Narratives and stories concerning the patriarchs and prophets form a substantial part of the Qur’an and were no doubt current among Arabs during the lifetime of the prophet Muhammad. Traditions explaining and expanding upon the Qur’an narratives were probably being collected very soon after this time and emerged in all the genres of Muslim literature: exegesis, historiography and  hadith literature. Books dedicated to the stories of the prophets ( qisas al-anbiyā’) had also been written since the very beginning of Muslim literary activity, and these constituted a literary genre in themselves.

This article will deal with one such work. Unpublished and almost overlooked by scholars, the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of the Andalusian Ibn Mutarrif al-Ṭarafi is a collection of stories of the prophets which was written in the fifth/eleventh century.  Following an introduction, in which the qisas al-anbiyā’ genre will be dealt with, the life of Ṭarafi, the structure, sources and contents of his work will be discussed.

The Qisas al-anbiyā’ genre

Ṭarafi wrote his qisas al-anbiyā’ collection at a time when many books about prophets and the major works of the genre had already appeared.

1 I dealt with the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafi —with an introduction, a translation and an edition of the Arabic text from the two extant manuscripts— in my dissertation Le Qisas al-anbiyā’ di Ṭarafi, tesi di Dottorato, Istituto Universitario Orientale, Napoli, 1996. 735 pp. A brief description of Ṭarafi’s life and work, that will be discussed here at length, is in my dissertation, at pp. 69-85. Supervisor in this research was Prof. Giuseppina Igonetti. I am grateful to her and to the Professors of the Dipartimento di Studi e Ricerche su Africa e Paesi Arabi for their support. I would also like to thank Prof. M. Fierro and C.S.I.C. in Madrid who provided a copy of the Escorial manuscript for me, and the Lady Davis

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The first book dedicated to this topic had been written around the end of the first/seventh century by Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 113/731), a Yemenite of Persian origin who was one of the most famous authorities of Biblical history. This book is not extant, but much material attributed to Wahb is quoted by later authors. It is said that Ibn Ishaq (d. 150/767) relied heavily on Wahb’s work in his Mubtada’, which was originally the introductory part of his biography of Muhammad and dealt with the stories of the prophets. But this Mubtada’ has also been lost and only the part concerning the life of the Prophet remains in later recensions.

The first extant example of the qisas al-anbiyà’ literary genre comes from the beginning of the third/ninth century. It is the Mubtada’ al-dunyà wa-qisas al-anbiyà (The beginning of the world and the stories of the prophets) of Abû Ḥudhayfa Ishaq b. Bishr (d. 206/821). This important work had been considered lost until few years ago, but recently the existence of a manuscript of it was announced by M. J. Kister. This manuscript is not complete but, in its more than two hundred folios, it ranges from the Creation story to that of Abraham, thus demonstrating its importance for qisas al-anbiyà’ literature. T. Nagel and other scholars who only knew Ishaq b. Bishr’s compilation from excerpts in later works had

Fellowship Trust that granted me a scholarship to study at the Hebrew University in the year 1993-94, where part of the research was carried out under the guidance of Prof. M. J. Kister: to whom I am indebted for many suggestions about qisas al-anbiyà’. Finally I would also like to thank Prof. M. Fierro and Prof. M. Lecker for their comments upon a first draft of this article.

Many studies are dedicated to Wahb b. Munabbih: see the references in R. Tottoli, Le Qisas al-anbiyà’ di Tarafi, 45-49. R. G. Khoury published the papyrus text dealing with the story of David, giving also a full analysis of Wahb’s life and works: R. G. Khoury, Wahb b. Munabbih, Wiesbaden, 1972.


Ms Oxford Bodleian, Huntingdon 388; see M. J. Kister, «Adam: a study of some legends in rafir and hadîth literature», IOS, 13 (1993), 113-14; but an abridged version of this article, where this manuscript was brought to the attention for the first time, had already appeared in 1988 in Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur’an, ed. by A. Rippin, Oxford 1988, see in particular pp. 82-83. Some folios of this work are also in Damascus, Žāhireyya, see F. Sezgin, Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums, I, Leiden 1967, 294.
already suggested its significance. Another compilation from the third century is the *Kitāb al-mubtada‘ wa-qīsas al-anbiyā‘* of ‘Umāra b. Wathima (d. 289/902), the authorship of which perhaps can be traced back to his father Wathima (d. 237/851). The extant part of this work, i.e. from the end of the story of Moses to Jesus, was edited by R. G. Khoury.

The major works concerning *qīsas al-anbiyā‘* are from the fifth/eleventh century, and they are complete collections of traditions ranging from the Creation to the time of Jesus. The first of these is the *‘Arā‘is al-majā‘īl is of Tha‘labi (d. 427/1035). It is probably the most comprehensive collection of stories of the prophets, and is the most widely known in the Arab world. The second work is the *Qīsas al-anbiyā‘* of Kisā‘i. Scholars suppose that it was written in the fifth/eleventh century as nothing is known about the author. The *Qīsas al-anbiyā‘* of Kisā‘i were published by I. Eisenberg in 1922-23, but more recent studies have disputed the authorship and dating of this work, underlining the limits and the incompleteness of this printed edition.

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Besides these major works another collection of *qisas al-anbiyāʾ* was written in the fifth/eleventh century by Ibn Muṭṭarīf al-Ṭaḥrīfī (d. 454/1062), an Andalusian expert in Qur’ānic readings (*qirāʾāt*). The two manuscripts of this work can be found in the Vaticana and in the Escorial, but it has never been published. The only scholar to deal extensively with Ṭaḥrīfī was Nagel in his authoritative study dedicated to *qisas al-anbiyāʾ* literature. For the first time he collected information about the author and gave a description of the contents of his work, pointing out the main features of this collection.

Brief mentions of Ṭaḥrīfī’s work can be found in some other studies, but most of the research concerning *qisas al-anbiyāʾ* collections and traditions has neglected it almost completely or mentioned it only briefly. This article will, firstly, complete the data about Ṭaḥrīfī’s life and work and, secondly, discuss at length the features of his *Qisas al-anbiyāʾ* and the most interesting material included in it.

### The life and work of Ibn Muṭṭarīf al-Ṭaḥrīfī

Little is known about the life of Abū ‘Abdallāh Muḥammad b. Ṭaḥrīfī. He was born in 387/997 in Cordova and he dedicated himself to the study of religious traditions and, in particular, to variant readings of the Qur’ān (*qirāʾāt*). Ṭaḥrīfī’s teachers were al-Qādisī Yūnūsī b. ‘Abdallāh, Abū Muḥammad Makki al-Ṭaḥrīfī, and, particularly, Abū Muḥammad Makki b. Abī Talib, who was the most famous of those he came

11 In the references to Ṭaḥrīfī’s *Qisas al-anbiyāʾ* I mention in this article, I give first the number of the tradition as it is in the edition of the Arabic text in my dissertation (Tottoli, *Le Qisas al-anbiyāʾ di Ṭaḥrīfī*, pp. 87-367 §§ 1-510). Since this edition has not been published yet, we give also the foliation of the Vaticana manuscript (Ms Bibl. Vaticana Borg. ar. 125), and the pagination of the Escorial manuscript (Ms Escorial 1770).
into contact with. All the sources point out that he was renowned in qirā‘at for his skill and his memory. Some pupils and later scholars considered him a reliable scholar and transmitted traditions under his name. Ibn al-Jazari is the only source to give any further information about the origin of his nisba: he was imām in the mosque of Ta‘rafa in Cordova and he was thus named Ta‘rafi. The final piece of information biographical sources give about Ta‘rafi is that when he died in 454/1062, he was buried near the Bāb ‘Amir inside an unknown mosque.

Two works attributed to him demonstrate his interest in qirā‘at: the Sharh qasā‘id fi l-qirā‘at and a second work titled Kitāb al-Qurtayn, which was published in Cairo in 1936. The Kitāb al-Qurtayn is a digest of two books by Ibn Qutayba, the Kitāb mushkil al-Qur‘ān and the Kitāb gharib al-Qur‘ān. Ta‘rafi collected passages from the works and arranged them according to the order of the chapters of the Qur‘ān, without adding anything to Ibn Qutayba’s words.

Biographical sources do not quote either of these works, as is the case with his Qisas al-anbiyā’. Further, his Qisas al-anbiyā’ are not mentioned nor quoted in later books. In spite of this, there is no reason to doubt the two extant manuscripts, both of which contain clear and explicit indications that the author was Ibn Mu‘arrif Ta‘rafi. Moreover, the discussion of variant readings in some passages constitutes evidence that the author of this qisas al-anbiyā’ collection was, like Ta‘rafi, an expert in questions of qirā‘at.

14 Ibn al-Farahi, Kitāb ta‘rikh, II, 114; Ibn Bashkuwāl, Kitāb al-sīla, II, 509; Ibn al-Jazari, Kitāb ghāya, II, 89; see also Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyā’, 103. Concerning Makkī, see EF, s.v. (A. Neuwirth).
15 See the names in Ibn al-Jazari, Kitāb ghāya, II, 89.
16 Ibn al-Jazari, Kitāb ghāya, II, 89; see also Yaqqūt, Mu‘jam al-buldān, Beirut 1990, IV, 35.
18 Ed. by ‘Abd al-Ḥaḥīf Sa‘d ‘Aṭiyyya, Cairo, al-Khanji, 1936 and recently reprinted in Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifa, n.d. Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyā’, 104 n. 4, and Levi Della Vida, «Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola», 154, did not have the possibility to consult this edition. In particular Levi Della Vida, who had a description of this book from another source, regretted he could not read Ta‘rafi’s biography included in the introduction by the editor. As a matter of fact he would have had nothing new, because ‘Abd al-Ḥaḥīf Sa‘d ‘Aṭiyyya reproduced here the biographical description of Ibn al-Jazari’s Kitāb ghāya.
19 See our edition of the Arabic text, p. 89 before § 1 (Ms Vat., 47a,47b; Ms Esc., 1).
20 See § 84 (Ms Vat., 58b; Ms Esc., 35), § 105 (Ms Vat., 61b; Ms Esc., 44), § 174 (Ms Vat., 72b; Ms Esc., 66-67), § 344 (Ms Vat., 104a; Ms Esc., 170). See also the considerations by Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyā’, supra.
should also be remembered that Makki was one of Ţarafi’s masters, that
Makki reputedly wrote a tafsîr, and that qisas al-anbiyâ’ literature is strictly
connected to Qur’ânic exegesis. 21

