

SOME EARLY ISLAMIC TEXTS ON THE NEGUS OF ABYSSINIA

WIM RAVEN

FREE UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

The Negus (*al-najāshī*) occurs in several stories, here referred to as *akbbār*, which found their way into the *sīra* of the Prophet and into history books and collections of *ḥadīth*.¹ He also occurs in a few Traditions, in the narrower sense of that word. None of these texts adds to our knowledge about any historical Negus contemporary with Muḥammad. We need not doubt that some early Muslims emigrated to Abyssinia nor that commercial relations between Abyssinia and the Arabian peninsula existed at the time of the Prophet; the present article, however, will not investigate that chapter of history.²

In our texts, the Negus is said to have professed a creed which sounds Islamic rather than Christian. He is supposed to have sent gifts to Muḥammad, and at his death, Muḥammad is said to have performed the *ṣalāt* for him.

¹ This article is part of research project no. LETT 83/6, Faculty of Letters, Free University, Amsterdam. In it I have used the same abbreviations as A. J. Wensinck in *A Handbook of Early Mubammadan Tradition* (Leiden 1927). Other abbreviations are:

I. Ish. = Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, ed. M. Hamidullah (Rabat 1976)

Ṭab. = al-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, ed. M. J. de Goeje *et alii* (Leiden 1879-1901)

TT = Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Tabḍīb al-tabḍīb* (Hyderabad 1325-7)

TB = al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ Baghdād* (Cairo 1349/1931)

I have made free use of Arberry's Koran translation and of Guillaume's translation of the *sīra*.

² See W. M. Watt, *Muhammad at Mecca* (Oxford 1953), 109-17 and index; M. J. Kister, "Some reports concerning Mecca. From Jāhiliyya to Islam", *JESHO* 15 (1972) 61-93. The traditional report on pre-Islamic trade between Mecca and Abyssinia, W. M. Watt, *op. cit.*, 13, cf. also Ṭab. I, 1089, according to which Hāshim had relations with Syria, Ghassān, and Byzantium, 'Abd Shams with Abyssinia, al-Muṭṭalib with the Yemen and Nawfal with Iraq, sounds a little too neat. On the other hand, in Kister's source *Nibāyat al-irab* it is the Hāshim only who had treaties with kings from all points of the compass; here perhaps the importance of this clan in pre-Islamic times has been unduly emphasized (Kister, *op. cit.*, 61).

I. THE STORIES ABOUT THE NEGUS: HIS CREED

To begin with, a survey is given of the *akbbār*, without however, a claim to exhaustiveness. Since a very interesting part which the Negus plays in these stories involves the profession of a creed, the variants of this creed are translated in full. The stories will be followed by comments where necessary.

Khabar 1: Muḥammad ibn Sa'd – Hishām ibn Muḥammad (TB XIV: 7386) – Ibn abī Šāliḥ, a man from Kināna, and a man from Raqqā, a learned *mawlā* of Asad: 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib ibn Hāshim and Ḥarb ibn Umayya asked the Abyssinian Negus to decide between them, but he refused to do so. Then they made Nufayl ibn 'Abd al-'Uzzā ibn Riyāḥ an arbiter between them, and he said to Ḥarb, "Do you want to surpass a man who is taller, more imposing and more handsome than you, who is less blameworthy than you, who has more children and is more generous with gifts and wields a longer spear than you?" Then he decided in his favour. Ḥarb said, "It is only because times are bad that we appointed you as an arbiter".³

In spite of its pre-Islamic setting, this *khabar* is rather late. One may see the Umayyads behind Ḥarb, the 'Alids behind 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib and 'Umar behind his grandfather Nufayl. Unlike the Umayyads, the Negus is a true king, whose conduct is noble; compare *kb.* 7. In *kb.* 13, the son of the Negus is also "tall, imposing and handsome", and a spear is a typically Abyssinian attribute.

Khabar 2: Ibn Ish.: The handsome poet 'Umāra ibn al-Walīd ibn al-Mughīra and 'Amr ibn al-'Āṣ went to Abyssinia as traders. On board the ship, 'Umāra made advances to 'Amr's wife and pushed 'Amr overboard. 'Amr swam back to the ship and saved himself. In Abyssinia, 'Umāra seduced the wife of the Negus. 'Amr, still bearing a grudge, betrayed him to the Negus (*ma'ī safīḥ min sufabā' Quraysb*), using as a proof against him his possession of a certain balm (*dubn*) which he could only have obtained through one of the king's wives. The Negus summoned 'Umāra and had him turned into a wild man by his sorceresses. He remained in Abyssinia, living among the wild asses, until a point during the reign of 'Umar. Men of the Banū al-Mughīra, among them 'Abdallāh ibn abī Rabī'a, went off in search of him; as soon as they found him, 'Umāra died.⁴

³ Tab. 1, 1091.

⁴ I. Ish. no. 211; *Agbānī*, ed. Dār al-Kutub, IX, 55ff.; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Dhamm al-hawā* (Cairo 1962), 330-1.

This *khbar* is untouched by Islamic ways of thought; its central character is a pre-Islamic poet. The conflict between the two main characters seems to be authentic. We hear about another conflict between them in the *Kitāb al-Aghānī*.⁵

Kb. 3: Muḥammad ibn Ishāq – Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn ‘Ubayd-allāh ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī – Abū Bakr ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (TT XII: 141) – Umm Salama bint abī Umayya ibn al-Mughīra, wife of the Prophet: The Quraysh sent ‘Abdallāh ibn abī Rabī‘a and ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ to the Negus to get the Muslim emigrants (*ghilmān sufahā’; fitya minnā sufahā’*) back from Abyssinia. They tried to bribe the Abyssinian generals and the Negus with presents, in particular, leatherwork (*adam*).

Ja‘far ibn abī Tālib, when summoned by the Negus, delivered a sort of catechism – possibly a text to be memorized by new converts from among the polytheists – and recited a passage from *sūrat Maryam*. “The Negus wept until his beard was wet and the bishops wept until their books were sodden, when they heard what he was reading to them. Then the Negus said, ‘In truth, this and what Jesus (var.: Moses) has brought have come from the same niche. You two (i.e. the two Qurayshites) may go, for by God, I will never give them up ...’”

‘Amr went back to the Negus and told him that the Muslims asserted that Jesus was but a human being, thus hoping to arouse the Negus’s anger against them. Ja‘far, when summoned again, answered the Negus, “We say about him that which our Prophet brought, saying he is the servant of God and His apostle and His spirit and His word which he cast into Mary the blessed virgin”. (K. 4:171). The Negus took a small piece of wood (*‘uwayd*) from the floor and said, “By God, Jesus, Son of Mary, does not exceed what you have said by the length of this stick”. His generals around him snorted when he said this.⁶

The Negus gave the two Qurayshites their presents back and sent them away, with the words, “God took no bribe from me when He gave me back my kingdom, so that I should take a bribe for it, and God did not do what men wanted against me, so why should I do what they want against Him?”

