

ALLIANCES AMONG THE ARABS*

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The institution of alliance, called *ḥilf* in Arabic, played an important role in pre-Islamic Arabian society, and continued to exist with certain modifications in Islamic times. Elsewhere I studied the ideological and legal problems precipitated by alliances in Islam.¹ Here I offer an investigation of other aspects of the institution as it existed both in pre-Islamic and Islamic times. I shall first briefly outline the structure of Arabian tribal society as a whole, and explain the principle of shared responsibility among agnates. This will be followed by a discussion of the different types of *ḥilf*.

Arabian tribal society

Arabian society of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times may be schematically described as consisting of hierarchies of agnatic descent groups that came into being by a process of segmentation. Put differently, any given group considered itself as the descendants in male line of a single male ancestor, thus differentiating itself from other descent groups. At the same time, it considered itself as part of ever larger descent groups, because its members were also the offspring of the ancestors further and further removed up in the same male line. Any given descent group referred itself sometimes to a closer, at other times to a more distant ancestor. When it referred itself to a distant ancestor, a descent group ignored the dividing lines between itself and those descent groups which, like itself, descended

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¹ See Landau-Tasserón, E., "Alliances in Islam". Much of the data used there is here put to other use, which explains the relatively numerous references to that article.

from the same distant ancestor. Thus the more distant the ancestor, the larger the descent group, and the greater the number of segments included in it. All Arabs considered themselves as being ultimately descended from two distant ancestors, in two different male lines, so that the genealogical scheme may be represented approximately as two pyramids. Descent groups are typically called “Banū so-and-so”, i.e. “the descendants of so-and-so”. It should, however, be noted that not every name mentioned in the genealogies stands for a founder of a descent group, and that the recorded genealogies are not always genuine (some would say: are always not genuine). As will be shown below, groups were sometimes formed by alliances, not by segmentation; but these groups too were eventually integrated into the genealogical scheme of agnatic descent groups. Furthermore, the sources convey the impression that pure agnatic descent groups only existed in theory; in practice, descent groups constantly absorbed outsiders who retained their own genealogy, at least temporarily. However, the basis and the bulk of almost any given social unit was a (genuine or alleged) agnatic descent group. Therefore, when I use this term I mean units that are considered by the sources to be descent groups, regardless of their actual origin and their attached members.

The sources preserved the names of many descent groups, which apparently varied in size and in their level of segmentation. It is often clear that a given descent group was an entity that comprised a number of independent parts. We may call such a descent group a comprehensive descent group. In the genealogies, the ancestor of the comprehensive descent group would be far removed up in the male line, whereas the constituent parts would be called after various descendants of that ancestor. Students of Arabia and Islam commonly refer to the comprehensive descent groups as “tribes”. Such are Quraysh, Tamīm, ‘Āmir, Ṭayyi’, Asad, Bakr, ‘Abs, Dhubyān, to name but a few. I shall follow this common usage, and apply the term “sections” to the descent groups constituting these tribes, regardless of their level of segmentation. Due to the hierarchical structure described above, the distinction between tribes and sections is often blurred, so that my terminology is in fact arbitrary, but I shall use it for want of a better one.²

² The Arabic terms found in the sources, such as *qabīla*, *‘ashīra*, *ḥayy* etc. are inadequate because they have no fixed meanings. The same applies to terms such as “clan”, “subdivision”, “subtribe”.

The existence of tribes is indisputable, yet we do not know what the members of any given tribe had in common in addition to the name, and perhaps some sense of solidarity. An illustration of the latter is the account about al-Ḥārith b. Surayj, who rebelled against the Umayyads. Both the rebel and the Umayyad army had on their side tribesmen of Tamīm. However, during the military confrontation al-Ḥārith ranged a ballista against the enemy, but was told that the ballista, where it stood, was aimed at Tamīmīs on the enemy's side. Al-Ḥārith therefore changed the position of the weapon so that it would hit other tribesmen.³ This account shows that Tamīmī solidarity was not powerful enough to prevent division of the tribe between enemy camps, yet it influenced the course of battle.

A modern Bedouin tribe in the Negev and Sinai may be defined by a common name, common leadership, common territory, sometimes common customary law, and external recognition, both legal and political.⁴ By contrast, the defining features of the tribes of old are far from being clear. The members of a given tribe sometimes occupied adjacent territories, but the legal significance of this fact, if any, is unknown.⁵ More often than not, sections of one and the same tribe were scattered over large territories. It is therefore not possible to define a tribe by its territory. A pre-Islamic tribe certainly had no common leadership, and its sections did not unite for common activities. When the sources seem to be reporting a joint activity of a tribe, it often turns out that the report is misleading. The confusion arises from the fact that the sources call sections interchangeably by the names of closer and more distant ancestors. Obviously, a designation by a more distant ancestor applies to a more comprehensive section. Moreover, the name of a tribe is often used to designate only one or a few of its sections. However, in my experience of the use of tribal names, a smaller descent group may be referred to by the name of the larger one to which it belongs, but not vice versa (except when a specific name becomes generic, such as Qays which came to designate all the

³ Ṭabarī (Cairo), *Ta'riḫ* 7/175. In fact political division within the descent groups was the rule rather than the exception.

⁴ See Marx, *Bedouin*, 61-3, 95, 123-4; Stewart, *Bedouin Boundaries*; idem, "Urf" 891. See also Stewart's analysis of Marx' book, "On Bedouin Society in the Negev" (in Hebrew).

⁵ There are references in the sources to *bilād Tamīm*, *bilād 'Āmir* etc. See Ḥamad al-Jāsir, "Taḥdīd manāzil al-qabā'il".

“Northern” tribes). When there are several possibilities in various versions of the same account, the smallest framework is probably the one that was involved in the events described. This means that even when a tribe (or a large section) is mentioned as having taken part in a certain activity, it is usually only members of one (or a few) of its constituents who were involved.⁶ We are thus left with no real definition of an Arabian tribe in the period discussed.

Shared responsibility among agnates

In pre-Islamic society the male adult members of certain descent groups shared legal responsibility. They were accountable for each other's offenses. At its most extreme manifestation this rule meant that they jointly sought revenge, or received blood-money, when one of them was killed by an outsider; conversely, they were all exposed to vengeance, or obligated to pay blood-money, when one of them killed an outsider. The obligation of mutual assistance applied not only in matters of blood revenge but in less extreme situations as well.⁷ The framework within which the rights and obligations of members were effective may be called a co-liable group, to borrow Emanuel Marx' terminology. Since outsiders constantly joined descent groups and shared liability with them, it follows that co-liable groups were not in fact identical with agnatic descent groups.⁸ However, joining a co-liable group involved a specific legal mechanism (to be discussed below), therefore we may assume that the original, or at least theoretical, boundaries of any given co-liable group matched those of a certain descent group. The rules by which co-liable groups were formed are unknown. The material at hand does not disclose

⁶ Landau-Tasserón, “Asad”, esp. 1-5; *idem.*, “Ṭayy”. See also Obermann, “Early Islam”, 249 on the use of names, and 244-50 for a general description of the tribal system.

⁷ This is analogous to the rule obtaining among the Bedouin in the Negev, see Marx, *Bedouin*, 195.

⁸ A similar situation obtains among modern Bedouin of Sinai, the Negev, Cyrenaica and the Western Desert of Egypt, see Marx, *Bedouin*, 63-78, 180-242; Stewart, “On the Structure of Bedouin Society”. Stewart uses the terms blood-money groups, and vengeance groups, see Stewart, *Texts*, vol. 1, 26-122. *idem.*, “Ṭha'r”. A reasoned distinction between descent groups and co-liable groups exists in the earliest Muslim legal literature (2nd/8th century), but this is outside the scope of this article. I intend to examine the topic in a separate study.

whether they came into being on the basis of a certain genealogical depth, or mutual consent of the members, or a decision by the elders, or external public opinion, or any combination of these or other factors.⁹ Also unknown are the actual boundaries of liability, that is, the lines dividing between co-liaible groups. We know thousands of names of tribes and sections, but we do not know how each of them actually operated in relation to the others. Not only is the source-material inadequate to supply such data in detail, but also the boundaries between the groups were not in fact rigid. As shown by the Tamīmī example above, members of different sections in a tribe could feel obligated to assist one another in certain situations. However, the men of a tribe never constituted a single co-liaible group, and we cannot tell which sections within each tribe fulfilled this function at any given point in time. Where modern Bedouin are concerned, contemporary anthropologists can ask their informants for data and attempt to draw the lines demarcating one co-liaible group from another.¹⁰ Modern anthropologists may indeed encounter certain difficulties, but they can at least both observe the groups they study and interrogate their members. As for the past, such methods are altogether inapplicable. The tribal system was (and is) dynamic, the processes of segmentation and alliance effecting constant changes in the composition of descent groups. Thus co-liaible groups, sections and tribes were constantly dissolved and newly formed, but the sources only give indirect and sporadic data about such matters. Moreover, they also confuse the names of smaller and larger sections as explained above. It is thus not possible to define the actual boundaries of past co-liaible groups. It is only possible to point out that they were defined by legal responsibility rather than by genealogy, and that they absorbed outsiders by a certain type of alliance.

