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## KUFA VS BASRA: THE LITERARY DEBATE

Geert Jan van Gelder, Groningen

As so often, the great al-Ġāḥiẓ (d. 255/868-69) provides us with a suitable opening citation. In his *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān* he says:

This book does not argue ... that Kufa is better than Basra, Mecca better than Medina, Syria better than al-Ġazīra [Northern Mesopotamia], the Arabs better than the non-Arabs, ʿAdnān [so-called Northern Arabs] better than Qaḥṭān [Southern Arabs], ʿAmr better than Wāṣil [two Muʿtazilī theologians], ... Mālik better than Abū Ḥanīfa, Imraʾ al-Qays better than al-Nābiġa, ... Ibn Surayġ better than al-Ġarīḍ [two singers], Sībawayh better than al-Kisāʾī, ... the wisdom (*ḥilm*) of al-Aḥnaf [Ibn Qays] better than the wisdom of Muʿāwiya, or Qatāda better than al-Zuhri [two scholars of Ḥadīth]. Each of these has his partisans, each man of these has his troops that fight for him, of whom many are impetuous fools, few are learned, and even fewer are both learned and fair-minded. Once I saw two men in Basra, at the door of Muways Ibn ʿImrān's house, who quarrelled about *nayrūz* grapes and *rāziqī* grapes. There was a lot of cursing between them and finally they flew at each other. One of them, who came from Kufa, cut off a finger of the other, a Basran; the latter gouged out the other's eye. Not long afterwards, however, I saw them together as if they were the best of friends ...<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, which I have shortened somewhat, a number of issues are listed that were popular controversies and disputes in early Islam. They included the most banal and trivial matters, such as the two kinds of grape; but primarily they concern persons or groups of persons, sometimes combined collectively as cities. The reader will have noticed that the quotation began and ended with the two towns, Kufa and Basra. That is no coincidence; it is partly the result of some slight editing on my part, for I have omitted a few politico-religious and dogmatic issues at the beginning, but in any case it is not strange that Kufa and Basra should be mentioned twice. There are many countries and regions in the world where we find rivalry between two towns. In England, at least in academic circles, it is Oxford and Cambridge, in Russia we have Moscow and St Petersburg, etc. In early Islam there are Kufa and Basra. Arabists who hear about Kufa vs Basra mostly think, first of all, of the rivalry between the so-called gram-

1 al-Ġāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, Cairo, 1965-69, vii, 7-8.

matical schools of the two towns. This topic will not be discussed by me; I shall leave the opinions of grammarians and philologists on grammar and philology out of consideration. What interests me is not so much the scholarly as the *literary* debate, or rather: a debate that may be found in texts that are not primarily scholarly; in short, texts that are often called *adab*, which includes literary anthologies and to some extent also historical and geographical works.

Rivalries between towns in the history of the Arabs are almost as old as Islam. When, after his Hiğra, the Prophet Mohammad founded a little state in Medina a conflict with Mecca was inevitable and was resolved only by the Muslim conquest of Mecca in 630. In Medina itself, moreover, a natural rivalry existed between Medinan followers of Mohammed and those Meccans who had accompanied the Prophet on his Hiğra, and who were sometimes seen by the Medinans as over-privileged intruders. This rivalry between Mecca and Medina, in various forms, continued after Mohammed's death. It is, as we have seen, included in the list of themes of popular "precedence debates" by al-Ğāhiz, given above. The Ottoman bibliographer Ĥāğğī Ĥalīfa mentions a debate between the two towns entitled *Munāzarat al-Ĥaramayn wa-munāḍalat al-Maḥallayn* ("The Debate between the Two Sacred Sites and the Controversy between the Two [Holy] Places"), by a certain Nūr al-Dīn ʿAlī Ibn Yūsuf al-Zarandī who died in 1370-1.<sup>2</sup> The famous polymath al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505) lists as one of his own treatises a similar work called *al-Ĥuğāğ al-mubīna fī l-tafḍīl bayn Makka wa-l-Madīna* ("Clear Arguments in the Precedence Debate between Mecca and Medina").<sup>3</sup> And, as may be expected, there is much more; the matter has been studied in a long article by Albert Arazi which appeared in 1984;<sup>4</sup> he apparently did not yet know that al-Suyūṭī also dealt with the

2 Ĥāğğī Ĥalīfa, *Kašf al-zunūn*, Istanbul, 1941-43, (ii) col. 1834.

3 al-Suyūṭī, *Ĥusn al-muḥāḍara*, Cairo, AH 1387, i, 343; see C. Brockelmann, *Gesch. d. Arab. Litt.*, ii, 153, Suppl. ii, 191-2.

4 Albert Arazi, "Matériaux pour l'étude du conflit de préséance entre la Mekke et Médine", *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 5 (1984) 177-235.

same topic in a more literary fashion, in a *maqāma* entitled *Sāğī'at al-ḥaram fī l-mufāḥara bayn al-Madīna wa-l-Ḥaram*.<sup>5</sup>

Besides Mecca and Medina there are other pairs of towns that have been the subjects of similar debates. Wagner lists a number of them in his fundamental study of the genre of the Arabic *Rangstreitdichtung*:<sup>6</sup> Damascus and Cairo, Málaga and Salé, Ta'izz and Ṣan'ā', Aden and Mocca, Roda and Cairo (the former now part of Cairo), Damascus and Baghdad. Among the more important debates, apart from the Mecca-Medina rivalry, is that between Kufa and Basra. Here I intend to deal with some aspects of this debate.

Basra and Kufa were founded very early during the great Arab conquests. They served first of all as military camps, as garrison towns, but soon developed into very important centres, both of major importance in Arab political, economic, linguistic, literary and religious history, especially in the first formative period of Islam before Baghdad, founded in 762, took over. As in the case of Mecca and Medina, rivalry had to happen: two towns in Iraq, only some 250 miles apart, on what may be called the same river (Kufa on the Euphrates, Basra near the confluence of Euphrates and Tigris called Ṣaṭṭ al-ʿArab), that were hothouses of diametrically opposed politico-religious groupings (Kufa, the Ṣī'ite town *par excellence* in early Islam; Basra, the home of Ḥārīğites and Mu'tazilites). Scholarly and literary activities flourished in both towns. The methods of grammarians and other philologists differed enough to give rise to the famous rivalry between the Basran and Kufan schools, which, it seems, was exaggerated in retrospect, at a time when Baghdad had taken over. But even when eclipsed by the great ʿAbbasid capital, which caused a considerable brain-drain from Basra and Kufa, the two towns remained important for centuries.<sup>7</sup> In any case, Baghdad's glory was derivative and not

5 *Ṣarḥ Maqāmāt Ġalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī*, ed. Samīr Maḥmūd al-Durūbī, Beirut, 1989, (i), 499-553.

6 Ewald Wagner, "Die arabische Rangstreitdichtung und ihre Einordnung in die allgemeine Literaturgeschichte", *Abh. der Wiss. und der Lit., Geistes- und sozialwissensch. Kl.*, Jhrg. 1962, Nr. 8, 435-67, see 448-49.

7 On Basra, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. (article by Ch. Pellat), Charles Pellat, *Le milieu basrien et la formation de Ġāḥiḏ*, Paris, 1953, Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra. Eine*



to be compared with its predecessors, as was argued, for instance, by a tenth-century grammarian, Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Luġawī. He expressed it as follows:

The Arabs have no scholarship except in these two towns [viz. Kufa and Basra]... Baghdad is a town of rulership, not of scholarship. Whatever scholarship it possesses has been transplanted and imported for the caliphs, their retinue and their subjects. Apart from that their interest in scholarship is faint, since scholarship is serious and they are people who are predominantly given to jesting.<sup>8</sup>

It is the purpose of the present study to investigate the rivalry between the two towns as a literary theme, the politico-religious or scholarly backgrounds of which will not be dealt with except where needed to explain the literary phenomena. The dispute of Kufa versus Basra is a literary theme or topos. One might speak of a literary debate, provided that this is not taken in the narrow sense of a literary composition in which contestants, normally lifeless or at least non-human objects or concepts, debate in a formalized setting.

Although there are many such literary debates in Arabic, some of them with towns acting and speaking themselves, I know of no text in which Kufa and Basra are personified in this manner, although in one famous and often-quoted comparison the towns are likened to a poor and pretty young girl and an ugly rich old woman, respectively. If there is question of a true debate, rather than a monologue by an impartial or partisan speaker, then it is performed by Kufans and Basrans, not by the towns themselves. As Wagner says, the *munāẓarāt* (literary debates) on towns originate in real local interests; in later, more strictly belletristic, debates

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*Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam*, Berlin, 1992- , ii, 1-429; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Leiden, 1967- , ii, 455-66, 502-26 (poets), viii, 50-114 (lexicographers), ix, 28-115 (grammarians).

On Kufa, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. (article by Hichem Djäit), Hichem Djäit, *Al-Kufa: Naissance de la ville islamique*, Paris, 1986, Josef van Ess, *op. cit.*, i, 151-456, Fuat Sezgin, *op. cit.*, viii, 115-58 (lexicographers), ix, 116-50 (grammarians).

