that Zayd's readings include errors and argues that there is no need for the project because he already has a perfect *muṣḥaf*. He also casts aspersions on Zayd as a Jew and a Sabian. At the end of this series of reports, after confirming that 'Uṭmān excluded him from his project, Ibn 'Asākir adds a report in which 'Alī praises Ibn Mas'ūd [44]. According to Ibn 'Asākir, the reason for Ibn Mas'ūd's fall from grace is not found in the hints of corruption other sources allude to, but in his arrogance and defiance toward 'Uṭmān in relation to the Qur'ān, along with his implied connection to 'Alī. The conclusion of Ibn 'Asākir's entry further undermines Ibn Mas'ūd and underscores the extent of his rift with 'Uṭmān. After the caliph cut off Ibn Mas'ūd's stipend, al-Zubayr reportedly provided for him instead. This detail is followed by a series of contradictory reports about whether 'Uṭmān or al-Zubayr prayed at Ibn Mas'ūd's funeral, which also explains the isolated report from Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt, which Ibn 'Asākir includes early in the entry, noting that al-Zubayr said the funeral prayers [45]. Without directly insulting the esteemed Companion, Ibn 'Asākir manages to connect Ibn Mas'ūd to both 'Alī and al-Zubayr and place him in defiance of the caliph regarding the Qur'ān.

Ibn 'Asākir's entry on Ibn Mas'ūd should be considered in conjunction with his treatment of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ. By emphasizing Ibn Mas'ūd's defiance of the legitimate caliph and focusing al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's efforts specifically on suppressing Ibn Mas'ūd's presumably errant reading, Ibn 'Asākir justifies al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's Qur'ān project. He also aligns Ibn Mas'ūd with Zubayrids and 'Alids, early and continuing foes of Syrian rule. More significantly, Ibn 'Asākir links al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's project to 'Uṭmān, the progenitor of the Umayyad dynasty, at least in Syrian memory. This is not Ibn 'Asākir's only effort to link the two. Early in his entry on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, Ibn 'Asākir includes a reported sermon in which al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's lamentations about death and the tomb bring his audience to tears. This is immediately followed by a report, provided on the authority of 'Abd al-Malik and Marwān, in which 'Uṭmān similarly brought a congregation to tears sermonizing on the tomb [46]. We will revisit the significance of this connection to 'Uṭmān later.

In general, Ibn 'Asākir's approach to al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ does not ignore accusations of cruelty and tyranny, but softens them by juxtaposing them with stories of mercy and kindness. He emphasizes that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, despite his origins in the Ḥiḡāz, was a Syrian with ties to Damascus, praising Syrians while condemning the Iraqi Kufans [47]. He also focuses on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's commitment to absolute caliphal authority coupled with predestinarian theology. Ibn 'Asākir's treatment of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's Qur'ān project, in Ibn Mas'ūd's biography as well as al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's, reflects this theme.

In constructing this alternative vision of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, Ibn 'Asākir relies on a variety of sometimes obscure sources, few of whom were Syrian. While it is beyond the scope of this study to examine Ibn 'Asākir's *isnāds* in detail, it is worth noting that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's condemnations of Ibn Mas'ūd and his assertion that he could decree which door of the mosque worshippers use (and by extension, which version of the Qur'ān they recite) were preserved by Kufans associated with the *qurrā'*. Versions of these reports begin with either 'Āṣim b. Bahdila (d. 128/746) or al-A'māš b. Mihrān (d. 148/765), both of whom were noted Qur'ān reciters [48]. They then filter through Abū Bakr b. 'Ayyāš (d. 193/809), another noted leader of the *qurrā'* [49].

[40] Ibn 'Asākir, XXXIII, p. 61, 75, 96.

[41] Ibn 'Asākir, XXXIII, p. 96-104, 61.

[42] VADET 1986, III, p. 873-875.

[43] Ibn 'Asākir, XXXIII, p. 134 -142.

[44] Ibn 'Asākir, XXXIII, p. 142.

[45] Ibn 'Asākir, XXXIII, p. 188-192, 53. Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt, *Ṭabaqāt*, p. 79. Ḥalīfa's *Ta'riḥ* does not include this detail and lists Ibn Mas'ūd's death date as 32 AH rather than 33

AH (Ḥalīfa b. Ḥayyāt, *Ta'riḥ*, p. 97).

[46] Ibn 'Asākir, XII, p. 114.

[47] Ibn 'Asākir, XII, p. 153.

[48] Regarding 'Āṣim, see Ibn 'Asākir, XXV, p. 220-242.