Further information can be added to what Nagel collected and to what
has been mentioned above. Yaqût states, in a passage in his Mu’jam al-
buldân, 22 that, in addition to the Kitâb al-Qur‘ân, Ţarafi wrote an abridged
version of Ţabarî’s tafsîr (la-hu ikhtisâr min kitâb tafsîr al-Qur‘ân li-l-
Ţabarî). This statement is very important, because Ţabarî’s tafsîr is the
principal source of the Qisas al-anbiyâ’ of Ţarafi, and sometimes this
collection resembles an abridgement of Ţabarî’s tafsîr. Yaqût’s statement
could thus be an allusion to the Qisas al-anbiyâ’ of Ţarafi. Further evidence
also points to a connection between Ţarafi and the traditions concerning the
prophets and, in particular, with one of the major authorities in the field, i.e.
Wahh b. Munabbih. As Ibn Khayr states, 23 ‘Ţarafi was one of the transmitters
of Wahh’s translation of the Kitâb zabûr Dàwûd (The Book of the Psalms of
David). Ibn Khayr provides another interesting piece of information, when
he quotes a qisas al-anbiyâ’ collection written by Aḥmad b. Khâlid and
transmitted by his son Muḥammad. 24 Nothing further is known about this
qisas al-anbiyâ’ collection. What is relevant for this research is that the
transmitter of this work from Aḥmad b. Khâlid’s son Muhammad was al-
Qâdi Ḫûnas b. ‘Abdallah, one of Ţarafi’s teachers who is also mentioned in
relation to the transmission of the Kitâb zabûr Dâwûd. 25 Despite the lack of
information concerning the Qisas al-anbiyâ’ of Ţarafi, the above mentioned
facts constitute evidence that he had been in contact with scholars and
works dealing with Qur’ânic exegesis and with the stories of the prophets.

Some words are now needed concerning Derenbourg’s peculiar
description of the work in the Escorial manuscripts catalogue. Both the
manuscripts of Ţarafi’s Qisas al-anbiyâ’ contain an introduction giving a
clear indication of the nature of the work and stating clearly that it is a

exegetical work by another of his masters, Abû l-‘Abbâs al-Mahdawî.
22 Beirut 1990, IV, 35; I am indebted to Prof. M. Fierro for this indication.
23 Fahrasa, ed. by F. Codera and J. Ribera Torrego, Damascus 1963, 295; I am indebted to
Prof. M. Fierro for this indication.
24 Fahrasa, 291.
25 See, for instance, Ibn al-Faradî, Kitâb ta’rîkh, I, 31 no. 94, and about his son
Muḥammad, see I, 327 no. 1302; the name given here, Aḥmad b. Khâlid, is a misreading of the
fuqa’ah’ wa-l-muḥaddithûn, Madrid 1992, 17-19; none of these sources mention the Qisas al-
anbiyâ’ written by him. I am indebted to Prof. M. Fierro for these references.

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qisas al-anbiyà’ collection. In spite of this, Derenbourg described the manuscript of Tarafi’s work as a «premier tome d’une histoire universelle sans titre»; Levi Della Vida was the first to note this strange statement. The Escorial manuscript gives no indication of the title of the work, neither at the beginning nor at the end, but there can be no doubt that it is a qisas al-anbiyà’ collection. Derenbourg’s statement can be traced back to the old catalogue by Casiri, where the Escorial manuscript is described as «codex... in quo primus Tomus occurrit Historiae universalis, titulum... Mundi Annales». It thus seems that Derenbourg took his description from Casiri without further investigation.

Structure and sources of the Qisas al-anbiyà’ of Tarafi

Nagel dealt at length with the structure and sources of the Qisas al-anbiyà’ of Tarafi in his comprehensive study, and identified the main features of the work. In this chapter the same questions that Nagel discussed will be looked at with the intention of completing his portrait of Tarafi.

Tarafi states clearly his reason for writing a qisas al-anbiyà’ collection at the beginning of his work: «Prophets and messengers are the best of Adam’s offspring, upon them be peace, they were singled out with excellent virtues and amazing miracles (...). Their stories, their narratives and their traditions are the best one can collect and summarize and the most wonderful one can study or tell (...). I decided to gather the stories of those quoted in the Quràn, from the best material the transmitters related and the authorities reported, to copy in this book what happened to them with their peoples at the time of their mission, and to present what every high-minded person should desire to know and be enthusiastic to read and to learn by heart (...). Moreover, I found in the Book of God, to Him glory and greatness, what He related to the Prophet Muḥammad, God bless him and grant him salvation, for he copied it and followed its example». It was not unusual for such statements to be written when introducing the biographies of the prophets. Also Tha’labì included a similar introduction in his work, so that he could

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27 «Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola», 155.
28 M. Casiri, Bibliotheca Arabico-hispana escurialensis, Madrid 1770, II, 155: the title in the footnote is given as Ta’rikh al-‘ālam.
29 Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyà’, 105-113.
30 § I (Ms Vat., 47b; Ms Esc., 1-2).
set out his purpose. However, as Nagel has already pointed out, Ţarafi’s predominant edifying purpose is not evident in the stories of the individual prophets, where the usual qisas al-anbiyā’ traditions can be found along with exegetical explanations. Ţarafi’s work does not differ from the other qisas al-anbiyā’ collections.  

Besides this gap between the introduction and contents of the work, the structure of the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Ţarafi shows some other peculiarities. The order of the biographies of the prophets is very unusual: Hūd and Sāliḥ’s biographies do not occur between those of Noah and Abraham and, what is even stranger, Ţarafi deals with David and Solomon before Moses. This structure indicates that a historical reconstruction of the past from the beginning of the world onwards was not Ţarafi’s purpose in writing his qisas al-anbiyā’ collection. Instead, his intent was exegetical, i.e. to provide further material describing the prophets mentioned in the Qur’ān. This is the reason why Ţarafi collected, firstly, the biographies of the twenty four prophets mentioned in the Qur’ān, and then, at the end of the work, the seven prophets who were only alluded to, without paying attention to historical sequence. Ţarafi announced the exegetical character of his work at the beginning when he stated that he had decided «to collect stories of those mentioned in the Qur’ān», and also, when he stated that «there are thirty-one prophets: the Qur’ān mentions twenty four of them by name and alludes to seven others». The same exegetical considerations also led Ţarafi to exclude other characters usually found in qisas al-anbiyā’ collections, e.g. Hàrút and Mărūt, Alexander (Dhū l-Qarnayn), Luqmān or Jīrīṣ. The Qur’ān does not assert their prophecy and so Ţarafi does not deal with them in his work.  

It should be pointed out however that, as well as excluding these characters, Ţarafi omits other stories that are usually included in qisas al-anbiyā’ collections, some of which are even mentioned in the Qur’ān. This is the case, for instance, with the traditions dealing with the plagues, the stories of Korah and Balaam and the story of Jesus’s miracles. Moreover, the

31 Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyā’, 106; Ţarafi’s introduction misled Thackston, Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisa’i, xvi, who wrote that Ţarafi «concentrated on the exemplary moral character of the prophets and stressed prophetic admonitions and moral counsels rather than the historical and legendary sides to their careers»; see also Thackston, «Islamische Mythologie», 199 n. 2. Levi Della Vida, «Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola», 154, had already pointed out that Ţarafi’s work is not different from the other qisas al-anbiyā’ collections.  


33 In § 1 (Ms Vat., 47b; Ms Esc., 2) and § 2 (Ms Vat., 47b-48a; Ms Esc., 2).  

34 See also Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyā’, 107.
legends connected to Seth, the wasīyya from Adam, the story of Abraham’s visit to Ishmael, the building of the Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon and the traditions concerning Solomon’s death are not mentioned in his work. Ṭarafi does not relate the story of the aṣḥāb al-kahf either, but whereas this might be unusual in a qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā’ collection, it is not strange here, because the aṣḥāb al-kahf were not prophets. These omissions and the strange sequence adopted might suggest that the work was unfinished, or that the two extant manuscripts are incomplete, but this is not the case. There are clear references within the text to the internal cohesion of the work and so the suggestion of incompleteness can be rejected. Two sections, one at the beginning and one at the end, are almost identical, 35 and in the final chapter direct references are made to the structure and contents of the work. Another interesting passage points to the internal cohesion of the work: Ṭarafi says, before dealing with the story of Jeremías, that as he has already dealt with the events of the lives of David and Goliath, there is no reason to repeat them. 36

As regards the structure of the work, Nagel 37 has already indicated that at the beginning of every biography there is a short summary of the contents, then the Qur’ān verses dealing with the subject are quoted, followed by traditions that explain and elucidate them. Although the genealogy of the prophets can usually be found at the beginning, this is not a rule. The Qur’ān verses and traditions from different sources (or attributed to transmitters or to the Prophet himself) are followed by brief descriptions of the appearance and age of the prophets. Ṭarafi respects this fixed structure in most of the chapters of his work. The striking point is that this close adherence to the order in the biographies contrasts with the absolute indifference towards isnāds. A word must also be said about the apparent randomness of some of the paragraph divisions in the manuscripts, which were apparently made with no attention to the meaning. 38 While not being able to account for this phenomenon with complete certainty, it is probable that it can be attributed to mistakes made during transcription.

As regards the questions of Ṭarafi’s sources it must first be noted that Ṭarafi does not give isnāds for references for most of the material he quotes, and only occasionally includes the name of the first transmitter. But when

35 § 2 (Ms Vat., 47b-48a; Ms Esc., 2-3) e § 507 (Ms Vat., 132a; Ms Esc., 262).
36 § 473 (Ms Vat., 127a-127b; Ms Esc., 249).
38 See especially § 127-128 (Ms Vat., 64b; Ms Esc., 51), and § 67-70 (Ms Vat., 57a; Ms Esc., 31-32), § 144-145 (Ms Vat., 66b; Ms Esc., 58), 405-413 (Ms Vat., 118b-119a; Ms Esc., 212-213), § 429-430 (Ms Esc., 222), § 480-490 (Ms Vat., 129b-130a; Ms Esc., 256-257).
names are given, they are the most important names of Sunnite tradition, like Ibn ‘Abbās (d. 68/687 ca.), who is quoted most often, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Mujaḥīd (d. 104/722) and Qaṭāda (d. 117/735). To a lesser extent the customary names of the qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ collections, such as Ka‘b al-Ahībār (d. 35/656 ca.) and Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728 ca.), can be found. It is perhaps surprising that Ka‘b is quoted only three times. It is also remarkable that the name of ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭalīb (d. 40/661), so often mentioned by Tha‘labī, occurs only four times in Ṭarafi’s work. Ṭarafi’s lack of concern for isnāds is evident in his use of expressions like ākhārūn (others) or qawm, ba‘d and ghayr (for ex. ba‘duhum and ghayruhu), instead of a list of all the transmitters. Along with this attitude it must be pointed out that only in two places does Ṭarafi show any concern about the formal criticism of his material. In one of these instances Ṭarafi says he is quoting «from Ibn al-Kalbī, regarding the pictures of the prophets which in his view were reliable» while in the other he states he is quoting the tradition with the best isnād.

