

"*Qâla* al-Samaw'al ibn *ġ*Ādiyâ *al-yahûdiyy*
(The Jew, Al-Samaw'al Son-of-*ġ*Ādiyâ Said: ...)"
Conscientiousness and Fidelity as Heroic Qualities
in Arab Traditions (The Jewish Example)*¹

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Abstract:

Willingness to sacrifice one's own son for a sacred or noble cause is an established tradition in Semitic value systems. The most celebrated case within the sacred context is that of Patriarch Abraham and his son (Ismael/Isaac), while the example in the non-sacred context is that of the Arab chieftain al-Samaw'al "the Jew" and his son. In the latter case, the act of "sacrifice" is euphemistic. In both contexts, the consequences of actions by both patriarchs have constituted "shared" and far-reaching traditions among Jews, Christians, and Moslems.²

This study treats the information related to al-Samaw'al in Arab sources as cultural phenomena rather than verified historical facts. The "Discussant" assigned by the symposium commented on this paper with one sentence: it treats al-Samaw'al as "the other" (that is: he is not a member of the society as a whole). However, in this regard we should remember that in the tribal Arab society, any person who did not belong to one's own blood-group (i.e., tribe) was "the other". It is in this sense that Samaw'al was viewed--in the same manner as Antar, Imru' al-Qays, al-'Aġshâ, etc.--and esteemed as noble "Arab" in spite of being "the other". The crux of discussion in the present paper, and the reason for holding this symposium is to explore what each of the three religions shares with "*the other*". If the quality of the "*otherness*" is negated by exclusion, then the essence of the foundation of this symposium is negated as well.

Introduction

The recently adopted concept and field of scholarship labelled "national memory (*dhâkirat al-'ummah*)" may be viewed as an euphemism or a personification of what is remembered

*Note: the sign § indicates a motif or tale-type generated by Hasan El-Shamy.
[The character *ġ* is used to indicate the Arabic letter "*ġAyn*".]

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² For other examples of shared traditions associated with "human sacrifice," see the literature on the entity (belief-character) appearing under different names as Elijah in Jewish traditions, St. George in the Christian, and el-Khidr in the Islamic (El-Shamy, *Folktales of Egypt*, see notes to tale no. 23, pp. 271-72). Also see the argument concerning the identity of the Moslem El-Sayyid El-Badawî and the Christian St. Nicholas (Santa Clause), and the ancient Egyptian Bes in Hasan El-Shamy, "The Story of El-Sayyid Aġmad El-Badawî with Fatma Bint Berry," Part I, "An Introduction." In: *Folklore Forum*, vol. 10, No. 1 (1976), pp. 1-13.

of a social group's experiences concerning significant events that affect that group as a whole. The group may be the entire nation, or only a segment of it such as an ethnic, racial or religious category of the population as constituted by its individual members.³ The issue is also one of cognitive learning involving such factors as motivation, retention and recall. All of these factors are components of the shared cultural traditions and the "folkloric behavior" of a social group.⁴

The article is based on a personal experience (i.e., what is known in the study of folklore as a "memorate")⁵ that took place around the years 1949-1953. It is an account of a portion of the writer's early life, and describes an urban boy's typical experience vis-à-vis a historical-literary character labelled "Al-Samaw'al ibn ʿĀdiyā, *al-yahūdiyy* (i.e., Al-Samaw'al Son-of-ʿĀdiyā, the Jew)". During the latter part of the elementary or the early years of the secondary schools stages of education the government-provided textbook on Arabic literature (labelled *mutālaʿah/Reading*) that included a poem and a brief description of a highly valued deed by the poet presently under discussion (as quoted in the title of the essay). Inevitably, the values expressed in this school reading passage was interconnected with how a pupil/"reader" perceived certain individuals of the Jewish faith in his/her immediate community. It is in this respect, that the account is a case of what is currently labelled: "national memory," and a constituent of the "modal personality" of the middle "white collar" social class.⁶

The Personal Side of the "National Memory"

The present writer comes from an urban middle class family in Egypt. Born in Cairo but raised in Zaqaḏīq, a provincial town in the easternmost part of the Nile Delta and capital of Sharqiyyah Province (currently, "Governorate"), northeast of Cairo. He attended a governmental primary school (grades 1 through 4: age 6-10), and secondary school (grades

³ Compare the Jungian concept of "Archetype"; see H. El-Shamy, "Archetype," in: , *Folklore: An Encyclopedia of Forms, Methods, and History* (Thomas A. Green, Gen. ed., ABC-CLIO), pp. 36-39. Also see "Al-Lāshuʿūr al gamāʿī wa al-folklore (Collective Unconsciousness and Folklore) [2]." In: *Al-Majallah*, Cairo, No. 126, June 1967, pp. 21-29.

⁴ On memory, see Hasan El-Shamy, *Folkloric Behavior: : A Theory for the Study of the Dynamics of Traditional Culture*. (<https://scholarworks.iu.edu/dspace/handle/2022/8959>).