8 Abū l-Ṭayyib al-Luġawī, *Marātib al-naḥwiyyīn*, Cairo, [1974 (date of preface)], 155, 160.

these interests dwindle into the background.<sup>9</sup> The Kufa vs Basra debate never reached this almost purely literary state. There are a few texts of some length, a few pages, where people do actually debate (from which it does by no means follow, of course, that these people did in fact debate in real life). In addition, there exists a large number of rather disparate shorter texts and fragments, often not so much debates as monologues or brief statements in favour of one of the towns; fragments that were freely handled and combined to form compositions of a more literary nature by various authors from ʿAbbasid times. Among the earliest of these authors and compilers was al-Hayṭam Ibn ʿAdī, himself from Kufa, who died between 821 and 824, and who wrote a treatise entitled *Faḥr ahl al-Kūfa ʿalā ahl al-Baṣra* (“The Boasting of the Kufans against the Basrans”).<sup>10</sup> A contemporary of his was al-Madāʾinī (d. perhaps 843), among whose many works there is a *Mufāḥarat ahl al-Baṣra wa-[ahl] al-Kūfa* (“Boasting Match between the Basrans and the Kufans”).<sup>11</sup> Neither of these two works has survived, although parts are quoted by later authors.

In the following I shall not restrict myself strictly to debates, since one-sided texts, by partisans of either town, are part of the debate expressed in the whole of classical Arabic belles-lettres.<sup>12</sup> One should perhaps imagine a reservoir of many statements and judgments, positive or negative, concerning the two towns, that occur as quotations in written texts, either separately or combined to form texts with direct confrontation of opposing views, sometimes in the form of a real debate. The basic elements could be represented as K<sup>+</sup> (pro-Kufa), K<sup>-</sup> (anti-Kufa), B<sup>+</sup> (pro-Basra) and B<sup>-</sup> (anti-Basra). These elements are sometimes combined: K<sup>+</sup>/B<sup>-</sup> (when a partisan of Kufa praises Kufa and blames Basra) or B<sup>+</sup>/K<sup>-</sup> (the opposite view) or B<sup>+</sup>/K<sup>+</sup> (someone praising both towns), etc. In a

9 Wagner, *op. cit.*, 450.

10 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel, Leipzig, 1871-1872, 100; Yāqūt, *Muʿğam al-udabāʾ*, Cairo, 1936-1938, xix, 310.

11 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 104, Yāqūt, *Muʿğam al-udabāʾ*, xiv, 138.

12 By using the term belles-lettres I mean what is customarily understood by the Arabic word *adab*, which includes historical and some geographical writings, but not strictly scholarly works for specialists, e.g. on the grammatical schools (see e.g. the monograph of Abū l-Barakāt al-Anbārī on the schools of Basra and Kufa, *al-Inṣāf*) or on religion.

true debate one usually finds all four elements:  $K^+/B^-::K^-/B^+$ , but other combinations are possible. This schematization suggests that the elements are prior to fully-fledged debates; however, in reality the reverse must have occurred often, when a true debate took place and was recorded in one form or other, after which it was broken up into separate elements when later authors used the various bits either in isolation or assembled to form new combinations. Subsequently, the process of decomposition and recomposition may repeat itself. It happens sometimes that a particular point is mentioned in connection first with one town, then with the other. One example, to which I shall return, is the description of Kufa as well as Basra in belonging to land and water, *barrī* and *baḥrī*; another is the expression *qubbat al-islām*, “the dome of Islam”, often applied to Kufa but at least once to Basra [see appendix]. This expression is combined with other genitive constructions such as *kanz al-īmān*, “the treasure of faith”, *ḡum-ḡumat al-islām*, “the cranium of Islam”, or *ḡumḡumat al-‘Arab*, or *ra’s al-‘Arab*, or *sayf Allāh*, “God’s sword”, or *rumḥ Allāh al-aṭwal*, “God’s longest lance”, etc. [see the appendix], all this in a bewildering tangle of combinations, ascribed either to ‘Umar or to ‘Alī and sometimes to others like Salmān al-Fārisī.

When one is confronted with a particular debate, the problem is to decide whether it has a historical basis or whether it is fictional, made up of originally disparate pieces. One might argue that this is a problem for historians, not for literary historians, who do not have to bother about “what really happened” and ought to busy themselves only with the texts; but Arabic historiography usually is a form of belles-lettres and the two disciplines should not operate in isolation. In any case it is obvious that an understanding of literary processes that take place in historiography is extremely relevant to historians, whereas, conversely, the dependence of the literary scholar on historical studies, though important, is less essential.

It has been claimed more than once by specialists in the history of Arabic grammar that the existence of two distinct grammatical schools in the two towns and their rivalry may be seen as a construct made in Baghdad, created by later grammarians for various reasons. The matter is still in dispute. What has been argued for grammatical studies might be extended to the rivalry between Basra and Kufa in general: after all, the texts that we possess were all written in ‘Abbasid times, after the foundation of Baghdad. However, it seems to me that there is no good reason to doubt

that especially before Baghdad took over the rivalry between the two towns really existed in various forms. The composition of some debates and the wording may be later inventions, but the various themes and arguments must antedate our written sources.

The rivalry between the towns, as we shall see, was fought on various grounds; the merits and demerits of the towns were derived from various fields, ranging from the climatological to the politico-religious. It is difficult to establish which of the relevant texts are the oldest. The harangue against the Basrans attributed to Mohammed's cousin and son-in-law, the caliph ʿAlī, who died in 661, looks suspiciously like a literary composition, but it may well be old even if not by ʿAlī himself; I translate the beginning of one of its many versions, with some interspersed annotation:

You have been that woman's soldiers [*viz.* of ʿĀ'īša, the Prophet's widow when she supported ʿAlī's opponents, including many Basrans, and was present at the Battle of the Camel fought in 656, while seated on the animal after which the battle was named]; the followers of that beast: it grunted and you responded; it was hamstrung and you fled. Your morals are thin [probably a pun is intended: another translation might be: "your threadbare clothes are thin"], your vows are broken in twain, your religion is feigning, your water is briny. He who stays amongst you is pledged to his sin, he who departs from you will attain mercy from his Lord. Your mosque seems to me like the prow of a ship over which God has sent torment from above and from beneath and which has sunk with all aboard (...) Yours is the town that is nearest to the water and farthest from heaven. In it are nine tenths of all evil ...<sup>13</sup>

This is Arabic literature in the grand style, prose embellished with parallelism and rhyme (*raġā fa-aġabtum, wa-ʿuqira fa-harabtum; ahlāqukum di-*

13 al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Nahġ al-balāġa*, with comm. by Muḥammad ʿAbduh, 2 vols. Cairo, n.d., i, 44-45; partly, with variants, in Abū ʿAlī Hārūn Ibn Zakariyyā al-Ḥaġarī, *al-Taʿlīqāt wa-l-nawādir*, ed. by Ḥammūd ʿAbd al-Amīr al-Ḥammādī, 2 vols. Baghdad, 1980-1981, ii, 271; cf. also Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-aḥbār*, Cairo, 1925-1930, i, 217, Ibn ʿAbd Rabbih, *al-ʿIqd al-farīd*, Cairo, 1948-1953, iv, 81, al-Masʿūdī, *Murūġ al-ḍahab*, ed. Ch. Pellat, Beirut, 1966-1979, iii, 113, al-Ābī, *Naṭr al-durr*, Cairo, n.d.-1991, i, 315, al-Zamaḥṣarī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār*, ed. Salīm al-Nuʿaymī, Baghdad, 1976-82, i, 308-9, Yāqūt, *Muġam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1866-1870, i, 646-47.

*qāq, wa-°ahdukum šiqāq, wa-dīnukum nifāq, wa-mā'ukum zu°āq*).<sup>14</sup> Its forcefully exploits what we may call the hybrid nature of Basra: half sea, half land: not a place where decent people should live. Its mosque looks like a ship foundering in a tempest.