The reports about al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ do not appear in Ibn 'Asākir's biography of 'Āṣim. Regarding al-A'māš see al-Mizzī, XII,

76-91. Ibn 'Asākir does not include an entry on al-'Amaš.

[49] See al-Mizzī, XXXIII, p. 129-135.

Some versions then pass via the Kufan *qāri'* Muḥammad b. Yazīd al-Rafā'ī (d. 248/862), or the Kufan *muḥaddiṭ* Wāṣil b. 'Abd al-A'lā (d. 244/858). Unfortunately, the intervening links between these Kufan sources and Ibn 'Asākir in Syria are rather obscure. The nature, origins, and identity of the loose collection of figures known as the *qurrā'* has been the subject of much debate and there remains a possibility that they were not Qur'ān reciters at all. By Ibn 'Asākir's time, however, it appears that they were generally recognized as such. It is notable that the stories of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ and the Qur'ān were at least initially passed down by Kufans whom Ibn 'Asākir would have remembered as Qur'ān authorities [50].

Ibn 'Asākir's interpretation of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ clearly differs from the image of the opaque tyrant presented in al-Ṭabarī and other chronicles. An examination of how later Syrian scholars portrayed al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ illustrates that, to some extent, Ibn 'Asākir provided the foundation for an alternative Syrian historiography of his governorship and his Qur'ān project. However, this revisionism did not entirely erase unsavory memories of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ and it is evident that later Syrian authors struggled to reconcile these divergent images.

Ibn al-'Adīm (d. 660/1262) modeled his *Buḡyat al-ṭalab* on Ibn 'Asākir's work and relied on the *Ta'riḥ madīnat Dimašq* as a major source. This holds true for his lengthy biography of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, though with notable exceptions [51]. He includes many of the anecdotes that appear in Ibn 'Asākir, although he arranges them somewhat differently. He quotes Ibn 'Asākir's discussion of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's houses in Damascus, thus establishing his Syrian ties. He also includes a variety of reports praising his knowledge and love for the Qur'ān [52]. While Ibn al-'Adīm cites a great deal of material from Ibn 'Asākir (occasionally through intermediary sources), he also omits much. These omissions are noteworthy. For instance, Ibn al-'Adīm includes none of the material about Ibn Mas'ūd in his entry. Nor does he repeat many of the sermons al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ gave, excluding in particular the sermon asserting al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's authority to dictate which mosque door and which Qur'ān reading can be used. Ibn al-'Adīm also includes more material about al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's battles with the Ḥawāriḡ than Ibn 'Asākir does. Despite relying heavily on Ibn 'Asākir, Ibn al-'Adīm

offers a less positive image of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ and deemphasizes his Qur'ān project.

Al-Mizzī's (d. 742/1342) approach to the problem of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ is radically different and somewhat surprising. Al-Mizzī typically follows Ibn 'Asākir closely, often simply condensing Ibn 'Asākir's entries (usually without citation), a topic that merits its own study. In the case of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, however, he deviates from this pattern by excluding him altogether. Al-Mizzī's focus tends to be more narrowly religious than Ibn 'Asākir's and he occasionally omits purely political figures who did not make religious contributions. However, he does include al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's protégé and successor, Ḥālid al-Qasrī, who was arguably much less religiously influential than al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ [53]. Neither was a significant *ḥadīṭ* transmitter, though both do appear as characters in Companion *ḥadīṭs* in the major collections, with al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ appearing more frequently [54]. Al-Mizzī's choice is the opposite of that of Ibn 'Asākir. Rather than claiming al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ as a Syrian and rehabilitating him, al-Mizzī opts to ignore him altogether.

Al-Ḍahabī (d. 748/1348) includes entries on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ in both his *Ta'riḥ* and his *Siyar*, however they differ dramatically. In the *Ta'riḥ*, he largely follows Ibn 'Asākir's precedent [55]. At 13 pages, his entry is much shorter than Ibn 'Asākir's, but it includes most of the same anecdotes in the same order. Its brevity stems from al-Ḍahabī's exclusion of many of Ibn 'Asākir's repetitions and his abbreviation of *isnāds*. Like Ibn 'Asākir, he begins by describing al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's houses in Damascus. [56] He includes similar stories of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's sermon in response to a defective *takbīr* as well as his argument with Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar over vocalization of the Qur'ān [57]. Al-Ḍahabī's version of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's sermon demanding obedience, in which he dictates which mosque door to use, adds a demand to use *i'rāb* and specific prohibition of Ibn Mas'ūd's recension. More condemnations of Ibn Mas'ūd follow, though with fewer details than Ibn 'Asākir provides [58]. Like Ibn 'Asākir, he concludes with a discussion of whether or not al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ is in hell. Curiously, al-Ḍahabī adds a concluding remark claiming that he has an additional collection of strange stories about al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ that he cannot verify [59]. Such remarks always tantalize and disappoint.