⁹ Cf. Stewart, *Texts*, 1/88, where a Bedouin says, “blood-money pacts have been made between people who’ve risen five generations from each other, and people who’ve risen six generations...” This comment amounts to a statement that co-liaible groups (“blood-money” groups) are formed by both a certain genealogical depth and mutual agreement (“pacts”).

¹⁰ See e.g. Marx, *Bedouin*, chapters 7, 8. Marx’ terminology is different from mine. He defines the boundaries of certain co-liaible groups and identifies their constituent parts, which he terms “sections” (see e.g. 115, 125); in my terminology a section would be larger than a co-liaible group.

Types of alliances

Genealogy was not the only adhesive force in Arabian society. Alliance, *ḥilf*, fulfilled this function as well. The term *ḥilf* covers various types of agreements. The root *ḥlf* signifies oath, and any agreement bolstered by an oath can be referred to as *ḥilf*. Indeed alliances are called *ḥilf* precisely because they involve an oath. The close connection between the two, and the precedence of the meaning “oath” to that of “agreement”, is indicated by the report about the Fuḍūl alliance (*ḥilf al-fuḍūl*). In pre-Islamic times, certain Qurashī sections agreed to protect the interests of strangers coming to trade in Mecca. It is reported that “they exchanged oaths in the name of God, saying, “we shall help those who are wronged’... they concluded an alliance agreeing not to allow injustice in Mecca...”.¹¹ The Fuḍūl was not merely a sworn agreement to help the oppressed, but an alliance, as proved by a later incident. During the caliphate of Mu‘āwiya, al-Ḥasan b. ‘Alī died, and his brother al-Ḥusayn intended to bury him next to the Prophet. The Umayyad governor, Marwān, strongly opposed this project, and so al-Ḥusayn rallied the Fuḍūl alliance. The sections Hāshim, Taym, Zuhra, and Asad assembled at al-Ḥusayn’s call, equipped with their weapons, to back him up.¹²

It is in fact difficult to distinguish between *ḥilf* as a sworn agreement on co-operation, and *ḥilf* as an alliance. The verb *tahālafū*, meaning both “they exchanged oaths” and “they concluded an alliance”, sometimes covers treaties and agreements upon limited co-operation, because they were fortified by oaths; the taking of oaths, however, is not always explicitly mentioned. Among other things, the treaty of Ḥudaybiyya between the Prophet and Quraysh is sometimes referred to as *ḥilf*, as are the pre-Islamic treaties of the *ilāf*, the boycott of Quraysh against Banū Hāshim, Muḥammad’s treaties with pagan tribes, a treaty between Bedouins and Kurds at the end of the 9th cen-

¹¹ *wa-tahālafū bi-allāh al-qā’il la-nakūnanna yadan li-l-mazlūm...fa-summiya ḥilf al-fuḍūl...tahālafū wa-ta’āqadū an lā yuqūma bi-Makka zālim..amr ‘alayhi ta’āqadū wa-tawāthaqū*, al-Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka* 5/195; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya* 2/292. Al-Jāhiz, *Ḥayawān* 4/471, states: “*wa-asl al-ḥilf wa-l-tahālaf innamā huwa min al-ḥilf wa-l-aymān*”. Also the explanations in the classical dictionaries strongly imply that *ḥilf* as an oath preceded *ḥilf* as an agreement, contrary to Tyan’s view, see Tyan, “*Ḥilf*” 388.

¹² Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* 3/276.

tury CE, etc.¹³ It appears, then, that the term *ḥilf* is indeed rather confusing.¹⁴

A distinction is often made between tribal alliances on the one hand, and pacts between one individual and another, or an individual and a descent group, on the other.¹⁵ The notion that individuals habitually forged alliances is based on two facts. First, the formal act of concluding alliances was often performed by individuals; the common oath formula was uttered in the singular form even though, by necessity, it applied to co-liable groups.¹⁶ Secondly, the sources constantly refer to individual allies, and the status of being an ally is mentioned in both biographies and *isnāds* as an identifying feature of individuals.¹⁷ The profusion of references to individual allies is misleading. More often than not, it turns out that an allied individual was in fact part of an allied section. For example, the ancestor of the Qāriḏ

¹³ For Ḥudaybiyya and the *ilāf* see al-Fākihī, *Akhbār Makka* 5/208-9; Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* 7/400-401; al-Ṭahāwī, *Sharḥ ma'ānī al-āthār* 3/312-3, 318 (Ḥudaybiyya); Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 1/75, 78, 71 (*ilāf*). The boycott of Quraysh against the Banū Hāshim is designated *taḥāluf*, see Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān* 1/170, 3/347; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya* 3/84. Muḥammad's treaties with pagan tribal groups are called *ḥilf*, see Ibn Ḥanbal, *Faḍā'il* 2/640. For the treaty between Bedouins and Kurds to fight al-Mu'taqid, see al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (Beirut) 5/609. Other cases: the military alliance of local Syrian Bedouins against the Fatimids in the 5th/11th century, see Ibn al-'Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭalab* 5/2239, 9/4078; the agreement among the people of Khurasan to fight Abū Muslim, see Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam* 7/271. It is sometimes clear that the agreement was bolstered by an oath, e.g. Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* 6/111, 377, 7/97, 8/373, 399, 9/61, 64, 73.

¹⁴ Reinert's statement (*Das Recht*, p. 22), that *ḥilf* is a purely political agreement between two equal groups, ignores the diversity of the term and is therefore misleading. So is Schmucker's classification (9-16); he sees *ḥilf* as a political, mostly temporary treaty between tribes, *jiwār* as a protection agreement between individuals, and *walā'* as a pact between an individual and a community. See also Smith, *Kinship*, 53-56.

¹⁵ Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, 51; Kister, "On strangers and allies", 142; Tyan, "*Ḥilf*" 338-9. Tyan's distinctions between types of alliances is blurred and self contradictory. See also Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* 1/65; Juda, *Mawālī*, p. 11, mentions alliances of individuals, but as a whole, his discussion (4-18) lumps together various types of agreements with no proper distinction between them. See also the previous note.

¹⁶ See e.g. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 240, and below. On ceremonies related to alliances, including written documents, see Smith, *Kinship*, 53-63, Juda, *Mawālī*, 2-4. See also Reinert, *Das Recht*, 22 (where he lumps *walā'* and *ḥilf* together; the two institutions differ on the one hand, but overlap on the other, see Landau-Tasseron, "Alliances in Islam").

¹⁷ "I was told by al-Sariyy Abū Bishr, who was an ally of Banū Zuhra..." Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rikh* (Beirut) 1/159, 4/601. See also Mālik b. Anas, *Al-mudawwana al-kubrā* 2/279; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/360; Ibn Qānī', *Mu'jam al-ṣaḥāba* 1/26; al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* 15/509. Note that the term *jār*, referring to the status of being a protected outsider, is not used as an identifying feature of individuals, even though the terms *jār* and *ḥalif* are sometimes interchangeable.

section (originating in the Kināna tribe), Khālid b. al-Ḥārith, allied himself to ‘Abd ‘Awf b. ‘Abd al-Ḥārith from Zuhra, a section of Quraysh. But the alliance involved the whole of the Qārīz section (*āl Qārīz*) on the one hand, and the Zuhra section on the other. The Qārīz section was part of yet another alliance called the Aḥābīsh; the latter was in fact a confederacy of discrete sections which was allied to Quraysh in pre-Islamic times, forming an auxiliary military force for Mecca.¹⁸ A simpler, perhaps more typical case is that of ‘Utba b. Ghazwān, a Companion of the Prophet from the Banū Māzin b. Manṣūr tribe. ‘Utba is defined as an ally of the Qurashī section Banū Nawfal, and it would seem that his case is one of an alliance between individuals. However, according to the data supplied by the scholar Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245/859), ‘Utba’s status was shared by his descent group, Banū Nusayb.¹⁹ Nusayb was ‘Utba’s ancestor 4 generations removed, so that this alliance with Banū Nawfal involved much more than one individual. The same applies to many allies of Quraysh known to us, such as the famous Companions ‘Abdallāh b. Mas‘ūd, al-Akhnas b. Sharīq, ‘Abdallāh b. Jaḥsh, al-‘Alā’ b. al-Ḥaḍramī. Each of these, and other allies of Quraysh, when checked, turns up with brothers or other agnates who shared the same status. Sometimes people who entered an alliance brought their previous allies into the new relationship.²⁰ Indeed the reports of the allies of Quraysh as recorded by Ibn Ḥabīb indicate that alliances always involved groups, not individuals.²¹ It may have happened that a man left his own descent group and allied himself with another. Such an individual might in time have offspring, who would be included in the alliance as well. Thus Ibn Sa‘d states that the grandfather of the Companion Khālid b. al-Bukayr concluded an alliance with the grandfather of ‘Umar b.

¹⁸ The alliance of Qārīz: Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 239; Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt* 5/58. Qārīz, after whom the section is named, descended from Khālid b. al-Ḥārith, but I found only incomplete and contradictory versions of the genealogy, see e.g. al-Bukhārī, *Al-ta’rīkh al-kabīr* 7/201; al-Bustī, *Al-thiqāt* 5/327. For the Aḥābīsh see Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 229-30, 239.

¹⁹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 243. ‘Utba defined as an ally: e.g. al-Bukhārī, *Al-ta’rīkh al-kabīr* 6/520.

