

QUOTATIONS IN ISLAMIC CULTURE

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Quotations are an indispensable part of our post-modern culture. The concept itself has acquired a wide range of meanings; quotations are a valid device for a strategy of convincing presentation and for adornment in both scientific and literary texts as well as, understood metaphorically, in music, architecture, cinema and all ramifications of the visual arts. The present article, rather an essay than a result of systematic research, undertakes to examine variform patterns of use, meaning and function of quotations in the Islamic culture: in the fundamental religious texts, in the Muslim medieval science, as well as in the Arabic medieval belles-lettres. Whereas in the former domains a predominant trend is to confirm one's own truth and to manifest the superiority over previous, partly adopted and remoulded knowledge, in the latter group of texts the main purpose is to arouse interest and to please. In conclusion the article, by describing a practical experience, points to the ambivalence of the post-modern gusto, since an appreciated device can be viewed from another angle as a burden.

Islamic culture can be discussed with equal correctness in the singular as in the plural. The latter viewpoint would seem preferable if an emphasis is to be laid on the numerous and heterogeneous varieties of ethnic, regional and local traditions within the complex whole. Regardless of the chosen perspective, there will always be a common denominator, namely the recognition of the supreme authority of the Qur'ān. Muslim theologians have agreed on its sublime status as the authentic Word of God, sent down to Muhammad as the final form of the gradual revelations made to peoples through prophets. The opinion that prevailed in doctrinal disputations held in the Muslim community in the 9th century defined the Qur'ān as uncreated, that is an eternal attribute of the Deity. The Muslims believe that people had distorted earlier versions of the revealed Scriptures. In particular the most prominent receivers of the previous revelation – Jews and Christians – are blamed for such misrepresentations of the Divine word. To correct them God – Allāh, the Merciful – sent down the Qur'ān as the final, all-embracing revelation expressing His instructions and His will ordained to humankind.

Accordingly, the Qur'ān overtly follows up the message of the Bible, but with amendments. It reassumes a great part of Biblical teachings and moral ethos, including the norms of the Mosaic Law. This is often done in a way, which a European reader, educated by the Bible, is likely to perceive as a para-

phrase of the well-known earlier holy text. Such an impression can be aroused, for instance, by the Qur'ānic variants of the commandments of the decalogue (17:23-27 and 6:151-2). The Qur'ān also takes over the lessons learnt from Biblical narratives, usually by means of scattered allusions to the personal stories of great figures of the Old and New Testament, whom the Muslim view of history indiscriminately regards as either prophets (*anbiyā'*) or messengers (*rusul*) of Allāh. A close comparative scrutiny of the Bible and the Qur'ān brings to light not only homogeneous theological ideas but also a number of identical or parallel metaphors and locutions. In this respect, to compare the Qur'ān with Psalms and Isaiah¹ proves most rewarding. As regards the imaginative language of the New Testament the most striking encounter with a familiar icon will be that with "a camel through the eye of a needle" (Mt 19:24, L 18:25, Mk 10:25). In the Qur'ānic imagery (7:40) it serves to underline the difficulties of access to Paradise for obdurate unbelievers. In one case the Qur'ānic text introduces a brief literal quotation with an orderly reference to the source: *And already have we written in the Psalms after the reminder that "the earth shall my righteous servants inherit"* (Q 21:195; Psalm 37:1 and 29).² It is worthy of note that for generations this and other similar promises provided hope to oppressed Shiite minorities and in our times helped to shape the ideology of the Islamic revolution, transformed into action by Khomeini.

Naturally, quotations of Qur'ānic verses play an important role in societies of the Muslim world. Many Muslims still learn the whole Qur'ān, or substantial parts, by heart and know how to support their standpoints in debates on political, legal, ethical or even scientific issues by well chosen verses of the Holy Book. If the quotation is used in a religious context it is, as a rule, preceded by a pious notice that the words to come are a dictum of the Most Noble God (*Allāh Ta'ālā*). The end of the quotation is marked by a brief complement of responsum: *Sadaqa 'llāhu l-ʿazīm* (So truly spoke Great God). Whenever the Qur'ānic verse is quoted in the Arabic original, which is of course the only authentic wording, the citation, whether printed or spoken, is marked with specific features, which differentiate it from ordinary speech. It is printed with supralinear and underlinear marks for vowels to ensure a correct pronunciation, although an ordinary Arabic text is usually left unvocalized. When used orally, the Qur'ānic quotation is pronounced with great care and concern for its rhetorical impact. In formal speech the presentation would often follow one of classical sophisticated modes of the recitation of the Qur'ān (*tajwīd* of three kinds: slow *tartīl*, medium *tadwīr* and fast *hadr*). Qur'ānic quotations in general very often fulfil an aesthetic function: in calligraphic inscriptions for a wide range of purposes, includ-