One of the early designations of the concept of "national memory" is given in the distinguished historian Ahmad Amin's *Qāmūs* under the label: "*ḥādithatān* (Two Events)" that became part of the Egyptian national memory. The first involved *kafāʿah* in marriage between a *sharīfah* woman and a non-*sharīf* man; the second was "Dinshiwāy" and the world-wide reaction to the tyranny of the colonial British rule and its brutality in dealing with villagers accused of attacking british soldiers hunting pigeons in the village's fields. (pp. 150-152).

⁵ A term introduced by the Swedish folklorist C.W. Von Sydow. The concept requires inclusion of a traditional component such as a folk belief for the personal narrative to qualify as folkloric. On the "Memorate," see Hasan El-Shamy, "*Folkloric Behavior*," p. {169}, 2010, p. 123. For examples from Arab traditional life, see by the same author: *Folktales of Egypt*, Chapter VI "Local Belief Legends and Personal Memorates," pp. 173-84.

⁶ Mot.: P751.3.0.1§, IEffendis class ('employees', '*muwazzafīn*'): westernized.

Describing his experiences with Arabic poetry at school, the Saudi educator-novelist Ḥamzah Boqari writes:

I did not learn of poetry except what we learned in the "*mahfūzāt*" ("[Poetry] Readings") class, and the importance of the Samaw'al-ode, which we [pupils] called "The ode of "We Have a Mountain," because he states in it: "We have a mountain where those we protect come to dwell." (Boqari, *Saqīfat al-Safā*, p. 98).

1 through 5: age 11-16/17) in that town. Boys schools and girls schools were separate after the kindergarten (*roadah*).

The composition of the pupil population of these schools reflected Egypt's demographic composition to a great extent: the majority of pupils were of the Moslem faith, but there were always several Christian (Copt) students. Except for personal names (such as Mikhâ'il, Lûqâ, "Henary", "Wilyam", etc.) and minor visually-based traits (such as a tattoo of a cross on the wrist, or females wearing a cross-shaped piece of jewelry as necklace or bracelet), there were virtually no major differentiating qualities between Moslems and Copts. However, the curriculum required one class session labelled *dîn* ("Religion") to be taught once a week. During that period (usually under one hour), Copts left their usual classrooms and gathered separately in another room for instructions by a Copt teacher about Christianity. Meanwhile, Moslems and Copts lived side by side in residential districts determined largely by such factors as income, profession and level of education rather than religious affiliation or race.

The prevailing popular culture presented the Egyptian society at that time period as composed of individuals and groups belonging to the three "celestial [Semitic] religions (*diyânât samâwiyyah*): Islam, Christianity, and Judaism".⁷ Movies depicting normal social relations among the three religions were on display all over Egypt with titles such as "Ḥasan, Morqus, and Kohain/Cohain," and "Fâtimah, Marîkâ, and Rashail": titles that had names with high degree of social name visibility (i.e., stereotypical) representing Moslem, Coptic, and Jewish affiliations consecutively.

A "Jew" in the Social Urban Life

My personal knowledge of a "Jew" happened to be outside of the contexts of school and residential quarter. It was due to a technological factor having to do with an old radio set we owned. The set needed repairs often. It was my responsibility to carry it to the shop of *khawâgah* (Mister) E.K. He was the only person of the Jewish faith that I personally knew in the town of Zagazig. Along with his ability to repair that radio set, he was punctual: the dates he set for picking up the set were always kept and the fees he charged seemed reasonable. My father commented more than once on how honest and reliable Mr. E.K. was; he also explained his efficiency in terms of having a 'blessed' hand.⁸

⁷ Often referred to by the literati as *Muḥammadiyyûn*, *Masḥiyyûn* and *Mûsawiyyûn*. On the use of the word "Yahûdî", Sir Richard Burton explains that

"Yahûdî" which is less polite than "Banû Isrâîl" = Children of Israel. So in Christendom "Israelite" when in favour and "Jew" (with an adjective or a participle) when nothing is wanted of him. (Burton, *The Arabian Nights*. vol. 1, p. 210 n. 3.)

Clearly, the use of the word "*yahûdî/yahûdiyy*" as an adjective in the Arabic work under discussion here is highly complimentary.

⁸ *barakâh* is defined as "... a sacred entity, constituted of both efficiency and God's help, that is diffusible from its owner to other persons, objects, and acts." See El-Shamy, *Religion Among the Folk in Egypt*, pp. 185-86. Mot.: D1705§, "*barakah* (blessedness): supernatural positive power residing in object, act, or person"; and D1706§, "A person's *barakah* (*mabrûk*-person, blessed person)"; D1707.2§, "Blessed bodily organ (limb); D1707.2.1§, "Blessed hand (arm)".