²⁰ Mālik b. ‘Amr al-Sulamī or al-‘Adwānī, was an ally of the Banū Asad who were allied to ‘Abd Shams, Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Iṣāba* (Beirut) 5/738; the same applies to his brother, Kathīr b. ‘Amr al-Sulamī, Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istī‘āb* 3/1308. ‘Ubayda b. Rabī‘a b. Jubayr al-Bahrānī was an ally of Ghūṣayna who were allied to the Anṣār, Ibn Ḥajar, *Al-Iṣāba* (Beirut) 4/427.

²¹ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 229-273.

al-Khaṭṭāb, therefore he and his offspring were allies of ‘Umar’s descent group, Banū ‘Adī.²² Suwayd, of the Tamīmī section Banū ‘Abdallāh b. Dārim, fled to Mecca after having slain the son of the king of Ḥīra. His offspring remained in Mecca as allies of Quraysh.²³ In the same vein, the ancestor of the Companion Ḥudhayfa b. al-Yamān fled blood revenge and came to Yathrib, where he allied himself with the section ‘Abd al-Ashhal; his offspring retained the same status.²⁴ Eventually, the allied status concerned groups, although it had implications for each member thereof. It is remarkable, but not surprising, that Bedouin of Sinai view individuals as sections. When one Ibn Naṣṣār negotiated his affiliation with a certain group, the options were to “join as a brother or as one among several sub-groups” (i.e. sections).²⁵ In view of the above, it seems to me that a distinction between group-alliances and individual alliances is not significant. A distinction between types of covenants should rather be qualitative, not quantitative, and I therefore suggest the following classification.

First, there were alliances which amounted to co-operation between sections for limited, clearly defined purposes, such as specific military enterprises, or consolidation vis-à-vis political rivals. The parties to such alliances never merged with one another, nor did any of them assume the name or use the *nisba* of the other. Thus we are told that the Ḥanīfa and the Taghlib tribes allied themselves with one another against the Bakr tribe;²⁶ Banū Mālik, a section of Thaḳīf, allied itself with the Tamīmī section Yarbū‘ against a confederacy from their own tribe, the Aḥlāf of Thaḳīf.²⁷ Certain sections of Quraysh allied themselves to one another against other sections of the same tribe, who in turn formed a “counter alliance”. The reasons for this particular division were economic and political; the groups were

²² Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt* 3/388; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istī‘āb* 2/426.

²³ *Naqā‘id* 2/653. See also Juda, *Mawālī*, 5, 6, 11 (but the individual allies whom he mentions were in fact part of groups, as I have just explained).

²⁴ Al-Yamān was not the father but an ancestor several generations removed; there are, however, other accounts about Ḥudhayfa, see Ibn Qutayba, *Ma‘ārif*, 114.

²⁵ See also the argument that follows in that discussion, “here are sub-groups with only one or two members...”, Stewart, *Texts* 1/88-89. Further explanation on individuals will be offered below, the chapter on “the parties to alliances”.

²⁶ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī* 11/48. The alliance did not apply to the whole of the tribes but only to sections thereof, cf. above.

²⁷ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil* 1/542.

called the Muṭayyabūn (“the Perfumed”) and the Aḥlāf (“the Allies”). We should, however, beware of confusing specific purposes with limited duration. Thus Tyan adduces the Muṭayyabūn and the Aḥlāf as examples of temporary alliances, but the oaths taken by the parties clearly show that the time limit set for these covenants was “for ever”²⁸. Indeed, the awareness of these alliances within Quraysh was deep and durable, as shown by Kister.²⁹

Secondly, the sources mention alliances between more or less equal groups that appear to have agreed on general co-operation.³⁰ Alliances of this kind sometimes led to a merging of the parties although, as far as I am aware, merging was never something explicitly agreed upon but rather something that occurred gradually.³¹ The process may have been as follows: independent sections conclude an alliance; the confederacy sometimes assume an aggregate name, or is given one by outsiders; later, the descent groups constituting the confederacy claim common descent, often interpreting the aggregate name as indicating a common ancestor. Thus certain sections which pledged themselves to act in co-operation “like finger-joints” (*barājim*, pl. of *burjuma*), were called al-Barājim, “the Finger-joints”, and we are told that they all had a male ancestor in common, Ḥanzala (of the Tamīm tribe).³² Goldziher

²⁸ Tyan, *Ḥilf*, 338, vs. Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 1/263; Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt* 1/77. cf. Juda, *Mawālī*, chapter 1 note 32, where he adduces an example of temporary alliance (cited from Bakrī, 1/41), whereas the text is clear about the original intention of the parties to stay allied forever. See also Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* 1/68-9, and Obermann, “Early Islam”, 245, both distinguishing between temporary and permanent alliances. Generally, however, the classifications of alliances are not clear.

²⁹ For references to the Muṭayyabūn and the Aḥlāf see Kister, “Some reports concerning Mecca”, 81-84; Juda, *Mawālī*, 8, 10.

³⁰ E.g. the tribes Ṭayyī’ and Asad, commonly called “the allies”, *al-ḥalīfān*, see Ibn Qutayba, *Shi’r* (Leiden), 86; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Muḥabbar*, 126; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (Cairo) 3/147. Asad and Dhubyān, or Asad and Ghaṭafān, were known as allies, see Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil* 1/490; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rīkh* (Beirut) 2/262; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 2/468, 5/51. In these cases it is not the tribes as a whole that are involved but sections thereof, see above, and Landau-Tasserón, *Aspects*, 134-53. A Prophetic statement (*ḥadīth*) mentions pairs of allies: The tribes Aslam and Ghifār, Muzayna and Juhayna, Ghaṭafān and Banū ‘Amir, see al-Haythamī, *Majma’ al-zawā’id* 10/45. See also Juda, *Mawālī*, 4-12.

³¹ But compare the report about the section Banū Ja’far who concluded an alliance with Banū al-Ḥārith b. Ka’b and joined them in their dwelling place; the latter planned to exchange 20 women with Banū Ja’far thereby to achieve an amalgamation between the two groups (*...wa-tashtabik al-arḥām*). The plan was not implemented due to the objection of the leader of Banū Ja’far, see *Naqā’id* 1/534.

³² Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 12/46. Cf. Marx, *Bedouin*, 24 on the elasticity of the genealogical scheme.

adduces this example to argue that “confederacies could spring up between the lineages of a great tribe who were brought together by common interests”; presumably he means sections which had drifted apart, and wished at some point to come together again.³³ Perhaps the argument is correct, but I suggest here another possibility. It seems to me that alliances for specific purposes (type 1 above) could be concluded within one and the same tribe, as the examples of the Qurashī Muṭayyabūn and Aḥlāf shows. But a confederacy within one and the same tribe seems to me redundant. Had these sections, which became “The Finger Joints”, really believed themselves to be agnatically related, they would not have needed to conclude an alliance and assume an aggregate name; they could have united under the name of their common ancestor, even if they had already drifted apart due to segmentation.³⁴ I therefore suggest that the Tamīmī genealogy of the Barājim groups is not the original one. That I found no indication of the earlier genealogies of any of the “Finger-joints” sections, is probably due to the incomplete state of our sources. Another possibility is that in the case of al-Barājim the process of merging was complete, and the original genealogies forgotten, before the Arabian genealogies were put in a written form. In contrast, two groups, Banū Bishr and Banū Ya‘nuq, concluded an alliance and were jointly called “Al-Adīm”, “the piece of leather”, because they wrote their agreement on parchment.³⁵ I did not find al-Adīm as a name of an ancestor, nor did I come across any claim of these groups to common descent. Again, this may be due to the state of the sources or to mere accident. But it is also possible that the tribal genealogies crystallized and were put into writing before these two specific groups completed their merging. If they ever became one group with alleged common ancestry, that group was formed too late to be recorded in the classical genealogy books. Another case is the group called al-Ribāb, which comprised six sections. Their aggregate name reflects the ceremony performed in order to ratify the alliance: hands were dipped in fruit juice (*rubb*). They too are considered by our

³³ Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* 1/68.

³⁴ But cf. Stewart, *Texts* 1/87-8. For legal purposes, that is, the drawing of the boundaries of co-liable groups, common ancestry is not generally adequate; the agnates usually conclude a pact among themselves, cf. Marx, *Bedouin*, 143, where marriage links (not alliances) reactivate lapsed kinship connections.

³⁵ Al-Bakrī, *Mu‘jam* 3/833. Cf. the verse by Qays b. al-Khaṭīm, quoted by Reinert, *Das Recht*, note 175, where the poet refers to an alliance recorded on parchment.

extant sources as agnatically related, although their ancestors are not all brothers.³⁶ Dipping of hands, this time in blood, occurred in the alliance which produced the Khath'am tribe. According to a certain account, Khath'am was the name of the camel whose blood served in the ceremony by which the alliance was formed. Yet "Khath'am" is also taken to represent an individual, the founder of this group. The camel, originally part of the ceremony of the alliance, became "a camel that was in possession" of the ancestor. The "real name" of the ancestor is sometimes given as "Ḥalf b. Aftal"; Ḥalf, not surprisingly, derives from the same root as "alliance" (*ḥlf*).³⁷ Similarly, the tribe called Madhḥij is reported to have acquired its name from "a tree by which they took the oath of alliance", but the name acquired a genealogical meaning as well, and it is recorded as "Madhḥij, son of Yuḥābir, son of Mālik". Since the word "Madhḥij" was not widely recognized as a proper name, a comment was added, "they are descendants of Madhḥij, whose name was Mālik b. Udad".³⁸ Many examples may be added, and indeed certain scholars consider confederation, not segmentation, as "the original type of Arab tribe formation"; but, as far as I can judge, both mechanisms were at work simultaneously, constantly forming new groups.³⁹

The third type of alliance is the attachment of people to descent groups other than their original ones. As a rule, it was small sections that were accepted as allies by larger, presumably stronger ones. More often than not, these smaller sections came to live with their allies, and also added the latter's *nisba* to their own. As will be explained below, the smaller or weaker section in fact was accepted into

³⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *Kāmil* 1/490; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 198. On ceremonies see above, note 16.