This very hybridity of Basra has more than once been seen as positive rather than negative, Basra being described as a wondrous place for this reason. °Umar Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb is told that Basra is a place where (sea-)fish and lizard are stuck on one skewer: *Mā taqūlu fī l-ḍabbi wa-l-ḥūti yuḡma°u fī saffūd?* He replies: “You describe a land terrestrial and marine (*arḍan barriyyatan baḥriyyatan*)” and is pleased with the place.<sup>15</sup> The poet Ibn Abū °Uyayna praises Basra as his beloved homeland where fishes marry lizards, where there are ships like ostriches and ostriches like ships: *Zuw-wiḡa ḥitānuhā l-ḍibāba bihā ... Min sufunin ka-l-na°āmi muqbilatin / wa-min na°āmin ka-annahā sufunū*.<sup>16</sup> Basra combines complementary opposites: *ḥaḍar/badw*, sea/land, meat/fish, highland/lowland, in the words of Abū l-°Aynā': *lā yu°rafu baladun aqrabu barran min baḥrin wa-ḥaḍaran min badwin wa-qāniša waḥšin wa-šā'ida samakin wa-naḡdan min ḡawrin min al-Bašrah ...*<sup>17</sup> Al-Ḥalīl Ibn Aḡmad made a verse on a place near Basra: *... min manzilin ḥaḡdirin in šī'ta aw bādī, / Turfā qarāqīruhā wa-l-°īsu wāqifatin / wa-l-nūnu wa-l-ḍabbu wa-l-mallāḡu wa-l-ḥādī*.<sup>18</sup> Much

14 For many of the words of these few sentences the sources offer variants: *da°ā* for *raḡā*, *fa-ḡi'tum* or *fa-ttaba°tum* for *fa-aḡabtum*, *fa-nhazamtum* or *fa-tafarraqtum* for *fa-harabtum*, *aḡlāmukum* or *a°mālukum* for *aḡlāqukum*, *riqāq* for *diqāq*; to say nothing of omissions or additions of words and phrases. This small-scale example is representative of what happens also on a larger scale when °Alī's speech as a whole is considered.

15 Ibn al-Faqīh al-Hamaḡānī, *al-Buldān*, ed. M.J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1885, 186.

16 Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-buldān*, i, 649.

17 al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas al-muḡtašar min al-Muqtabas*, ed. R. Sellheim, Wiesbaden, 1964, 173.

18 al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 70; a variant (*turfā bihi l-sufnu wa-l-ḡilmānu ḥaḡdiratun / wa-l-ḍabbu wa-l-nūnu wa-l-mallāḡu wa-l-ḥādī*) in al-Ḡāḡiḡ, *Rasā'il*, iv, 138, id., *al-Ḥayawān*, vi, 98-9, al-Ta°ālibī, *Ṭimār al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1985, 527-8, id., *Yatīmat al-dahr*, Cairo, 1947, i, 134, al-Zamaḡšarī, *Rabī° al-abrār*, i, 317 and al-Qazwīnī, *Āṭār al-bilād*, Beirut, 1979, 310; cf. al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 71 (here attributed to either al-Ḥalīl or Abū °Uyayna; cf. above): *Šāhara ḡitānahā l-ḡibābu ... / Min sufunin ka-l-na°āmi muqbilatin / wa-min na°āmin ka-annahā*



later, the motif reappears in al-Ḥarīrī: *bihi taltaqī l-fulku wa-l-rikāb / wa-l-ḥītānu wa-l-ḍibāb / wa-l-ḥādī wa-l-mallāḥ / wa-l-qāniṣu wa-l-fallāḥ / wa-l-nāšibu wa-l-rāmiḥ / wa-l-sāriḥu wa-l-sābih*.<sup>19</sup>

Interestingly, it seems that the same motif was also applied, perhaps even originally so, to Kufa, which did not lie near the sea but on a river, both *baḥr* in Arabic. It is reported that the site of Kufa was described to ʿUmar Ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb as *arḍun barriyyatun baḥriyyah, arḍu šīḥin wa-qayṣūm, wa-arḍu ḍabbin wa-ḥūt*.<sup>20</sup> Kufa was also described as partaking in river and desert: *ṭarfuhā fī baḥrin aḡḡāḡin wa-l-ṭarfu l-āḥaru fī l-falāḥ*.<sup>21</sup> I suspect that the topos was transposed from Kufa to Basra because there the geographical and ecological contrasts were more striking.

There are several accounts of a few debates that allegedly took place between Basrans and Kufans in the presence of caliphs or governors, both Umayyad and ʿAbbasid ones; confusingly, it happens that the same or at least a very similar debate is mentioned in connection with more than one ruler. One of these debates is said to have taken place before ʿAbd al-Malik (d. 705) or his son Hišām (d. 743). The geographer Ibn al-Faqīh gives the following story on the authority of Ibn al-Kalbī:

Al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ [the governor of Iraq], together with some prominent men from Iraq, was received by ʿAbd al-Malik Ibn Marwān. After they had entered, the matter of Kufa and Basra was mentioned. Muḥammad Ibn ʿUmayr al-ʿUṭāridī said, “Kufa lies lower than Syria and its hills and its cold,<sup>22</sup> and higher than

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*sufunū*); and al-Zamaḥṣarī, *Rabīʿ al-abrār*, i, 318 (Ibn al-Muʿaddal, in *saḡʿ*): *bayna sawāriya wa-riʿāʿ / wa-ḥītānin wa-ḏibāʿ*.

19 al-Ḥarīrī, *al-Maqāmāt*, ed. A.I. Silvestre de Sacy, Paris, 1847-1853, 671.

20 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-ʿAlawī al-Ḥasanī (d. 445), *Faḍl al-Kūfa wa-faḍl ahlihā*, ed. Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Ṭurayḥī, Beirut, 1981, 57-88, 61; cf. the several versions in al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, 2483-84, 2486-87 (transl. Juynboll, xiii, 63-65, 67), relating the story why the Arabs moved from al-Madāʿin to the site of Kufa. Juynboll translates the two words *barriyyan baḥriyyan* as “on the edge of the desert and [not entirely surrounded by, but with easy access to] the water”; a rendering he himself admits is “perhaps somewhat wordy”.

21 al-ʿAlawī al-Ḥasanī, *Faḍl al-Kūfa*, 67.

22 Reading *rubāhā* with Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, *ʿIqd*, vi, 249, instead of *wabāʿihā*, and assuming with De Goeje that *ʿamaliḥā* is a corruption for a word meaning “cold”, suggested by the context and found in a similar statement attributed to Ibn al-Qirriyya, Ibn Ḥallikān, *Wafayāt*, Beirut, 1968-72, i, 253.

Basra and its heat and its lowland.<sup>23</sup> The Euphrates is near, so it has fresh water. Its fruit is good. It is salubrious and fertile.” Then ʿAbd Allāh Ibn al-Ahtam al-Saʿdī said, “But, by God, Commander of the Believers! our land (*turba*) is wider than theirs, and has more habitation (*durba*) than theirs. Our desert hinterland (*barriyya*) is larger than theirs and we have swifter raiding parties (*sariyya*) than they. We have more candy and cash (*qand wa-naqd*) than they. Whatever comes to us comes of its own accord, happily (ʿ*afwan ṣafwan*); those who leave us are either driving, leading or shouting [ʿ*sāʾiq aw qāʾid aw nāʾiq*; one would expect ‘being driven, led or shouted at (like cattle)’].”<sup>24</sup> Then al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ said, “I know something about the two towns, Commander of the Believers!” “Let us have it”, he said, “for you cannot be accused [of partisanship] for them.” He answered, “As for Basra, that is a grey-haired old woman, with bad breath. She stinks, but has all sorts of jewels and finery. Kufa, on the other hand, is a virgin without ornaments: she has neither jewels nor finery.” Then ʿAbd al-Malik said, “It seems to me that you prefer Kufa.”<sup>25</sup>

A relatively old text that has a rather authentic ring is given by a ninth-century author, al-Ḥaḡarī, which I translate here, with explanatory remarks added by me. The reference to al-Saffāḥ at the beginning seems to imply that the text is from the early ʿAbbasid period; but parts of it could be older. The rather abrupt shift from third person plural to first person plural after a few sentences might indicate that the text is a bit of patchwork:

Among the things of which the Kufans boast against the Basrans is that they have given birth to Abū l-ʿAbbās [al-Saffāḥ], the commander of the faithful [i.e. the first ʿAbbasid caliph, regn. 750-54]; that they have expelled Kisrā [the Sassanid emperor] from his abodes and plundered his army and his treasures. They settled in Kufa. Basra compares to Kufa in Iraq as does the bladder to the body: its water reaches it after it has gone off and has become putrid, and then, having gathered, it flows into the salt sea. We [note the shift in person] are the inhabit-

23 Read *ḡamaq* “dampness, humidity” instead of ʿ*umq*?

24 The same Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 191 (where a variant reading *bi-sāʾiq* is recorded) and al-Masʿūdī, *Murūḡ*, iii, 358 (said by Ḥālid Ibn Ṣafwān); cf. iv, 190: “I always come to Basra willingly, I always leave it unwillingly” (said by al-Aḡnaf Ibn Qays in a similar context).