¹ The Qur'ānic emphasis on the unicity of God (*tawhīd*) has close parallels in Dt 32:39 and in the Prophets (Isaiah 45:5-6, 45:21, 48:21, Oseah 13:4). The image of the tireless God (Q. 2:255 and 46:33) has precedents in Psalms (121:34) and Isaiah (40:28). Many more examples could be introduced.

² Qur'ānic passages are quoted in English translation of E. H. Palmer: *The Qur'an*, Oxford, 1900.

ing ornament in architecture, or in recital performances staged on family or larger social occasions.

How effective an argument underpinned with a reference to a text from the Holy Book may have been in the medieval golden age of the Islamic culture can be vividly seen in the literature from those days. An anecdotic story of this kind relates what happened to the famous poet al-Farazdaq (d. 732/3). Once upon a time he was allegedly entertaining notables at the Umayyad court by reciting a poem about his fiery love affair with six women in one night. The impudence scandalized the *khalīfā* so much that he stopped him with a menacing outcry that he would severely punish the shameless poet for sexual licence, forbidden by *Kitāb Allāh*. Farazdaq, however, succeeds in his defence by referring to the same Qur'ān. To justify his poetic rodomontade he cites three verses from the sura *Al-Shu'arā'* saying: *And the poets do those follow who go astray! Dost thou not see that they wander distraught in every vale? and that they say that which they do not do?* (26:224-6). And to conclude Farazdaq maintains: "I was as well saying what I had never done."³

The second textual source of authority, next to the Qur'ān, consists of the record of traditions about actions or sayings of the prophet Muhammad and some of his companions, or, in case of the Shiites, of the Aliid *imāms*. They are called *hadīth* "narratives" or, by the Shiites more often, *akhbār* "news". In a comparative perspective, their position in the system of fundamentals of the creed is analogical to that of the oral Law of the Jews (*Tora she-be-al pe*). The *hadīths* were collected, evaluated and recorded in respectful collections mostly as late as the 2nd and 3rd century of *Hijra* within the larger efforts to systematically construe and explain the Divine Law, the *shar'fa*. In those times there were tens of thousands of *hadīths* in circulation, most of them apocrypha or just fakes produced to serve particular interests of various social and political groups. A number of *hadīths*, including those recognized as authentic, retell various wise sayings, proverbs and opinions adapted from cultural traditions that had influenced the intellectual climate in the Middle East, among them a couple of paraphrases of Jesus Christ's parables.

In order to sort out obvious forgeries and items of little credibility Muslim scholars of the Abbasid period developed a method of criticism. Its backbone was to examine the reliability of the chain of transmitters. Every saying ascribed to Muhammad must have been attested by a list of men (exceptionally also women)⁴ who transmitted it from one generation to another. Such list is called *isnād* "support", *silsila* "chain" or *ʿanʿana* according to the preposition *ʿan* "from", which connects individual names in the chain in the backward di-

³ Especially the *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Book of Songs) of Abū 'l-Faraj al-Isbahānī (d. 967) is a rich repertory of anecdotes of the kind.

⁴ Although women – e.g. Muhammad's youngest wife ʿĀisha – sometimes took part in transmitting the Tradition, the biographical study of the respective authorities came to be known as *maʿrifat ar-rijāl*, "the knowledge of the men".

rection down to the Prophet's companion who personally heard the saying and transmitted it further on. The critics of the reliability of the *hadīths* examined personal data and truthfulness of the transmitters in order to establish whether they really could meet and speak to another person indicated next to them in the same chain.