³⁷ Al-Bakrī, *Mu'jam* 2/489; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 12/166; Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, 387; al-Firūzābādī, *Qāmūs* 3/129.

³⁸ Al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* 1/378. See other explanations, Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 2/278.

³⁹ For more examples see Juda, *Mawālī*, 7, 10. Goldziher, *Muslim Studies* 1/65-70, speaks of the process of alliances turning into (allegedly) descent groups, but does not explain the transformation of an aggregate name into an alleged ancestor. He also blurs the distinction between merging such as described here, and the absorption of weaker groups by stronger ones, which I consider as the third type of alliances. Tyan, "Hilf", 339, states that according to *Al-'iqd al-farīd* most of the Arab tribes were formed by alliances, but he cites no reference; the *Kitāb al-nasab* in the *'Iqd*, however, consists of genealogies recorded as hierarchies of genuine descent groups. See also Obermann, "Early Islam", 245 note 4.

the co-liable group of the larger or stronger one. I therefore call this kind of attachment “hosting alliances”, the weaker sections that joined stronger ones “guest allies”, and the absorbing sections “host allies”.⁴⁰ Sometimes a guest section first forged the alliance, and later forged a genealogy, to integrate itself into the male line of the host section. This process is described by the terms *dakhalū fī...*, “they entered into” (the name of a host section follows), and “*intasabū fī...*”, “they traced their pedigree in” (or: “they claimed descent from”) (the name of a host section follows). For example, the section Banū Aklub b. Rabī‘a b. Nizār concluded an alliance with the Khath‘am tribe, whereupon they joined the Khath‘am in their dwelling place. The Aklub later changed their own genealogy, replacing Nizār with ‘Ifris; they claimed that they were descendants of Aklub b. Rabī‘a b. ‘Ifris, ‘Ifris being a name in the male line purportedly descending from Khath‘am.⁴¹ Describing the vicissitudes of the tribal system the geographer Bakrī remarks, *wa-l-qawm ḥaythu waḍa‘ū anfusahum*, “the people’s places [in the genealogical scheme] are determined by themselves”.⁴²

A systematic, deliberate distinction between types of agreements is lacking in the sources. Thus it is, for instance, difficult to determine whether the ceremonies described in the reports are pertinent to all types of alliances or only to some of them. In what follows I focus on hosting alliances, although I cannot be sure that my description does not sometimes apply to other types of alliances as well. I discuss the material under two categories, namely, the rights and obligations of allies, and the precise identity of the parties to alliances. These categories do not exist as such in the sources, whether works of *ḥadīth*, jurisprudence, Qur’ān exegesis, history or *adab*.

Rights and obligations of allies

Hosting alliances entailed specific rights and obligations, which were incumbent upon all the parties to the agreement. There is, first,

⁴⁰ By contrast, Marx, *Bedouin*, 129-132, distinguishes between joining a co-liable group and an alliance; cf. Stewart, *Texts*, 1/84, 89-99.

⁴¹ Ibn Ḥazm, *Jamhara*, p. 391; al-Ḥafḥānī, *Aghānī* 17/98. Many more examples may be adduced, see e.g. Bakrī, *Mu‘jam* 1/41-3, 48; Juda, *Mawālī*, 11.

⁴² Al-Bakrī, *Mu‘jam* 1/39.

indirect evidence of this fact, namely, the pejorative terms *zanīm*, *mulṣaq*, and *mulṣaq bi-ghayr hilf*. *Zanīm* is an outsider informally staying with a descent group, and also: someone known to be an evil person, or a troublemaker (*yu'rafu bi-l-sharr*). The term *mulṣaq*, attached, literally: glued, is explained as someone staying with a descent group without being related to it by genealogy nor by alliance. In Arabian tribal society where genealogy was the main claim to status, this term had a strong negative connotation. The same applies to *mulṣaq bi-ghayr hilf*, attached without an alliance.⁴³ A differentiation between the allied status and other categories also follows from comments found in the sources, such as “I think that [the family Sayhān] was not allied to Banū ‘Abd Manāf but merely stayed with them”.⁴⁴ There was thus a distinction between people informally residing with a group other than their own, and allies who, in fact, did not necessarily reside with their partners.⁴⁵ This distinction favors the allied status as opposed to informal relationships, presumably because the former was more secure for being institutionalized, that is, having definite, firmly guaranteed rights and obligations.⁴⁶

The direct evidence pertinent to the rights and obligations of allies is here examined under two categories. One of them may be termed scholarly evidence, consisting of statements by scholars who define and describe alliances. The other is narrative evidence, by which I mean reports of steps taken by allies in specific situations of crisis. Accounts of the stipulations made in concrete cases would belong in this category, but they are mostly given in the form of the traditional oath of alliance, so that they do not add to the knowledge derived from the scholarly evidence.

⁴³ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 253. Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 1/287; al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 6/78. For *zanīm*, always glossed with highly pejorative words (including “immoral, illegitimate child, claiming false descent”) see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, 12/227, al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 29/25.

⁴⁴ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī* 2/236, and see below on Ibn Arṭāt. Cf. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 249 (the chapter about pseudo allies).

⁴⁵ “The allies of Quraysh used to live either in Mecca or in its hinterland (*bādiyatihā*), or one of its provinces (*a‘māl*)”, al-Fāsī, *Dhayl* 1/66; cf. the case of Jābir b. Samura al-Suwā‘ī, an ally of the Qurashī section Banū Zuhra, who lived in Kūfa among his original descent group, Suwā‘a (There is no indication that the alliance was dissolved), al-Baghdādī, *Ta‘rīkh* 1/186.

⁴⁶ But see below, note 57.

Scholarly evidence:

The scholarly statements are often general, saying that parties to alliances pledge themselves by oath to adhere to one another (*an yalzama ba'dhum ba'dan*), to give succor to one another (*nuṣra, i'āna*), to act as one body in matters of defence and support (*amruhumā wāḥid fī al-nuṣra wa-l-ḥimāya*).⁴⁷ Sometimes, however, more specific stipulations are reported in scholarly statements; these are 1) mutual inheritance and jointly owned property, and 2) common liability.

1) Mutual inheritance, and sometimes joint property, are mentioned in scholarly statements about *ḥilf*; obviously, *ḥilf* in these cases means a hosting alliance, not a political or military treaty. However, it is not clear whether mutual inheritance was part of the rights pertinent to the institution, or a specific type of agreement between two individuals. The latter is implied by certain discussions of inheritance laws, and one may even encounter the term *ḥilf al-tawāruth*.⁴⁸ This may be due to the fact that inheritance is always connected to the death of an individual. Indeed it is not specified exactly how a mutual inheritance arrangement worked, if the alliances were concluded between groups. Presumably it applied to the representatives of the two parties, or only to property jointly owned by each one of the parties, such as houses.⁴⁹ However, references to “a covenant about mutual inheritance” are rare, and such a stipulation is usually recorded as part of a broader agreement. A typical formula of alliances reads, “my blood is your blood, my property is your property, you will give me succor and I shall give you succor, you will inherit from me and I shall inherit from you”.⁵⁰ This formula stipulates both the sharing of property and mutual inheritance. The matter of inheritance is raised in connection with a phrase in Qur'ān 4:33, namely, “and those with whom you have agreements by oath give them their due” (*wa-lladhīna 'āqadat (or 'aqadat) aymānukum*

⁴⁷ Al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr* 3/397; idem., *Al-ta'arīf* 1/293; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Al-dirāya* 2/193; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 8/77.

⁴⁸ Al-'Azīmābādī, *'Awn* 8/101; al-Suyūṭī, *Dibāj* 5/478. The term is mentioned in the context of the ban on alliances; see also Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 1/490-91; Sa'īd b. Manẓūr, *Sunan* 1/112-13.

⁴⁹ See below, the case of Abū Sufyān and Banū Ghanm.