A rebellion arose against the Negus and a battle was imminent, the Nile lying between the two parties. The Companions called for a man who would be prepared to go to the battle and bring back news. Young Zubayr ibn al-‘Awwām volunteered and showed himself a

⁵ *Aghānī* XVIII, 123 ff.

⁶ In A.b.H. III, 441-2, Byzantine generals are reported on a similar occasion to have snorted as one man, so much that they burst out of their burnouses (*kbarajū min barānisibim*).

true *'awwām* by swimming on an inflated waterskin to the point where the armies were facing each other. The Negus won his battle with God's help and Zubayr came back with the good tidings.⁷

This Medinese story shows a great deal of interest in Islamic politics and religion. It is the oldest extant Islamic adaptation of the subject matter of *khābar* 2, turned into a *sabab al-nuzūl* story. To serve his own ends, the narrator found it expedient to use the names of 'Amr and 'Abdallāh, the theme of 'Amr's reporting the *sufahā'* to the Negus, and that of the Negus summoning the accused and acting as an arbiter (cf. also *kh.* 1).

There is a clear *ṣaḍā'il/mathālib* element: two early converts and Emigrants contrast with two opportunistic late vocations, who were associated with the Umayyads.

The main hero, Ja'far, a full brother of 'Alī ibn abī Ṭālib, figures in Ibn Ishāq's list of early converts.⁸ From Abyssinia, says Ibn Ḥajar, "he emigrated to Medina", so that he could boast of two *hijras*. The other hero, al-Zubayr, was a very early convert, either no. 4 or 5. He made both *hijras*.⁹ Al-Zubayr himself rebelled against 'Alī, but perhaps his name is used here for the counter-caliphate of his son 'Abdallāh. Thus these two heroes would be representatives of two types of opposition to the Umayyads, with whom the two "villains" are associated.

'Amr ibn al-Āṣ became a Muslim for reasons of expediency, shortly before Muḥammad's conquest of Mecca. His clan, Sahn, had opposed the Prophet vehemently. He took sides with Mu'āwiya against 'Alī. 'Abdallāh ibn abī Rabī'a, a uterine brother of Abū Jahl, belonged to Makhzūm, one of the clans which resisted Muḥammad to the very end. On the day of the conquest of Mecca, he is said to have sought refuge in the house of Umm Hāni', a cousin of the Prophet, which implies

⁷ I. Ish. no. 282; I.H. 217-21; A.b.H. 1, 201-3; v, 290-2. I. Ish. adds: (no. 284) I. Ush. - Yazīd ibn Rūmān - 'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr: "No, the Negus spoke with 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān".

(no. 285) I. Ish.: "That is not true; he spoke with Ja'far ibn abī Ṭālib".

'Urwa ibn al-Zubayr, who hastened to show loyalty to the caliph 'Abd al-Malik once the counter-caliphate of his brother 'Abdallāh had been put to an end, obligingly tried to ascribe the glamorous part in *kh.* 3 to the Umayyad 'Uthmān, who had indeed been among the emigrants to Abyssinia. Apparently, he had no success; all other sources mention only Ja'far.

⁸ I. Ish. no. 187, p. 124; I.H. 164; Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba* (Cairo 1939), 1: 239/1163.

⁹ I. Ish. no. 179, p. 121; I.H. 162; I.S. III, 1, p. 71.

that he had not yet been converted. He belonged to the *ṭulaqā'*, who could not claim "precedence". He is mentioned in the same breath as Mu'āwiya as a possible threat to Islam.¹⁰

The "weeping" episode originally had an *asbāb al-nuzūl* background, as will be seen in *Kb.* 5.

Now that some of the minor themes have been sifted out, we see that the story as a whole belongs to the genre of *asbāb al-nuzūl*. The Koranic verse to which it owes its existence is 3:199.

Al-Ṭabarī states in his *Tafsīr* that this verse had been revealed either about the Negus, or the converted Jew 'Abdal-lāh ibn Salām, or the Muslims drawn from among the People of the Book. Then he quotes only the Tradition about the Prophet's *ṣalāt* for the Negus at his death, which will be treated below.

A comparison between the phrases of the verse and the elements of our story makes clear that the story belongs to this verse:

"Some there are of the People : *man* is taken as a singular: "there is of the Book, who believe (*man* one who believes ...", i.e. the Negus. *yū'minnu*) in God"

"and what has been sent down : the Koran is from the same niche as to you (i.e. Muḥammad)" that which Jesus/Moses had brought.

"and what has been sent down : the Negus professes a creed which coincides with K. 4:171; *'abd* was added from K. 4:172.

"not selling the signs of God" : i.e. the Muslims.

"for a small price ..." : for the bribes of the Quraysh.

"God is swift at the reckoning" : by helping the Negus to overcome his foe.

Attention should be paid to the fact that the Negus owes his kingship to God. This theme will recur in later variants of the story.

Kb. 4: Muḥammad ibn Ishāq – al-Zuhrī – 'Ā'isha: The Negus, when still a prince, was sold as a slave by rebellious Abyssinians who wanted to put an end to his father's dynasty. Later, when they were in need of an heir to the throne, they bought him back, without

¹⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba* II:297/4671; TT v:361.

however paying for him. When the merchant complained, the Negus ordained that he should be given his money.¹¹

This rather long story aims at explaining the Negus's words "God took no bribe from me", etc., as quoted in *kb.* 3.

The theme of Abyssinians weeping on hearing the Koran recited, as it occurs in *kb.* 3, is also found separately in three *asbāb al-nuzūl* Traditions, for example:

Kb. 5: Yūnus ibn Bukayr – Asbāt ibn Naṣr al-Hamdānī (*GAS* I, 33) – Ismā'īl ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān (al-Suddī; *GAS* I, 32-3): The Negus sent twelve men to the Prophet, to ask him questions and to bring back reports about him. The Prophet recited the Koran for them and they began to weep. Concerning them, God revealed K. 5:83.¹²

Kb. 6a: Ṭay. – Ḥudayj ibn Mu'āwiya (TT II:401; Kufan) – Abū Ishāq (Kufan) – 'Abdallāh ibn 'Utba (TT v:531; Kufan) – 'Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd: The Quraysh sent 'Umāra and 'Amr to the Negus with presents to obtain the extradition of the Muslim emigrants. Ja'far was summoned. He did not prostrate himself before the Negus, but said, "We only prostrate ourselves before God". Then, about Jesus, he said, "He is the spirit of God and His word which he cast into the blessed virgin, untouched by a man and unmarked (? *frā*) by a child", whereupon the Negus said to his priests, "These people do not add so much as the weight of this [piece of wood] to what we say. I profess that he (i.e. Muḥammad) is a prophet and I wish I were with him to wear his sandals (Var.: to serve him)."¹³

Kb. 6b: A.D. – 'Abbād ibn Mūsā (TT v:173) – Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far (TT I:533) – Isrā'īl (ibn Yūnus; TT I:496, Kufan) – Abū Ishāq – Abū Burda (TT XII:95, Kufan) – his father (Abū Mūsā al-Ash'arī): ... "I profess that he is the apostle of God, and that he is the one announced by Jesus, son of Mary. Were I not the king I am, I would join him to wear his sandals."¹⁴

Kb. 6c: A.b.Ḥ. – Ḥasan ibn Mūsā (TT II:560) – Ḥudayj ibn Mu'āwiya – Abū Ishāq – 'Abdallāh ibn 'Utba – 'Abdallāh ibn Mas'ūd: ... "I profess that he is the apostle of God. He is the one whom we find in the Gospel; he is the apostle announced by Jesus,

¹¹ I. Ish. no. 283; I.H. 222-3.