[50] Regarding this debate, see CALDER 1991, JUYNBOLL 1973 and JUYNBOLL 1975.

[51] Ibn al-'Adīm, V, p. 2037-2099.

[52] Ibn al-'Adīm, V, p. 2041-2042.

[53] Al-Mizzī, VII, p. 107-118.

[54] For instance, al-Buḡārī includes several accounts of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ discussions with Ibn 'Umar about pilgrimage rituals. Buḡārī, number 966, 967, 1660, 1663. Ḥālid appears

only in a single report in Abū Dā'ūd regarding weights and measures. Abū Dā'ūd, number 3275.

[55] Al-Ḍahabī, *Ta'riḥ*, III (81-100 AH), p. 314-327.

[56] Al-Ḍahabī, *Ta'riḥ*, III (81-100 AH), p. 316.

[57] Al-Ḍahabī, *Ta'riḥ*, III (81-100 AH), p. 318-319.

[58] Al-Ḍahabī, *Ta'riḥ*, III (81-100 AH), p. 320.

[59] Al-Ḍahabī, *Ta'riḥ*, III (81-100 AH), p. 327.



While al-Ḍahabī's *Ta'riḥ* presents a predictable retelling of Ibn 'Asākir's narrative of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ with few deviations, his *Siyar* offers a different and more perplexing account. His entry on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ is quite short, barely half a page in length [60]. It begins by acknowledging al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's eloquence and knowledge of the Qur'ān. The tone then changes dramatically. He calls al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ a tyrant, an oppressor, a fraud, and a shedder of blood. He criticizes him for his attack on the Ka'ba and his humiliation of the Ḥiḡāzīs. He rounds out his evaluation, saying that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's merits are submerged in the sea of his faults. Finally, and most puzzlingly, al-Ḍahabī asserts that he has addressed al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's many evil deeds in his *Ta'riḥ*. Of course, his entry on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ in the *Ta'riḥ* includes no such catalogue of misdeeds and is instead at least somewhat apologetic regarding al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ. While it is possible that these misdeeds are recounted in other parts of the *Ta'riḥ*, perhaps in biographies of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's victims, the contrast between the two works is jarring. Two details stand out, however. First, even in his screed in the *Siyar*, al-Ḍahabī acknowledges al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's excellence regarding the Qur'ān. Second, in both works, al-Ḍahabī mentions additional material about al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ that he excluded. What he omitted and why he did so remain open to speculation. His contradictory entries on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ underscore the dilemma he created for later scholars, thanks to his simultaneous religious significance and condemnable behavior.

Al-Ḍahabī's student al-Ṣafadī (d. 764/1363) generally follows his mentor's *Ta'riḥ* rather than his *Siyar*. There are, however some notable differences in emphasis and detail in al-Ṣafadī's short, 8-page entry [61]. Familiar material is included, such as acknowledgement of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's eloquence, descriptions of his sermon about the mosque doors, and enumeration of his victims and prisoners [62]. Speculations about his ultimate fate are interspersed, though none specifically condemn him to hell [63]. Al-Ṣafadī also includes more detail about his final illness and his deathbed repentance and emphasizes his loyalty to the Banū Marwān, explicitly using the term *ḥalīfat allāh*, which other sources avoided [64]. He also describes al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's Qur'ān project more explicitly, relying on a report from Abū Aḥmad al-'Askarī that does not appear in earlier Syrian sources. He states

that, in response to variant readings that deviated from the 'Uṭmānic *muṣḥaf*, al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ ordered scribes to include vowels and spaces in the text, which met initial resistance [65]. No mention is made of Ibn Mas'ūd. Al-Ṣafadī also uses different means to identify al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ as a Syrian. He does not mention al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's houses in Damascus, though al-Ṣafadī seldom includes this type of detail in his entries. Instead, he ties al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ to Syria with several anecdotes. In one, he is referred to as the "*sayyid ahl al-Ṣām*." In another, the focus is culinary. The entry notes that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ only ate Syrian food and refused Iraqi cuisine, and that he once had his cook beaten for bringing the wrong variety [66]. In this short, condensed version of earlier biographies, al-Ṣafadī manages to clarify the nature of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's Qur'ān project while finding new ways to assert his Syrian identity and downplaying his tyrannical behavior.