⁵⁰ Ibn Qudāma, *Al-mughnī* 6/205; cf. Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 8/249, 10/502; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ* 10/305.

fa-ātūhum naṣībahum). The connection with the Qur'ān arouses the suspicion that inheritance by alliance was an invention of the exegetes rather than a real practice. The following interpretation is in particular unconvincing: It is explained that in the Jāhiliyya, a man would ally himself to others promising that he would assist them in securing their rights, but without their having any obligation towards him; the verse abolished this unjust practice. Obviously, this is a concocted elucidation of “give them their due”.⁵¹ There is, however, evidence that seems to show that mutual inheritance was indeed practiced. First, a specific share, a sixth, is mentioned for the ally, and this lends the reports some credibility.⁵² Secondly, the subject is also discussed independently of the verse. The *ḥadīth* “there is no alliance in Islām” was adduced in order to abolish the practice of inheritance by alliance.⁵³ Thirdly, the formulae of alliance associate inheritance with the duty of paying blood-money. This association is attested for agnates,⁵⁴ and there is no reason to reject it for allies, given that alliance simulates agnatic relations. Fourthly, and perhaps more convincingly, certain jurists, mainly Ḥanafīs, accepted the practice of inheritance by alliance.⁵⁵ This seems to prove that the practice really existed, since jurists are more likely to legitimize an existing practice than to invent and defend one that a) never existed, and b) does not fulfill any urgent need.

2) Common liability, or in other words shared legal responsibility, typically takes effect in the context of blood revenge, but also appears in other matters. Hosting alliance in fact amounted to integrat-

⁵¹ Al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 5/54, and see further, discussions of inheritance in connection with the verse in e.g. Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan* 3/128; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 10/306; al-Ḥanafī, *Mu'taṣar*, 2/294-5; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 4/472, 8/247-9. See also “Alliances in Islam”. Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, 53, raises the same doubts as here, but decides that the oath formula stipulating mutual inheritance “sounds extremely convincing”, and that the anecdote about the two Jāhili poets in *Aghanī* (Cairo 1927-72) 10/28 is, a) reliable, and b) an illustration of “the agreement of mutual inheritance in action”. The anecdote, however, is neither one nor the other, see below.

⁵² E.g. *Fath al-bārī*, 8/249, 10/502; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 10/305; al-'Azīmā-bādī, *'Awn* 8/96; Sa'īd b. Maṣṣūr, *Kitāb al-Sunan*, 1/112; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr* 5/166.

⁵³ Al-Zīla'ī, *Naṣb al-rāya* 4/149; al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr* 3/80, but see Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 1/491 where the *ḥadīth* is adduced as part of the interpretation of Qur'ān 4:33.

⁵⁴ Ibn Hazm, *Al-muḥallā* 11/58-59, cf. Ibn Qudāma, *Al-mughnī* 8/306. See also Smith, *Kinship*, 65-6.

⁵⁵ Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 1/491; see “Alliances in Islam”.

ing outsiders into agnatic co-liaible groups. Like the agnatically-related members, the allies were supposed to bear the consequences of the offenses of their partners. The document composed by the Prophet, the *'ahd al-umma*, contains a clause saying “a man should not bear the guilt of his ally”.⁵⁶ The existence of such a clause indicates that common liability of allies was the rule in pre-Islamic Arabian society.

Statements by Muslim scholars reveal that common liability was a major theme of hosting alliances in the Jāhiliyya.⁵⁷ Allies were supposed to protect their partners, to avenge their blood if spilled or to compensate their agnates with blood-money, as well as pay blood-money on their behalf when they were involved in homicide. However, genuine tribesmen were not supposed to be killed in retaliation for the murder of allies.⁵⁸

There are various versions of the oath taken on the occasion of alliances, such as, “my blood is your blood, my unavenged blood is your unavenged blood (*hadmī hadmuka*), my vengeance is your vengeance, my war is your war, my peace is your peace, you will inherit from me and I shall inherit from you, you shall be sought for my offenses and I shall be sought for yours, you shall pay blood-money on my behalf and I shall pay blood-money on your behalf”.⁵⁹ The reason why the formula is pronounced in the singular form is apparently that the ceremonies were performed by individuals. The commitments, however, were meant to join the allies in one co-liaible group, as the

⁵⁶ Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 3/33.

⁵⁷ Al-Ḥanafī, *Mu'taṣar* 2/109; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 10/502. An ally, as well as a protected individual (*jār*), could be punished for the crimes of their partners, *ibid.* 12/211. Co-liability applied to allies, and to other attached people as well (*'adūd*, on which see “Alliances in Islam”), al-Shaybānī, *Mabsūṭ* 4/661-3, see also Juda, *Mawālī*, pp. 11-12. Marx, *Bedouin*, 150-2, 172-6, clearly distinguished between alliances and co-liaible groups; Bedouin allies in the Negev do not share liability (but he does not distinguish between types of alliances).

⁵⁸ Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 7/111.

⁵⁹ *damī damuka wa-hadmī hadmuka wa-tha'rī tha'ruka wa-ḥarbī ḥarbuka wa-silmī silmuka wa-tarīthunī wa-arīthuka wa-tuṭlab bī wa-uṭlab bika wa-ta'qīl 'annī wa-a'qīl 'anka*, al-Qurtubī, *Tafsīr* 5/166, see also al-Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr* 5/53; al-'Azīmābādī, *'Awn* 8/96; Ibn Qudāma, *Al-mughnī* 6/205; 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 10/305; see the references in Juda, *Mawālī*, pp. 3, 5. Juda follows the usual (and erroneous) translation of *hadmī hadmuka* as “my destruction is your destruction”. Reinert, *Das Recht*, 22, records one, very deficient form of the oath, under *walā'*, clientage, and not under *ḥilf*. See also Smith, *Kinship*, 56.

phrase “my war is your war” clearly indicates. Another pointer in the same direction is the version that runs “whoever kills one of my co-livable group, it is as if he killed one of yours (*man qatala waliyyī fa-qad qatala waliyyaka*).⁶⁰ The most obscure phrase in the formula is *hadmī hadmuka*. The Prophet used the phrase when he concluded his agreement with the Anṣār-to-be at the ‘Aqaba, and Muslim scholars offered various explanations.⁶¹ Some of these explanations are obviously reflections of the particular relations between Muḥammad and the Anṣār, such as the fact that he came to live among them. For example, *hadmī hadmuka*, or *hadamī hadamuka*, is interpreted as “my house is your house” (*manzil*), because a house may be ruined (*qad yuhdamu*) and therefore it may be called “ruin” (*hadm*, *hadam*). The dictionaries, however, also record that *hdm* is equivalent to *hdr*, a term applied to blood revenge that was waived. The content of the oath clearly indicates that the latter was the original meaning of the phrase. There is not much sense in stating “my blood is your blood, my house is your house, my vengeance is your vengeance” etc., or “my blood is your blood, my grave is your grave, my vengeance is your vengeance”, and so on. There is much more sense in a statement which runs “my blood is your blood, my unavenged blood is your unavenged blood, my vengeance is your vengeance” etc. Another indication that this is the correct interpretation is the proposition made by ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, of the Qurashī section Taym, to the famous jurist Mālik b. Anas (d. 179/795). He proposes only two conditions, *an yakūna damunā damuka wa-hadmunā hadmuka*. These two elements must be complementary, not disconnected, meaning that in matters of blood revenge the two parties would act together, whether in seeking revenge or waiving it.⁶² Whatever the meaning of *hadmī hadmuka*, common liability between allies is amply established by the rest of the formula.

⁶⁰ Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 12/604. An explanation of the role of an individual as a link connecting the guest allies to the hosts is offered below.

⁶¹ Al-Haythamī, *Majma‘ al-zawā‘id* 6/44; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 3/461; al-Bustī, *Al-thiqāt* 1/111; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 2/291; al-Ṭabarī, *Ta‘rīkh* (Beirut) 1/562.

⁶² Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt* 5/63; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Al-tamhīd* 1/92. See the detailed discussion of Mālik in “Alliances in Islam”. For the various explanations of *al-hadm* see al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-fā‘iq* 1/252; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 8/77, 12/604. Lane, s.v. *dmw*, translates, “If my blood be sought, your blood shall be sought, if my blood go for nought, thy blood go for nought” (he adduces other explanations as well, but not “destruction”).

Narrative evidence:

The general terms of mutual assistance occur also in reports of particular alliances.⁶³ In addition, reports about the conduct of allies under various circumstances provide evidence of the effects of alliances. A few examples follow.

The section Sayhān, originating in the Muḥārib tribe, was allied to the Umayyads, of the Quraysh. The Umayyad caliph Mu'āwiya intervened on behalf of one of them, the poet 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Artāt b. Sayhān; he annulled the punishment which the governor of Medina inflicted upon the poet for wine-drinking. Since the punishment had already been carried out, the point of Mu'āwiya's measure was the rehabilitation of the poet's reputation.⁶⁴ However, Mu'āwiya, while protecting his *ḥalīf* Ibn Artāt from the governor of Medina, did not hesitate to punish another one of his allies when he thought it appropriate.⁶⁵

Mu'āwiya's son, Yazīd, asked his father to assign allowances to the orphans of the Qurashī sections Jumaḥ, Sahm and 'Adī. Mu'āwiya inquired why Yazīd was concerned about them, whereupon Yazīd replied that they were allied to him, and had moved to his residence.⁶⁶ It should be noted that in pre-Islamic times the sections Jumaḥ, Sahm and 'Adī belonged to the intra-Qurashī alliance called the Aḥlāf, whereas Yazīd's family, the Umayyads, belonged to the rival alliance, the Muṭayyabūn.⁶⁷ Another remarkable point about this report is the implication that Yazīd was committed to an alliance of which his father was unaware.