¹² I. Ish. no. 288; cf. nos. 289, 287 on K. 28:52-5. Ibn Ishāq does not occur in the *isnād*; this may be a text added by Yūnus ibn Bukayr to his edition of the *Sīra*. Cf. J. Fück, *Muḥammad ibn Ishāq. Literarhistorische Untersuchungen* (Frankfurt 1925), 36 n. 17, "Namentlich die Rezension des B. Bukair ... ist reich an Zusätzen".

¹³ Ṭay. 346.

¹⁴ A.D. *Janā'iz* 58.

son of Mary ... Were I not the king I am, I would join him to wear his sandals and to help him in performing the ablution (*waddi'ubu*)."¹⁵

This *khobar* presupposes the material of *kb.* 2 and 3 in one form or another. The theme of the Qurayshite emissaries (the same as in *kb.* 2), and that of the presents, the reporting by 'Amr, the summoning and the creed occur in the same order. Thereafter, the story takes another turn.

The Negus's wish to join Muḥammad to serve him (or: to wear his sandals) sounds vaguely biblical. In another Tradition, the Byzantine Emperor utters a similar wish, "If I were with him, I would wash (*ghasaltu*) his feet."¹⁶ This is not far away from "serve him". *Kb.* 6c gives quite a different twist to the sentence by using the verb *wadda'a*. Thus it becomes directed against the "wiping of the shoes" (*al-mash 'alā al-khuffayn*). In 6b and 6c, the theme of Jesus's announcement of Muḥammad's coming has been added.¹⁷

The connection with the Koranic verse 3:199 has become looser. The parallel to "Not selling the signs of God", etc., has been replaced by an explicit recognition of Muḥammad's prophethood, and the Negus, instead of becoming a king by divine right, submits to Muḥammad, at least verbally. But his very kingship prevents him, on the other hand, from making the actual *hijra* to Muḥammad. (Read: being an Umayyad prevents him from acclaiming the members of the House of the Prophet as the legitimate heirs to the caliphate). Thus the narrative of *kb.* 3, which is primarily a comment on a Koran verse, is here turned into outright anti-Umayyad propaganda.

Kb. 7: Muḥammad ibn Ishāq – Ja'far ibn Muḥammad (TT II:156) – his father (Muḥammad ibn 'Ali ibn Ḥusayn; TT IX:580): The Abyssinians accused the Negus of apostasy and revolted against him. Ja'far and his companions were advised to be prepared for a hasty departure. The Negus took paper and wrote, "He testifies that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is His servant and apostle; and he testifies that Jesus, son of Mary, is His servant (*'abdubu*) and His apostle, His spirit and His word which he cast into Mary". He put it inside his gown near the right shoulder and set out for a confrontation with the rebels. A discussion followed; the rebels

¹⁵ A.b.H, I, 461. On this use of *wadda'a*, see *inter alia*, Bu. *Wuḍū'* 35.

¹⁶ Bu. *Tafsīr sūra* 3, 4.

¹⁷ Cf. I.H. II 6, 149-50.

recognized his claim to the throne and were satisfied with his conduct, but could not bear his assertion that Jesus was a human being (*'abd*). They themselves considered him the son of God. The Negus put his hands upon the gown covering his breast and said: "He testifies that Jesus, son of Mary, was nothing more than 'this'." By "this" he meant what he had written, but they were content and went away. News of this reached the Prophet, and when the Negus died, he performed the *ṣalāt* for him and prayed that his sins might be forgiven.¹⁸

This *ḵhabar*, with its Medinese *isnād*, makes two political statements: the Negus has a legitimate claim to the throne and his conduct is satisfactory. Thus he sets the example for an 'Alid caliph. He owes his kingship to having professed the right creed and, at the same time, to literally hiding it, by which he set a royal precedent for *taqiyya*.

The creed of the Negus in this story uses the wording of Koran 4:171, as it does in *ḵb.* 3, but here it takes the form of an extended *shahāda*. A similar, even more extended *shahāda* is found in the *Ṣaḥīḥs* of al-Bukhārī and Muslim:

The Prophet said: If anyone testifies that there is no god but God alone, and that He has not associate, and that Muḥammad is His servant and His apostle, and that Jesus is the servant and apostle of God, and His word which He cast into Mary, and a spirit from Him, and that Paradise is a reality, and that Hell is a reality, then God leads him into Paradise, regardless of his actions (var.: by whichever of the eight gates of Paradise he desires).¹⁹

These texts have Syrians *isnāds*. The provenance of the *shahāda* in its shorter form, as found in *ḵb.* 7, cannot be established. In my view, it was already in existence before the dogmatic issues were added. It may have been used to facilitate the conversion of Christians to Islam, or one could imagine it being used in a polemic against Christians. It could be plausibly put into the mouth of the Negus.

The words of the Negus, "Jesus was nothing more than this" (*lam yazīd 'alā ḵādbā shay'an*) do not fit in with the story. One would have expected him to say, "Jesus was exactly *ḵādbā*". Then *ḵādbā* could be interpreted as: (a) this, which I have written on paper, or (b) that, which you say. The phrase

¹⁸ I.H. 223-4.

¹⁹ Bu. *Anbiyā'* 47, Mu. *Imān* 46.

was apparently taken over unaltered from a text resembling *kb.* 3, where it was not out of place.

Kb. 8: I. Ish. – Yazīd ibn Ḥabīb (TT XI:614, Egyptian) – Rāshid (TT III:430) – Ḥabīb ibn Aws al-Thaqafi (TT II:321, Egyptian) – ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ: After the battle of the Ditch, ‘Amr proposed to some Qurayshites that they should go to the Negus, because Muḥammad continued to grow in strength, and life would be better under the Negus than under him. So they went and took leatherware (*adam*; cf. *kb.* 3) as presents. At the court of the Negus, they saw ‘Amr ibn Umayya, Muḥammad’s messenger. It occurred to ‘Amr ibn al-‘Āṣ that it would be advantageous for the Quraysh to have him killed. So he asked the Negus to do this, after having offered him his presents. But the Negus became angry and said, “You demand the extradition of the messenger of a man who is visited by the Great Nāmūs who used to come to Moses?²⁰ ... You would do better to obey him and to follow him, for he and his followers will no doubt get the better of their adversaries, just as Moses overcame Pharaoh and his army.” ‘Amr was very much ashamed. The Negus arranged a covenant between ‘Amr and the Prophet, implying the former’s conversion to Islam. On his way back, he met Khālīd ibn al-Walīd; so they went to Muḥammad together. ‘Amr asked forgiveness for his former sins, and the Prophet said, “Swear allegiance, for Islam annuls what has happened before, and the *hijra* annuls what has gone before.”²¹

With this story, the Egyptians tried to restore the reputation of their former governor ‘Amr and to put the best face on his visit to the Negus such as it was already known: now it was said that he became a Muslim through the Negus. It was not feasible to make an early Muslim out of ‘Amr, but the present text at least gives him the status of Emigrant. On ‘Amr ibn Umayya, see *kb.* 11. Perhaps there had originally been a story of a certain ‘Amr who went to Abyssinia; somewhat later, he was given different identities by the storytellers. In this *kbabar*, we end up with two ‘Amrs who made the voyage.