It was under these social and cultural conditions that the title of the reading textbook of the 1940s/1950s: "*Qāla* al-Samaw'al ibn ʿĀdiyā *al-yahūdiyy* (The Jew, Al-Samaw'al Son-of-ʿĀdiyā Said)" became relevant and meaningful to me and to thousands of other pupils in Egypt and wherever else in the Arab World that the Egyptian school curriculum and its textbooks were adopted.

Introducing al-Samaw'al to pupils as "Jew" constituted a departure from the typical 'heroic' characters associated with Islamic (or biblical) dogma such as Moses, Solomon, Job, etc. Such identification was also at sharp variance with other pre-Islamic poets included in textbooks, such as 'Imru' al-Qays "of Kindah", ʿĀntar ibn Shaddād "of Banū ʿAbs", or al-Nābighah "of Banū Dhubyān," among others. These poets were identified by tribal (blood) affiliation. Typically, their poems were assigned as examples of *fakhr* (boasting), *madh* (praising), *rithā'* (eulogy), *hijā'* (lampooning/satire), *wasf* (description), *karam* (hospitality/generosity), *nasīb* (love), etc.

In the absence of the textbook mentioned, the exact contents of the passage concerned cannot be ascertained. However, what is certain is the fact that the passage was titled (or subtitled) "*Qāla* al-Samaw'al ibn ʿĀdiyā *al-yahūdiyy* (The Jew, Al-Samaw'al Son-of-ʿĀdiyā Said: ...)". It is also certain that some sort of a report on why Al-Samaw'al composed that poem, titled ("*inna al-kirāma qalīlu*/The Noble are Few"), was provided. The dominant theme for the *qaṣīdah* (ode) was *al-wafā'* (fidelity/constancy),⁹ while the most memorable *bayt* (verse) was its lead line:

'idhā al-mar'u lam yadnas mina al-lu'mi ʿirduhu ∴ fa kullu ridā'in yartadihi jamīlu.

(If a man's honor is not defiled by wickedness ∴ then, any garment he may wear is beautiful)¹⁰

The Poet and his Fortress

Al-Samaw'al ibn-ʿĀdiyā (d. ca. 560), is typically identified as a pre-Islamic poet of the sixth century A.D. His name is associated with a fortress (or a citadel) known as *al-Ablaq* (the Piebald), situated about 200 miles north of al-Madinah in Arabia. The site where that fortress stood must have been of considerable size for, as will be mentioned below, it was spacious enough to provide private quarters to accommodate guests who required seclusion on an open space (camp), as well as a public *sūq* (market) where neighboring tribes (or traveling caravans) could acquire goods they needed. Geographer Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1179-1220) described al-Ablaq as

... the fortress of the Jew al-Samaw'al ibn ʿĀdiyā, which is also known as 'al-

⁹ Mot.: W29§, Constancy (*wafā'*).

¹⁰ Translated by El-Shamy. The English text here is slightly at variance with the one A. Arberry gives (see Appendix no. 1A, below).

This verse is a recurrent cliché of the *'inshā'* literary style. See Intro. to Hasan El-Shamy's *Tales Arab Women Tell...*, p. 10. (Cf. Mot.: Z1.0.1§, "*'inshā'*-style literary composition: constituted mainly from copied (memorized) famous quotations."

'*ablaq al-fard* (the piebald [and] the unique)'. It dominates [the region of] Taymâ' between Hejâz and el-Shâm [(the Levant Coast)]. It is situated on a dusty mound that contains relics of adobe buildings that do not betray what has been told about its [past] glory and invincibility.¹¹

Similarly, Zakaryyâ ibn Muḥammad al-Qazwîni, geographer and historian (1203-1283) was of the opinion that it was called *al-'ablaq* (the piebald) "due to its white and reddish color."¹² Maymûn ibn Qays al-'Aḡshâ of Bahilah Tribe, the pre-Islamic poet (whose name signifies "night-blind"; c. 570-629) adopted in a verse a legendary claim that the building of the fortress harkens back to Sulaymân ibn Dâwûd (Solomon son of David).¹³ It is also reported that Arabs used to stop by Samaw'al's domain as guests, and because a market was held there where they acquired rations in that commercial facility.¹⁴

Arabic literary records characteristically identified al-Samaw'al as "*yahûdiyy* (a Jew)". Some added "al-Qurazîyy" (of tribe of Banî Qurayzah).¹⁵ However, some modern studies cast uncertainty on his Jewishness. Stephen and Nandy Ronart, for example, present al-Samaw'al as "*supposedly* of Jewish descent."¹⁶ The distinguished orientalist David Samuel Margoliouth reveals that "The père Cheikho is of course delighted with the chance of proving that Samau'al, like the rest of the pre-Islamic poets, was a Christian."¹⁷ Other scholars question the existence of the person altogether and suggest that al-Samaw'al is a mythological entity (character). Margoliouth considers the issues of al-Samaw'al and his religion (faith) within a broader context that includes "Jewish Oral Traditions neglecting the supposed Judaism of Arabia." Thus, he writes