The case of the poet Ibn al-Mufarrigh al-Ḥimyarī is somewhat complicated. He was allied to one of the Umayyad families, that of Khālid b. Asīd. However, he joined the entourage of the governor 'Abbād b. Ziyād, son of Ziyād b. Abīhi. Ziyād, a former governor of Iraq, was related to the Umayyads because the caliph Mu'āwiya had recognized him as his brother. When Ibn Mufarrigh got himself into trouble with his patron, Ziyād's son, his Umayyad ally Khālid b. Asīd (among others) refused to help him. He therefore sought the protection (*jiwār*) of

⁶³ E.g. Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 1/85 ('Abd al-Muṭṭalib and Khuzā'a).

⁶⁴ See al-Isfahānī, *Aghānī* 2/236-58; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 252.

⁶⁵ Al-Isfahānī, *Aghānī* 2/254. The affair is discussed in more detail below, section "the parties to alliances".

⁶⁶ Ibn al-Athīr, *Al-kāmil* 3/465; Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya* 8/227.

⁶⁷ Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya* 2/209; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 273-75, see also above.

the father of Ziyād's daughter-in-law. For some reason, the notable Ṭalḥa al-Ṭalaḥāt, himself a Khuzā'ī (but related to Quraysh on his mother's side), pressured the Umayyad allies of Ibn Mufarrigh to assist him, saying "he is your ally, he is counted among you, he is one of you" (*ḥalīfukum wa- 'adīdukum wa-rajul minkum*). An expedition comprising members of several sections, Umayyads included, appealed to the (Umayyad) caliph Yazīd b. Mu'āwiya on behalf of Ibn Mufarrigh. The appeal involved a reference to Ibn Mufarrigh's status as an ally, and Yazīd eventually complied and rescued the poet from the sons of Ziyād. There are indications that the intervention on behalf of Ibn Mufarrigh was motivated by hatred of the sons of Ziyād b. Abīhi rather than by codes of social institutions.⁶⁸

Intervention on behalf of allies was not restricted to the royal family. During Muḥammad's raid on Muraysī' an ally of the Banū 'Awf (of the Anṣār) quarreled with an employee (*ajīr*) of 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. The Anṣār responded to the tribal war-cry uttered by their ally (*yā la-l-anṣār*). So did, however, the Muhājirūn, called up not by an ally but by an employee.⁶⁹

Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad b. Ṭalḥa and his section the Banū Taym of Quraysh stood by their allies, the descendants of the Companion Ṣuhayb b. Sinān, in a time of crisis. When the caliph Hishām b. 'Abd al-Malik decided to reduce the pension of Suhayb's descendants from the level of allies to that of clients (*mawālī*), the Banū Taym protested by refusing to collect their own pensions. As a result, the caliph withdrew his decision.⁷⁰

There were also cases where the allies did not live up to their obligations. The Prophet's uncle, 'Abbās, was captured by the Muslims at Badr together with his nephew(s) and an ally. Upon the Prophet's request, he paid ransom for himself as well as for his nephew(s), but withheld the payment for his ally. Eventually he handed it over only because he feared for his good reputation.⁷¹

⁶⁸ Al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī* 18/262-94; Ibn Qutayba, *Al-shi'r wa-l-shu'arā'* (Cairo) 1/360-65; al-Jumaḥī, *Ṭabaqāt*, pp. 143-4. The rivalry is reflected in Ibn Mufarrigh's poetry, see Ch. Pellat, in *Mélanges Louis Massignon*, Damascus 1957, 3/195-232 (I owe this reference to Isaac Hasson).

⁶⁹ Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb* 1/268.

⁷⁰ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, *al-qism al-mutammim*, 96-7.

⁷¹ Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt* 4/14; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 7/322; al-Haythamī, *Majma' al-zawā'id* 6/85; al-Bayhaqī, *Al-sunan al-kubrā* 6/322; al-Hākīm al-Naysābūrī, *Al-mustadrak* 3/366; al-Qurṭubī, *Tafsīr* 8/52; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr* 2/327.

The foregoing examples illustrate the general concept of *nuṣra*, assistance, undertaken by allies. As for the specific obligations, we may again consider the evidence under 1) mutual inheritance and jointly owned property, and 2) common liability.

1) Narrative evidence of mutual inheritance and joint property is sparse. A report of an agreement between two Jāhilī poets, Durayd b. al-Ṣimma and Mu‘āwiya b. ‘Amr, is sometimes interpreted as an illustration of inheritance between allies;⁷² this interpretation, however, is mistaken. The two poets promised one another not an inheritance, to be bequeathed by the one who dies first, but an elegy, to be composed by the one who dies last (read *an yarthyahu*, not *an yarithahu*). They are indeed also reported to have undertaken mutual responsibility for blood revenge, but the elegy is the core of the anecdote. The story goes on narrating that Mu‘āwiya b. ‘Amr was murdered, and Durayd composed an elegy on him; no more is said about blood revenge. In fact al-Iṣfahānī adduces the anecdote as an introduction to the elegy, which he records, among other verses by Durayd, in the latter’s biography. Another dubious report states that when the caliph Abū Bakr died, a sixth of his property was bequeathed to one of his allies. The scholar reporting it remarks, “I found no one who had heard about it”. Indirect evidence of mutual inheritance is supplied by the anecdote about Kināna b. ‘Abd Yālīl, a notable from the Thaḳīf tribe. The reason for his refusal to convert to Islam was that he rejected the idea that a Qurashī should be entitled to his inheritance (*lā yarithunī rajul min quraysh*). The report may be fictitious, but it reflects the way some people grasped the act of conversion to Islam: it was seen as an alliance with Quraysh. Furthermore, it attests to the rule of inheritance between allies because, had no such rule existed, this report would have made no sense.

The only report about inheritance which has a real ring of truth is the one concerning the daughter of the Companion Sa‘d b. al-Rabī‘. She complained that she received nothing of the estates of her father and her uncle, who had both been killed at Uḥud. Their allies, she alleged, had taken the whole of both estates. I see no reason to dismiss

⁷² Juda, *Mawālī*, p. 5; Crone, *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law*, 53, both quoting al-Iṣfahānī, *Aghānī* (Cairo 1927-72) 10/28. Cf. the version of the story in al-Shanqīṭī’s edition (Cairo n.d), 9/13.

this report, and, again, it would not have been fabricated if inheritance between allies had been an unknown practice.

Jointly owned property is attested by one piece of evidence. When the allies of the Umayyads, Banū Ghanm, emigrated to Medina with the Prophet, the Umayyad leader Abū Sufyān seized their houses in Mecca and sold them. According to ‘Umar b. Shabba Abū Sufyān had a right to do so, on account of the alliance between the two sections.⁷³

2) The narrative evidence of common liability is more substantial. The obligation of allies to bear the consequences of the offenses of their partners is demonstrated by the following incident. Companions of the Prophet were taken prisoners by people from the Thaḳīf tribe. Muḥammad retorted by seizing an ally of Thaḳīf, a man from the tribe of ‘Uqayl. The ‘Uqaylī asked why he was taken, having done no wrong, and the Prophet replied “I seized you because of the crime of your allies” (*bi-jarīrat ḥulafā’ika*). Notwithstanding, the Prophet stipulated in *‘ahd al-umma* that “a man should not bear the guilt of his ally”.⁷⁴

Illustrations of alliances functioning in matters of blood revenge are listed in what follows.

Abū Uzayhir, from the Daws tribe, was allied to the [co-liable group of] the Umayyad leader, Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb. Abū Uzayhir was killed by people of the Qurashī section Makhzūm, but Abū Sufyān refrained from avenging his blood in order to avoid bloodshed within Quraysh. Instead, he sent blood-money to Abū Uzayhir’s family.

Qurashī reluctance to become embroiled in bloodshed is also evident in the case of ‘Amr b. al-Ḥaḍramī, ally of the Qurashī section Banū ‘Abd Shams (which comprised the Umayyads). A Muslim raiding party killed him and seized his property when he was returning to Mecca with a trading caravan. ‘Amr’s host allies were advised to pay

⁷³ The Abū Bakr tradition: ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* 10/305. The Kināna b. ‘Abd Yālīl tradition: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Al-iṣāba* (Cairo) 3/324. The daughter of Sa’d: Ibn Rāhawayh, *Musnad* 1/270. Banū Ghanm: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 6/543. See on Banū Ghanm also below.

⁷⁴ *‘Ahd al-umma*: Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 3/33, and above. The ‘Uqaylī: Ibn Kathīr, *Al-bidāya wa-l-nihāya* 4/154; al-Shāfi‘ī, *Al-umm* 2/253-55, 7/68; al-Shawkānī, *Nayl al-awṭār* 8/147; al-Ḥumaydī, *Musnad* 2/365-66; al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-mu’jam al-kabīr* 18/190-92; al-Munāwī, *Fayḍ al-qadīr* 5/170-71; al-Bayhaqī, *Sunan* 1/318, 5/175, 6/320, 9/72, 10/75; Abū Dā’ūd, *Sunan* 3/239; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* 4/430, 433; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 3/1262; al-Bustī, *Ṣaḥīḥ* 11/198; al-Ḥanafī, *Mu’taṣar* 2/109, see also “Alliances in Islam”.

blood-money to the Ḥaḍramī family and to compensate them for the lost property, rather than avenge ‘Amr’s blood. The brother of the deceased, who was also allied to ‘Abd Shams, protested strongly and threatened to transfer his alliance to another Qurashī section (but he never did). Abū Jahl, of the rival Qurashī section Makhzūm, attempted to exploit this affair in order to undermine the prestige of the ‘Abd Shams section.