In addition to the names of the transmitters, Ṭarafi provides some further indications, and the most interesting of these are the quotations of his main sources, i.e. Ṭabarī (d. 311/923) and Iṣḥāq b. Bishr. In fact, Ṭarafi relied mostly upon one source, Ṭabarī’s tafsīr, and complete chapters in his Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, like the story of Abraham, are word for word quotations or abridged versions of it. It can be affirmed that more than half of this work is taken from Ṭabarī’s Qur’ānic commentary, but in spite of this strong dependence Ṭarafi mentions the name of Ṭabarī only four times. Instead of mentioning Ṭabarī’s name, Ṭarafi usually mentions only the names of the

19 § 67 (Ms Vat., 57a; Ms Esc., 31), § 84 (Ms Vat., 58b; Ms Esc., 35), § 95 (Ms Vat., 60a; Ms Esc., 40), § 220 (Ms Vat., 81a; Ms Esc., 96); See also Nagel, Die Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 109-110, and in particular p. 110, where he stated that ‘Alī is mentioned only twice. About the tendency of Andalusī Mālikīs to avoid references to ‘Alī, see I. Fierro, «The introduction of hadith in al-Andalus», Der Islam, 66 (1989), 87.

40 § 13 (Ms Vat., 40b; Ms Esc., 8); § 59 (Ms Vat., 55b; Ms Esc., 26); § 137 (Ms Vat., 65b; Ms Esc., 55); § 140 (Ms Vat., 66a; Ms Esc., 56); § 173 (Ms Vat., 72b; Ms Esc., 66); § 193 (Ms Vat., 76a; Ms Esc., 78); § 194 (Ms Vat., 76b; Ms Esc., 79); § 219 (Ms Vat., 81a; Ms Esc., 96); § 297 (Ms Vat., 97a; Ms Esc., 150); § 415 (Ms Vat., 119b; Ms Esc., 215); § 424 (Ms Esc., 219); § 473 (Ms Vat., 127b; Ms Esc., 249); § 508 (Ms Vat., 132b).

41 § 277 (Ms Vat., 92b; Ms Esc., 138): wa-dhakara Ibn al-Kalbī f-mā sahha ‘indahu mīn...

42 § 468 (Ms Vat., 127a; Ms Esc., 247).

43 § 74 (Ms Vat., 57b; Ms Esc., 33): qāla Abū Ja’far al-Ṭabarī; § 89 (Ms Vat., 59a; Ms Esc., 37): qāla Abū Ja’far al-Ṭabarī wa-jamā’u mīn ahl al-tafṣīr; § 182 (Ms Vat., 73b; Ms Esc., 69): qāla Abū Ja’far al-Ṭabarī wa-ghayruhu mīn ahl al-tafṣīr; § 182 (Ms Vat., 73b; Ms Esc., 69): qāla Abū Ja’far al-Ṭabarī. See also Nagel, Die Qīṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 110-111, who translates and discusses these passages.
Companions and the Successors who originated the traditions. Finally, again Tabari is the source of some other traditions which contain introductory expressions like jà’a fi l-tafsîr..., wa-yudhkar fi l-tafsîr..., fi ba’al-tafsîr....

Strangely enough, these vague expressions are not always connected to Tabari, because Tarafi uses them to introduce some reports and traditions from various other sources. On a number of occasions, when mentioning an indefinite tafsîr, Tarafi relates traditions similar to those reported in Muqatîl b. Sulaymân’s (d. 150/767) tafsîr, with some slight differences. Some other material, which is introduced with the same expressions, is taken neither from Tabari nor from Muqatîl, but from an unknown source, i.e. an unknown tafsîr. This inconsistency in Tarafi’s references is evident in two reports where a tradition taken from the Mubtada’ of Ishâq b. Bishr comes after the following introductory phrases: wa-jà’a fi l-tafsîr and jà’a fi l-tafsîr an Ishâq b. Bishr. It is known that Tabari did not make use of the works of Muqatîl and Ishâq b. Bishr, nor did he quote from them, and this tafsîr cannot be a reference to Tabari. Undoubtedly by referring to an indefinite tafsîr, Tarafi is also indicating a different, unknown commentary and not simply that of Tabari.

The other main source is the Mubtada’ of Ishâq b. Bishr. Tarafi mentions the name Ishâq b. Bishr twelve times, but, as was the case with Tabari, some other traditions originating in his Mubtada’ occur in the Qisas al-anbiyà’ of Tarafi without an indication of the source. A comparison between this material and the extant manuscript of the Mubtada’ shows that Tarafi abridged the

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44 See also Nagel, Die Qisas al-anbiyà’, 111-113; for a comprehensive analysis of the question of ‘Tarafi’s dependence on Tabari’s tafsîr see my notes to the Arabic text, where, for each tradition, I give the source: Rottoli, Le Qisas al-anbiyà’ di Tarafi, 369-507.

45 § 94 (Ms Vat., 60a; Ms Esc., 39); § 103 (Ms Vat., 61a-61b; Ms Esc., 43); § 114 (Ms Vat., 62b; Ms Esc., 47); § 115 (Ms Vat., 62b-63a; Ms Esc., 47); § 120 (Ms Vat., 62b; Ms Esc., 49); § 121 (Ms Vat., 63b-64a; Ms Esc., 49-50); § 129 (Ms Vat., 64b; Ms Esc., 52); § 136 (Ms Vat., 65b; Ms Esc., 55); § 198 (Ms Vat., 77a-77b; Ms Esc., 82-83); § 232 (Ms Vat., 82b; Ms Esc., 102); § 261 (Ms Vat., 90b; Ms Esc., 130); § 292 (Ms Vat., 95b-96a; Ms Esc., 147); § 293 (Ms Vat., 96a; Ms Esc., 148); § 311 (Ms Vat., 99b; Ms Esc., 158); § 319 (Ms Vat., 100b; Ms Esc., 161); § 344 (Ms Vat., 104a; Ms Esc., 171); § 351 (Ms Vat., 105a-105b; Ms Esc., 174); § 372 (Ms Vat., 110a; Ms Esc., 187); § 398 (Ms Vat., 116b; Ms Esc., 204); § 403 (Ms Vat., 117a; Ms Esc., 206-7); § 426 (Ms Esc., 221); § 441 (Ms Vat., 121b; Ms Esc., 231); § 442 (Ms Vat., 122a; Ms Esc., 232); § 462 (Ms Vat., 126a; Ms Esc., 244-45); § 474 (Ms Vat., 127b; Ms Esc., 249-50); § 475 (Ms Vat., 128a; Ms Esc., 251); § 430 (Ms Vat., 129a-129b; Ms Esc., 254-55).

46 See § 64 (Ms Vat., 56a; Ms Esc., 29), which is partially taken from Tabari and partially from Muqatîl; § 204 (Ms Vat., 78a-78b; Ms Esc., 85); § 389 (Ms Vat., 114a; Ms Esc., 197); § 442 (2nd) (Ms Vat., 122a; Ms Esc., 233).

47 § 84 (Ms Vat., 58b; Ms Esc., 35-36); § 330 (Ms Vat., 102a; Ms Esc., 165); § 334 (Ms Vat., 102b; Ms Esc., 166); § 427 (Ms Esc., 222); § 477 (Ms Vat., 128b; Ms Esc., 252).

48 § 153 (Ms Vat., 67b; Ms Esc., 60); § 258 (Ms Vat., 89a; Ms Esc., 125).
original version, taking sections from longer traditions. It is difficult to state whether Ṭarafī himself abridged this material or whether he relied upon an intermediary, and already abridged, version. The expression wa-dhakara Ḩishāq b. Ṣibbar ḍ an jama’a asnada al-khabar ilayhim ⁴⁹ suggests that Ṭarafī took his material directly from Ḩishāq b. Ṣibbar’s work. At the same time, as has been stated above, the two references to a tafsīr ‘an Ḩishāq b. Ṣibbar, alert us to the fact, that, in all likelihood, there was an intermediary source.

At one point Ṭarafī mentions another third century author, Bukhārī (d. 256/870), who compiled the most important ḥadīth collection. ⁵⁰ This reference is quite strange, since it is the only one related to ḥadīths, whereas Ṭarafī includes many traditions attributed to the Prophet in his work. This inconsistency cannot be explained, unless we assume that this was the only tradition Ṭarafī took directly from a ḥadīth collection, while the others were taken from other sources.

Even without Ṭarafī’s indication, some of the other sources of this work can be identified, such as the Muḥabbār of Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 345/859) which was the source of the tradition about the sons of Iblīs. ⁵¹ In some other places, e.g., the tradition about the sons of Abraham, the source could perhaps be Ibn Ḥabīb, but, given the slight differences, it seems probable that Ṭarafī took this material from another intermediary source who had, in turn, depended on Ibn Ḥabīb. ⁵² The same can be said for the Kitāb al-ta’rīkh of the Andalusian ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (m. 238/852), recently published and edited by J. Aguadé (Madrid, 1991). Ṭarafī related a few traditions which are similar to those ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb included at the beginning of his work dealing with prophets. These common traditions are already attested in Ḩishāq b. Bishr’s Mubṭada’, which was probably a source for both. Only one of Ṭarafī’s passages bears more resemblance to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb’s version than that of Ḩishāq b. Ṣibbar, but this is not sufficient to indicate that his Kitāb al-ta’rīkh was one of Ṭarafī’s sources. ⁵³ ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb’s

⁴⁹ § 48 (Ms Vat., 53b; Ms Esc., 20).
⁵⁰ § 456 (Ms Vat., 124b; Ms Esc., 24).
⁵¹ § 23-25 (Ms Vat., 50b; Ms Esc., 11).
⁵² § 170 (Ms Vat., 72b; Ms Esc., 66). This is also true for the two chronologies given at the end of Ṭarafī’s work: § 508 (Ms Vat., 132a-132b); the two traditions, in the same order and with some slight variations given by Ṭabarī, Ta’rīkh al-rasul wa-l-mulūk, ed. by M. A. al-F. Ibrāhīm, Cairo 1960-67, II, 238 (=ed. M. J. de Goeje et al., Leiden 1879-1901, I, 1072), and Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-Muḥabbār (repr. ed. I. Lichtenstadter, Hyderabad 1942), Beirut n.d., 1-2, but since the final hijrī date is different in all the three versions, Ṭarafī could have taken these reports from another source.