Finally, Ibn Kaṭīr (d. 774/1374) also largely follows Ibn 'Asākir in his *Bidāya wa-l-nihāya* [67]. Most of the same anecdotes are included with little variation, including those connecting al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ to Damascus. In many cases, Ibn Kaṭīr explicitly cites Ibn 'Asākir as his source, a courtesy some of the other Syrian writers forego. Military campaigns in the East that were omitted by Ibn 'Asākir are at least mentioned here [68]. Ibn Kaṭīr's discussion of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's Qur'ān project is slightly different from that of Ibn 'Asākir, however. He focuses on al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's antipathy for Ibn Mas'ūd's reading and includes his declaration that Ibn Mas'ūd is the head of the *munāfiqūn*. He then inserts accounts of the Prophet's praise for Ibn Mas'ūd, which appear to be taken from Ibn 'Asākir's biography of the Companion. Next, he adds accusations that al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ lied about Ibn Mas'ūd, following these with the explanation that such accusations were made because al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ was an "'Uṭmānī Umayyad" (*'uṭmānī umawī*), a partisan of the Umayyads. Ibn Kaṭīr also links questions about al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ being a *kāfir* to his alleged preference for the Umayyad caliphs over the Prophet. [69] Ibn Kaṭīr does not rely entirely on Ibn 'Asākir, but notably adds reports and assessments from legal scholars, particularly al-Ṣāfi'ī and Ibn Ḥanbal. After presenting sometimes contradictory accounts of al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's actions and character, Ibn Kaṭīr often concludes with *allāhu a'lam*, the scholarly cry of surrender in the face of evidentiary dilemmas. Ibn Kaṭīr appears to be trying to

[60] Al-Ḍahabī, *Siyar*, IV, p. 343.

[61] Al-Ṣafadī, XI, p. 307-315.

[62] Al-Ṣafadī, XI, p. 308-312.

[63] Al-Ṣafadī, XI, p. 309, 314.

[64] Al-Ṣafadī, XI, p. 309, 312.

[65] Al-Ṣafadī, XI, p. 311.

[66] Al-Ṣafadī, XI, p. 314-315.

[67] Ibn Kaṭīr, IX, p. 142-168.

[68] Ibn Kaṭīr, IX, p. 144.

[69] Ibn Kaṭīr, IX, p. 155-158.

follow the Syrian tradition regarding al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ while also confronting additional, often contrasting material from non-Syrian, non-historical sources.

Syrian historiography on al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ offers a subtle and evolving image of the Umayyad viceroy and his role in codifying the Qurʾānic text. In general, Syrian sources offer a contrast to their Iraqi counterparts. Most striking is the virtual absence of citations of al-Ṭabarī in these works. By eschewing the chronicle format, Syrian historians produced a different narrative wherein the accounts of battles, lists of governors, and timelines of events are less important. The biographical format lends itself more readily to an emphasis on personality, character, and culture. This difference in genre does not, however, explain the distinctly Syrian treatment of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ. The biographical format lends itself to different emphases, but leaves room for different conclusions. A brief perusal of the Egyptian Ibn Ḥaǧar's (d. 852/1449) entry on al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ in his *Tahdīb al-tahdīb* offers evidence of this. While his work is generally an abridgement of al-Mizzī's *Tahdīb*, he deviates from his typical practice to include a short biography of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ [70]. It offers a decidedly negative view of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, focusing on Ibn al-Ašʿat's revolt and providing a list of those who labeled al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ as a *kāfir*. He acknowledges al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's eloquence and legal knowledge, and includes reports of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ reciting specific suras of the Qurʾān from the *minbar*, but does not mention his efforts to standardize the text. Instead, he notes the participation of the *qurrāʾ* in Ibn al-Ašʿat's revolt, a group the Syrian sources ignore in this context. Using the same biographical format, Ibn Ḥaǧar presents an image of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ that emphasizes his tyranny while minimizing his religious influence, and places the pious in opposition to him. Whether this entry derives from material excised from al-Mizzī's work at some point, or is instead an addition on the part of Ibn Ḥaǧar remains to be investigated.