"The archaeologists profess to know of a Jewish king of Taima who ruled shortly before the rise of Islam. He has the Hebrew name Samuel, pronounced Samau'al, and that of his father or grandfather is given as 'Adiyah, evidently identical with the 'Adâyâh repeatedly found in the Old Testament."¹⁸

Margoliouth conducted careful inquiry examining the validity of the events constituting the Samaw'al account, and the concordance between certain aspects of the poem's contents and external events with documented validity. He concluded that "it is not quite certain that this

¹¹ *Muḡjam al-bildân*, vol. 1, p. 75. After Sâbâ: Introduction to *Dîwânâ ḡUrwah ibn al-Ward wa al-Samaw'al* (*The Two Dîwâns of...*) Dâr Şâdir: Beirut, 1964, p. 68. Translated by El-Shamy.

¹² After Sâbâ, p. 73.

¹³ *Āthâr al-bilâd*, p. 73. After Sâbâ, p. 68.

¹⁴ After Sâbâ, p. 68.

¹⁵ Sâbâ (p. 100) points out that Anastas the Carmalite differentiates between two Samaw'als: one Quradhiyy, and the other a Ghassanide. However, Sâbâ declares that "we do not know on what basis he [(Anastas)] relied in differentiating between two Samaw'als."

¹⁶ *Concise Encyclopedia of Arabic Civilization* I. *The Arab East*; II. *The Arab West*. Djambatan: Amsterdam, 1966). vol. 1, p. 462 (*italics* added).

¹⁷ David Samuel Margoliouth, *The Relations between Arabs and Israelites prior to the Rise of Islam*, (Oxford, 1924), p. 78.

¹⁸ Margoliouth, p. 71.

Samau'al is a historical personage." He then takes the matter to a higher level of uncertainty and reports further that "H. Winckler resolves him into a sun-myth, as he does so many other personages.[...].¹⁹ However, Margoliouth mocked Winckler's solar mythological interpretation and dismissed his view as misguided to the extent that "the process of his reasoning is not worth reproducing." Yet, Margoliouth argues further, that the "*proverb* [associated with Samaw'al] might quite well have reference to the Samuel of the books which bear his name, since he (1 Sam. xii. 3) made loud attestation of his honesty."²⁰ Here, it may be pointed out that Winckler was evidently a follower of the tenets of the solar mythological arguments in the tradition of Max Müller's School.²¹ However, the absence of the basic theme of sacrificing one's own son in non-sacred oral traditions of the region tends to reinforce Margoliouth's conclusion dismissing the mythological hypotheses. (See data pertaining to Tale-type AT 516C, below).

The Refuge and the Siege

If poems presumed to have been composed by al-Samaw'al were not readily available to early collectors of the pre-Islamic poetic legacy, records show that two proverbial utterances have had continuous presence in both oral as well as literary/written Arabic traditions. These sayings are: "'*awfā min al-Samaw'al* (More fidel than ...)", and "*fi wafā' al-Samaw'al* or *ka wafā'* ... (With fidelity as, or like, that of ...)", which stand as examples for this much praised Arabian virtue. (See also al-'Aḷshā's poem and consequent proverb below).²²

According to reports, historical circumstances brought together two Arab chieftains, each of whom was recognized as a tribal notable and an eminent poet, for an event that proved to be tragic for both: al-Samaw'al of northern Arabia and Imru' al-Qays ibn Ḥujr al-Kindī (i.e., "The Kindite", c. 501-544) of the south. Imru' al-Qays was a king's son and a womanizer, with drinking and daring sexual exploits which he publicized in his poems. His father ruled over the tribe of Banī 'Usd. During one of his drinking trysts he was informed that his father was overthrown and murdered by his own people. He declared: "Liquor (fun/frolic) today, action (resolve) tomorrow!" and continued on drinking. He tried to restore his kingdom but found no support among Banī 'Usd. He traveled with some companions northward to seek the aid of "*Qayṣar*/Caesar", the Byzantine ("*rūm*") king, in Asia Minor. On their way, one of the companions of Imru' al-Qays' introduced him to al-Samaw'al who granted him refuge in his fortress (al-Ablaq). Before continuing his trip north, Imru' al-Qays entrusted five precious cuirasses/shields, weapons, money, and his daughter--named Hind²³--

¹⁹ Margoliouth cites the reference as : "Winckler, in: n.#1 MVAG. vi. 262. p. 72 = [= *Mitteilungen der vorder asiatischen Gesellschaft*].

²⁰ Margoliouth, p. 72. *Italics* added. For the "proverb", see n. 23, below.

²¹ For description and critique of the Solar Mythological School, see R.M. Dorson, "The Eclipse of Solar Mythology," in: *Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 68, No. 270, Myth a Symposium, Ed., T. Sebeok. (Oct.-Dec. 1955), pp. 393-416.