Kb. 9: The Prophet’s marriage with Umm Ḥabība (Ramla) bint abī Sufyān, whose husband ‘Ubaydallāh ibn Jaḥsh had died in Abyssinia, was arranged in that country. The story occurs in several versions:

Khālīd ibn Sa‘īd ibn al-‘Āṣ acted as her *walī*, or ‘Uthmān ibn ‘Affān, or the Negus himself. The Negus paid her bride-price. The Prophet

²⁰ Cf. I. Ish. no. 140; I.H. 153-4.

²¹ Ibn ‘Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūḥ Miṣr*, ed. C. C. Torrey (New Haven 1922), 252-3; Ṭab. I, 1601-3.

sent his messenger 'Amr ibn Umayya to fetch her, or the Negus sent her to the Prophet. In a fanciful story, Khālīd proposes to her on behalf of the Prophet, and the Negus himself proposes too! Needless to say, Umm Ḥabība chose the Prophet. In this text, the slave girl Abraha acts as a go-between. Several narrative elements which are also found in other stories, the giving back of the presents, the balm (*dubn*) of the king, signet rings (cf. below, Trad. 18), the refusal to accept a bribe, are also attached to her.

In a longer version, the Negus professes a creed before Ja'far and his companions: "Praise to God, the King, the All-holy, the All-peaceable, the All-faithful, the All-preserver (K. 59:23)! I testify that there is no god but God and that Muḥammad is His servant and His apostle, and that he is the one announced by Jesus, son of Mary."²²

Apart from the usual mentioning of Companions' names, I cannot understand what the story is aiming at. The creed of the Negus is much more "Islamic" than the ones we saw previously; Jesus has only a subordinate place in it.

The edited versions in the standard *ḥadīth*-collections differ widely, though all *isnāds* have 'Abdallāh ibn al-Mubārak in common. Their centre of interest seems to be the amount of the bride-price of the Prophet's wives.

Kb. 10: I. Ish.: Some young Abyssinian men molested Ruqayya, the daughter of the Prophet, the wife of 'Uthmān ibn 'Affān. The Muslim emigrants, being foreigners in Abyssinia, did not dare to do anything about it. Fortunately, the young men marched with the Negus against his enemy, and God killed them all.²³

Kb. 11: The Prophet sent 'Amr ibn Umayya al-Ḍamri as his messenger to the Negus: for an unspecified reason, or concerning Ja'far and his companions, or in connection with his marriage to Umm Ḥabība, or with a letter summoning him to Islam (see *kb.* 12), or as a scout.²⁴

²² I.H. 1002; I.S. VIII, 69-70; Ṭab. I, 1570-1, 1772; cf. *kb.* 5; I. Ish. no. 373; Nas. *Nikāb* 66; A.D. *Nikāb* 19, 28 (2 ×); A.b.Ḥ. VI, 427.

²³ I. Ish. no. 286.

²⁴ Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, *Futūb Miṣr*, 252; Ṭab. I, 1602, II, 1560, 1569. The Prophet is said to have sent a letter to the Negus, summoning him to Islam. Some Basran Traditions (Tir. *Isti'dbān* 23; Mu. *Jibād* 75; A.b.Ḥ. IV, 75, cf. 61) add, "This was *not* the Negus for whom the Prophet performed the *ṣalāt*". This is explicitly contradicted by a variant of the same Tradition, also Basran (Mu. *Jibād* 75, 2 ×), which adds, He did *not* say: "This was *not* the Negus, etc.". The idea is that the Negus for whom the Prophet had performed the *ṣalāt*, i.e. the Negus who had granted asylum to the Muslim emigrants, did not need a summons, since he had already become a Muslim.

Kb. 12a: The Prophet sends a letter to the Negus, summoning him to Islam. The Negus tears it up, upon which the Prophet says, "May God tear his kingdom as he tore this letter!"²⁵

Kb. 12b: I. Ish.: Muḥammad's letter contained the following words about Jesus: "I testify that Jesus, son of Mary, is the spirit of God and His word, which He cast into the good, chaste virgin Mary. She became pregnant with Jesus, and God created him from His spirit and His breath, as He had created Adam with His hand and His breath". The Negus wrote back, among other things, "There is no god but God ... Jesus is not as much as the crown of a date more than you have mentioned; he is as you say. We know with what you were sent to us, and we have received your cousin and his companions hospitably. I testify that you are the apostle of God, veracious and confirmed, and I have sworn allegiance to you and to your cousin (*sic*). I have become a Muslim through him. I send you my son ..., and if you wish, I will join you..."²⁶

In this creed of the Negus, the human nature of Jesus is not referred to by the word *'abd*, but the parallel with Adam is suggestive enough. The Negus here is not a king by divine right; he has only to submit, as in *kb. 6*. The Shī'ite bias of the story is manifest in his swearing allegiance to Muḥammad and Ja'far in one breath. A descendant of Ja'far, 'Abdallāh ibn Mu'āwiya, was proclaimed caliph at Kūfa in 127 A.H.,²⁷ but his rebellion was of little moment. I do not think that our *khabar* has any connections with it. As in most stories, Ja'far simply represents the House of the Prophet in its widest sense.

Kb. 13: Muḥammad ibn Ishāq's father told him that he had seen Abū Nayzar (Nīzar?), the son of the Negus. He was not really so black, he looked rather like an Arab, and he was imposing, big and handsome. 'Alī had found him with a slave-trader in Mecca and bought him. Then he manumitted him, in recompense for what the Negus had done to Ja'far.²⁸

This may reflect a readiness to accept *mawālī* as equals.

Kb. 14: I. Ish. – 'Abdallāh ibn Ḥasan (ibn Ḥasan ibn 'Alī; TT v:321) – his mother Fātima bint Ḥusayn ibn 'Alī (TT xii:2863): Abū Nayzar, who had been manumitted by 'Alī, was visited by some

²⁵ A.b.H. iv, 75; iii, 442.

²⁶ Ṭab. i, 1569-70.

²⁷ Ṭab. ii, 1880.

²⁸ I. Ish. no. 296. Cf. Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba* iv:198/1170: *aslama wa-kāna ma'ā al-nabī fī mu'natib*.

countrymen. 'Alī received them and fed them for a month. They said to Abū Nayzar, "Abyssinia is in revolt; come with us, so that we can make you king over them, for you are the son of him whom they have known". He answered, "Since God honoured me with Islam, I am not in a position to do so". In despair, they left him and went back. He was an excellent man, but he was a man who shrank from it(?²⁹) and who hid among the people.³⁰

A Medinese Shī'ite development of *kb.* 13. I cannot help seeing Ḥasan ibn 'Alī portrayed here; he abdicated from his legitimate rights to the caliphate and retired to Medina, where he lived quietly and married many times. His abdication was criticized by many of his supporters, though not at the cost of their reverence.