25 Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 163-64; cf. Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-buldān*, iv, 324-25. The comparison of Kufa and Basra to women of contrasting appearance is often found, sometimes attributed to the earlier governor Ziyād Ibn Abīhi (e.g. Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 165, al-Ġāḡiz, *Rasāʾil*, vol. iv, Cairo, 1979, 136).



ants of Iraq whose example is followed.<sup>26</sup> Our land is not as cold as Syria, nor as hot as the Hejaz. We are those who killed the people of the Camel [°Alī's opponents], and the people of al-Nahrawān and Ḥarūrā [referring to °Alī's Ḥārīḡite opponents who were defeated in 658] and the people of Ṣiffīn [°Alī's Umayyad opponents, in a battle in 657 ending in a stale-mate]. We were given before you, you were given after us [this is rather obscure]. There is someone among you who maintains that he may guide his own soul [himself] or lead it astray, if he wills. [This sounds as if it is directed against the Basran Mu'tazilite anti-predestinarian theologians]. Al-Rayyān Ibn Hawḍa al-Ḥanafī, who killed Ḍū l-Ṭudayya, is from Kufa [Ḥurqūṣ Ibn Zuhayr, nicknamed Ḍū l-Ṭudayya, was a Ḥārīḡite killed at the battle of al-Nahrawān], and also Ḥaḡḡār Ibn Abhar, Qa'qā' Ibn Ṣawr, °Utayba Ibn al-Nahḥās ... [some more names follow]. Among us are the leading tribes of the Arabs: the tribe of Tamīm, the people of Ḥāḡīb Ibn Zurāra, the tribe of Rabī'a, Qays Ibn Mas'ūd of the Two Grandfathers, the tribe of Qays °Aylān, the people of Badr Ibn Fazāra, the tribe of Dabba, the people of Dirār Ibn al-Munḍir Ibn Ḥassān, the tribe of Kinda and the people of al-Aṣ'at Ibn Qays. [To us belong] people like °Abbās Ibn Mirdās [This is odd, because this *muḥaḍram* poet settled near Basra],<sup>27</sup> Abū Miḡḡan al-Ṭaqafī [another *muḥaḍram* poet, for whom I again cannot see any connection with Kufa], the people of Ḥanzala Ibn Sayyār al-°Iḡlī, the man of the battle of Ḍū Qār,<sup>28</sup> Amīr Ibn Aḡmar Ibn Mis'ar al-Yaṣkurī, the governor of Ḥurāsān ... [a number of names follow, ending with:] Have you then, people of Basra, someone like him who protected the Banū Ḥāšim, Ḥānī Ibn °Urwa?"<sup>29</sup>

The last-mentioned was executed in 680 because he had sheltered a cousin of al-Ḥusayn Ibn °Alī shortly before the latter's uprising, which made him the most prominent of Ṣī'ite martyrs.<sup>30</sup> The plethora of politico-religious references together with the unembellished style make it plain that the "literary" function is still minimal. One could imagine that debates on such hot issues could have considerable amusement value for those involved as participants or, especially, as interested bystanders. It is probably no coincidence that the first "official" debates between Kufans and Basrans, instigated or encouraged by more or less impartial outsiders, are according to the reports set at the court of the early °Abbasid caliphs, who, rather than

26 Uncertain; the edition has *yḥdywn*; but \**yuhḍayūna* surely ought to be *yuhḍawna*.

27 See *EI*<sup>2</sup> s.v. al-°Abbās b. Mirdās.

28 See *EI*<sup>2</sup> s.v. "Ḍḥū Kār".

29 al-Ḥaḡarī, *al-Ta'liqāt wa-l-nawādir*, ii, 265-71.

30 See *EI*<sup>2</sup> s.v. "Ḥānī' b. °Urwa al-Murādī".

residing in either town, built a new one near a village called Baghdad. Here is one such story, or at least the beginning of it:<sup>31</sup>

A number of °Alīds and °Abbasids, including Basrans and Kufans, came together in the presence of Abū l-°Abbās al-Saffāḥ [the first °Abbasid caliph, regn. 750-54]. Among them were Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī, a Basran, and Ibn °Ayyāš, from Kufa. Abū l-°Abbās said, “Debate, so that we may know which of you is better.” One of the °Alīds said, “The people of Basra fought against °Alī at the Battle of the Camel; they broke with the Muslim community.”

Abū l-°Abbās said, “What do you say, Abū Bakr?” He said, “God forbid that the people of Basra should be so brutish! It was merely a little band that strayed from the true path, overcome as they were by Satan. In every people there are good ones and wicked ones. The Basrans are richer in goods and children, more obedient to the ruler, and more knowledgeable about the regulations of Islam.”

Ibn °Ayyāš answered, “We know more about conquests than you. We expelled Kīsrā from the land and destroyed his armies. We took possession of his realm, we conquered the provinces. Basra is in Iraq what the bladder is in the body: the water reaches it after it has become altered and bad. Its back is pressed by the roughest and worst stones of the Hejaz; from above it is pressed by its stagnant river, even though they think its water sweet: but for that they could not live there; and from underneath it is pressed by the dark sea (...) Kufa’s place is like that of the uvula and the tongue in the body; it lies at the forefront of countries. Water reaches it while still cool and sweet (...) Basra’s place in Iraq is like the place of the bladder in the body.”

Abū Bakr answered, “In addition to what you have described, you are richer in prophets. We have but one prophet: Mohammed, God bless and preserve him! All your prophets are weavers”.

Then Abū l-°Abbās (the Caliph) laughed so that he nearly fell off his throne. “By God, you are a one, Abū Bakr!”, he exclaimed. “And”, added Abū Bakr, “I have never seen prophets crucified except in Kufa”. Ibn °Ayyāš replied, “You revile the Kufans on account of three madmen from the riffraff who pretended, in their madness, to be prophets, so God let them be crucified in Kufa. In Basra there are many who should be reviled who pretend to possess reason and nobility and knowledge of Ḥadīṭ, each of them claiming that by his own will he either follows the right path or strays from it. A mad would-be prophet

31 There exist several versions, the longest being preserved in the oldest source: Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 167-73, followed here; see also al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 41-43, Abū l-Faraġ Mu°āfā Ibn Zakariyyā al-Ġarīrī, *al-Ġalīs al-šāliḥ al-kāfi*, ii (ed. Muḥammad Mursī al-Ḥawlī), Beirut, 1993, 443-46, al-Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsīn wa-l-masāwī*, Beirut, 1970, 96-98.

is less dangerous than a sound person claiming that he is righteous or straying by his own choice! They have claimed God-like powers by saying such things.”

Abū l-ʿAbbās said, “That answers your words, Abū Bakr, with like words, or worse even!”

At this point someone else butts in on the Kufan side; the debate turns around the Battle of the Camel once more, and other events such as the episode of al-Muḥtār. Then this person, al-Ḥasan Ibn Zayd, addresses Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī:

“Do not try to get the better of the Kufans, Abū Bakr, and do not boast against them, for they have more religious scholars (*fuqahāʾ*) and nobles (*ašrāf*) than you!”

Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī argues that for every noble person in Kufa the Basrans have someone who is even more noble and lists several names. Ibn ʿAyyāš replies that “the people of Basra are like a string of animal droppings, all equal, with one pearl in the middle”. He means that in Basra each tribal group can boast of one prominent person, whereas in Kufa there are many in each tribe, and continues with many names. The debate goes on for some time. Finally the caliph stands up and utters the following statement before retiring:

“Kufa is the place of *adab* (erudition, good manners), the face of Iraq, the place where new moons rise (...), the goal of the seeker, the dwelling of the Prophet’s best companions, people of nobility. The Basrans are most like them of all people.”

The priority given to Kufa in this verdict is perhaps understandable, since the inauguration of the reign of this first ʿAbbasid caliph took place in Kufa. Yet there exists another version of the same debate where Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī from Basra is pronounced the winner by al-Saffāḥ, who “laughed so much that he stamped with his foot and said, By God, I have never seen such a victory!”<sup>32</sup> It must be added that in this version Abū Bakr himself is presented as the narrator.

It might be thought that the oldest debates deal with more serious issues, such as religion and politics, than later debates which serve as a form

32 al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 43, al-Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsīn*, 98, al-Ġarīrī, *Ġalīs*, ii, 446.

of literary entertainment. However, trivial aspects are by no means absent in early debates, if the sources may be believed. I have mentioned the quarrel between a man from Basra and one from Kufa reported by al-Ġāḥiẓ in the ninth century, on different kinds of grapes. Ibn Qutayba mentions that Yazīd Ibn ʿUmar Ibn Hubayra (d. 749-50), governor of Basra and Kufa together, once asked, “Which town has better fruits, Kufa or Basra?” In the ensuing debate between Ḥālīd Ibn Ṣafwān for Basra and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ibn Baṣīr for Kufa, the latter scores a clear victory.<sup>33</sup>

Thus far I have spoken about debates that are presented as the written versions of what were once, presumably or allegedly, real debates. But in works of literature one often finds another kind of debate; a kind that does not pretend ever to have taken place in reality. I mean the juxtaposition or collocation of opposing judgments and opinions. This is what I should like to call the true literary debate of Kufa and Basra. The texts discussed before are themselves building-blocks for writers and compilers of historical or anthological and other works. Some try to be fair and scrupulously attempt to keep a balance. Yāqūt, in the chapter on Basra in his great geographical dictionary, includes a section entitled *dīkr mā ḡāʿa fī damm al-Baṣra*, quotations condemning Basra, which is followed by *dīkr mā ḡāʿa fī madḥ al-Baṣra*, quotations in praise of Basra.<sup>34</sup> Remarkably, in the former section Kufa is not mentioned at all, but to anyone who is acquainted with the history of Basra the other place is present as a kind of virtual reality. The balance is somewhat tipped in favour of Basra simply because the praise section is longer than the blame section and follows it; but the equilibrium is restored more or less in the section on Kufa.