²² Salient motifs are: Z62, "Proverbial simile"; Z62.9.1§, "Proverbial comparisons ('bigger than', 'smaller than', 'bolder than', 'softer than', etc.)"; W29§, "Constancy [(*wafā'*)]"; W29.5§, "Man chooses to let his son (brother, father, etc.) be killed by captor rather than to break his promise (betray trust). (Al-Samaw'al)".

Compare Tale-type 516C, below.

²³ Sábā, p. 72.

-to Samaw'al's protection. He requested that Samaw'al write to al-Ḥarth ibn Shamr al-Ghassânî (a protégé of the Roman Caesar) to assist him reach Caesar and seek his military aid. Al-Samaw'al granted him that wish as well.

After Imru' al-Qays departed, his enemy, the king of al-Hîrah (al-Mundhir ibn Mâ' al-Samâ') learned of the presence of Imru' al-Qays's belongings at al-Samaw'al. He asked al-Samaw'al to deliver to him Imru' al-Qays's possessions. But al-Samaw'al refused. Consequently, al-Mundhir sent an army constituted of men from various tribes ('Iyâd, Tanûkh, among others) and laid siege to the fortress but could not overcome its fortifications.²⁴ Tragically, Samaw'al's young adolescent son, who was outside the fortress hunting, chanced to return during the siege and was captured. Ibn Zâlim held the lad and called al-Samaw'al:

Ibn Zâlim asked: "Do you recognize this [boy]?"

Al-Samaw'al answered: "Yes. He is my son."

Ibn Zâlim threatened: "Will you deliver to me Imru' al-Qays's belongings, or shall I kill the boy?"

Al-Samaw'al replied: "Do whatever you wish with him. I would not betray my *dhimmah* (sense of honor),²⁵ nor surrender (betray) my protégé (a person whom I granted protection).

Thus, the father chose to see his son die rather than to break his promise and fail his protégé (guest). Ibn Zâlim struck the lad's waist thus cutting him in twain and departed.²⁶ It is in this regard that al-Samaw'al composed his poem that starts with the words "ġĀdiyâ built for me a grand fortress," in which he declares:

wafaytu bi 'adruġi al-kindiyi 'innî ∴ 'idhâ-mâ khâna 'aqwâmun wafaytu
 (I dealt faithfully with the Kindite's cuirasses, for, indeed, ∴
 when other folks betray, I remain faithful)

Hence the traditional Arab proverbial sayings "More loyal than al-Samaw'al)", and "Loyalty like that of al-Samaw'al)," (cited above).

This very account of the event triggered the emergence of another proverbial utterance in sympathy with, and for glorification of, al-Samaw'al, along with the moral of the need to

²⁴ Al-Ḥarth ibn Zâlim (or--according to another report Al-Ḥarth ibn Shamr al-Ghassânî) as its commander; see: Sâbâ, pp. 72-73. Margiliouth (p. 72) reports the commander of the army as "Persian."

²⁵ Mot.: W37.8§, "*dhimmah*: economic, political, governmental, conscientiousness and honesty".

²⁶ The key motif in this account is: W29.5§, "Man chooses to let his son (brother, father, etc.) be killed by captor rather than to break his promise (betray trust). (Al-Samaw'al)". It also incorporates the following Motifs: R51.4.1§, "Hostage (captive) killed"; S265.1, "Hostages sacrificed".

follow his example. It is reported that upon hearing of this cruel incident forcing Samaw'al to choose between two painful outcomes, al-'Aḷshā was inspired to improvise a poem:

konn k-al-samaw'ali 'idh ṭāfa al-Humāmu bihi .: fi jahfalin ka-sawādi al-layli jarrāri
(Be like al-Samaw'al when al-Humām besieged him .:
with an immense army that resembled the [endless] blackness of the night)

khayyarahu khutātay khasfin fa qāl lahu .: 'aḷriḏhumā hākadhā asmaḷuhumā ḥāri
(He gave him a choice between two unjust plans. .:
He [Samaw'al] replied describe them, so that I may hear them in anguish)

fa qāla "thuklun wa ghadrun 'anta baynahumā .: fa 'ikhtar wamā fihā ḥazzun li mukhtāri"

(He explained: "[Misery of] loss to death, or of betrayal! .:
Now choose: there is no fortuitous outcome for the chooser!")

fa shakka ḡayra ṭawīlin thumma qāla lahu .: "'iqtul 'asīraka 'innī māniḷun jāri."

(He [Samaw'al] thought briefly and replied, .:
"Kill your captive for I will protect my neighbor!")

Consequently, the utterance, "*'ikhtar, wa mā fihā ḥzzun li-mukhtāri* (Choose: there is no fortuitous outcome for the chooser)!" was coined as a proverb.²⁷

Imru' al-Qays's mission to Caesar failed and he died on his way back to his homeland. According to some reports, he had an illicit sexual liaison with a princess in Caesar's court. This affair--it is argued--provoked Caesar into plotting his death by ruse: he bestowed upon him as a present a cuirass that was laced with poison. Upon wearing it, Imru' al-Qays's skin corroded into "soars" and fell off--a condition that is believed to have caused his death, and the nick name: "*dhu al-qurūḥ* (the One-with-Skin-sores)."²⁸ Upon learning of his protégé's death, al-Samaw'al delivered the belongings Imru' al-Qays's left in his trust to his heirs.