Quoting *hadīths* has become an important tool to promote arguments in debates on legal and moral issues. Muslim lawyers with well trained memory know by heart and can quote hundreds of them, like in the case of the Qur'ānic verses. To ask about the exact wording of a doctrine expounded in a *hadīth* is now quite common in competitions (quizzes) on Egyptian, Kuwaiti and some other TV programmes. A Western orientalist has to rely either, as in the previous generation, on printed volumes of concordances⁵ or, as a more modern approach, on specialized computerized programmes. To look for passages cited from the Qur'ān or from the most respected collection of *hadīths* by al-Bukhari (d. 870) software in Arabic and English has become available on the market. School children in Muslim countries, as a rule, learn the *hadīths* not only in lessons of Islamic religion but also in their reader, where they serve well the objectives of moral education.

Controversies about the credibility of a number of specific *hadīths* have been reanimated again in modern times. Serious doubts have been thrown especially on those where the chain of transmitters goes back to the Prophet's companion Abū Huraira. Their very numerousness is amazing (5,347!). Moreover their content very often seems to deviate more or less from the prevailing ethos of early Islam. Critics of Abū Huraira point to some debatable aspects of the personal character of this talkative hypercitor, for example to what historians wrote about his immoderate appetite and epicureanism. Most present-day Muslim scholars defend the authenticity of the disputed *hadīths*, including those of Abū Huraira, but some opinion makers prefer cautious selections and reject or do not recommend a number of traditional sayings. A radical reform was made in Qadhafi's Libya, where the fundamental core of Islam was reduced to the Qur'ān alone, whereas the tradition was entirely put aside.⁶

Muslim scholars of the past never paid substantial attention to original books of the Biblical corpus, nor to further relevant religious writings by Jewish or Christian authors. It is true that exegetes of the Qur'ān were using Jewish narratives (*isrā'īlīyāt*) to explain numerous Biblical events that the Qur'ān mentions

⁵ A.J. Wensinck et J.P. Mensing: *Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, from 1936. After Wensinck's death (1939) the monumental work was continued by his successors. The 8th, i.e. last, huge volume came out in 1988 thanks to painstaking efforts of J. Brugman.

⁶ The most radical critic, rejecting most *hadīths*, was Mahmūd Abū Rayya. His *Adwā' al-āṣ-sunna l-muhammadīya* (Cairo, 1958) presents an overall criticism, while *Shaykh al-madīna Abū Huraira ad-Dawsī* (2nd ed. Cairo, 1964) attacks specifically the incredibility of Abū Huraira. In Western oriental studies an assessment of Muslim discussions on the Tradition was presented by G.H.A. Juynboll: *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature*, Leiden, 1969.

only in brief hints, but verbal quotations from the Old or New Testament have always been very rare. Their richest repertory – along with quotations from a cabbalistic treatise – can be found in manuscripts of an Ismāʿīlī emissary (*dāʿī*) al-Kirmānī (d. about 1030).⁷ Quotations from Jewish writings are written in the original Hebrew, Christian materials in Syriac. This seems to be a natural, but not indispensable way to handle them, considering the status of Arabic as above all the language of the final and complete revelation and knowledge, embodied only in the Qurʾān. As a matter of fact, even modern well educated Muslims usually lack first-hand and accurate knowledge of the Jewish and Christian Scripture. Some quotations taken supposedly from the Gospel, which are circulated in the Muslim environment and presented as illustrations of a contrast vis-à-vis the teachings of Islam, are often erroneously related to a source, which is not theirs. Thus many Muslims know a saying that “wine rejoices the human heart” and attribute it to Jesus. In fact, it alludes to a Psalm (104:15). It is fair to add that on the other side, in Europe, a number of much more concocted or distorted “quotations” from the Qurʾān have been circulated for generations and still survive.

In the medieval Arabic scholarship erroneous attribution of authorship occasionally occurred also in translations and quotations from Greek philosophical and scientific works. In the Abbasid golden age, sometimes also labelled the “Islamic Renaissance”⁸ or “Arabic humanism”,⁹ an important part of the Islamic culture embraced the legacy of Hellenism with as much enthusiasm as the Europeans did later. They were just as much legitimate heirs of this legacy as Europe, but they handled it differently from the Byzantines or the Latin West.

For Arab philosophers the foremost master was Aristotle, although themselves – with the exception of Ibn Rushd – built their *Weltanschauung* more on Neo-Platonic representations. The Arab physicians, in their turn, accorded most authority to Galen. Aristotle was understood and reverently referred to as the “First Teacher” (*muʿallim awwal*). The story about his appearance in a dream to the Khalifa al-Maʾmūn (813-833) is often presented as a beginning of the great historic élan pushing Muslim intellectual élites of the 9th and 10th century to search for Greek philosophical and scientific works and to translate them into Arabic. In doing so, they attributed to Aristotle even some texts he had not authored, in particular substantial parts of Plotinus’ *Enneadas*, which were then circulated and quoted in Muslim medieval learning as a supposed *Theologia Aristotelis*.