More obviously biased is the great al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122), author of the most famous collection of *Maqāmāt*. As usual, most *maqāmāt* are called after towns. Naturally, al-Ḥarīrī, like his predecessor Badīʿ al-Zamān al-Hamaḍānī, includes a *maqāma kūfiyya* (no. 5) and a *maqāma baṣriyya* (no. 50, the last one).<sup>35</sup> In the former, Kufa is merely the setting for a nightly

33 Ibn Qutayba, *ʿUyūn al-aḥbār*, i, 220-21; cf. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, “Khālīd ibn Ṣafwān — The Man and the Legend”, *Studia Orientalia* (Helsinki), 73 (1994) 69-166, see 113.

34 Yāqūt, *Muḡam al-buldān*, i, 646-48 and 648-53, respectively.

35 al-Ḥarīrī, *al-Maqāmāt*, 49-60 and 668-87, respectively.

conversation; the town is not mentioned apart from the very beginning. The last *maqāma*, however, contains a true panegyric on Basra. It concludes with the theme of the “penitence”, *tawba*, of its hero Abū Zayd, which is not unusual in non-religious works of *adab*, but praise of Basra is in fact its main theme. The *maqāma* has been discussed by Von Grunebaum in his article “Observations on City Panegyrics in Arabic Prose”,<sup>36</sup> later published in German as “Zum Lob der Stadt in der arabischen Prosa”.<sup>37</sup> He calls al-Ḥarīrī’s text the finest and richest city panegyric in Arabic, and at the same time a good example of the stubborn survival of certain elements of classical (that is, Greek) epideictic literature.<sup>38</sup> He means that it cannot be a coincidence that al-Ḥarīrī’s panegyric neatly corresponds to the prescriptions of the old Greeks like Menander. It seems to me that any extensive city panegyric would almost naturally contain the elements mentioned by Menander and that Von Grunebaum’s contention is by no means beyond dispute.<sup>39</sup>

What concerns us here is that al-Ḥarīrī can be seen to have used many of the traditional issues in the Basra-Kufa debate, while leaving out Kufa altogether. In al-Ḥarīrī’s day there was, after all, no point in demolishing poor old Kufa, no longer a pretty girl but ruined by being dominated by Bedouin tribes and superseded by nearby al-Ḥilla, newly founded in 1102. Al-Ġāḥiẓ no doubt exaggerated when he described Kufa as mostly in ruins, merely a village,<sup>40</sup> but Ibn Ġubayr’s account of the state of its decay in 1183 is obviously true to life,<sup>41</sup> and al-Muqaddasī, in the second half of the tenth century, although calling it “a splendid, charming, and beautiful metropolis ..., a well-populated, prosperous place”, nevertheless says that

36 *JAOS* 64 (1944) 61-65.

37 Gustave E. von Grunebaum, *Kritik und Dichtkunst: Studien zur arabischen Literaturgeschichte*, Wiesbaden, 1955, 80-86.

38 Von Grunebaum, *Kritik und Dichtkunst*, 83.

39 A few stylistic features common in city panegyrics also derive from Greek models, according to Von Grunebaum: lists of genitive constructions (*Bagdād umm al-dunyā wa-sayyidat al-bilād wa-...*) and lists of short verbless sentences (*kawkabuhā yaqzān wa-ġawwuhā uryān wa-...*). This derivation seems equally far-fetched to me.

40 *Rasā’il*, iv, 142.

41 Ibn Ġubayr, *al-Riḥla*, ed. W. Wright, Leiden, 1852, 212-13.



the town has become delapidated, its suburbs being in ruins.<sup>42</sup> Basra, too, was but a shadow of its former self, as al-Ḥarīrī says in his *maqāma*.<sup>43</sup> In any case, the rivalry between the two towns was a thing of the past in al-Ḥarīrī's time. In literature, however, based on past literary monuments as it always is, the rivalry lives on. Everyone cultured reader of, or listener to, al-Ḥarīrī's *maqāma* would be aware of this. Here are a few quotations from Abū Zayd's speech to the Basrans; for each of its statements there are parallels in the older texts, discussed in the above:

(Your town is) the one with the most spacious area, the most fertile grazing ground. Yours is the truest *qibla*,<sup>44</sup> you are richest in rivers and date-palms ... You are one of the world's wings, a town founded upon piety ... In it, ships and stirrups meet, seafish and lizards, cameleer and sailor, hunter and farmer, ... cattle driver and swimmer. It has (God's wondrous) sign of the tides, overflowing high and sinking low ... Your population is most obedient to the ruler, most grateful for beneficence. Your ascetic (i.e. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, according to the commentators) is the most God-fearing of all creatures, the best walker on the True Path; your scholar (Abū ʿUbayda) is the greatest scholar of all time ..., from among you is the one who discovered and laid down the science of grammar (Abū l-Aswad al-Du'alī) and the one who newly invented poetical prosody (al-Ḥalīl Ibn Aḥmad).

In short, there is no question of a debate, but in fact there certainly is a debate lurking behind this text.

The challenge of the pro-Basran al-Ḥarīrī was taken up by an emulator, Abū l-ʿAbbās Yaḥyā Ibn Mārī al-Baṣrī (d. 589/1193), whose "Christian *Maqāmas*" (*al-Maqāmāt al-masīḥiyya*) include a *maqāma* on Kufa and another on Basra. The liveliness of the former town, excited with

42 al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, ed. M. J. de Goeje, Leiden, 1906, 116-17, Al-Muqaddasi, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, transl. by Basil Anthony Collins, Reading, 1994, 105.

43 *Maqāmāt*, 673: "... even though it is effaced, on the brink of extinction". Yet Baghdad itself was soon past its prime; al-Muqaddasī records the opinion that in his day all the inhabited parts of Baghdad, brought together and the ruined parts removed, would amount to a town no bigger than Basra (*Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, 117-18, transl. Collins, 107).

44 According to the commentators the Basrans take the door of the Kaaba in Mecca as their direction of prayer; others turn towards the corner that holds the Black Stone or some other point.

the performance of an improvising poet in the market-place, is contrasted with the dullness of the latter, where the silence of the cemetery is less oppressive than the boredom and dreariness of the town itself.<sup>45</sup>

Taken on the whole, through the centuries, Basra seems to dominate in the debate. I began with the towering figure of al-Ġāḥiẓ, a Basran; the *Maqāmāt* of the Basran chauvinist al-Ḥarīrī wholly eclipsed those of the obscure emulator, the Kufan partisan. The grammatical school of Basra prevailed, in the end, over the Kufan school. If I may end on a personal note, I have always felt more affinity with the Basran Muʿtazilites than with the Kufan Šīʿites. Yet Kufa, the poor but comely maiden, deserves our sympathy. The Basran grammarians were fond of regularity and rules; they built systems; the Kufan philologists, on the other hand, preferred to look at language as it was used in real life and therefore paid more attention, for instance to poetry, as depicted by Yaḥyā Ibn Mārī. To the Basrans, studying poetry was useful for the study of linguistics; to the Kufans, studying grammar was useful for the interpretation of poetry. Do I in fact prefer Basra? Do I like stinking rich old women? Nein, ich bin ein Kufier, I am a Kufan!

45 On this author, see Brockelmann, *GAL* I, 278, *S* I, 489. His *Maqāmāt* are still unpublished. See on the Kufa en Basra *maqāmas* Ignaz Goldziher, “A nyelvtudomány történetéről az araboknál. Irodalomtörténeti kísérlet”, *Nyelvtudományi Közlemények*, 14 (1878), 344-45, recently made more accessible by Kinga Dévényi, “A cultural-historical approach to the history of Arabic grammar: On Ignaz Goldziher's views about the history of grammar among the Arabs”, in Concepción Vázquez de Benito & Miguel Ángel Manzano Rodríguez (eds.), *Actas XVI Congreso UEAI*, Salamanca, 1995, 147-56 (see 152), and in Ignaz Goldziher, *On the History of Grammar among the Arabs: An essay in literary history*, Transl. and ed. by Kinga Dévényi and Tamás Iványi, Amsterdam, 1994, 32-33.