Kb. 15: A.b.H. – Abū Naṣr – Abū Sa'īd Muḥammad ibn Muslim ibn abī Waḍḍāḥ (TT 1x:735) – Ismā'īl ibn abī Khālid (TT 1:542; Kufan) and al-Mujālid ibn Sa'īd (TT x:65; Kufan) – 'Āmir al-Sha'bi (TT v:110; Kufan) – 'Āmir ibn Shahr (TT v:112; Kufan): I heard two sayings: one from the Prophet and one from the Negus. I heard the Prophet saying, "Look at the Quraysh and accept some of their words, but refrain from their deeds". And I sat with the Negus when his son came home from school (*al-kuttāb*) and recited a verse from the Gospel which I knew (var.: which I understood). I laughed, but the Negus said, "At what do you laugh? At the Book of God? By God, among God's revelations to Jesus, son of Mary, are these words, 'The curse will lie on the earth when its rulers (*umarā'*) are small boys'".³¹

The first half of this Kufan curiosity expresses the notion that the Quraysh are an indispensable source of knowledge, but the acts of the "Quraysh" – now understood as the Umayyads – are unacceptable. The second saying may be an allusion to Mu'āwiya ibn Yazīd, a young Umayyad caliph who was a weak mother's boy.³²

A semi-legend like *kb.* 2 seems to underlie the stories of Qurayshite *sufahā'* visiting the Negus. In *kb.* 3, these Qurayshites have become Muslims, and so they remain in most other

²⁹ Word lacking in text. Conjecture by Hamidullah, *yashma'izzu*.

³⁰ I. Ish. no. 297.

³¹ A.b.H. III, 428-9.

³² Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb* IVB, ed. M. Schloessinger (Jerusalem 1938), 63-5. Mu'āwiya's age varies from 18 to 23 years. The enemy Ibn al-Zubayr is explicitly called (p. 65) a *rajul kāmil al-sinn*. I owe this reference to Dr. Patricia Crone.

stories. The Negus represents the Christians, who by necessity are impressed by the Koran and recognize it as true (3,5,6). He is a king by divine right, whose conduct is praiseworthy, contrary to the Umayyad caliph (1,3,7). He guides people to Islam (8), or has become a Muslim himself (9, 12), or at least declares himself inferior to Muḥammad (6). He is used as a spokesman against the Umayyads (15).

Far from being a historical figure, the Negus began as a semi-legendary king and gradually turned out to be employable for a variety of religious and political purposes. More of these we shall see in the following rubrics.

II. THE *ṢALĀT* FOR THE NEGUS AT HIS DEATH

The theme of the Prophet's *ṣalāt* for the Negus at his death, as it occurs in *kb.* 7, found its way into many *ḥadīth* collections. I have come across about twelve types of *matn* and seventy-five *isnāds*. These offer an inextricable puzzle, since there does not seem to be much of a connection between a given *isnād* or *isnād*-type and a *matn*.

A clear insight into the matter can be obtained only by studying the huge amount of *ḥadīth* material on funeral prayers in general. For the moment, the best thing seems to be to collect those texts whose antiquity is reasonably certain, so that at least it will become clear which questions were at issue in the earliest discussions.

In his *Tafsīr*, al-Ṭabarī quotes *ad* 3:199 four similar texts with Qatāda ibn Di'āma (60-117 A.H.) figuring in the *isnāds*. One of these texts has the *isnād* Yazīd – Sa'īd – Qatāda, by which, according to Horst and Sezgin, al-Ṭabarī transmitted Qatāda's own *Tafsīr*.³³ It runs as follows:

Trad. 1: K. 3:199 was revealed concerning the Negus. The Prophet prayed that the sins of the Negus might be forgiven, and said the funeral prayers for him when the news of his death reached him. He said to his Companions, "Pray for a brother of yours, who has died abroad". Some Hypocrites said, "He prays for a dead person who is not of his own religion". Then God revealed K. 3:199.

In this old text, the conversion of the Negus has not yet occurred any more than it had done in *kbabar* no. 3. Its *raison d'être* should be sought in the Basran, Qadarite discussions

³³ H. Horst, *ZDMG* 103 (1953), 301; *GAS* 1, 32.

on funeral prayers over non-Muslims, which group included Christians, but also "Muslims" whose conduct was considered un-Islamic. *Istighfār* and *ṣalāt* for polytheists and Hypocrites are the subject of many Traditions.³⁴ The discussions were based *inter alia* on K. 9:84. That there should be funeral prayers for good Muslims is taken for granted. The tenor of Trad. 1 is perhaps that the Negus, though officially not a Muslim, deserved on account of his noble deeds funeral prayers more than many a pseudo-Muslim.

Trad. 2: I. Ish. – al-Zuhrī – Saʿīd ibn al-Musayyab – Abū Hurayra: The Prophet took us to the *muṣallā* and lined us up in rows behind him, and then he led us in four *takbīrs*. When he departed, we asked him, "O Prophet, for whom did you say the prayer?" He answered. "For your brother the Negus; he died today".³⁵

This Medinese text has as a *terminus ante quem* the year 150, when ibn Ishāq died, or 124, when we assume that al-Zuhrī created it. In a slightly streamlined version, it runs as follows:

Trad. 3: Mālik ibn Anas – al-Zuhrī – Saʿīd – Abū Hurayra: The Prophet announced (*naʿā*) the death of the Negus to the people on the day he died. He took them to the *muṣallā* and lined them up. He said four *takbīrs*.³⁶

Trad. 4 (= *kb.* 7): News of this reached the Prophet, and when the Negus died he performed the *ṣalāt* for him and prayed that his sins might be forgiven.

Given the anti-Umayyad tendency of *kb.* 7, from which this text has been taken, it must be older than 132. In this *kbabar*, the Negus is a Muslim.

The *naʿā* motif as well as the conversion can also be given a *terminus ante quem* in another way:

Trad. 5: A.b.H. – from a book by Surayj ibn Yūnus (*GAS* I, 521) – ʿAbbād ibn ʿAbbād al-Muhallabī (TT v:161; Basran) heard from

³⁴ E.g. Bu. *Tafsīr sūra* 9, 12, 13, 16, and many other places; see Wensinck, *Concordance*, s.v. *istaghfara*, *munāfiq*, *musbrik*.

³⁵ I. Ish. no. 290; A.b.H. II, 348.

³⁶ Mā. *Janāʾiẓ* 14 (= Bu. *Janāʾiẓ* 4, 65; Mu. *Janāʾiẓ* 62, 63; A.D. *Janāʾiẓ* 58; Nas. *Janāʾiẓ* 72, 76; A.b.H. II, 438-9; al-Shāfiʿī, *Tartīb musnad al-imām* (Cairo 1950), I, 575). I found the *isnād* al-Zuhri – Saʿīd – Abū Hurayra at fourteen other places in combination with a kindred, in many cases shortened text. Only three of these places offer an interesting variant, see Trad. 14.