Solidarity with allies continued into Islamic times in a truly Jāhili spirit, sometimes with a complete disregard for the newly introduced values and institutions. The ally and client of the Makhzūm section, the Companion ‘Ammār b. Yāsir, was beaten by the caliph ‘Utmān’s men. The Makhzūmīs decided to kill the caliph if ‘Ammār should die as a result of his injuries; they ignored the Jāhili rule that no genuine tribesman is to be killed in retaliation for the killing of an ally, let alone the Islamic rule forbidding bloodshed among Muslims; neither did they pay any regard to the sanctity of the caliphate.⁷⁵

The Jāhili rules of co-liability influenced the Prophet’s conduct as well. His Khuzā’ī allies were assaulted by allies of Quraysh, whereupon the Khuzā’īs appealed to Muḥammad’s assistance, even though they were not yet Muslims at the time. The conquest of Mecca by the Prophet was the outcome of that appeal.⁷⁶

A case where the guest-, not the host-ally shouldered responsibility is that of Ḥujayr b. Abū Ihāb, an ally of the Qurashī section Banū Nawfal. When his ally and brother in law, al-Ḥārith b. ‘Āmir, was killed by Muslims, Ḥujayr bought a Muslim captive and handed him over to the dead man’s son, who executed him.

Co-liability within the injuring rather than the injured party is illustrated by the case of the Banū al-‘Arāba, from the Sulaym tribe. They were involved in homicide within their own tribe, and were protected from blood revenge by their ally ‘Aṭā’ b. Abū Jalīd al-Khuzā’ī al-Ḥimyarī. ‘Aṭā’ promised to pay the blood-money on their behalf.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ The story of Abū Uzayhir: Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 199-204; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Al-iṣāba* (Beirut) 8/273. ‘Amr b. al-Ḥaḍramī: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh* (Beirut) 2/30-31; Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 3/170; Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt* 2/16. ‘Ammār b. Yāsir: Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istī‘āb* 3/1135-36. ‘Ammār’s father was an ally of Makhzūm, and his mother was their client. See “Alliances in Islam”.

⁷⁶ The Khuzā’īs were old allies of the the Prophet’s section, Hāshim, not merely political allies of the Prophet, see Landau-Tasseron, “Alliances in Islam”.

⁷⁷ The Ḥujayr’s story: al-Ṭabarī, *Ta’rikh* (Beirut) 2/77. Banū ‘Arāba: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Al-iṣāba* (Beirut) 5/128; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 261 (where they are called

In conclusion, it may be stated that, as far as the rights and obligations of allies are concerned, the scholarly and the narrative evidence is not in conflict even though the narrative evidence is deficient where mutual inheritance is concerned. Finally, it should be mentioned that the parties to an alliance could make special stipulations that did not apply in all alliances. Such stipulations are not covered by scholarly statements. For example, it is reported that al-Damūn b. ‘Abd al-Malik from Ḥaḍramawt, a fugitive from blood revenge, allied himself to the Thaḳīf tribe in pre-Islamic times. It was stipulated that he pay for the construction of a wall around the town of Thaḳīf, al-Ṭā’if, and that the two parties to the alliance exchange women in marriage.⁷⁸ Exchange of women between allied parties was common (although I found no scholarly statement to that effect), but paying for a wall around Ṭā’if is obviously peculiar to this particular alliance.

The identity of the parties to alliances

Since hosting alliances involved rights and duties, it was important to know who the parties were in any given case. It seems, however, difficult to acquire such information from our sources. The names of individuals and the names of their descent groups are mentioned interchangeably as partners to alliances. For example, Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh b. Jaḥsh (a Successor (*tābi*‘)) is once defined as one of the allies of the Qurashī section Banū ‘Abd Shams, another time as an ally of Ḥarb b. Umayya (b. ‘Abd Shams). The descent group of this Successor, the Banū Ghanm, is designated alternatively as allies of the Banū ‘Abd Shams, of Ḥarb b. Umayya (b. ‘Abd Shams), and of Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb (b. Umayya b. ‘Abd Shams).⁷⁹ The descent group of the famous jurist Mālik b. Anas is sometimes said to have been allied to the Qurashī section Banū Taym. At other

Banū al-Ghazāla), see also Landau-Tasseron, “Alliances in Islam”. The two *nisbas* of Abū al-Jalīd indicate that ‘Aṭā, in his turn may have been an ally, presumably of Khuzā’a.

⁷⁸ Yāqūt, *Mu’jam al-buldān* 4/9. For exchange of women see Landau-Tasseron, “The status of allies”.

⁷⁹ Muḥammad b. ‘Abdallāh: Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istī’āb* 3/1373, cf. the Qāriz section, defined once as allies of the Qurashī section Banū Zuhra, al-Bukhārī, *Al-ta’rīkh al-kabīr* 7/201, and another time as allies of Quraysh, Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *Al-jarḥ wa-l-ta’dīl* 7/148. Banū Ghanm: Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt* 3/89.

times, a specific Taymī individual is mentioned as the partner in that alliance, that is, ‘Uthmān b. ‘Ubaydallāh, brother of the famous Companion Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubaydallāh al-Taymī.⁸⁰ The scholar Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr (d. 463/1071) says that Mālik was allied not to the brother, but to the nephew of Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubaydallāh (presumably son of the same ‘Uthmān b. ‘Ubaydallāh just mentioned). Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr adds, “[Mālik’s] alliance within the Quraysh was with the Banū Taym”.⁸¹ Such formulations raise the question of the boundaries of responsibility: did the rights and obligations of this alliance rest upon ‘Uthmān b. ‘Ubaydallāh (or his son) alone or upon other members of the Taym section as well? The alliance obviously persisted, and was sometimes called after ‘Uthmān b. ‘Ubaydallāh, even generations after his death. References to Mālik’s descendants as allies of ‘Uthmān occur as late as in the third century A.H. Did the rights and obligations rest only upon the offspring in male line of ‘Uthmān b. ‘Ubaydallāh or upon other Taymīs as well, or upon Taym as a whole? A somewhat different example is that of Ja‘wana b. Sha‘ūb, who is said to have been an ally of one or the other of Muḥammad’s uncles, Ḥamza and al-‘Abbās. This seems to imply a boundary: If Ja‘wana was allied either to one man or to the other, then it would appear that the rights and obligations entailed by the alliance belonged to either one or the other. But sometimes Ja‘wana is called “an ally of the Banū Hāshim”, the section that included both Ḥamza and al-‘Abbās.⁸²

Various sections at various levels of segmentation within one and the same tribe, as well as the whole tribe, are mentioned interchangeably as the parties to one and the same alliance. For example, the allies of Ghazwān b. ‘Utba are variously said to be the Qurashī sections Banū ‘Abd Manāf, and Banū Nawfal b. ‘Abd Manāf.⁸³ The former designation technically comprises the latter, as well as the Banū Hāshim, the ‘Abd Shams and the Banū al-Muṭṭalib, each of them apparently a co-liable group in its own right. Another version has it that ‘Utba b. Ghazwān was allied either to the Banū ‘Abd Shams or to the

⁸⁰ Banū Taym: Al-Baghdādī, *Ta’riḥ Baghdād* 10/5; Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Tahdhīb* 10/366; al-Bukhārī, *Al-ta’riḥ al-kabīr* 5/127. ‘Uthmān: Al-Kalābādhi, *Rijāl ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* 2/482; al-Bustī, *Al-thiqāt* 5/383; al-Bukhārī, *Al-ta’riḥ al-kabīr* 1/364.

⁸¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Al-tamhīd* 1/89.

⁸² Al-Dhahabī, *Siyar* 7/336 vs. al-Bustī, *Mashāḥir* 1/141.

⁸³ Al-Bukhārī, *Al-ta’riḥ al-kabīr* 6/520; al-Bustī, *Al-thiqāt* 5/292.

Banū Nawfal (who were both sections of ‘Abd Manāf).⁸⁴ Thus it is difficult to know whether only Banū Nawfal were a party to that particular alliance, or another section of ‘Abd Manāf, or the whole of ‘Abd Manāf. Similarly, the Khuzā‘ī section of Sibā‘ is defined once as allies of the Qurashī section Banū Zuhra, another time as allies of the Banū ‘Awf b. ‘Abd ‘Awf from Zuhra.⁸⁵ Another example is that of al-Miqdād b. ‘Amr, who was not only allied to, but also adopted by the Zuhri al-Aswad b. ‘Abd Yaghūth. The sources often refer to al-Miqdād as an ally of the Zuhra section as a whole.⁸⁶

The formulation in the case of the small descent group Sayḥān, originating in the section Jasn b. Muḥārib, is puzzling. They were allies of Ḥarb b. Umayya and “were considered as part of [the group of Ḥarb] in particular, and of the Banū Umayya in general” (*bi-manzilat ba‘dihim ‘indahum khāṣṣatan wa-‘inda sā‘ir banī Umayya ‘āmmatan*).⁸⁷ In Islamic times, long after Ḥarb b. Umayya had died, a quarrel broke out among the Umayyads on account of one of the Sayḥānī allies, the poet Ibn Arṭāt. The governor of Medina, the Umayyad Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, punished Ibn Arṭāt for drinking wine, whereupon the caliph Mu‘āwiya scolded Marwān, saying, “you beat him [...] when he was allied to [my father] Abū Sufyān, by God, had he been allied to your father al-Ḥakam you would not have punished him”.⁸⁸ This indicates a division within the Umayyad section into independent co-liable groups. Yet according to another opinion, the Sayḥānīs were attached not to a mere section of the Umayyads (Abū Sufyān and his son) but to the whole of Banū ‘Abd Manāf (which comprised the whole of the Umayyads as well as other sections). It is recorded that “[the Qurashī section] Banū ‘Abd Manāf loosened their relationships with the Sayḥānīs; the latter are [now] not allied to the Banū ‘Abd Manāf but merely reside with them”.⁸⁹ Perhaps the

⁸⁴ Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Al-iṣāba* (Beirut) 4/438.