APPENDIX: SELECTIVE INVENTORY OF MOTIFS; NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS IN A DEBATE AND OTHER SPEAKERS

Sources:

- ĀbīND: al-Ābī, *Naṭr al-durr*, Cairo, 1980-1990.
- Ağ: Abū l-Farağ al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Ağānī*, Cairo, 1927-1974.
- °AlawīFaḍl: Muḥ. b. °Alī b. al-Ḥasan al-°Alawī, *Faḍl al-Kūfa wa-faḍl ahlihā*, Beirut, 1981.
- BalāḍFut: al-Balāḍurī, *al-Buldān wa-futūḥuhā wa-aḥkāmuhā*, Beirut, 1992.
- BayMaḥ: al-Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-masāwī*, Beirut, 1970.
- ĠāḥBT: al-Ġāḥiz, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, Cairo, 1968.
- ĠāḥḤay: al-Ġāḥiz, *al-Ḥayawān*, Cairo, 1965-1969.
- ĠāḥRas: al-Ġāḥiz, *Rasā'il*, Cairo, 1964, 1979.
- ĠarĠalīs: al-Ġarīrī, *al-Ġalīs al-ṣāliḥ al-kāfi*, Beirut, 1993.
- HağTa°l: al-Hağarī, *al-Ta°liqāt wa-l-nawādir*, Baghdad, 1980-1981.
- ḤarMaq: al-Ḥarīrī, *al-Maqāmāt*, ed. Paris, 1847-53.
- IFaqBuld: Ibn al-Faqīh, *al-Buldān*, Leiden, 1885.
- °Iqd: Ibn °Abd Rabbih, *al-°Iqd al-farīd*, Cairo, 1948-1953.
- IQut°U: Ibn Qutayba, *°Uyūn al-aḥbār*, Cairo, 1925-1930.
- MarzNQ: al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, Wiesbaden, 1964.
- MasMur: al-Mas°ūdī, *Murūğ al-dahab*, Beirut, 1966-1979.
- MuqAḥsTaq: al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, Leiden, 1906, transl. B.A. Collins, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, Reading, 1994.
- NahğBal: *Nahğ al-balāğa*, with comm. by Muḥammad °Abduh, Cairo, n.d.
- QazwAB: al-Qazwīnī, *Ātār al-bilād*, Beirut, 1979.
- RāğMuḥ: al-Rāğib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*, Būlāq, 1287.
- ŠarŠMaq: al-Šarīšī, *Šarḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Cairo, 1952.
- ṬabTār: al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḥ*, Cairo, n.d.-1969
- Ṭa°Laṭ: al-Ṭa°ālibī, *Laṭā'if al-ma°ārif*, Leiden, 1867, tr. C.E. Bosworth, *The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information*, Edinburgh, 1968.
- Ṭa°Ṭim: al-Ṭa°ālibī, *Ṭimār al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1985.
- Ṭa°Yat: al-Ṭa°ālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, Cairo, 1947.
- YāqMB: Yāqūt, *Mu°ğam al-buldān*, Leipzig, 1866-1870.

ZamRab: al-Zamakṣarī, *Rabī° al-abrār*, Baghdad, 1966-1982.

### Basra

B. is more spacious than K. and has more hinterland: IFaqBuld 164, YāqMB iv, 324 (°Abd Allāh b. al-Ahtam al-Sa°dī); cf. ĞāḥBT ii, 93-94 and ĞāḥRas iv, 138 (both al-Aḥnaf), YāqMB i, 324 (°Abd Allāh al-Sa°dī), IQut°U i, 217, RāḡMuḥ (both al-Aḥnaf), ĞāḥBT ii, 93-4, MasMur iii, 358 (Ḥālid b. Ṣafwān), ĞarĜālis ii, 44 (Ḥ. b. Ṣ.).

B. lies in a dry area at the edge of the desert: IFaqBuld 166 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays), MarzNQ 172 and 234 (al-Aḥnaf b. Q.)

B. lies in a silty swamp, its water is brackish: IFaqBuld 166 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays); cf. ĞāḥRas iv, 136-38, 146, HaḡTa°l ii, 266, MarzNQ 234; B.'s water is one third seawater, one third tidewater, one third sewage: MuqAḥsTaq 129/tr. Collins 118

B. stinks: YāqMB i, 648

B. stinks when the south wind blows, is pleasant when the north wind blows: Ta°Laḡ 103/tr. Bosw. 124 (Ibn Lankak, poetry), YāqMB i, 647-48 (Ibn Lankak), MuqAḥsTaq 125/tr. Collins 113

B.'s water is purified of all mud and sand found in Baghdad or K.: ĞāḥRas iv, 140; cf. MasMur iii, 358 (Ḥālid b. Ṣafwān), MasMur iv, 190-91

B. is a place where (sea-)fish and lizard are stuck on one skewer: IFaqBuld 186, cf. YāqMB i, 649 (Ibn Abū °Uyayna, poetry), ḤarMaq 671

B. combines complementary opposites: *ḥaḍar/badw*, sea/land, meat/fish, highland/lowland: MarzNQ 173 (Abū l-°Aynā°): *lā yu°rafu baladun aqrabu barran min baḥrin wa-ḥaḍaran min badwin wa-qāniṣa waḥṣin wa-ṣā°ida samakin wa-naḡdan min ḡawrin min al-B. ...*; in verse by al-Ḥalīl b. Aḥm. on a place near B.: MarzNQ 70 (... *min manzilin ḥaḡirin in ṣi°ta aw bādī*, / *Turfā qarāqīruhū wa-l-°isu wāḡifatun / wa-l-nūnu wa-l-ḡabbu wa-l-mallāḡu wa-l-ḥādī*); NB var. in ĞāḥRas iv, 138, ĞāḥḤay vi, 98-9, Ta°Tim 527-8, Ta°Yat i, 134, ZamRab i, 317 and QazwAB 310 (*turfā bihi l-sufnu wa-l-ḡilmānu ḥaḡiratun / wa-l-ḡabbu wa-l-nūnu wa-l-mallāḡu wa-l-ḥādī*); cf. MarzNQ 71 (either al-Ḥalīl or Abū °Uyayna:) *Ṣāhara ḡitānahā l-ḡibābu ... / Min sufunin ka-l-na°āmi muḡbilatin / wa-min na°āmin ka-annahā sufunū*); and ZamRab i, 318, Ibn al-Mu°addal (*saḡ°*): *bayna sawāriya wa-ri°ā° / wa-ḡitānin wa-ḡibā°*; cf. ḤarMaq 671 (*bihi taltaḡi l-fulku wa-l-rikāb / wa-l-ḡitānu wa-l-ḡibāb / wa-l-ḥādī wa-l-mallāḡ / wa-l-qāniṣu wa-l-fallāḡ / wa-l-nāṣibu wa-l-rāmiḡ / wa-l-sāriḡu wa-l-sābiḡ*).

B. is "oppressed" (*maḡḡūta*) by its surroundings: IFaqBuld 168 (Ibn °Ayyāṣ)

B. is characterized by *tā°ūn*: °Iqd vi, 249 (Ḥuḡayfa)

B.'s people open Error's door and do not open True Guidance's door: °Iqd vi, 249 (Ḥuḡayfa)

B. is richer than K.: IFaqBuld 167 (Abū Bakr al-Huḡalī)

B. has more dirhams, K. more food: IFaqBuld 165 (Ziyād)

B. has good *azād* dates: IFaqBuld 166, 175 (Hālid b. Šafwān), IQut<sup>c</sup>U i, 220-21 (Hālid b. Š.); cf. MuqAḥsTaq tr. Collins 119: 49 varieties of dates at B. (as well as 24 kinds of fish)

B. has the best food: ĞāḥRas iv, 145

B.'s dates are an *āya* of God, as are also its *madd & ġazr*: IFaqBuld 191-92 (al-Ḥasan [al-Bašrī?]); cf. ĞāḥRas iv, 145, ĞarĠalīs ii, 45 (Hālid b. Šafwān), YāqMB i, 651-52, MarzNQ 172 (al-Ḥasan), ḤarMaq 671; the tides are a source of constant wonder and a boon to the people of B.: MuqAḥsTaq 124/tr. Collins 113

B.'s "wonders" are dates, sugar cane and cotton (*ruṭab, qaṣab, ʿutub*): MarzNQ 173 (Abū l-ʿAynā')

B. has more cash and candy (*qandan wa-naqdan*): IFaqBuld 164 (ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ahtam al-Saʿdī); cf. MasMur iii, 358 (*qandan wa-ʿāḡan ...*) (Hālid b. Šafwān), ĞarĠalīs ii, 44 (*fayḍan wa-naqdan*) (Ḥ. b. S.)