‘Abdallāh ibn ‘Uthmān ibn Khuthaym (TT v: 536; Meccan; died 135 or at least before 144) the story of the letter which Muḥammad sent to the Negus and which was torn up by the latter. ‘Abbād then asked, “Did not the Negus become a Muslim, and did not the Prophet announce his death to his Companions, and had not he performed prayers for him?” ‘Abdallāh answered that that had been another Negus.³⁷

In view of the date of ‘Abdallāh’s death, this conversation must have taken place before, let us say, 140 A.H.; so ‘Abbād’s text existed before that year.

Now let us consider some old reports, which have no relevance to the Negus, about funeral prayers in general:

Trad. 6: (Muḥammad) ibn Fuḍayl (TT ix:658; Kufan) – Yazīd (ibn abī Ziyād al-Hāshimī al-Kūfī; TT xi:630) – ‘Abdallāh ibn al-Ḥārith (al-Hāshimī al-Madanī; TT v:310): The Prophet said the prayers over Ḥamza and he said nine *takbīrs*.³⁸

Trad. 7: al-Shāfi‘ī – Muḥammad ibn Yazīd (TT ix:864) – Ismā‘īl (ibn Muslim al-Baṣrī; TT i:598) – al-Sha‘bī (TT v:110; Kufan) – ‘Abdallāh ibn Ma‘qil (TT vi:69; Kufan) *and*: ‘Abd al-Razzāq – (Sufyān) ibn ‘Uyayna (TT iv:205; Kufan) – Yazīd ibn abī Ziyād – ‘Abdallāh ibn Ma‘qil *and*: Ibn abī Shayba – Hushaym (TT xi:100) – Ḥuṣayn ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (TT ii:659; Kufan) – al-Sha‘bī: ‘Alī said the prayer over Sahl ibn Ḥunayf and he said six *takbīrs*.³⁹

Trad. 8: ‘Abd al-Razzāq – Ibn ‘Uyayna – Ismā‘īl(?) – al-Sha‘bī – ‘Abdallāh ibn Ma‘qil: ‘Alī said the prayer over Sahl ibn Ḥunayf and he said six *takbīrs*; then he turned to us and added, “because he fought at Badr”. al-Sha‘bī said: ‘Alqama (TT vii:484; Kufan) came from Syria and said to ‘Abdallāh ibn Mas‘ūd, “Your brethren in Syria say five *takbīrs* for their dead; if you will fix a time for us, we will follow your example”. ‘Abdallāh said, “Consider your dead and say as many *takbīrs* as your *imāms* do; there is no fixed time and no fixed number of *takbīrs*”.⁴⁰

Trad. 9: al-Shāfi‘ī – (Shaybān ibn ‘Abd al-Raḥmān) Abū Mu‘āwiya (TT iv:628; Basra/Kufa) – al-A‘mash (TT iv:376; Kufan) – (Yazīd) ibn abī Ziyād – ‘Abdallāh ibn Ma‘qil: ‘Alī said five *takbīrs* over Sahl ibn Ḥunayf; then he turned to us and added, “because he fought at

³⁷ A.b.H. iv, 74-5.

³⁸ Ibn abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* III, 304.

³⁹ Al-Shāfi‘ī, “Ikhtilāf ‘Alī wa-‘Abdallāh ibn Mas‘ūd”, in *Kitāb al-umm* (Cairo 1325), VII, 156; ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* III:6399; Ibn abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* III, 304, mentions two other Kufan *isnāds*.

⁴⁰ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* III:6403.

Badr". Al-Shāfi'ī: "We keep to four, as is confirmed on authority of the Prophet".⁴¹

Trad. 10: 'Abd al-Razzāq – Ma'mar – Ḥammād (ibn abī Sulaymān; TT III:15; Kufan) – Ibrāhīm (al-Nakha'ī; TT I:325; Kufan): 'Alī said five *tabbīrs* over a dead body.⁴²

Trad. 11: al-Shāfi'ī – Abu Mu'āwiya – al-A'mash – 'Umayr ibn Sa'īd (TT VIII:259; Kufan) and: Abū Yūsuf – Abū Ḥanīfa – Haytham (ibn Ḥabīb; TT XI:152; Kufan) – ('Umayr ibn Sa'īd) Abū Yaḥyā: 'Alī said four *tabbīrs* over ibn al-Mukaffif.⁴³

Trad. 12: 'Abd al-Razzāq – (Sufyān) al-Thawrī – al-A'mash – Ibrāhīm: Everybody has always said four *tabbīrs*, and the people agree on that.⁴⁴

Trad. 13: Abū Yūsuf – Abū Ḥanīfa – Ḥammād – Ibrāhīm: The Prophet said six, five or four *tabbīrs* over a dead body; so did Abū Bakr, but 'Umar gathered the Companions of the Prophet, saying, "You disagree, for a short time ago the people were still in the *Jāhiliyya*. Now direct your attention to the last person over whom the Prophet said *tabbīrs*". They looked into the matter and found that the Prophet had said four *tabbīrs* on that occasion. "So say four *tabbīrs*", concluded 'Umar.⁴⁵

The focus of interest in these texts is the number of *tabbīrs* in funeral prayers. The practice in Kufa, where all the texts originated, was apparently to set the number in proportion to the rank of the deceased. The Medinese wanted to fix the number at four and appropriated the story of the Negus (Trad. 2), which is its oldest form (Trad. 1) does not mention any number at all, thus "proving" that the Prophet had said only four *tabbīrs* for a man of high rank. Abū Ḥanīfa had the same intention. He unearthed a report on 'Alī's saying four *tabbīrs* for a person of little merit, and invented a Companions' consensus which pronounced five or six *tabbīrs* "abrogated" by the Prophet (Trad. 13). Al-Shāfi'ī (Trad. 9) as usual preferred a Tradition to prevailing practice. Trad. 12 might represent the opinion of Sufyān al-Thawrī.

⁴¹ Al-Shāfi'ī, "Ikhtilāf" 156.

⁴² 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* III:6400.

⁴³ Al-Shāfi'ī, "Ikhtilāf" 156; Abū Yūsuf, *Kitāb al-āthār*, ed. Abū al-Wafā' (Cairo 1355), no. 391; cf. Ibn abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* III, 300 line 13. Yazīd ibn al-Mukaffif was an opponent of 'Alī, cf. I.S. v, 22.

⁴⁴ 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* III:6401.

⁴⁵ Abū Yūsuf, *Āthār* 390.

Another issue which arose early in connection with funeral prayers was the place where they should be performed: over the body itself, in the mosque or at the graveside.

According to Schacht, the Medinese practice in the generation before Mālik was to say the prayers outside the mosque.⁴⁶

Qatāda apparently was not yet interested in the "mosque" issue. Many of the later transmitters do mention the *muṣallā*; some of them may have done so because they wanted to make a point of it; others, no doubt, because they just found the word in the Traditions they had appropriated for their own ends, and saw no reason to omit it. On the other hand, later texts without the word *muṣallā* occurring in them may either be based on Qatāda's text or have omitted the word for no reason other than brevity. A thorough study of the many late Traditions would therefore hardly be rewarding on this point.