⁸⁵ Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istī‘āb* 2/437-8.

⁸⁶ Al-Ṭabarānī, *Al-mu‘jam al-kabīr* 20/235, 246.

⁸⁷ Al-Ṣfahānī, *Aghānī* (Beirut) 2/236.

⁸⁸ Al-Ṣfahānī, *Aghānī* (Beirut) 2/245; Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 252. Ibn Ḥabīb denies that the poet was an ally.

⁸⁹ The text reads *wa-banū ‘abd Manāf tuqwī ḥilfahum, wa-hum ‘indī a‘izzā’uhum wa-laysū bi-ahlāfihim*, read *a‘rā’uhum* for *a‘izzā’uhum*, al-Ṣfahānī, *Aghānī* (Beirut) 2/236. See also Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 252, where they are defined as *‘idād*, i.e. “counted with” (for administrative purposes, see Landau-Tasserón, “Alliances in Islam”). The text could be read *tuqawwī*, “Banū ‘Abd Manāf buttress [the alliance]”, but I think that this reading

Sayḥānīs were rejected by their allies (whoever they were) precisely because of the shame caused by the behaviour of Ibn Arṭāt. Be that as it may, the data concerning the Sayḥānīs seem to be contradictory. It is not clear whether they were attached to one Umayyad family, to the Umayyad section as a whole, or to the larger descent group, ‘Abd Manāf.

Occasionally, clear specifications of the parties to alliances occur in the sources, expressed by the terms *thumma* or *khaṣṣatan*. The poet Yazīd b. Mufarrigh al-Ḥimyarī was “an ally of Quraysh, and, more specifically (*thumma*), of the family of Khālīd b. Asīd”, one of the families of Banū Umayya. The Asādī section Banū Ghanm was allied to Banū ‘Abd Manāf, but, according to another version, to Banū Umayya specifically (*hulafā’ banī Umayya khaṣṣatan dūna banī ‘Abd Manāf*). *Thumma* sometimes indicates an individual. Sa’d b. Khawla was allied to the Qurashī section ‘Āmir b. Lu’ayy and, more specifically (*thumma*), to Abū Ruḥm b. ‘Abd al-‘Uzza.⁹⁰

The confusion about the precise identity of the parties to alliances in fact reflects the confusion about the boundaries of descent groups and co-liable groups, explained in the beginning of this article. The only additional problem is this: Whereas genuine tribesmen always had a group of agnates responsible towards them, it appears as if allies could have individuals responsible towards them. This is puzzling, for two reasons. First, it has been shown above that alliances concerned groups, not individuals. Secondly, the nature of the rights of allies makes alliances a matter for groups, not individuals. If one of these rights was retaliation for spilled blood, then obviously a group, not an individual, must be responsible to implement it. By way of settling this seeming contradiction I suggest the following: A guest ally in fact had to be tied to an individual within the hosting co-liable group in order to determine his place within the hierarchy of succor. By this term I mean the order in which the members of a co-liable group were called upon to act. In matters of blood revenge, and perhaps in other matters as well, the responsibility rested first and fore-

makes no sense in the context. *Aqwā* means, among other things, to loosen the knots of a rope, see Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān* 15/207; a rope, *ḥabl*, also means a pledge, agreement.

⁹⁰ Ibn Mufarrigh: *Al-Ṣfahānī*, *Aghānī* 18/262, 281-94. Banū Ghanm: Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 238, cf. a similar case in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra* 1/209. Sa’d b. Khawla: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath al-bārī* 5/364. *Thumma* is the technical term also used to specify sections within larger descent groups.

most upon the closest male agnates, then on the farther circle of agnates, and so on (of course a large circle of agnates could be called upon already at the first stage of action). From an external vantage point, the members of a given co-lial group were seen as equals, indeed interchangeable, to the extent that any one of them was prone to be killed for the crime of another. From an internal point of view, there was a hierarchy, or rather a network of relationships determining the stage at which any member of the group had to help any other member. This explanation also accounts for the fact that Ḥujayr b. Abī Ihāb mentioned above helped the son of his murdered ally to avenge his father's blood, but did not himself carry out the act.⁹¹ An ally who joined a co-lial group had to have his specific place within that network. This explains the role of the individual host who actually performed the ceremony of concluding the alliance. This individual host functioned as the closest agnate in relation to the guest allies. The relationships thus created were sometimes named after the individual host even generations after his death.⁹² The same individual, and afterwards one of his descendants, formed a point of reference for the guest allies when the need arose for action. My conclusion is corroborated by the following anecdote. The Qurashī nobleman 'Abdallāh b. Jud'ān was host ally of the family of Mas'ūd b. 'Amr al-Qārī. When 'Abdallāh was on his deathbed his allies asked him to renounce the alliance, because he had no son. 'Abdallāh consented and the family of Mas'ūd transferred their alliance to another section of Quraysh.⁹³ The point of the allies' request must be, that when a host ally dies, a son takes over the responsibility towards the guest allies. Further evidence of this is the case of the son of Abū al-Jalīd mentioned above; he declares, "[Banū al-Ghazāla of Sulaym] allied themselves to my father, therefore I shall pay the blood-money on their behalf".⁹⁴ Presumably, if he could not afford to pay, his co-lia-

⁹¹ That the Ḥanafis insisted on the equality of all members of any given co-lial group seems to vindicate my point, see al-Jaṣṣāṣ, *Aḥkām* 3/197. See also Marx, *Bedouin*, pp. 194-5. Smith, *Kinship*, 63-4 insists upon the equality of the tribesmen but contradicts himself on p. 65.

⁹² See above, on Mālik b. Anas. Another example: 'Abdallāh b. 'Āmir b. Rabī'a who died in 86/705 is defined as ally of al-Khaṭṭāb, father of 'Umar (who probably died in pre-Islāmic times), al-Ḍaḥḥāk, *Al-āḥād wa-l-mathānī* 2/69.

⁹³ This section was in fact the descent group of 'Abdallāh's wife. Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, p. 248; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Al-iṣāba* (Beirut) 2/575.

⁹⁴ Ibn Ḥabīb, *Munammaq*, 261, see also above note 77.

ble group would offer help. This means that obligations towards the guest allies rested in fact on a host co-liable group, not on an individual. The case of ‘Amr b. al-Ḥaḍramī (and his family) clearly proves this argument. ‘Amr was “allied to ‘Utba [b. Rabī‘a] to the exclusion of the rest of Quraysh”, but when he was killed by Muslims and the matter of blood revenge was raised, the whole of ‘Utba’s co-liable group, Banū ‘Abd Shams, was involved.⁹⁵

In conclusion, the term *ḥilf*, translated as “alliance”, may refer to a variety of agreements and attachments. The type which I have termed “hosting alliance” applied to descent groups, whereby one absorbed another, weaker or smaller one, to share co-liability with it. One person (and afterwards his male descendants in male line) within the hosting section would act as if he were the closest agnate of the guest section. The most clearly defined rights and obligations were shared legal responsibility and mutual inheritance, but assistance was given in a variety of circumstances. Needless to say, the real situations were much more complex than any schematic description can convey.

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⁹⁵ Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt* 2/16.

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ABSTRACT

Arabian society of pre-Islamic and early Islamic times consisted of units whose members shared certain legal responsibilities. They may be called co-lia-ble groups. Originally the boundaries of any given co-lia-ble group matched those of a certain descent group (that is, a group consisting of agnatically related males). However, the boundaries of all the groups were constantly shifting, due to segmentation on the one hand, and alliances on the other. Three types of alliances may be discerned. The paper discusses one of them in detail, using the term "hosting alliance" to designate it. This type of alliance amounted to integrating outsiders into co-lia-ble groups.

RESUMEN

La sociedad árabe de los tiempos preislámicos y de los comienzos del Islam se componía de unidades cuyos miembros compartían ciertas responsabilidades legales. Se les puede llamar "grupos de responsabilidad legal compartida". Originariamente, los límites de estos grupos se correspondían con los de un grupo unido por lazos de parentesco, es decir, grupos de hombres relacionados por descendencia agnática. Sin embargo, estos límites variaban constantemente debido, por una parte, a la segmentación y por otra a las alianzas entre grupos. Se distinguen tres grupos de alianzas, de los que el presente artículo analiza uno detalladamente usando el término de "alianzas hospitalarias". Este tipo de alianzas consiste en integrar en un grupo de responsabilidad compartida a miembros ajenos a los lazos parentales.