⁵³ ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-ta’rīkh, 41-42 no. 83 (=Ṭarafī, § 186 [Ms Vat., 74a; Ms Esc., 70]; cf. Ḩishāq b. Bishr, Mubṭada’, 150b-151a).
dependence upon Ishaq b. Bishr, while requiring further investigation, is relevant for another reason: it demonstrates the diffusion of his Mubtada’ in al-Andalus. 54

Moreover, some further traditions quoted by Tarafi can be found in other works which may have served as sources. Indeed it seems unlikely that Tarafi would have depended on Taban and Ishaq b. Bishr’s writings for the greater part of this work and then have used so many different sources for a few remaining traditions. It is much more probable that he took all of this material from one or two intermediary sources. 55

Tarafi does mention other indefinite sources. At the beginning of certain traditions, without giving any name of transmitter, he states he is quoting mufassirîn wa-ashâb al-akhbâr, 56 or other exegetical material traced back to jamâ’a min ahl al-tafsîr, 57 ba’d al-mufassirîn, 58 qawm min ahl al-tafsîr, 59 and ahl al-tafslîr. 60 In another place Tarafi states he is citing Taban and from jamâ’a min ahl al-’ilm 61 This last expression clearly indicates transmitters and not other authors, since he later writes: wa-qâla jamâ’a min ahl al-’ilm min al-ṣaḥâba wa-l-tâbi’in. 62 The same can be said for the

54 See ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, Kitâb al-tafslîr, 39 no. 75 end: after the quotation of Qur.40:11 it is said that wa-badat al-bad’a (?) fi l-samâ’ wa-baqiya qaws wa-kânât āyât al-amân min al-gharq wa-tatalla’a ʾNuh fa-ra’ā l-shams (al-nad’a/al-qaws appeared in the sky and it was the rainbow, the sign of safety from the flood; Noah raised his eyes and he saw the sun). This tradition is a verbatim quotation from Ishaq b. Bishr, Mubtada’ al-dunyà, Ms Huntingdon 388, 103b-104a. The word al-bad’a makes no sense, it should be corrected in al-nad’a or al-nad al-qaws. Even if ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb does not mention the name of Ishaq b. Bishr, all the later sources trace back this report to him, but failing to read the word al-nad’a in the right way. See Tarafi, § 77 (Ms Vat., 56a; Ms Esc., 33-34); al-nad ahl al-tafsîr, Suyūfî, al-Durr al-manthûrî l-tafslîr al-ma’thûr, Beirut 1983, IV, 426; al-yad, Ibn ‘Asâkir, Ta’rikh madinat Dimashq, fac. ed., Amman n.d., XVII, 662; al-badhdh. These are the other passages in ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, and mentioned also by Tarafi, probably taken from Ishaq b. Bishr. Kitâb al-tafslîr, p. 39 no. 75 (=Mubtada’, 103b; Tarafi, § 85 [Ms Vat., 58b; Ms Esc., 36]; 41 no. 83 (Mubtada’, 116a; Tarafi 179 [Ms Vat., 73a; Ms Esc., 68]).

55 See, for instance § 334, 335, 338 (Ms Vat., 102b-103a; Ms Esc., 166-167) which are similar to traditions in the Tabaqât of Ibn Sa’d; some material could instead have been taken from ‘Umarâ b. Wâbah; see for instance § 445-446 (Ms Vat., 122b-123a; Ms Esc., 233-234).

56 § 63 (Ms Vat., 56a; Ms Esc., 28).

57 § 213 (Ms Vat., 80a; Ms Esc., 93); § 246 (Ms Vat., 84b; Ms Esc., 111).

58 § 214 (Ms Vat., 80b; Ms Esc., 94); § 263 (Ms Vat., 90b; Ms Esc., 131); § 354 (Ms Vat., 106a; Ms Esc., 178b); § 440 (Ms Vat., 120b; Ms Esc., 228b).

59 § 352 (Ms Vat., 105b; Ms Esc., 175).

60 § 299 (Ms Vat., 97b; Ms Esc., 152); § 376 (Ms Vat., 110b; Ms Esc., 189); § 417 (Ms Vat., 119b; Ms Esc., 215); § 473 (Ms Vat., 127b; Ms Esc., 249).

61 § 89 (Ms Vat., 59a; Ms Esc., 37).

62 § 133 (Ms Vat., 65b; Ms Esc., 54).
expression *ba’d al-‘ulamà*. As well as exegetical works, mention is made also of historical works: *naqalat al-akhbàr wa-jumlat al-mufassirin* or *jà ‘a fi l-khabar/al-akhbàr* or *qàla ba ‘d naqalat al-akhbàr*. Finally there is evidence that Ţarafi also made use of traditions going back to experts in genealogy: *dhakara al-nassàbln*.

The preceding description of the structure and sources is sufficient to enable a preliminary evaluation of the work to be made. It can be inferred that the *qiṣas al-anbiyà*’ literary genre had reached a wide diffusion in al-Andalus where many important manuscripts dealing with the topic had been copied and circulated widely. This was the case with the *Kitàb bad’ al-khalq* of ‘Umarà b. Wathîma and the works of his father Wathîma, as well as some other collections dealing with the prophets, such as the *Qiṣas al-anbiyà* of Ḥijrî. Works such as these and the *Mubtada* of Iṣhâq b. Bishr probably prompted the diffusion of popular traditions and legends in connection with the stories of the prophets, with the typical influence of Shi‘ite and Iṣmâ‘îlîte beliefs.

The *Qiṣas al-anbiyà* of Ţarafi take a different direction: his work gives a sacred history of the prophets which adheres closely to Sunnite exegetical tradition. With this purpose Ţarafi relied upon the best Sunnite exegetical source, the *Tafsîr* of Ṭâbarî, and on the *Mubtada* of Iṣhâq b. Bishr, whose diffusion and authority made this an essential reference work when dealing with *qiṣas al-anbiyà*, even though there may have been doubts about some of its contents. Notwithstanding Ţarafi’s purpose, the use of this material from Iṣhâq b. Bishr, together with other traditions from unknown sources and Ţarafi’s interest in onomastics, shows that legends of popular origin

63 § 308 (Ms Vat., 98b; Ms Esc., 155).
64 § 187 (Ms Vat., 74a; Ms Esc., 71).
65 § 264 (Ms Vat., 91a; Ms Esc., 133); § 326 (Ms Vat., 102a; Ms Esc., 164).
66 § 392 (Ms Vat., 114b; Ms Esc., 199); § 490 (Ms Vat., 130a; Ms Esc., 257).
67 § 151 (Ms Vat., 67a; Ms Esc., 60); § 160 (Ms Vat., 68b; Ms Esc., 63); see also § 177 (Ms Vat., 73a; Ms Esc., 6): *qawm min al-nassàbln*.
68 See Levi Della Vida, «Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola», 163 n. 1: Borgia manuscripts show the diffusion of the works of ‘Umarà ad his father Wathîma in Spain.
69 Al-Ḥijrî (Ps-Wâbb), *Qiṣas al-anbiyà*; Alexandria, Ms Baladiyya B 1249; about this work see Nagel, *Die Qiṣas al-anbiyà*, 149-54, 168-69; and J. Pauliny, «Ein Werk *Qiṣas al-anbiyà* von Abû ‘Abdallâh Muḥammad ibn Sa‘îd al-Ḥijrî al-Abhârî», *Asian and African Studies, 6* (1970), 87-91; see also the anonymous *Qiṣas al-anbiyà* (*Kitâb al-majàlis ‘alâ ‘ilm al-ta’rîkh*), Berlin, Ms Staatsbibliothek, or. quart. 1171, 137b-188b.
70 See Nagel, *Die Qiṣas al-anbiyà*, 161.
about the prophets could not be completely omitted from qisas al-anbiyā’ collections.

**Contents of the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Ṭarafi**

Most of the contents of the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Ṭarafi are word for word quotations from Ṭabarî’s tafsîr and some other material is taken from the Mubtada’ of Ishāq b. Bishr. A full description of these parts of Ṭarafi’s work is given in the notes to the text in my dissertation and so will be not dealt with here. But apart from the main body of the work, Ṭarafi also borrowed some significant traditions from other sources. The following pages will be dedicated to a discussion of this material because of its contribution to a clearer understanding of this qisas al-anbiyā’ collection. There is an inevitable element of arbitrariness in any such selection but, nevertheless, it cannot be doubted that some of the traditions in Ṭarafi’s work contain important particulars or rare versions. This is particularly the case for the following material, which has been arranged in three different groups and is discussed below in the following order: onomastics, reports about the physical appearance of the prophets and various individual traditions.

Onomastics is the first subject to be discussed. Ṭarafi displays a particular interest in names and he mentions the names of most of the characters quoted in his work, even if they are only of secondary importance, often providing rare versions. It must be noted that these versions are merely orthographical variants, but, nevertheless, they can be very useful for gaining a better understanding of Ṭarafi’s sources in particular, and for the history of the qisas al-anbiyā’ genre in al-Andalus in general. The names discussed here will be given in the vocalization as preserved in the manuscripts, and mainly that of the Vaticana. Later, but in the same line, called Dasim (as in Ibn Habib, Kitāb al-muhabbar, 395).

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73 We shall not discuss here, for instance, the name of the father of David (§ 197 (Ms Vat., 77a; Ms Esc., 81)), the name of the Queen of Sheba (§ 227: Ms Vat., 32a; Ms Esc., 100) or the names of the sons of Joseph (§ 294: Ms Vat., 96a; Ms Esc., 149). The versions given by Ṭarafi are also attested in other sources and all the variants of these names are discussed at length in my dissertation *Le Qisas al-anbiyā’ di Ṭarafi*.