There is an interesting variant of Trad. 3, in which the *muṣallā* has been replaced by al-Baqī', the graveyard of Medina:

Trad. 14: Ṭay – Zam'a (ibn Šāliḥ al-Makkī; TT III: 629) – al-Zuhrī – Sa'īd – Abū Hurayra *and*: Ibn abī Shayba – (Sufyān) ibn 'Uyayna – al-Zuhrī – Sa'īd – Abū Hurayra *and*: Ibn abī Shayba – 'Abd al-A'lā (TT VI: 199; Basran) – Ma'mar (TT X: 439; Basran) – al-Zuhrī – Sa'īd – Abū Hurayra: The Prophet said, "(Ṭay.: Your brother) the Negus has died. (Ṭay.: Come let us pray for him)"; then he went (Ṭay.: with his Companions) to al-Baqī', where we lined up behind him; then he said four *takbīrs*.⁴⁷

Of course, the Negus was not buried in al-Baqī', but the fact that it was a graveyard is significant, since funeral prayers at the graveside were another old point of contention.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ J. Schacht, *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Oxford 1950), 152. Our Medinese Traditions nos. 2 and 3, which explicitly mention the *muṣallā*, can be added to Schacht's Medinese counter-Traditions which advocate saying the prayers in the mosque. However, they might be intended to cover an exceptional case, since in the case of the Negus, the body of the deceased was not readily at hand.

⁴⁷ Ṭay. 2300; Ibn abī Shayba, *Muṣannaḥ* III, 300; I.M. *Janā'iz* 33.

⁴⁸ Schacht, *Origins*, 165, may be right in his assumption that this was an Iraqi invention, but he misinterpreted our Trads. 7 and 9. These texts do *not* state that 'Alī prayed over Sahl at his graveside. The "tradition from the Prophet in its favour", which he adduces from Mālik (*Janā'iz* 5) is restrictive rather than supportive. A poor old woman died and was buried during the night. Although the Prophet had asked to be informed of her death, people had not wakened him. So he went the next morning to her grave and prayed over it, with four *takbīrs*. The wording of this text

In many later texts, other aspects are emphasized. In Qatāda's text (Trad. 1), the phrase *māta fī ghayr bilādikum* was used with no particular intent. In its later derivatives⁴⁹ it may have been taken as a guideline for cases of death abroad, as for instance is indicated by Abū Dāwūd's chapter-heading *fī al-ṣalāt 'alā al-muslim yamūt fī bilād al-sbirk*.⁵⁰

A question which certainly arose in a late stage of the development of the Negus Tradition is that of the number of lines in funeral prayers. In some texts, the Companion in the *isnād* claims to have prayed in the third line, or rather in the second one, etc. If this matter is to be studied at all, it should be done in connection with the *ṣalāt* in general.

Another, more interesting question is that of the incomplete funeral prayers for the Negus, which are mentioned by al-Bukhārī: "(The Prophet) called it a *ṣalāt*, but it was without *rukū'* and *suḥūd*, and one did not speak during it".⁵¹ This subject should also be studied in a wider context.

III. THE NEGUS'S GIFTS: A SIGNET RING, A PAIR OF SHOES AND A SPEAR

We may assume that the early Muslims, when they had settled in the countries which they had conquered, adopted the clothing, shoes, and rings which were available and which they found practical or attractive. When, however, Traditions began to develop and the *sunna* of the Prophet was reconstructed, certain pieces of attire became the subject of discussion.

Verdicts on garments considered too extravagant were sometimes put in the form of a report about a gift to the Prophet, which he accepted politely, but either did not use or gave away for some secondary purpose. For example:

Trad. 15: Yūnus – Shaybān – Qatāda – Anas ibn Mālik: The Prophet was presented (*uhdiyya li-nabī allāh*) with a gown of fine silk brocade, but it was his custom to forbid silk. When the people admired it, he said, "By Him in whose hand is my life, the napkins of Sa'd ibn Mu'ādh in Paradise are better than this".⁵²

suggests that the Prophet, had he been warned in time, would have prayed over her dead body rather than over her grave.

⁴⁹ Tay. 1068; A.b.H. III, 369; I.M. *Janā'iz* 33.

⁵⁰ A.D. *Janā'iz* 58.

⁵¹ Bu. *Janā'iz* 56; cf. A.b.H. v, 396 lines 13-15; Mu. *Jum'a* 73, and Wensinck, *Concordance*, s.v. *al-takallum fī al-ṣalāt*.

⁵² A.b.H. III, 229; cf. I.H. 903.

Such garments were often presented by foreigners, or by people who maintained relations with foreign countries:

Trad. 16: Abū Bakr ibn abī Shayba *and* Abū Kurayb *and* Zuhayr ibn Ḥarb – Wakīʿ – Misʿar – Abū ʿAwn al-Thaqafī – Abū Ṣāliḥ al-Ḥanafī – ʿAlī ibn abī Ṭālib: The Ukaydir of Dūma presented the Prophet (*abdā ilā al-nabī*) with a silk garment. He gave it to ʿAlī and said, “Tear it up to make head-coverings for the Fāṭima’s out of it”.⁵³

A long-sleeved brocaded fur coat offered by the Byzantine emperor was disapproved of. In this case, the Prophet found a sympathetic way of putting it to another use: he presented the Negus with it via Jaʿfar ibn abī Ṭālib.⁵⁴ Coptic textiles were also considered too beautiful:

Trad. 17: (Egyptian *isnād*, ending with Diḥya ibn Khalīfa al-Kalbī): Some Coptic gowns were brought to the Prophet. He gave me one of them and said, “Tear it in two; cut an undershirt out of one and give the other to your wife to make a head-covering from it”, and when he wanted to depart, [the Prophet] added, “and tell your wife to put something under it, so as not to reveal herself”.⁵⁵

The impression is that it was above all attire from Christian countries that was frowned upon. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī had no objection to gowns of Magian fabric.⁵⁶ The Prophet is said to have accepted a Yemenite garment worth thirty-three camels from Mālik ibn dhī Yazan.⁵⁷

There are two Traditions of the *abdā ilā al-nabī*-type in which the Negus is the donor:

Trad. 18: Ibn abī Shayba – ʿAbdallāh ibn Numayr (TT VI:109; Kufan) – Yaḥyā ibn ʿAbbād ibn ʿAbdallāh ibn al-Zubayr – his father ʿAbbād – ʿĀʿisha: The Negus presented the Prophet with a ring with a golden signet, with an Abyssinian stone in it (*siċ*). The Prophet removed the stone with a piece of wood, or: with one of his fingers. Then he sent for Umāma bint abī al-ʿĀṣ, the daughter of his daughter, and said to her, “Adorn yourself with this, my girl”.⁵⁸

Trad. 19a: Ibn abī Shayba – Wakīʿ (ibn al-Jarrāḥ; TT XI:211; Kufan) – Dalham ibn Ṣāliḥ al-Kindī (TT III:403; Kufan) – Ḥujayr ibn

⁵³ Mu. *Libās* 18; cf. I.H. 903.