⁷ Cf Paul Kraus: “Zu den Schriftzitaten al-Kirmanis”, *Der Islam*, XX, 1932, pp. 308-313. Biblical quotations in Muslim medieval writings are also researched by G. Lecomte: “Les citations de l’Ancien et du Nouveau Testament dans l’œuvre d’Ibn Qutaiba”, *Arabica*, Leiden, 1958, pp. 34-46, and A. Chafri: “Le christianisme dans le Tafsir de Tabari”, *MIDEO*, Cairo, 1983, 16, pp. 117-168.

⁸ Cf Adam Mez: *Die Renaissance des Islams*, Heidelberg, 1922.

⁹ Cf Mohammed Arkoun: *L’humanisme arabe au IV^e-IX^e siècle*, Paris, 1982.

Arabic translations, usually provided with additions or comments, were henceforth regarded as the final formula of rational knowledge. This typical approach, different from the European "Roman" acceptance of one's own posteriority, has been lucidly analysed by Rémi Brague.¹⁰ He describes the Arabo-Islamic attitude to Greek antiquity like that to the Bible as a swallowing, absorption or excessive assimilation. For that matter, much the same judgement was earlier pronounced with an implicit approval by Ibn Khaldun (d. 1406) in his unique sociological introduction to the universal history – the *Muqaddima*. His opinion deserves to be quoted: "The Muslims desired to learn the sciences of the foreign nations. They made them their own through translations. They pressed them into the mould of their own views. They took them over into their own language from the non-Arab languages and surpassed the achievements of the non-Arabs in them. The manuscripts in the non-Arabic language were forgotten, abandoned and scattered. All the sciences came to exist in Arabic writing. Thus, students of the sciences needed a knowledge of the meaning of Arabic words and Arabic writing. They could dispense with all other languages, because they have been wiped out and there was no longer any interest in them."¹¹

Thus as in the case of the Biblical precedent, in the realm of the adopted science there was no interest in turning occasionally back to the older, foreign text. In spite of the intensive exploitation of Neo-Platonists, no exact, that is unadapted, text has been preserved in Arabic. Muslim scholars worked in this field, as a rule, with ideas, not with literal dicta or with winged words of quotations. A good, though somewhat extreme, illustration of this point can be found in a recently edited text of the *Pseudo-Ammonius Doxography*. This treatise, whose foreign model, if any, cannot be identified with certainty, was amply cited in the Arabic medieval doxographic literature, especially by its greatest master Shahrastānī (d. 1153), and produced an obvious impact on the esoteric doctrine of the early Ismāʿīliya.¹² It deals with the question whether God had created the world *ex nihilo* or from something available. To answer this question it introduces the opinions of nearly thirty philosophers. Most of them are Greeks, pre-Socratic thinkers. There opinions are never quoted by means of their *ipsissima verba*, but always just explained, which is done quite arbitrarily, at the discretion of the unknown author.

The practice of backing one's own arguments by prestigious names from classical antiquity, without direct quotation, is far from rare. Most false refer-

¹⁰ Rémi Brague: *Europe, la voie romaine*, Paris, 1992.

¹¹ Translation by Franz Rosenthal, cit. from Ibn Khaldun: *The Muqaddimah. An Introduction to History*, Princeton University Press, 1967, p. 432.

¹² Ulrich Rudolph: *Die Doxographie des Pseudo-Ammonios*, Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, Stuttgart, 1989. The editor of the text U. Rudolph suggests that the work was written in Arabic about the mid-9th century, while a great deal of materials were taken from ancient sources. In doing so the unknown author was by negligence or on purpose changing names and opinions. Among the possible sources, the most probable one is *Refutation omnium haeresium* by the Church Father Hippolytus from Rome.