74 Later, but in the same line, called Dāmis (as in Ibn Ḥabīb, *Kitāb al-muḥābbar*, 395).
Miswat. This tradition goes back to the Muḥibbar of Ibn Ḥabīb with al-Tubuww instead of Ibn Ḥabīb’s al-Thubar, which is evidently an ortographical variant. This same name is usually given in other sources in the form th.b.r with different vocalizations. Ţarafi quotes some other names in connection with the fall of Adam, as is usual in all qīṣaṣ al-anbiyā’ collections: Adam was cast down to earth on a mountain called Rāsim, Eve in Jiddah, the serpent in Isfahan and Iblis near al-UbuUa. The only significant name from this list is the mountain (in India) where Adam fell down, Rāsim; other sources contain many variations of this name, even with ortographical versions similar to Rāsim — e.g. Wāsim in Ţabarî and others — but no other source gives the same name as Ţarafi. In the story of Adam, Ţarafi also quotes the names of the wives of Cain and

75 § 23-25 (Ms Vat., 50b; Ms Esc., 11).
76 Ibn Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-muḥabbar, 395. See the list of names given by Ťabarî, Jāmi‘ al-bayān ‘an ta‘līl ‘ay al-Qur‘ān, Cairo 1968, XV,262; Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-manṭhūr, V,403; Sibī b. al-Jawzī, Mi‘āt al-zamān fi ta‘rikh al-a‘yān, I, ed. by I. ‘Abbās, Beirut 1985, 133; see also Ghazālī, Ḥiyā‘ ‘ulum al-dīn, Cairo 1939, III,37. Also the name Zalīfīyan instead of Zalanbur is particularly relevant, but it is already attested in the Muḥabbar by Ibn Ḥabīb.
78 § 38 (Ms Vat., 52a; Ms Esc., 16).
Abel: Nabûdāhā and Affîmiyâ. These are simply orthographical variants with slight differences, of the more common Iqlîmā e Laśûdâ/Layûdha. In the biography of Noah, Târâfî gives two different versions of the name of the village in the Jazîra where the Ark landed: Taśîrâdâ and Târândâ. The names given by Târâfî were probably taken from the Mubtada' of Išâq b. Bîshr like nearly all the traditions collected in the story of Noah, but in the extant manuscript of this work the first name mentioned is a completely different version (qawdi) while the second, that could actually be read as târândâ, has no diacritical point. The
name of Noah’s wife, Aligha, is also relevant; it is a very uncommon variant of the well attested Wåligha, and a mere mistake in the transcription could be its cause. Finally, in the story of Noah, Tarafî also quotes the names of Noah’s daughters-in-law in a tradition dealing with the virtue of these names when written on the dovecotes: doves thrive in good conditions. The names are: Miîla (Sem’s wife), Nafîsâ (Cam’s wife), and Suhûm (Yafet’s wife), and they are different from those given in other sources.

Another name occurring in Tarafî’s work which deserves our attention is that of Abraham’s mother, Nûnînîyya. This version is not attested in any other sources. Later on Tarafî gives the name of the man who spoke the words quoted in Qur. 21:68: «Burn him (i.e. Abraham), and help your gods, ...min ahlihi wa-huwa Kin’an (sic) ibnuhu wa-Áligha inma’atu hu, the correct text could have been: ibnuhu wa-Wåligha inma’atu. See the other sources: Muqatîl, Taafsîr, II,282; Wåligha; Ibn 9âhib, Kiitâb al-Muâbabbar, 383: Wàli’a; Majîsî, Bihâr al-anwâr, XI,304,309: Wålîhâ; Nuwayrî, Nihâyât al-arab fi funun al-adab, Cairo 1923 f., XIII,44: Wâli’a; Ibn Kathîr, al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâyâ, Beirut 1966, 1,181: Wålîhâ. Also different names are given, since it is argued by some sources that Noah had a second wife, a believer one, mother of Sem, Cam and Yafet; see Kisîî, Qiisâs al-anbiyâ’, 89: Noah had two wives, a believer one mother of his sons, ‘Amûrât, and an unbeliever one, Wâli’a; and Tabarî, Ta’rîkh al-rusul, 1,173 [=1,177]: ‘Amdhura, with variants in the notes; Nuwayrî, Nihâyât al-arab, XIII,44: ‘Amra; Ibn al-Atîhîr, al-Kàmil fi l-ta’rîkh, I, Beirut 1967 (an. repr. ed. C. J. Tomberg, Leiden 1867), 63: ‘x.r.a; but see the names and the explanation given by Majîsî, Bihâr al-anwâr, XI, 342, and the name and the discussion in E. Kohlberg, «Some Shi’i views of the antediluvian world», Studia Islamica, 52 (1980), 59.

§ 81 (Ms Vat., 58a; Ms Esc., 35). This legend was discussed by G. Levi Della Vida, «Una traccia del libro dei giubilei nella letteratura araba musulmana», Orientalia, 1 (1932), 205-212; Levi Della Vida at p. 207 relates the name as given by Ibn Qutayba in his ‘Uyûn al-akhbâr: Sem’s wife name is M.h.l.th M.h.w, Cam’s wife name is ‘.dh.n.f N.shi, and Yafet’s wife name is Z.dh.q.t N.b.t. Maqdisî, al-Bad’ wa-l-ta’fikh, 111,26-27, quotes these names: ‘r.y.s.y.m.h bint Marazll, N(?).h.l.b(?) (without diacritical points) bint ‘Varib, and Salib bint B(?)athawyll. Similar names are also given by Tabarî, Ta’rîkh al-rusul, 1,202-3 [=1,211-12], with many variant readings in the manuscripts; see the translation by W. M. Brinner, The History of al-Tabarî, II. Prophets and Patriarchs (Albany 1987), 11-12: Arbaslsa bint Marazîl, Nahlab bint Mîrîb and Salib bint Batawîl. Names similar to the ones given by Ibn Qutayba are also in Ibn 9âhib, Kiitâb al-Muhabbar, 383, and see also other versions in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, al-‘Iqãl al-farîd, Beirut 1983, VII,267.

§ 88 (Ms Vat., 59a; Ms Esc., 37); see Ibn Kathîr, al-Bidâya wa-l-nihâyâ, Beirut 1966, I,140 who gives the best explanation of the different versions of the names: it is Umayyla (from Ibn ‘Asîkîr-Ishiq b. Bishr) or Bûnû bint K.t.b.nâ (from al-Kalbî); in fact see Ibn ‘Asîkîr, Ta’rîkh madinat Dimashq, II, 314: Umayyla, and II,316: Yûnû.; Ishiq b. Bishr, Mabtûda’, 161a: Umayyla. See also Ibn Sa’d, Kiitâb al-tabaqât, I,121: Nûnà bint K.r.n.bâ or Abiyûnâ; Maqdisî, al-Bad’ wa-l-ta’rîkh, III,26-27, quotes these names: ‘r.y.s.y.m.h bint Marazîl, N(?).h.b(?) (without diacritical points) bint Yûrîb, and Salib bint B(?)athawâyîl. Similar names are also given by Tabarî, Ta’rîkh al-rusul, 1,202-3 [=1,211-12], with many variant readings in the manuscripts; see the translation by W. M. Brinner, The History of al-Tabarî, II. Prophets and Patriarchs (Albany 1987), 11-12: Arbaslsa bint Marazîl, Nahlab bint Mîrîb and Salib bint Batawîl. Names similar to the ones given by Ibn Qutayba are also in Ibn 9âhib, Kiitâb al-Muhabbar, 383, and see also other versions in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbîh, al-‘Iqãl al-farîd, Beirut 1983, VII,267.
of Abraham was a Kurd called Habzar. It is worth noting that the whole passage is taken from Ṭabarî, with the introductory expression ja‘a fi l-tafsîr, but that the name in Ṭabarî’s tafsîr is different.

At the beginning of the story of Shu‘ayb, Ṭabarî gives a list of Abraham’s sons: Ishmael (the son of Agar), Isaac (the son of Sarah) and finally the sons of the third wife Qantûr bint Maqtûr, i.e. Madyan, Madûn, Bunshaban, Zumrûn, Asbaq and Shaqî. The source of this report could be the Muḥabbâr of Ibn Ḥabîb, but the names are slightly different, e.g. Yaqshân instead of Bunshaban and Shaqî instead of Shaqî. The story of Hûd also contains the names of the two legendary cities, one in the east and one in the west, inhabited by the survivors of the ‘Âd and of the Thamûd: Jâbalqà and Jâbarsà.

Some other names can be found in the biography of Lot, e.g. the names of his daughters. The names of these two daughters, given by Ṭabarî in a long tradition mostly taken from the Mubtada’ of Ishaq b. Bishr, were Râghûthâ and Ranthâ. However, it must be stressed that the extant manuscript of Ishaq b. Bishr’s work contains different versions of the

87 § 120 (Ms Vat., 63b; Ms Esc., 49).
88 Ṭabarî, Jâmi‘ al-bayân, XVII,43: Hayzan; Id., Ta’rîkh al-rusul, I,241 [=I,262 but in the Leiden edition the name is Hayzan]: Haynûn. Hayyan and Haynûn seem to be the most frequent readings of the name; see the name Hayyan in Dîyârbakrî, Ta’rîkh al-khâmîs, I,82; Khûzn. Lûbûb al-ta’wil, IV,300; Baghawî, Ma‘ûlûm al-ta’wil, IV, 300; Ibn al-Atlîr, al-Kâmîl, I,98; and see Haynûn in Tha‘lîbî, Qisas al-anbiyà’, 77. See also Mâwardî, al-Nukât wa-l-‘uyûn, III,68-3: Hayzûn; Suyûtî, al-Durr al-manthûr; V,639: Habûn. Ibn al-Jâwzî, al-Muntazam, I,261, and Siûb b. al-Jâwzî, Mir‘ât al-zaman, 275, relate the tradition but they do not give the name.
89 § 170 (Ms Vat., 72b; Ms Esc., 66).
91 § 186 (Ms Vat., 74a; Ms Esc., 70). The same names are given by ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabîb, Kitiāb al-ta’rikh, 41-42 no. 83; and Ishqû b. Bishr, Muḥtada’, 17, but 150b: Jâbalqà and Jâbân Sä, 151a: Jâbalqà and Jâbarsà. See also Tha‘lîbî, Qisas al-anbiyà’, 20: Jâbalqà and Jâyarsûnîyût (but the Jumhûriyya edition, Cairo n.d., has here Jâbarsûnîyût); Ṭabarî, Ta’rîkh al-rusul, I,169 [=I,168]: Jâbars and Jâbalqû, with many variants in the notes; Yâqût, Mu‘jam al-buldûn, II,105: Jâbars and Jâbalqû; Ibn Iyâs, Badû‘î al-zahîr fi waqî‘î al-duhûr, Beirut n.d., 163: Jâbalqà; Maqdisî, al-Bad’ wa-l-ta’rikh, II,73: Jâbalqà and Jâbalqû; Ibn al-Atlîr, al-Kâmîl, I,21: Jâbars/Jâbarsà and Jâbalq/Jâbalqûb.; Ibn al-Dawâdârî, Kanz al-durar, I,47: Hâbûr and Jâbalqû; I, 48: Hâbûl and Jâbarî; and see also the names given in L’Abrégé, 55.
92 § 156 (Ms Vat., 68a; Ms Esc., 61).

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http://al-qantara.revistas.csic.es
names. Tarafí also quotes the name of Lot’s wife in this chapter: Wālima.