B. is renowned for its (date) palm trees, its sheep and its homing pigeons: ŠarŠMaq iv, 255

B.'s prices are reasonable, unlike those in K.: ĞāḥRas iv, 144-45

B.: *manābitunā qaṣab wa-anḥārunā ʿaḡab wa-samā'unā ruṭab wa-arḍunā dahab*: ĞāḥBT ii, 93 (Hālid b. Šafwān); cf. IFaqBuld 192, IQut<sup>c</sup>U i, 217, ĞarĠalīs ii, 44 (Ḥ. b. Š.), YāqMB i, 649-50

B. is *aktaru sāḡan wa-ʿāḡan wa-dībāḡan wa-nahran ʿaḡḡāḡan wa-ḥarāḡan* than K.: IFaqBuld 190 (Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī); cf. ĞāḥBT i, 357, ii, 94, IQut<sup>c</sup>U i, 217 (all Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī), ĞāḥRas iv, 147; *aktaru ʿāḡan wa-sāḡan wa-ḥazzan wa-dībāḡan wa-birdawnan himlāḡan wa-ḥarīdatan miḡnāḡan*: IFaqBuld 192 (Hālid b. Šafwān), ĞarĠalīs ii, 44 (Ḥ. b. Š.), YāqMB i, 649 (Ḥ. b. Š.); *aktaru qandan wa-ʿāḡan wa-sāḡan*: MasMur iii, 358 (Hālid b. Š.); *aktaru sāḡan wa-ʿāḡan wa-dībāḡan wa- ... aktaru qandan wa-naqdan* MasMur iv, 190 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays), *aktaru minkum ʿāḡan wa-sāḡan wa-dībāḡan wa-ḥarāḡan*: ĞāḥHay vii, 232 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, or Hālid b. Š., or Abū Bakr al-Ḥudālī)

B. is *ḥayr bilād Allāh li-l-ḡā'i wa-l-ḡarīb wa-l-muflis*: IFaqBuld 190, IQut<sup>c</sup>U i, 221, YāqMB i, 647

B. is eagerly sought, unwillingly left: IFaqBuld 164, 191 (both ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ahtam al-Saʿdī), MasMur iii, 358 (Hālid b. Šafwān), MasMur iv, 190 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays)

B., if lost, should have K. for its ransom: IFaqBuld 190, IQut<sup>c</sup>U i, 216, ʿIqd vi, 249, YāqMB i, 649 (all Ziyād); whoever brings me to B. may have K. as reward from me: ZamRab i, 308 (Abū ʿUbayda)

B. is *ʿayn al-ʿIrāq* (which is *ʿayn al-dunyā*): ĞāḥRas iv, 139 (Ğaʿfar b. Sulaymān), ʿIqd vi, 249 (Ğaʿfar b. Sul.), IQut<sup>c</sup>U i, 222 (Ĝ. b. S.), TaʿLaṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123 (Ĝ. b. S.)

B. is *ḥizānat al-ʿarab wa-qubbat al-islām*: ZamRab i, 317.

B. is one of the two wings of the bird that is the world: IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 216 (Abū Hurayra), MarzNQ 171 (Iyās b. Mu<sup>°</sup>āwiya), ḤarMaq 670-71

B. as bladder in body: HaḡTa<sup>°</sup>1 ii, 266, IFaqBuld 168 (Ibn <sup>°</sup>Ayyāš), IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 220 (I<sup>°</sup>Ayyāš), <sup>°</sup>Iqd vi, 249 (Ibn <sup>°</sup>Ayyāš), Ta<sup>°</sup>Laṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123 (Ziyād [b. Abīhi])

B. is *asra<sup>°</sup> al-arḍ ḥarāban wa-aḥbaṭuhā turāban*, furthest from heaven, quickest to drown: ĞāḥRas iv, 139, HaḡTa<sup>°</sup>1 ii, 271, MasMur iv, 191, YāqMB i, 647 (<sup>°</sup>Alī)

B. is *ašadd al-arḍ <sup>°</sup>adāban wa-šarruhā turāban wa-asra<sup>°</sup>uhā ḥarāban*: IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 216 (Ḥālid b. Maymūn)

B. as ugly rich old woman: IFaqBuld 164 (al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ), ĞāḥRas iv, 136 (Ziyād), YāqMB iv, 325 (al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ), IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 220 (al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ), MasMur iii, 358 (al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ), MasMur iv, 190 (anon.), <sup>°</sup>Iqd vi, 249, Ta<sup>°</sup>Laṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123, QazwAB 250 (all al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ)

B.'s people fought <sup>°</sup>Alī at the Battle of the Camel and were defeated: IFaqBuld 166 (A<sup>°</sup>šā Hamdān, poetry, also MarzNQ 245, Aḡ vi, 55, ĞarĠalīs iv, 111), IFaqBuld 167, 168-69 (al-Ḥasan b. Zayd & Ibn <sup>°</sup>Ayyāš), HaḡTa<sup>°</sup>1 ii, 266

B.'s people are *baqāyā Tamūd*: IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 216, YāqMB i, 646-47, ŠarŠMaq iv, 255 (all <sup>°</sup>Alī)

B.'s people are *ḡund al-mar'a* [= <sup>°</sup>Ā'iša], *atbā<sup>°</sup> al-bahīma* [= <sup>°</sup>Ā'iša's camel] etc.: IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 216, 217, NahḡBal i, 44, HaḡTa<sup>°</sup>1 ii, 271, <sup>°</sup>Iqd iv, 81, MasMur iii, 113, ĀbīND i, 315, YāqMB i, 646-47, ŠarŠMaq iv, 255 (all <sup>°</sup>Alī)

B. had to help K. against Muḥtār, K.'s false prophet: IFaqBuld 169 (Abū Bakr al-Huḍalī)

B.: to be deposed as its governor and then to be made K.'s governor (like al-Muḡīra) is a great punishment: IQut<sup>°</sup>U i, 216-17, YāqMB i, 649 (both Ibn Sīrīn)

B. may boast of al-Ḥasan al-Bašrī: IFaqBuld 166, ḤarMaq 671-72 ("*zāhidukum*")

B. may boast of al-Ḥasan al-Bašrī, Ṭalḥa b. <sup>°</sup>Abd Allāh, Ibn Sīrīn, Mālik b. Dīnār, al-Ḥalīl b. Aḥmad: IFaqBuld 190, cf. ḤarMaq 672

B. is renowned for its *ibāda*: MarzNQ 234 (Ṭābit al-Bunānī)

B. has *aḥlam al-nās* (al-Aḥnaf), the most generous one (Ṭalḥa b. <sup>°</sup>Abd Allāh b. Ḥalaf), the bravest (<sup>°</sup>Abbād b. Ḥusayn and al-Ḥarīš) and the most pious (<sup>°</sup>Āmir b. <sup>°</sup>Abd Qays): IFaqBuld 167 (Sa<sup>°</sup>id b. Mas<sup>°</sup>ūd al-Māzinī)

B. has more noble people than K.: IFaqBuld 170 (Abū Bakr al-Huḍalī)

B. superior to Baghdad because of the large number of pious people: MuqAḥsTaq 117/tr. Collins 107; cf. *ibid.* 130/118-19

B.'s people are *aṭwa<sup>°</sup> li-l-sultān*: IFaqBuld 167 (Abū Bakr al-Huḍalī), ḤarMaq 671

B.'s people amazingly given to riot: MuqAḥsTaq 117/tr. Collins 107; cf. *ibid.* 129-30/118: most grievous sectarian quarrels at B., between Sunnīs and Šī<sup>°</sup>īs

B. houses heretics believing in freewill: IFaqBuld 168 (Ibn <sup>°</sup>Ayyāš), HaḡTa<sup>°</sup>1 ii, 266

B.'s people possess the excitability (*ḥidda*) and the frivolity (*nazaq*) of the Ḥūz: MarzNQ 25 (Abū °Amr b. al-°Alā')

### Kufa

K. *arḍ saḥla ma°rūfa ta°rifuhā ḡimālunā al-ma°lūfa*: IFaqBuld 163 (°Alī)

K.'s surface is like a virgin's cheek; lavender, camomile, anemonies grow there in plenty: MarzNQ 233 (al-Ša°bī)

K.'s earth is like camphor: MarzNQ 234 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays)

K. lies lower than cold Syria, higher than hot B. etc.: IFaqBuld 163-64, 164 (Muḥ. b. °Umayr al-°Uṭāridī = Muḥ. b. °Umayr b. °Uṭārid), IQut°U i, 220 (Muḥ. b. °Umayr b. °Uṭ.), cf. HaḡTa°l ii, 266, MasMur iii, 358 (Muḥ. b. °U. b. °U.), °Iqd vi, 249 (Muḥ. b. °U. b. °U.), YāqMB iv, 324 (Muḥ. b. °U, al-°U.)

K. combines river and land: *arḍ barriyya baḥriyya, arḍ ših wa-qaysūm wa-arḍ ḍabb wa-hūr*: °AlawīFaḍl 57-8; *ṭarfuhā fī baḥr aḡḡāḡ wa-ṭarfuhā l-āḡar fī l-falāḥ*: °AlawīFaḍl 67; *manzilan barriyyan baḥriyyan*: ṬabTār iv, 41, 42; *manzilan ... barriyyan baḥriyyan yunbitu l-ḡaliyy wa-l-našiyy*: ṬabTār iv, 43

K. is placed like the uvula or the tongue in the body: IFaqBuld 168, IQut°U i, 220, °Iqd vi, 249 (all Ibn °Ayyāš), Ṭa°Laṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123 (Ziyād [b. Abīhi]), QazwAB 250 (Ibn °Abbās [sic] al-Hamdānī)

K. has pleasant winds: IFaqBuld 164, °Iqd vi, 249, YāqMB iv, 324 (all Muḥ. b. °Umayr b. °Uṭārid)

K.'s water is fresh & sweet: IFaqBuld 164 twice (Muḥ. b. °Umayr b. °Uṭārid), cf. ibid. 166, 168 (Ibn °Ayyāš); brackish, but drinkable: MuqAḡsTaq 117/tr. Collins 106

K. has broader rivers (*awsa° anḡaran*): MarzNQ 42 (Ibn Abī Laylā)

K.'s water is not as pure as B.'s: ḠāḡRas iv, 140-41

K. has better fruit: IFaqBuld 164 (Muḥ. b. °Umayr al-°Uṭāridī), ibid. 166 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays); cf. IFaqBuld 175 (°Abd al-Raḡmān b. Bašīr al-°Iḡlī), IQut°U i, 220-21 (°Abd al-Raḡm. b. B.)