ences can be ascertained in texts on whatever stands close to various branches of hermetic knowledge. The enigmatic "classic" of alchemy Jābir ibn Hayyān (d. possibly about 780), known to the Latin authors as Geber, did not hesitate to refer to knowledge obtained from Socrates and Homer. In Arabic mathematic treatises on magical circles a concept called "Plato's circle" began to be used from the 13th century. Examples of similar kind could be introduced in fairly good number. Yet it should be stressed in this connection that in spite of all pseudographs, errors and *bona fide* remakings the Arabo-Islamic share in preserving and developing the Hellenistic legacy deserves high appreciation. Arab scholars, certainly, also worked with exact translations and paid attention to correct citations, sometimes even with double variants of the Greek term, in order to convey the ideas as precisely as possible. Nowadays, the medieval Arabo-Islamic science is an object of careful research, which continues to yield remarkable discoveries.¹³

Some branches of knowledge, regarded as (home-made) traditional science (*ʿulūm naqlīya*), developed in the world of Islam from domestic roots and impulses, entirely or almost without a Greek influence. They were mostly *ʿulūm* closely connected with the religious core of Islam. Their expansion gave impetus, motives and direction to the development of historiography. The Qur'ānic exegesis called for research into the larger context of the history of revelation, while the critics of *hadīths* were in need of chronologically arranged biographies of transmitters of the tradition as well as of other persons. Biographical dictionaries became a needed tool also in other disciplines, since quotations of certain persons' sayings and references to their opinions played an important part in the structure of scholarly works. In the writings of historians a method of simply juxtaposing testimonies or other evidence by various source persons came to the fore right from the start. These were living contemporaries or older chroniclers or historians, whose accounts the author of the new work chose for quotation. He gives the name of his knowledgeable resource, followed by the quotation. In the Arabic script, which did not use punctuation prior to modern times, the direct speech was always introduced by a verbal quotation-mark *qāla*, "he said". Frequently, the author was able to enlist several accounts (*akhbār*), perhaps even contradictory to one another. In such a case, he quoted them one by one, while often concluding the survey with a gnomic *wa Allāhu aʿlam*, "... and God knows better".

Geographical works also to a great extent relied on quotations of reports by knowledgeable persons. Geography consisted of two branches. One was oriented towards mathematics and astronomy. Its basic source was the cosmography of Ptolemy, masterly adapted for Arabic science by al-Khwārizmī at the beginning of the 9th century. The other branch was more attractive for a wider edu-

¹³ The main centre of this specific research is now the Institut für Geschichte der Arabisch-Islamischen Wissenschaften an der J.W. Goethe-Universität in Frankfurt a.M., directed by Prof. Fuat Sezgin.

cated readership. Usually it is labelled human geography. Starting from the Abbasid period its important section was made up by a popular genre called *kutub al-masālik wa-l-mamālik*, “books of travels and kingdoms”, providing a well disposed geographic and ethnographic information obtained from reports by travellers, merchants and officials and even, as regards foreign countries, by captives and spies. The style reveals such strong dependence on sources, whether contemporary reports or texts adopted from earlier manuscripts, that it sometimes gives an impression of extremely fragmentary compilation. Polish orientalist T. Kowalski rebukes the Arabic medieval documentary literature for this feature: “*The contents tends to disintegrate into an immense multitude of mutually independent and unrelated individual remarks, expressed in short sentences, which, moreover, have not been written by the author but by various scholars in various times and countries; the remarks, however, are always literally quoted and put together without any harmony. We do not find any effort on the part of the author to critically examine these single pieces, which are often contradictory to one another, or to put them by whatever other way into concert... An average Arabic scientific monograph is in fact a list of contents of individual filing boxes, arranged without any concern at all, but carefully marked with a signature of each file card.*”¹⁴

Thus a modern researcher is to tackle the problem of dating, chronological arrangement and critical assessment. A brief reminder of the uneasy progress in research on the important travel undertaken by Ibrāhīm ibn Ya‘qūb from Muslim Spain to Central Europe in the 10th century can well illustrate the complexities and intricacies of such task. Ibrāhīm’s own report has not survived, but fairly large fragments were discovered in the *Kitāb al-masālik wa-l-mamālik* written by the geographer al-Bakrī in Cordova in 1068. The discovery was made in 1875. Al-Bakrī’s manuscript includes among other things Ibrāhīm’s now famous relation about Prague. Further fragments, dealing mostly with Dutch and German cities, were identified in a cosmographic work by al-Qazwīnī (d. 1283). Since Ibrāhīm’s name was once completed with a surname (*nisba*) al-Turtūshī, that is “from Spanish Tortosa”, and once with another attribute *al-Isrā’īlī*, that is a Jew or a convert of Jewish descent, the fragments were erroneously ascribed to two different persons. Only in 1946 T. Kowalski proved that in fact the traveller was one and the same. Another fragment, this time a short one, was discovered for the specialists in 1960 in a manuscript of a geographical dictionary by al-Himyarī from the 14th–15th century. Nonetheless, a number of questions concerning the travel of the keen observer and reliable reporter Ibrāhīm still remain open, among them the purpose of his mission, the dating of his visit to Prague (in 965/6?) and the overall itinerary.