Finally, various names in the story of Moses are worth noting. The name and the origin of the Samaritan (al-sama’i) occurring in the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Tarafí, in a passage taken from Ṭabarî’s ta’īṣîr, is as follows: Mūsā b. Ṭayfār, from the Persian region of Kirmān. The name Ṭayfār is clearly an orthographical variant of the more common name, as given in all the sources, Mūsā b. Ṭufār, even if some other versions give completely different names. In his description of the vicissitudes of the mysterious al-Khīḍr, Tarafí quotes only one name, the name of the pirate king in the story of the ship damaged by al-Khīḍr. The name of this pirate king is Hadad b. Bād. Ṭabān, that is an orthographical variant of the more common Hadad b. Būd. 97


95 § 401 (Ms Vat., 117a; Ms Esc., 206).


Some general conclusions can be drawn from the material discussed above. With the exception of the names of the prophets, most of the names given by Ṭarafī are particular and not attested in other sources, even if they are only orthographical variants. Orthographical variants of names are common in Arabic literature, and it is not unusual to find that different manuscripts of the same work contain various versions. There is no doubt that this particularity is due to either the peculiarities of the Arabic writing or to the misunderstandings and corruptions of the scribes. However, all of these variations cannot be dismissed as simple mistakes in the transcription or copying. It is highly probable that at least some of these variants derived from the versions used in the sources relied on by Ṭarafī. Whether these versions arose as the result of some local differing tradition or of some misunderstanding in reading or copying cannot be stated. ⁹⁸

The traditions describing the physical appearance of some of the prophets in Ṭarafī’s work are the second subject to be discussed. Ṭarafī usually gives a physical description of the prophets at the end of the chapters dealing with their biographies. The first of these descriptions is in the story of Adam and includes a clear source reference, Ibn al-Kalbi (d. 205/820 ca.). In this version Adam is described as «having a white complexion, a distinct space between his eyebrows, curly hair, wide eyes, big buttocks, and, as being, of such an intense whiteness that no one had ever seen a face like his or neck as long as his; he had also a hairy body». ⁹⁹

It must be pointed out that this report, even if a comprehensive description not attested in other sources, is not very clear about the main question at issue in the traditions dealing with the appearance of Adam, i.e. whether he had a beard and, if so, when he grew it. ¹⁰⁰

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⁹⁸ For instance, the name al-Falah concerning the ashâb al-Rass in § 502 (Ms Vat., 131b; Ms Esc., 261) is clearly a mistake for al-Falaj.

⁹⁹ § 51 (Ms Vat., 54a; Ms Esc., 21-22): wa-ammā sûratuhu salla Allah ‘alayhi wa-sallam fa-dhakara Ibn al-Kalbi annahu kana ahyad ablaj ja ‘dan a’yan ‘ażīm al-alyatayn shadid al-bayyād lam yura mithlu wa-lajhi wa-lajhi fa-lajhi fi jasadihi sha’r kathīr.

¹⁰⁰ See Ibn Qutayba, al-Ma’ārif, 17: Adam was without a beard (amrad) and had a lot of hair; Shib b. al-Jawzî, Mīrāt al-ẓamān, 199: he was amrad and his beard grew as punishment; Kūsî‘ī, Qīṣṣās al-anbīyā‘, 52: God caused his hair and beard to grow after falling, 53: Adam asked God why the beard had grown and He said that it was for his transgression and to distinguish male from female; see also Nuwayrî, Nihāyat al-arab, XIII,22: when Adam fell down beard and hair grew and he suffered a lot from this. But see Ibn ‘Asakîr, Taʾrīkh madīnat Dimashq, II,656: God granted him a long beard upon his request to become more handsome (see also Maqîṣî, Bihâr al-anwâr, XI,172), II,621 and Ibn Katîr, al-Bidâya, 197: Adam was the only one in Paradise to have a long beard reaching his navel; Maqîṣî, al-Bad‘ wa-l-taʾrîkh, II,99, III,11: he was created amrad and only his offspring had beards; Ps-Mas‘ûdî, Akhbâr al-zamān, Cairo 1938, 49, and Ibn Sa‘d, Kīṣāb al-tabaqāt, I,10: Adam had curly hair. See the
Later Tarafí quotes a long physical description of Abraham: he was «white with a complexion intermixed with redness, had beautiful eyes of intense blackness, a wide forehead, long cheeks, a hooked nose and little hair on his body; he was a white-haired man with a white beard that was neither long nor short, and he had big hands and feet». This report is notable, since qisas al-anbiyā’ collections and other works dealing with prophets do not usually contain such a detailed description of Abraham; only one other tradition about the messengers sent by Abū Bakr to Heraclius gives any details about the appearance of Abraham, though in a very brief form. A hadīth attributed to the Companion Samura b. Jundab (d. 58-9/677-78) states that, in Muhammad’s words, Abraham was such a tall man that the Prophet, who met him in his nocturnal journey, could hardly see his head. In another widespread hadīth Muhammad gives further particulars of the physical appearance of Abraham: «Regarding Abraham, look at your fellow (Muhammad)», or: «I saw Abraham and I am the most similar to him among his offspring». The existence of traditions attributed to the Prophet probably discussion in Kister, «Adam», 139-40. Adam was also akhtar al-nās sha’ran: see Bayhaqī, Dalā’il al-nubuwwa, Beirut 1985, I,387; al-Mu‘āfā b. Zakariyā’, al-Ja‘īs al-sālih al-kāfī wa-l-an’īs al-nāsīl al-shāfi’, Beirut 1987, III,391; Abū Nu‘aym al-Isfahānī, Dalā’il al-nubuwwa, Beirut 1986, I,53 no. 13; but he became bald, see Tha‘labī, Qīṣās, 35; and C. Castillo, «Aportación a la mítica historia de Adán y Eva (II)», Miscelánea de Estudios Árabes y Hebraicos, 31 (1981), 47-48. See also Ḥiḍrī (Ps-Wāhḥīb), Qīṣās al-anbiyā’, 5a. In some of these reports it is said that Adam was the most beautiful of human kind, a particular that usually concerns Joseph; see Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, Beirut 1992, 1,97: Yusuf had half of the beauty of Adam; but in another report, when Adam is shown his offspring and he saw Yusuf, he was impressed by his beauty: Tha‘labī, Qīṣās al-anbiyā’, 108-9.


This report is of great significance: in fact Heraclius showed to the Muslim messengers the images of many prophets, including Muhammad; see, about Abraham, Bayhaqī, Dalā’il, I,388; Abū Nu‘aym, Dalā’il, I,53; al-Mu‘āfā b. Zakariyā’, al-Ja‘īs, III,392; for further references and a discussion of this tradition, see R. Tottoli, «Dell’aspetto físico dei profeti secondo alcune tradizioni musulmane», AfuON, forthcoming.

103 Bukhārī, Ṣaḥīḥ, Beirut, 1992, IV, 458 no. 3354.
prevented the diffusion of variant reports concerning the physical appearance of Abraham, and this is why sources do not usually dwell upon descriptions of him. At the same time, the statement that Muḥammad was similar to him held back the diffusion of popular traditions with fanciful particulars.\(^\text{105}\)

Following the biographies concerning David and Solomon, where no description of appearance is given, the next prophet described by Ṭarāfī is Job. At the end of his story Ṭarāfī quotes this short description: «Job was a man of a reddish complexion, blue eyes, protuberant cheeks and bulky constitution».\(^\text{106}\) Other sources give a few particulars about the physical appearance of Job and all of them differ from this one in the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā‘ of Ṭarāfī.\(^\text{107}\)

In the middle of the story of Joseph, Ṭarāfī quotes a tradition about his physical appearance along with the description of Jacob and Isaac. This is an exception to the formal structure of the work, since the descriptions are usually found at the end of the chapters. The reason is clear: Ṭarāfī is discussing the prodigious beauty of Joseph, which is so central to his biography, and recounts first the hadīths going back to the Prophet concerning his beauty, and then gives a full description of him, along with his ancestors, from a tradition attributed to Ibn al-Kalbī: «who stated, regarding the pictures of the prophets which in his view are reliable, that Joseph, God bless him and grant him salvation, was a white man, with curly

177; and cf. Ibn Kathīr, al-Biḍāya wa-l-nihāya, I,173. It should be remarked that a variant of these traditions states that it was Jesus the most similar to Muḥammad, see for instance Bukhārī, Sahīh, IV,475 no. 3394; al-Muttaqī al-Hindi, Kanz al-‘umāl, XI,396 no. 31849; but see for instance Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, III,622 no. 10832, and Haythamī, Majma‘ al-zawā‘id, I,66: ‘Urwa b. Mas‘īd was the most similar to Jesus.

\(\text{105}\) A comprehensive analysis of the traditions about the physical appearance of Muḥammad and his Companions could help the understanding of this material about the prophets. Regarding the appearance of the Prophet see for instance the long description in ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-ta‘rīkh, 79-82 and other references at p. 118 n. 208, or the vague description of the Prophet in Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, I,194 no. 684, I,218 no. 796, I,247-48 no. 944, 946-47, I,269-70 no. 1053, I,283 no. 1122; Ṣuyūṭī, al-Khasā‘īs al-kubrā, I,71 f.; further references are given in Totoli, «Dell’aspetto fisico dei profeti». The resemblance with the Prophet is evidently a way of praising someone, see for instance concerning al-Ḥasan and al-Ḥusayn, Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, I,213 no. 774, but in the case of Abraham is the way to underline the strict connection between him and Muḥammad. A comprehensive description of the appearance of the Prophet is given in the books dealing with the dalā‘īl al-nubuwaw.\(^\text{106}\)

\(\text{106}\) § 256 (Ms Vat., 89a; Ms Esc., 125): wa-kānūn sīfāt Aḥyāū sallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallām aḥmar ashbal nātī‘ al-wajnutayn ghalīf al-khalq.

\(\text{107}\) See the descriptions given first by Tha‘labī, Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā‘, 153; and then by Ṣa‘īdī, Biḥār al-anwār, XII,356; Ibn Abī ‘Udhayba, Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā‘, 49a. See also the description in al-Ḥakīm al-Nisābūrī, al-Mustadrak, II,635 no. 4113; and the definition given by Kisā‘ī, Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā‘, I,79: Job was the most similar to Joseph.
hair, big legs and arms, a little navel, large eyes and he was of uniform constitution. He was the most similar to Adam and his face radiated light. His father Jacob, God bless him and grant him salvation, was handsome, with slim cheeks and a long nose protruding over [his upper] lip. Isaac, God bless him and grant him salvation, was corpulent, white, of medium stature and had very little hair. Many of the particulars in this tradition deserve our attention, as is the case, for instance, with the clear indication of the source: Ibn al-Kalbi. Tārāfi also quoted a tradition from Ibn al-Kalbi with regard to Adam, as has already been noted above. However, the exact source for these traditions regarding the physical appearance of various prophets, though attributed to Ibn al-Kalbi, cannot be ascertained.