The Syrian image of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ is not, then, merely a product of genre. Instead, it represents an effort, beginning with Ibn ʿAsākir, to rehabilitate Umayyad figures as representatives of a more glorious Syrian past. It is important to note that Ibn ʿAsākir and other Syrians could have excluded and ignored al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, as al-Mizzī did. However, part of what made al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's inclusion essential, despite his many faults, is his role in preserving the Qurʾān. Ibn ʿAsākir's project, carried on by his acolytes and later scholars, was not merely

to restore Syria's political glory, but to reclaim its role in the formation of Islam. Al-Ḍahabī's contradictory accounts of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ underscore the contentious, perhaps confusing nature of Ibn ʿAsākir's revisions. Despite al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's obvious flaws, emphasizing his role in the Umayyads' quest to protect the revelation from Iraqi perversion was a crucial element of this effort.

In this context, efforts to connect al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ to ʿUṭmān and his recension of the Qurʾān are particularly significant. In Syrian memory, ʿUṭmān was the original Umayyad. ʿAlī was a usurper, Zubayr was a failed usurper, and his son Ibn al-Zubayr was a rebel, not the de facto caliph as some modern scholars suggest [71]. Muʿāwiya was ʿUṭmān's avenger and the restorer of proper rule. In this narrative, ʿUṭmān's Qurʾān is an Umayyad accomplishment and efforts to alter it are attacks on both the Umayyad dynasty and the revelation itself.

The preservation of this Umayyad Qurʾān made it necessary to include and rehabilitate al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ in Syrian historiography. Ibn ʿAsākir clearly understood this, as the explicit and implicit connections he draws between al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ and ʿUṭmān illustrate. The demands for obedience to caliphal authority combined with efforts to disparage Ibn Masʿūd served to make acceptance of ʿUṭmān and, by extension, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ essential for the faith. In this narrative, those threatening the integrity of the Qurʾān, perhaps too conveniently, are all foes of the Umayyads: Ibn Masʿūd, supported by Zubayr and ʿAlī, and later Kufans enamored with Ibn Masʿūd and prone to ʿAlid and Ḥārījī rebellion.

Later Syrian scholarship for the most part followed Ibn ʿAsākir's lead, while abbreviating the story, more clearly associating al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ with ʿUṭmān's Qurʾān and also downplaying al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's tyranny. Over time, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ is transformed from the Taʿifī tyrant terrorizing innocent Kufans into a solidly Syrian figure defending both the Umayyad dynasty and the ʿUṭmānic Qurʾān from Iraqi threats. Of course, despite the importance of the Qurʾān project, the exact nature of al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ's efforts are never entirely clarified, much to our continuing frustration [72].

In a broader historical sense, the close association between ʿUṭmān, al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ, and the Qurʾān creates an ongoing dilemma for Muslim historians and religious scholars. Arguably, aside from the Prophet himself, these two men were most responsible for the

[70] Ibn Ḥaǧar, II, p. 210-213.

[71] See ROBINSON 2005, for instance.

[72] See SINAI 2014, HAMDAN 2011, p. 795-835.

Qur'ān's current form. Both campaigned effectively to impose uniformity on the text and to suppress variant readings that might have undermined the unity of the faith and the integrity of the revelation. Critics such as Ibn Mas'ūd may have protested their textual interventions, but to no avail. Overall, they were surprisingly successful. While variant readings continued to be discussed in *tafsīr*, no alternative Qur'ān has endured and the 'Uṭmānic text remains the standard.

This accomplishment is tarnished by the two men themselves. Both 'Uṭmān and al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ were remembered as sinners and tyrants in many later historical sources. Hence, the sanctity of the Qur'ān is tied to extraordinary, at times controversial efforts by deeply flawed men. Efforts at rehabilitation could not entirely erase their failings. In 'Uṭmān's case, many have fallen back on the perhaps dubious explanation that his caliphate had six good years and six bad years, with the hopeful but oft unspoken assumption that

he codified the Qur'ān during the good years. Later Sunnis could perhaps dismiss criticism of 'Uṭmān as 'Alid propaganda evading a discussion of his merits or lack thereof. For al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ, the task is actually more difficult. His reign in Iraq made him a villain in 'Abbāsīd historiography and a representative of the worst of the Umayyads' failings in a locale that was essential for the success of the 'Abbāsīd revolution. The fact that there was actually debate amongst reputable religious scholars about whether or not he was an apostate spending eternity in hell made his role in preserving the Qur'ān particularly uncomfortable. Iraqi historians largely tried to avoid this conundrum by ignoring or erasing al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ's Qur'ān project, whatever it may have been. Syrian scholars, beginning with Ibn 'Asākir, mostly chose a different route, rehabilitating him as much as possible and connecting him to 'Uṭmān as part of a larger project to claim the preservation of the sacred text as a Syrian, Umayyad accomplishment. ■

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