Whereas the method of compiling a scholarly work from quotations seems to have created problems only for modern researchers, medieval Muslim scholars worried about frequent quotations inserted into story telling and in general

¹⁴ T. Kowalski: *Na szlakach Islamu*, Kraków, 1935, p. 114; similar opinion also p. 109.

belles-lettres for a clearly aesthetic purpose. The reason for their worries had little to do with research. The authors of the imaginative literature were used to embellishing their prose with inserted verses. Even oral popular and semi-popular¹⁵ literature, produced and disseminated by story-tellers, resorted to this strategy of ornament and attraction. The poetry has always been highly appreciated. It imparted the sense of classicism from one generation to another. For Arabs classical models were represented by verses of their ancient bedouin poets, for Iranians and later as well for Turks and Mughal India by Persian poetry.¹⁶

Quotations in literature, especially in both poetry and prose, were studied as a theoretical problem by Arab specialists in rhetoric. Next to a simple generic term *tadmīn*, "citation" (literally "incorporation") and to *talmīh*, "allusion", which was considered a literary figure, the specialists singled out specific instances of verbal borrowings by the term *iqtibās*. Its etymological motivation is not without interest. *Qabas*, a word occurring in the Qur'ān, means "a live coal" and the derived verbal form *iqtabasa* imparts the idea of taking a light or a burning coal from other person's fire-place. The theoreticians of rhetoric used this term to indicate borrowings of characteristic words or phrases from the Qur'ān, the *hadīths* and sometimes even from the juristic (*fiqh*) vocabulary in profane poetry or prose without mentioning the source. Some Muslim jurists (in particular the Mālikīs) condemned such behaviour, others regarded it as admissible within certain limits. They declared it illicit for instance to use Qur'ānic phrases in frivolous verse and to cite or to paraphrase Qur'ānic passages, in which God speaks about Himself. Occasional objections to such limitations reminded those concerned that the Qur'ān itself was using borrowings or allusions in relation to the Bible or even pre-Islamic poetry.¹⁷ In modern Arabic the verbs *qabasa* and *iqtabasa* serve to designate any kind of quotations and, besides borrowing of a live coal, can also refer to the use of electricity.

Let us remain in modern times in the following couple of words in conclusion. They are based on a particular experience of an interpreter of Arabic who over twenty years worked in cabins of simultaneous translation at various international conferences. This extremely straining work made him realize that the most perplexing stumbling-blocks in translating from Arabic are occasional quotations: Qur'ānic passages, proverbs or poetry. These ornaments are, as a rule, most difficult both in structure and in challenging expressions of multiple

¹⁵ The Czech term *pololidová literatura*, i.e. semi-popular literature, is applied by J. Oliverius (*Svět klasické arabské literatury*, Brno, 1995, p. 360ff.) to a large range of both oral and (later) printed, anonymous literary works, including *Sīrat Antār*, *Sīrat az-Zāhir Baibars* as well as the *Arabian Nights* and many others.

¹⁶ The notion of classicism in the Islamic culture was studied esp. by G.E. von Grunebaum; see his contribution *Le concept du classicisme culturel* in R. Brunschvig et G.E. von Grunebaum (eds.): *Classicisme et déclin culturel dans l'histoire de l'Islam*, Paris, 1957, pp. 1-27.

¹⁷ For more details and bibliography see *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd ed., Leiden, IV, p. 1091, keyword *Iqtibās*.

meanings of an idea, exploiting, as they do, to the full the unique potential of polysemy and occasional ambivalence of the Arabic word-stock. One word can include even its own opposite, like a melody in the Arab traditional music, *tarab*, which imparts both joy and grief at one time. Thus it happens at modern international conferences that masterly adorned rhetoric jewels of the original fall down on the translation cabin, without much concern for the larger part of the audience in the hall, as a humiliating blow dealt to the heterogeneous modern hunt for fast communication.