K. has good *mušān* dates: IFaqBuld 166; cf. 175; good *āzād* dates: MuqAḡsTaq 117/tr. Collins 117

K. has more food, B. more dirhams: IFaqBuld 165 (Ziyād)

K. is *akṭaru ḡarāḡan* than B. [but cf. *supra*]: MarzNQ 41, ḠarḠalīs ii, 444 (both Muḥ. b. °Abd al-Raḡm. b. Abī Laylā)

K. is the site where Ibrāḡīm was born and where Nūḡ built his ark: MuqAḡsTaq 130/tr. Collins 118

K. contains [Ibrāḡīm's] oven, Nūḡ's ark, Mūsā's staff and four Paradisial rivers: °AlawīFaḍl 106 (Salmān), IFaqBuld 173 (°Alī)

K. has more *°ilm and fiqh* than B.: MarzNQ 42, ĞarĜalis ii, 444, BayMaḥ 97 (all [Muḥ. b. °Abd al-Raḥm.] Ibn Abī Laylā)

K.'s people are *ahl Allāh*: IFaqBuld 163, YāqMB iv, 325 (Salmān)

K. is *kanz al-°imān wa-ḡumḡumat al-islām wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: IFaqBuld 163 (°Alī), HaḡTa°1 ii, 271 (°Alī); is *rumḥ Allāh wa-kanz al-°imān wa-ḡumḡumat al-°arab*: BalāḡFut 334 and °AlawīFaḡl 91 (both °Alī); is *kanz al-°imān wa-ḡumḡumat al-°arab wa-rumḥ Allāh al-aṭwal*: ZamRab i, 308 (°Umar); is *sayyid al-amṣār wa-ḡumḡumat al-°arab*: IFaqBuld 164 (°Umar); is *rumḥ Allāh wa-ḡumḡumat al-°arab wa-masqaṭ al-°ilm*: HaḡTa°1 ii, 271 (°Umar); is *rumḥ Allāh wa-qubbat al-islām*: ṬabTār 2515 (°Umar); is *ḡumḡumat al-°arab wa-kanz al-°imān wa-rumḥ al-Allāh fī l-arḍ wa-māddat al-amṣār*: °Iqd vi, 248 (°Umar); is *kanz al-°imān wa-ḥuḡḡat al-islām wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: YāqMB iv, 325 (°Alī); is *kanz al-°imān wa-hāmat al-islām wa-hum sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: °AlawīFaḡl 85 (°Alī); *kanz al-°imān wa-maṣābiḥ al-hudā wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: °AlawīFaḡl 84 (°Alī); is *ḡumḡumat al-islām wa-kanz al-°imān wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: MarzNQ 233, °AlawīFaḡl 71-2, 74-5 (all °Alī); is *ḡumḡumat al-°arab wa-ra'suhā wa-sahmī llaḡī armī bihi*: °AlawīFaḡl 88 (°Umar); is *ra's al-°arab wa-ḡumḡumatuhā*: MarzNQ 233 (°Umar); is *ḡamāḡim al-°arab wa-kanz al-°ilm wa-rumḥ Allāh al-aṭwal*: °AlawīFaḡl 93 (°Umar); is *ma°din al-°ilm wa-ḡamāḡim al-°arab wa-qubbat al-islām*: °AlawīFaḡl 105 (Salmān); is *ra's al-°arab*: BalāḡFut 333 (°Umar); is *ra's al-°arab wa-dimāḡuhā*: °AlawīFaḡl 89 (°Umar); is *ra's al-islām*: BalāḡFut 334 (°Umar), °AlawīFaḡl 93 (°Umar)

K. is *qubbat al-islām*: IFaqBuld 163 (Salm-n), *ibid.* 166 (°Alī), ṬabTār 2514 (°Alī), YāqMB iv, 325 (Salmān), °AlawīFaḡl 73 (°Alī), 102, 103, 105, 108, 109, 110 (all Salmān), 115, 120 (both Ḥuḍayfa)

K. is *bilād al-adab wa-waḡh al-°Irāq ...*: IFaqBuld 173 (al-Saffāḥ)

K.'s dialect is the most correct one, being close to the desert and far from the Nabaṭ: MuqAḥsTaḡ 128/tr. Collins 116

K. has more *fuqahā'* and *aṣrāf* than B.: IFaqBuld 170 (al-Ḥasan b. Zayd); cf. HaḡTa°1 ii, 266-670, ĞarĜalis ii, 445 (Muḥ. b. °Abd al-Raḥm. b. Abī Laylā), MarzNQ 42 (Ibn Abī Laylā), MarzNQ 233 (al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī)

K. is renowned for its *fiqh*: MarzNQ 234 (Ṭābit al-Bunānī)

K. is renowned for its *ra'y*: MarzNQ 234

K. was where 70 people settled who had been at Badr, B. had only °Utba b. Ğazwān (its founder): IFaqBuld 166 (Fiṭr b. Ḥalīfa), MarzNQ 234 (Quṭrub [sic, l. Fiṭr b. [Ḥalīfa]])

K. was °Alī's residence: IFaqBuld 166

K.'s people supported °Alī at the Battle of the Camel, at al-Nahrawān, at al-Ḥarūrā, at Ṣiffīn: HaḡTa°1 ii, 266

K. has the bravest man (al-Aṣṭar), the most generous one (Ḥālid b. °Attāb), the ...est (*aḥmal*) (°Ikrima al-Fayyāḡ), the most pious (°Amr b. °Utba b. Farḡad): IFaqBul 167



- K. will one day be beloved by all believers: IFaqBuld 163 (°Alī)
- K. most favoured in having the Mahdī (?): IFaqBuld 164 (°Abd Allāh b. °Umar)
- K. is rich in false prophets from the rabble: IFaqBuld 168, 185, ĞarĜalīs ii, 444, MarzNQ 42 (all Abū Bakr al-Huḍalī)
- K.'s people are often rebellious; *lā yardawna bi-amīr wa-lā yardāhum amīr*: IFaqBuld 184 (°Umar), cf. °Iqd vi, 249; *lā yurđihimu llāhu °an wālin wa-lā yurđi wāliyan °anhum*: QazwAB 251 (Sa°d Ibn Abī Waqqāš)
- K.'s people are treacherous: IFaqBuld 186 (°Alī; Sukayna bt al-Ḥusayn), MasMur iv, 191, °Iqd vi, 249, Ta°Laṭ 104/tr. Bosw. 124 (*al-Kūfi lā yūfi*)
- K.'s people are stingy: MasMur iv, 191
- K. has more conceitedness (*kibriyā'*) and fewer God-fearing people (*atqiyā'*) than B.: MarzNQ 42, ĞarĜalīs ii, 444, BayMaḥ 97 (all Abū Bakr al-Huḍalī)
- K.'s men copulate with their cows rather than their wives: IFaqBuld 185 (al-Naġāšī, poetry)
- K.'s people are thieves in the night: IFaqBuld 185 (al-Naġāšī, poetry)
- K. boasts of its role in the conquests: IFaqBuld 165, 168 (Ibn °Ayyāš)
- K.'s people dwell in Kisrā's palaces & gardens: IFaqBuld 165-66 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays), cf. ibid. 167-68 (Ibn °Ayyāš), HaġTa°l ii, 266, MarzNQ 172 and 234 (al-Aḥnaf b. Q.)
- K. as pretty poor girl: MasMur iv, 190 (anon.), IFaqBuld 164 (al-Ḥaġġāġ), ibid. 165 (Ziyād), ĞāḥRas iv, 136 (Ziyād), YāqMB iv, 324, IQut°U i, 220, MasMur iii, 358, °Iqd vi, 249, Ta°Laṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123, QazwAB 250 (all al-Ḥaġġāġ)
- K. is a beautiful girl that pleases her husband: °Iqd vi, 248 (°Alī b. Muḥ. al-Madīnī)
- K. is mostly ruins, merely a village: ĞāḥRas iv, 142; dilapidated, its suburbs in ruins: MuqAḥsTaq 117/tr. Collins 106
- K. has a ruined mosque which once was °Alī's (in B. it would have been kept in good shape): ĞāḥRas iv, 143
- K.'s people possess the pedantry (*ḥadlaqa*) and arrogance (*šalaf*) of the Nabaṭ: MarzNQ 25 (Abū °Amr b. al-°Alā')