Samaw'al's *Dīwān* (Collected Works) as Commemoration

Whether actual or imagined, veridical/historical or fictitious (i.e., *muntaḡal*),²⁹ the relevance of "al-Samaw'al ibn ʿĀdiyā" as reported here to the quest for "Shared Heroes in Judaism,

²⁷ See: Ibn ʿĀṣim, Abu-Ṭālib al-Mufḏdal, *al-Fākhir*, No. 482, p. 302-3 (Cairo, 1960); and, C.A. Storey, ed. Pg. 245 (2nd ed. al-Fergāni, Cairo: 1982). Translation by El-Shamy.

Mot.: J210, "Choice between evils"; J229.17§, "Choice between sins (religious)"; J229.17.1§, "Choice: breaking one's own oath (pledge) or breaking a friend's". The latter motif occurs in the story of "Bulūqiya," *Alf laylah*, vol. 3, p. 76.

²⁸ Motifs: S111.6.1§, "Murder with poisoned shield (cuirass). Flesh (skin) of wearer falls off." It is a variation on Thompson's Mot. S111.6, "Murder with poisoned robe," which occurs in Tale Types: 314, *The Youth Transformed to a Horse*. (Goldner). [Hero in menial disguise wins battle]; 410, *Sleeping Beauty*. [Princess falls in magic sleep: disenchanting by prince]; and 709, *Snow-White*. [Mother jealous of her daughter's beauty]. All recurrent in the narrative traditions of the Arab World.

²⁹ See Margoliouth, esp. p. 74, n. 1, data owed to "Mr. F. Krenkow," a specialist in early Arabic poetry.

Christianity, and Islam" remains viable. The issue is the perception of heroism attributed to an Arab Jew, or a Jew who is a hero to an Arab populace or to a significant category thereof. It is also the perception of "Conscientiousness and Fidelity as Heroic Qualities in Arab Traditions" rather than militancy, conquest and revenge as the focus for opposite traits for heroism.

Since the six century A.D., when the incident of Samaw'al "sacrificing" his own son for a noble cause was reported (or imagined--if one wills), a steady chain of Arab--Moslem and Christian (and, more recently, Jewish)³⁰--scholars have expressed serious interest in al-Samaw'al and his "heroic" character. Speaking of Arab-Jews, Margoliouth notes that "Samau'al is the only one who has risen to a *diwân*, or 'collected works'." He also reports that "[t]his collection was put together by the [Moslem] grammarian Niftawaihi (A.D. 858-935)," and that "a copy of that manuscript was discovered in Damascus by the meritorious Carmelite, Anastase of Baghdad, and published by the no less meritorious Jesuit, Cheikho of Beyrut, in 1909."³¹ Prior to Niftawaihi, Abû Tammam (d. 845), one of the most prominent Arab poets included al-Samaw'al's main ode ("inna al-kirâma qalîlu/The Noble are Few") into the first section of his anthology titled *al-Ĥamâsah*, which constitutes the popular and most trusted collection of early Arabic verse.³² Similarly, in the thirteenth century, the celebrated Iraqi poet Şafiyy al-Dîn al-Ĥillî (1258- ca. 1350) composed a parody poem in the vernacular (folk) stanzaic format that reproduced in a creative manner al-Samaw'al's "The Noble are Few"-ode. (See App. # 1 and App. #3, below).

Modern students of literature, like their earlier predecessors, hold al-Samaw'al, his character and poetry in high esteem. The inclusion of al-Samaw'al's work in Arab elementary and high schools curricula (as mentioned above) reinforces this viewpoint. The editors of Samaw'al's *diwân* group it together with that of the pre-Islamic ʿUrwah ibn al-Ward (d. 616 A.D.): Ibn al-Ward being the foremost of the *ṣaʿîʿ*-poets admired for their egalitarian and "socialistic" life philosophy especially concerning individual freedom, economic justice and "sharing" their own possessions with the needy. Thus, in 1964 Sâbâ wrote writes:

"Whosoever would review al-Samaw'al's poetry will sense *sharaf* (honor), '*ibâ*' (lofty-mindedness/dignified pride), and absence of the [lowly] spirit of seeking rewards [monetary or otherwise] by resorting to the panegyric poetry [praising the rich and the mighty] Instead [of panegyric trend], he will find poetry motivated by a thrust towards *majd* (glory) and *fakhr* (outboasting) [by enumerating one's unique positive assets]."

Sâbâ concludes his description of al-Samaw'al "the Jew" by asserting that

³⁰ **Web Sources:** Al-Samaw'al ('Samuel') ibn 'Adia Modern Schools Secondary Schools Zion Conflict Israel Sectarian Conflict; and Moreh, Shmuel, "The Study of Arabic Literature in Israel".