⁵⁴ A.D. *Libās* 8.

⁵⁵ A.D. *Libās* 35.

⁵⁶ Bu, *Ṣalāt* 7.

⁵⁷ A.D. *Libās* 5.

⁵⁸ I.M. *Libās* 40.

‘Abdallāh al-Kindī (TT II:397) – ‘Abdallāh ibn Burayda (TT v:270; Kufan) – Burayda (ibn Ḥuṣayb; TT I:797): The Negus presented the Prophet with a pair of plain, black shoes (*kbuffayn aswadayn sādbijayn*). He put them on; then he performed the *wudū’* and wiped them.⁵⁹

Trad. 19b: I.M. – Ibn abī Shayba – Wakī’, etc., until the words “He put them on”.⁶⁰

Trad. 18 is a clear case of disapproval of a luxury article. The role of the Negus is mainly that of being a plausible source for it. Besides, the fact that he was a Christian stresses the un-Islamic character of the object in question.

In Trad. 19a, the point at issue is not the luxurious character of the shoes, since they are explicitly called “plain black shoes”.⁶¹ This text certainly originated in the discussions on the “wiping of the shoes” (*al-mash ‘alā al-kbuffayn*), which occupied the minds of Muslim scholars for a considerable time. The subject has been treated with incredible detail by Strothmann.⁶²

Shoes were not the only garment involved, but the *jawrab*, *na’l*, *khimār*, *‘imāma*, *qalansuwa*, *khamīša*, and *jubba* as well. Once Muslims had begun to have qualms about their careless ablutionary practices, it must have struck them that many of the clothes they had adopted in the conquered territories created practical difficulties in performing the ablution properly. One had to undo buttons or to undress partially, as is illustrated by these exemplary Traditions:

Trad. 20: ‘Abd al-Razzāq – Sufyān al-Thawrī – al-A‘mash – Sa‘īd ibn ‘Abdallāh ibn Dirār(?): I saw Anas ibn Mālik coming back from the latrine, wearing a white, buttoned bonnet (*qalansuwa*). He wiped the bonnet and the black woollen socks he wore; then he performed the *ṣalāt*. Al-Thawrī added. The bonnet takes the place of the turban.⁶³

Trad. 21: Mālik – Ibn Shihāb (al-Zuhrī) – ‘Abbād ibn Ziyād (TT v:155) – Ibn al-Mughīra – al-Mughīra ibn Shu‘ba (TT x:471): During the raid on Tabūk, the Prophet once retired to relieve himself. I went with him, carrying water. When the Prophet came

⁵⁹ Ibn abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf* I, 177; A.D. Ṭabāra 60; Tir. *Adab* 55; I.M. *Ṭabāra* 84; A.b.H. v, 352. All have Wakī’ and the lower part of the *ismād* in common.

⁶⁰ I.M. *Libās* 31.

⁶¹ Red shoes were, according to Lane, *Lexicon*, 770, “formerly distinctive of kings and men of high rank”.

⁶² R. Strothmann, *Der Kultus der Zaiditen* (Strassburg 1912), 21-46; cf. J. Schacht, *Origins*, 263f., and Ch. Pellat, *EP* s.v.

⁶³ ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf* I, 745.

back, I poured the water out for him, and he washed his face. Then he tried to get his arms out of the sleeves of his *jubba*, but he did not succeed, as the sleeves were too narrow. So he stuck them out from under his *jubba*, washed his forearms, wiped his head and his shoes ...⁶⁴

Bu. – Yahyā – Abū Mu'āwiya – al-A'mash (Kufan) – Muslim (ibn al-Muntashir; TT IX:764; Kufan) – Masrūq (TT X:205; Kufan) – Mughīra ibn Shu'ba: slightly different; states explicitly that it was a Syrian *jubba*.⁶⁵

Tir. – Wakīf – Yūnus ibn abī Ishāq – al-Sha'bī – 'Urwa ibn Mughīra – Mughīra: idem, ... a Byzantine *jubba*.⁶⁶

Trad. 21 shows how difficult it is to perform the ablution in a correct manner with a narrow-sleeved cloak on, although it can nevertheless be done. At a certain stage, the Kufans apparently threw the foreign origin of such garments into the discussion. They made the unpractical cloak explicitly Syrian or Byzantine, and the shoes Abyssinian or Byzantine. The discussions on some garments, like shirts and trousers, can by their nature have no connection with the *mash*. The very wearing of un-Islamic attire was controversial too.

Therefore, we may consider Trad. 19b as a late, not unintentionally abridged version of Trad. 19a.

Many other Traditions discuss shoes and other garments without the *mash*-context. One is very similar to 19b:

Trad. 22: Tir. – Qutayba (ibn Sa'īd; TT VIII:639; TB XII:6942) – (Yahyā ibn Zakariyā') ibn abī Zā'ida (TT XI:349; Kufan) – Ḥasan ibn 'Ayyāsh (TT II:543; Kufan) – Abū Ishāq al-Shaybānī (TT IV:334; Kufan) – al-Sha'bī (Kufan) – Mughīra ibn Shu'ba (TT X:471): Dihya al-Kalbī presented the Prophet with a pair of shoes. He put them on.⁶⁷

Dihya ibn Khalīfa al-Kalbī is said to have acted as a messenger of the Prophet to the Byzantine emperor and to have become a Muslim only during the caliphate of Abū Bakr,⁶⁸ so that, in common with the Negus, he was a non-Muslim and also a plausible supplier to the Prophet of goods considered un-Islamic.

⁶⁴ Mā. *Ṭahāra* 8.

⁶⁵ Bu. *Ṣalāt* 7.

⁶⁶ Tir. *Libās* 30.

⁶⁷ Ibid.; also a continuation of this Trad. with another emphasis.

⁶⁸ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba* I:463/2390.

Finally, there is the *'anaḡa*, the short spear which the Prophet allegedly once used as a *suṭra* during the *ṣalāt*, and whose use later was confined to the two festival days. This spear was considered Abyssinian; it is said to have been planted in the soil in front of the Prophet by Bilāl, the Abyssinian muezzin.⁶⁹ Later, this spear becomes a gift from the Negus to al-Zubayr ibn al-ʿAwwām, who brought it to the *muṣallā* in the year 2 A.H., where the *ṣalāt* was performed facing it. "It used to be borne before him (i.e. the Prophet) on the festival days. Today, so I gather, it is kept by the muezzins of Medina", says al-Ṭabarī.⁷⁰ Elsewhere, he reports that caliph al-Mutawakkil had this spear carried before him by his police commissioner.⁷¹ In the development of this motif, we see a chance Abyssinian spear turn into a gift from the Negus. All the stories with the gift-theme in them foster the same rôle for the Negus: that of a plausible and prestigious donor of a "foreign" object.

⁶⁹ Mu. *Ṣalāt* 250.

⁷⁰ Ṭab. I, 1281.

⁷¹ Ṭab. III, 1437.