Moreover, another interesting particular is given at the end of the description of Joseph, where it is said that his face radiated light. This is similar to Shi'ite conceptions about prophetic light, but here this particular is related to Joseph’s prodigious beauty, since Tārāfi does not mention this light in his descriptions of the other prophets. Finally, in relation to references from other sources, only some details of the description of the physical appearance of Joseph traced back to Ka'b al-Aḥbār in the *Qīṣās al-anbiyāʾ* of Ṭhā’lābī are similar to the ones given here.
In the story of Moses, Tarafi mentions a report about his and Aaron’s physical appearance: «Moses, God bless him and grant him salvation, was a man of very tawny complexion, lank hair, light of flesh, with sunken eyes, but sharp sight, and with contracted lips; Aaron, God bless him and grant him salvation, was similar to Moses, with a round head, large forehead and he was cross-eyed». 112 Other sources contain descriptions of Moses with similar details. 113 It can be suggested that this long description also derives from Ibn al-Kalbi, like the other, similar reports about Adam and Joseph. Moreover, Tarafi had already mentioned something connected to Moses’ appearance in the description of the miracle of the leprous hand, when he added that Moses was a man of tawny complexion. These same words occur in a hadith where the Prophet described Moses, Abraham and Jesus. 114 In another place, at the beginning of this Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’, Tarafi related one further detail concerning Moses’s height in relation to the length of his rod. Also in a tradition dealing with the things that came down from Paradise with Adam, Tarafi mentions the rod of Moses which, it is said, «was ten cubits tall like Moses». 115

Finally, Tarafi also quotes the description of Jesus, but this report is notable only because he quotes some details taken in full from hadith 116 § 418 (Ms Esc., 218): wa-kānāt šīfāt Mūsā sallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam shādīd al-udma sāhī al-sha’rā’ darb al-laḥm ghā’ir al-‘a’nyān hadīd al-nāsār muqallās al-shafā wa-kānāt šīfāt Hārrūn sallā Allāh ‘alayhi wa-sallam shābīh bi-Mūsā mudawwār al-ra’s ‘ārid al-jābin fi ‘a’nyāyih ġabal.

116 § 376 (Ms Vat., 111a; Ms Esc., 189): wa-yuqāl inna [Mūsā sallā Allāh] ’alayhi wa-sallam kānā rajulan ādam. Hadīths usually add some other particulars, but the most cited tradition going back to the Prophet states that Moses was a man of tawny complexion and tall like men of the tribe of Shānū’a; see Bukhārī, Šafīḥ, IV,422 no. 3239; IV,458 no. 3325; IV,475 no. 3396, and cfr. IV,494 no. 3438, VII,77 no. 5913; Muslim, Šafīḥ, L,151-54 nos. 165-168; Tirmidī, al-Jāmi’ al-sahḥ, V,300 no. 3130, V,604 no. 3649; Abī Ya’lā, Musnad, IV,179 no. 2261, V,108 no. 2720; Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, L,257 no. 2197, I,533 no. 2324, I,537 no. 2347, I,732 nos. 3179-80, I,800 no. 3546; III,122 no. 7794, III,622 no. 10832, V,91 no. 14959; Ibn Balabān, al-Ībsān, L,134; ‘Abd al-Razzāq, al-Muṣannaf, V,329 no. 9719; al-Muttaqi al-Hindi, Kanz al-‘umāmah, XI,395-96 no. 31848; Haythami, Maṣma’ al-zawā’id, 66-67; Bayhaqī, Ḥoṣn al-anbiyā’, Cairo 1988, 21 no. 10; Ṣuyūṭī, al-Khayā‘īs al-kubrā, I,175,177. And see the description of Moses in Tha‘labī, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’, 144, and of Moses and Aaron, traced back to Ka‘b, in Tha‘labī, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’, 172; and also the description of the Moses in front of the Pharaoah, in Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i’i al-zuhūr, 124.

115 § 39 (Ms Vat., 52a; Ms Esc., 17): tūḥāh ‘aṣharat adhru’ ‘alā tūḥ Mūsā. See also Tābahī, Taʾrīkh al-rasul, I,431 [=I,501], I,127 [=I,126]; Tha‘labī, Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā’, 241; al-Hayyam, Qiṣṣas al-ṭurān, 107b; Ibn ‘Asākir, Taʿrīkh madnat Dimashq, XVIII,380; Ibn Ḥabīb, Kišāh al-muḥājibbār, 389: he says only that the rod was tall like Moses; Sibt b. al-Jawzī, Miṣrī‘at al-zamān, 202. But see also Kissī‘, Qiṣṣas al-anbiyā’, 235: twenty cubits; Ibn Iyās, Badā‘i’i al-zuhūr, 45: twenty; and Diyarbakrī, Taʾrīkh al-khamīs, L,63: ten or forty cubits.
literature as well as the name of Bukhārī: «Concerning Jesus, God bless him and grant him salvation, he was a man having a medium stature and a red complexion.» Al-Bukhārī states that he was red as if he had just come out of the bath; he had curly hair and broad breast, while in another report he had a complexion between red and white with lank hair, as if water was trickling down from it even though it was not moist, and the locks of his hair fell onto his shoulders. In the final part of his report Thārafi points out the contrasting particulars in the hadiths with regard to Jesus’s complexion, red or between red and white, and his hair, lank or curly.

A few words should be added to draw some final conclusions. Most of the descriptions of the prophets in the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Thārafi are not attested to in other sources and, with the exception of the description of Jesus, there can be few doubts that Ibn al-Kalbī was Thārafi’s source on this subject. However, it cannot be ascertained with certainty whether or not Thārafi relied directly upon his work or took material from an intermediary

116 About the meaning of ḥumra and āhmar when related to complexion, see E. W. Lane, An Arabic-English Lexicon, London-Edinburgh 1863-93, 640c, 642a; and see the discussion of the question in Tottoli, «Del’aspetto fisico dei profeti».


118 See, with complexion between red and white and lank hair: Bukhārī, Ṣahlīh, IV,422 3 no. 3239; Muslim, Ṣahlīh, I,152 no. 165; Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, I,527 no. 2197, I,557 no. 2347; see, about Jesus with curly hair and tawny complexion as if he had just come out of the bath (but hadiths sometimes give only one of these particulars): Bukhārī, Ṣahlīh, IV,475 no. 3394, IV,475 no. 3396, IV,494 no. 3437-8; Muslim, Ṣahlīh, I,151 no. 165, I,154 no. 168; Tirmidhī, al-Jāmi’ al-ạṣālīh, V,300 no. 3130; Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad, I,635 no. 2697, I,732 no. 3179: complexion between red and white but curly hair, I,732 no. 3180, I,800 no. 3546: white complexion and curly hair, III,123 no. 7794: ‘Abd al-Razzāq, al-Muṣannaf, V,329 no. 9719; Ibn Balābān, al-Ihsān, I,134; al-Muttaqī al-Hindi, Kanz al-‘umāl, XI,395-96 no. 31848; Abū Ya’lā, Musnad, V,108 no. 2720, and Haythamī, Majma’ al-zawā’id, I,67 (=Ibn Ḥanbal no. 3546). Finally a tradition states that Jesus was a man of tawny complexion (ṭādam) and lank hair, and adds that water used to trickle down his head and his locks of hair were falling on his shoulders: Malik, Kitāb al-muwatta’, ed. by M. F. ‘Abd al-Bāqī; Beirut 1988, II,920 (Ṣifat al-nabī, 2); Bukhārī, Ṣahlīh, VI,495 no. 3440-1, VII,75-6 no. 5902, VIII,403 no. 6999, VIII,441 no. 7128; Muslim, Ṣahlīh, I,555-6 no. 169; Ibn Ḥanbal, Musnad II,383 no. 5554, II,480 no. 6077, II,517 no. 6320, II,539 no. 6434; Abū Ya’lā, Musnad, IX,346 no. 5458, IX,359 no. 5469. See also the description given by Tha’labī, Qisas al-anbiyā’, 387, traced back as usual to Ka’b al-ʿAlbīrī; and see Siṭḥ b. al-Jawzī, Mir`āt al-zamān, 573; Ibn Kathīr, al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya, II,97; Ibn ‘Asākir, Tārīkh madinat Dimashq, XIV,34 f.: Ibn al-Jawzī, al-Muntaqṣam, II,20; Ibn Abī ‘Udhayba, Qisas al-anbiyā’, 128b; Abū Ḥusain al-Dinawari, Kihāb al-akhdhīr al-ṭiqlīl, 22; see also Bayhaqī, Dalā’īl, I,389; Abū Nu’aym, Dalā’īl, I,54; al-Mu`āfā b. Zakariyā, al-Jalīs, III,392. See also Tottoli, «Dell’aspetto fisico dei profeti».
source quoting Ibn al-Kalbi. What is sure is that the descriptions of the prophets given in the *Qisas al-anbiyā‘* of Tarafī contain many notable details.

Various other traditions, which are difficult to collect under a single subject heading but which are nevertheless relevant, will be discussed below.

In the story of Adam, Tarafī quotes a popular etymology of the Arabic word for man (*insān*): he states that man was named *insān* because he was gladened (*anisa*) by the creation of Eve. 119 The most widespread interpretation says that the origin of the term *insān* is a Qur’ān verse (Qur.20:115) where it is said that man forgot (*nasiya*) his pact with God. 120 Another statement in the story of Adam merits our attention: in the tradition detailing the objects that Adam brought with him when he fell down on earth from Paradise, it is said that no man, except the prophets, could take the rod (of Moses), without being devoured. 121

In the story of Solomon, Tarafī relates a tradition where the prophet asked the chief of the birds the whereabouts of the hoopoe; in this report the chief of the birds is the crane (*al-kulā‘*). In the traditions dealing with this episode in the other sources, it is usually the eagle who looks for the hoopoe upon Solomon’s request. 122

Two segments from the biography of Joseph are relevant. At the beginning Tarafī introduces the following report with the statement «from a *tafsir* from Ishāq b. Bishr»: Joseph had a dream, before that of the stars, but similar to it: his brother went and gathered firewood, and his brothers’ faggots fell down prostrate to Joseph’s faggot. 123 Another report occurs at the end of the story of Joseph. Jacob asks the wolf, who was reputedly involved in the presumed death of Joseph, about the fate of his son; the answer the wolf gives, denying every charge, is worth noting: «O prophet of

119 § 27 (Ms Vat., 50b; Ms Esc., 12).