³¹ Margoliouth, p. 76.

³² Margoliouth (p. 76) points out that several of the ode's lines are "spirited" and "have become proverbial". He notes that the poem is placed in "Courage" but actually should be seen as "Mufâkharah (outboasting)," pp. 76-77.

"[t]hese are the character traits of the [true] Arab in his desert that evoke the spirit of *izzah* (loftiness/dignity) and *tabāhī* (vaunting) of descent and social ties, strict observance of rules of honor, and generosity of giving."³³

A salient trait shared by the two characters is fidelity to keeping one's word: al-Samaw'al "sacrificed" his son to keep a word of honor he gave to a protégé, while ġUrwah surrendered ("sacrificed") his beloved wife (whom he had abducted) so as to keep a promise that was coaxed out of him while drunk.³⁴

Fidelity and Jewishness in Broader Context

It would be relevant to ask whether this exaltation for the Jewish poet and his faithfulness to his values is confined to this case of choosing to lose ("sacrifice") his son over losing his sense of honor, or are there others? Instances of remarkable faithfulness to a promise, marital fidelity, religiosity, and manifestation of sense of honor by an ordinary Jew (who is not venerated as a "Moslem" prophet such as Moses, Solomon, David, Job, etc.) are recurrent in Arab and Islamic folk literature. For example, *The Thousand Nights and a Night*³⁵ contains numerous instances illustrating the extent to which these values are appreciated and perceived to be part of being a Jew or Jewess (or an "Israelite").³⁶ Among these the following may be cited:

1. Island King/Pious Jewish Merchant:

In this story a son's fidelity to a promise (not to make an oath) given to his father--a pious Israelite--constitutes the moral core around which the tale coheres. Faithfulness causes the son to lose his wealth, flee his homeland, and suffer subsequent dispersment of his family. Through faithfulness to his principles, honesty and sound mercantile practices he becomes king of an island and the family is reunited.³⁷

³³ Sābā, p. 69.

³⁴ For the story, see Karam al-Bustānī, *Dīwānā ġUrwah ibn al-Ward wa al-Samaw'al (The Two Dīwāns of...)* pp. 30-31. See also Ronart and Ronart, p. 548.

The key motifs in this historical account are: W37.0.1, "Man never breaks his word"; and W14.8§, "Right to a woman (girl) surrendered or claimed as an act of gallantry". The plot is comparable to Tale-type 895B§, *Host Surrenders his Wife (Sister) to Guest*. Guest fell in love with her unaware of her identity.

Other salient motifs include: P477.1§, "The banished (*saġālik*) value individualism highly"; K332.3§, "Consent (promise) secured from person when he is drunk"; K1397.4§, "Man tricked into divorcing his wife"; T194§, "Marriage by abduction (or raid)"; P529.2.2.1§, "Wife (bond-woman) abandons husband in spite of his merits"; and T145.9.0.1.1§, "Lower status for concubine (slave-woman) among a man's wives".

³⁵ Anonymous, *'Afl laylah wa laylah*, 4 vols. (Cairo, Maktabat al-Jumhūriyyah al-Arabiyyah, n. d.).

In June 2006 a certain researcher e-mailed me asking for instances of "Anti-Semitism" in the *Arabian Nights* to be used in a project he was undertaking on that topic. I replied that I was not aware of any, and pointed the researcher to the texts cited below. To his credit, the researcher wrote back (7/10, 2006) expressing the view that these texts are indeed "respectful" of Judaism and the Jews. (S.B. 7/10, 2006).

³⁶ On the use of "Jew" and "Israelite", see Burton's remark in n. 7, above.

³⁷ *Alf* vol. 3, pp. 16-18; Burton vol. 5, pp. 290-94. Tale-type: 912§, "Do not Make an Oath." *Dying Father's Counsel*; and 938, *Placidus (Eustacius)*. [Loses all in mishaps, then regains all].

2. Virtuous Jewess and Wicked Elders:

Two elder men try to seduce a pious "Israelite" woman and resort to treacherous means. She remains faithful to her principles. When their plots fail, they accuse her of fornication. The wisdom of Daniel (when just a young lad) reveals the truth. Fire from heaven destroys the two men.³⁸

3. Jewish qâdî and His Devout Wife:

An "Israelite" qâdî goes on pilgrimage and leaves his beautiful wife in the care of his brother. The brother tries to seduce her but she remains faithful to her vows. The brother accuses her of adultery and she is sentenced to death by stoning. She survives the stoning ordeal and is rescued. Again, a robber tries to seduce her but she remains faithful. Miraculously, she receives powers of healing. Her brother-in-law, who became sick, seeks her aid. He along with other sinners confess their evil deeds and are healed. She reveals herself and all are forgiven.³⁹;