121 § 40 (Ms Vat., 52a; Ms Esc., 17): *wa-qila innahā kānat lá ya’khudhuhā ghayr nabiyy illā akalat-hu*

122 § 234 (Ms Vat., 88b; Ms Esc., 99); see, concerning the eagle, as chief of the birds, Tha’labī, *Qisas al-anbiyā‘*, 312; Mujīr al-Dīn, *al-Uns al-jaiīl*, I,128: *Qisas al-anbiyā‘*, (Anonymous), Ms Princeton n.s. 2120, Ib; Sibṭ b. al-Jawzī, *Mīr‘āt al-zamān*, 513.

123 § 258 (Ms Vat., 89a; Ms Esc., 125-26); this tradition (cf. Gen. 37:7) is given also by al-Haysam, *Qisas al-Qur‘ān*, 57b; together with another dream before the one with the stars; Ps-‘Asma‘ī, *Qisas al-anbiyā‘*, 29a. Other sources describe other dreams by Joseph before the famous dream of the stars; see for instance Tha’labī, *Qisas al-anbiyā‘*, 110; Kisā‘ī, *Qisas al-anbiyā‘*, 157; Ibn Abī ‘Udhayba, *Qisas al-anbiyā‘*, 30b; F. Croisier, *L’histoire de Joseph d’après un manuscrit oriental*, Genève 1989, 107.
God, I did not even see your son (...); I only came (to the region of Canaan) to visit some relatives; my village is eighty parasangs away from here». 124 Only a few sources give similar details about this tradition, usually saying that this wolf was in Palestine visiting some other wolves or a brother. 125

At the end of the story of Joseph, Tarafi mentions some important traditions about the number of the prophets and their 'nationality'. This material is typical in the works dealing with prophets and sources usually state that all the patriarchs and the prophets were from the Israelites excluding some who were Syrian, and spoke Aramaic, and some others who were Arab. The number and the list given by Tarafi are relevant: he states that all, but eleven, were Israelite: Adam, Idris, Noah, Hûd, Šâlih, Lot, Abraham, Shu‘ayb, Ishmael, Isaac and Muḥammad. Tarafi then gives another version: all but twenty of the prophets were Israelite: four of them were Syrian, Adam, Seth, Idris and Noah, and four were Arab, Hûd, Shu‘ayb, Šâlih and Muḥammad. 126 Contradictory numbers in all probability derive from a mistake of the copyist, since Tarafi mentions only eight prophets, in line with a well known tradition going back to the Companion Abû Dharr (d. 32/651 ca.). Sources usually only specify eight or ten prophets, who were Arab and Syrian, with many variations to their nationalities and languages. 127 It

124 § 330 (Ms Vat., 102a; Ms Esc., 165): Ya nabiyy Allah mā ra‘aytu li-ibnika šara qūṭu qūla fa-mā adkhalaka arq Kanʿan qūla ji‘tu min ajl qurāba li min al-dhi‘āb wa-baynī wa-baynī qaryatī thamānīn farsakhan.

125 See in Ibn al-Murajjî, Fudā‘il Bayt al-Maqdis wa-l-Khaul wa-fadā’il al-Shâm, ed. by O. Livne-Kafri, Shfaram 1995, 352-53 no. 584; and R. Y. Ebied and M. J. L. Young, The Story of Joseph in Arabic Verse, Leiden 1975, 13. For some other traditions about this dialogue between Jacob and the wolf, see Tha‘labî, Qisas al-anbiyâ’, 116; and Kisâ‘î, Qisas al-anbiyâ’, 159-60. Also Maqdisî, al-Bad‘ wa-l-ta‘rikh, III,70, hints at this story and relates that Qussâs have a lot of legends about the wolf.

126 § 331-333 (Ms Vat., 102a-102b; Ms Esc., 165-166).

127 See Ishâq b. Bishr, Muḥadda‘a, 833a: five prophets spoke Arabic: Muḥammad, Ishmael, Shu‘ayb, Hûd and Šâlih, and all the others spoke Aramaic; Ibn Qutayba, al-Ma‘ārif, 56: five were ‘ibrâmiyyûn: Adam, Seth, Idris, Noah and Abraham, and five Arab: Hûd, Šâlih, Ishmael, Shu‘ayb and Muḥammad; the same as in Ibn Qutayba also in Maqdisî, al-Bad‘ wa-l-ta‘rikh, III,1; Sîbî b. al-Jawwâ, Mir‘ât al-zaman, 586: four Syrian and four Arab, as given by Tarafi (>Abû Dharr), but in the same page Sîbî b. al-Jawwâ gives another tradition: all the prophets were from Israelites excluding ten of them (all the names given by Tarafi but Adam); Suyûfî, al-Durr al-manthur, II,746: four Syrian prophets and four Arab (>Abû Dharr); see the same tradition also in Ḥusaynî, Qisas al-anbiyâ‘ ‘alâ ra‘y al-imâmiyya, Berlin, Ms Staatsbibliothek Petermann I.633, 3b; al-Mu‘âra b. Zakariyâ‘, al-Jalîls, III,376; Mu‘jir al-Dîn, al-Uns al-jalîl, I,175. See also Shāhî, Kitâb al-jumân fi akhbâr al-zaman, London, Ms British library or. 3008, 16b: four Arab prophets; Ma‘ânis, Bilâr al-anwar, XII,385: five Arab prophets, including Ishmael; Ibn ‘Asâkir, Ta‘rikh madinat Dimashq, XVII,651: five Arab prophets: Muḥammad, Noah (!), Hûd, Šâlih and Shu‘ayb; ‘Abd al-Malik b. Ḥabîb, Kitâb al-ta‘rikh, 27 no 43: there were prophets speaking three languages: Syriac, Hebrew and Arabic; five prophets were Syrian: Idris, Noah,
should be pointed out that what is at issue here, in the lists and names of prophets, is in reality the nationality and the language spoken by Abraham and Ishmael. Later on, in the chapter dedicated to Ishmael and Isaac, Tarafī states that Ishmael spoke Arabic from birth,\textsuperscript{128}

Another peculiar report not attested in any other source available to me can be found in the story of Moses. It is stated «in a \textit{tafṣīr}, that the magicians decided to bewitch Moses and they transformed his head into that of a lion, his body into that of a pig and his hands into those of a monkey».\textsuperscript{129} Tarafī mentions further significant material about al-Khīdhr, when he quotes a long tradition concerning his dialogues with Moses, where one exhorts the other (\textit{ja‘ala yuwaṣṣi kull wahīd minhumā šāhibahu}). Only a few parts of this tradition can be found in the major \textit{qiṣṣas al-anbiyā‘} collections or in \textit{zuhd} books.\textsuperscript{130}

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The parts of Tarafī’s \textit{Qiṣṣas al-anbiyā‘} dealt with here share some features in common: they are connected with traditions or questions—such as onomastics or the physical descriptions going back to Ibn al-Kalbī—that are typical of the material of popular origin regarding the prophets. This is apparently material that authors of \textit{qiṣṣas al-anbiyā‘} collections could not afford to neglect. Notwithstanding the exegetical character of his \textit{Qiṣṣas al-anbiyā‘}, Tarafī could not but include such popular traditions when dealing with particular subjects—such as names or physical description of the prophets—while almost always disregarding what is stated in \textit{ḥadīths}. What Tarafī’s source or sources were for these traditions cannot be stated definitely. It is possible that the \textit{Muḥrada‘} of Ishāq b. Bishr was the source for some of this material, but for some other traditions a Qur’ānic Abraham, Lot and Jonah, and twelve (sic!) spoke Arabic: Adam, Seth, Hūd, Šālīh, Ishmael, Šu‘ayb, al-Khīdhr, the three prophets mentioned in the surāt Yā-sīn, Jonah, Khālid b. Sīnān and Muhammad, and see also 27-28 nos. 42-44; cf. also Sa‘īd al-Andalusī, \textit{Kitāb ṭabaqāt al-umam}, ed. by L. Cheikho, Beirut 1912, 6: five Syrian prophets.

\textsuperscript{128}§ 334 (Ms Vat., 102b; Ms Esc., 166).

\textsuperscript{129}§ 382 (Ms Vat., 112a; Ms Esc., 192): \textit{wa-fi ba’d al-taṣfīr anna al-sahara ijtama‘u‘i an yashurū Miṣā‘ fa-ja‘al ra‘ sahu ra‘ asad wa-jasadahu jasad khinzir wa-yadayhi yaday qird.}

commentary seems to be far more probable, as in the case of the two reports introduced by the expression fi ba’d al-tafsīr.

At the same time we should also consider the possibility that this material could have been taken from another, unknown, work dedicated to the prophets, which Ţarafi had at his disposition and made use of for his Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ. We have already pointed to the probability that Ţarafi took these traditions from one or two intermediary sources, as he tended to rely upon few sources, such as the works of Ţabārī and Ishāq b. Bishr. 131 The most likely explanation is that this intermediary source was another work containing traditions about the prophets, and in this case it could have been a work from al-Andalus, where this literary genre was widely diffused. 132 If this local qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ production, now lost, ever existed, it surely influenced Ţarafi in some way, with its materials and traditions of popular origin, and left its sign in the parts of his work that have been dealt with in this article.

ABSTRACT

The Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of the Andalusian Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ţarafi is a collection of stories of the prophets which was written in the 5th/11th century. There are only two extant manuscripts of this work. Little is known about the author, who was an expert in variant readings of the Qur’an. No biographical or later source mentions this qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ collection.

Ţarafi’s work is introduced by a preface that indicates its exegetical character. Its most noteworthy feature is the strong dependence on Ţabārī’s tafsīr. Notwithstanding this, some of the material included by Ţarafi in his work is quite interesting, such as the traditions dealing with onomastic, the physical appearance of the prophets and various other reports.

RESUMEN

La obra del andalusí Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ţarafi, Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ, es una colección de relatos sobre los profetas escrita en el siglo v/xi y de la cual sólo se conservan dos manuscritos. Se conoce muy poco sobre su autor, un experto en lecturas coránicas. Ninguna fuente biográfica —ni otras fuentes posteriores— menciona esta colección de qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ.

La obra se inicia con un prefacio en el que se puede apreciar su carácter exegético. La característica más notable del texto es su estrecha dependencia del tafsīr de al-Ţabārī. Sin embargo, parte de los materiales que al-Ţarafi incluyó en su obra no carecen de interés, como es el caso de las tradiciones que se refieren a la onomástica, el aspecto físico de los profetas y otros temas.

131 See in particular p. 143.
132 This work could be the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Aḥmad b. Khālid mentioned above.