4. Jewish Tray-maker and Temptress:

An "Israelite" who makes his living as a door-to-door vendor is subjected to seduction by a wealthy woman. He is miraculously saved when he jumps off the top of the woman's house. He and his wife receive divine rewards.⁴⁰

5. Hunchback's Tale: Resuscitated:

Faithfulness to a sense of justice motivates a Jew, a Moslem and a Christian to confess to a murder each erroneously believes he committed, thus "sacrificing" oneself to "execution". Fortunately, the supposedly "murdered" person proves to be alive. All three men are proven innocent.⁴¹

6. Nûr al-Dîn ʿAlî and Son:

In this tale the hero is saved through the honesty and truthfulness of a Jewish merchant.⁴²

³⁸ *Alf*, vol. 2, pp. 286-87; Burton, vol. 5, pp. 97-98. Tale-type: 883§, *Innocent Slandered (Suspected) Female*. (General); 926C, *Cases Solved in a Manner Worthy of Solomon*.

Key Motif: J1153.1, "Susanna and the elders: separate examination of witnesses [discredits accusation]"; Q552.1, "Death by thunderbolt as punishment"; Q552.13, "Fire from heaven as punishment".

³⁹ *Alf*, vol. 3, pp. 10-11; Burton vol. 5, pp. 256-59. Mot.: V298§, "The pious (as quasi-sacred persons)".

Tale-type: 881, *Off-proved Fidelity*. [Woman successfully resists a series of cruel attempts to violate her]; and 712, *Crescentia [the Faith-healer]*. The slandered and banished wife is reinstated through her miraculous healing powers.

⁴⁰ *Alf*, vol. 3, pp. 13-14; Burton vol. 5, pp. 264-69.

Tale-type: 802C*, *The Rooms in Heaven*. [Palace in Paradise for the true believer]; and 620A§, -cf., *Benevolent (Hospitable) Lies and Malevolent (Miserly) Ones Become Truths*. Also Cf./theme of Tale-type, 227, *Geese Ask for Respite for Prayer*. [They fly away]. [Here it involves humans].

⁴¹ *Alf*, vol. 1, p. 87; Burton, vol. 1, p. 260.

Mot.: W37, "Conscientiousness"; and W37.5.1§, "At the execution (hanging, crucifixion), a Moslem, a Christian, and a Jew each declares that he is the culprit upon seeing the other about to be unjustly executed for it".

⁴² *Alf*, vol. 1, p. 69; Burton vol. 1, p. 211.

Mot.: P770.0.2§, "Bill of sale (contract)"; P715.1.1§, "Jew as merchant (businessman)".

Ritualistic Sacrifice

In the sacred Abrahamic account both the father and son were ready to enact God's will. However the actual human sacrifice act was suspended by Divine intervention and the providing of an animal as substitute. This account seems to be the only case of human sacrifice to a higher supernatural entity in Arab traditions. As mentioned above, the concept of a sacrifice in its ritualistic sense is not involved in the Samaw'al account under investigation here. Yet, there is one salient case in the folk traditions of the Arab-World that involves human sacrifice in ritualistic context. The case in question recurs as an ordinary folktale (a *Zaubermärchen*) classified as Tale-type AT/(ATU) 516C, "*St. James of Galicia*. Amicus and Amelius."⁴³ In this tale the hero dies, and the life (or the blood) of the son of the hero's friend is required for the hero's resuscitation. The friend willingly offers his son for sacrifice, but the son is usually restored back to life (via one of several means). Thus, the potential for the existence of an association between the Samaw'al account in any of its various versions on the one hand, and the only known true folktale involving the motif of "sacrifice of son," on the other, should be considered.

Characteristically, the Aarne-Thompson *Type Index* (1961/1964) is woefully inadequate in dealing with Arab narrative traditions. It cites only three occurrences of the tale-type from Europe. None is given from the Arab World. Yet, numerous occurrences of the tale-type were already available in languages accessible to the European indexers, such as French and German.⁴⁴

An examination of the nature of the theme of sacrificing one's own son for the benefit of a friend proves to bear no resemblance to the Samaw'al's "sacrificing" his son for the benefit of his protégé. Beside the main motif of "sacrificing" a son (W29.5§), the two accounts share no common episodes. Clearly, the folk narrative designated as Type 516C, and the Samaw'al account--be it an actual historical occurrence or a fictitious story--are not related. Consequently, the possibility of the Samaw'al account being unique and therefore is an actual occurrence as reported by those who retained it in their "memory" is lent some support. Meanwhile no support is detected for its being a "solar myth" dependent on recurrent mythical themes--as proposed by Winckler.

⁴³ See Aarne, Antti, and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*. Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 184 (Helsinki, 1964), p. 186.

⁴⁴ It was also included in Victor Chauvin's encyclopedic work: *Bibliographie des ouvrages arabes ou relatifs aux Arabes: publiés dans l'Europe chrétienne de 1810 à 1885*, 12 vols. (Liège, 1892-1922).

Subsequently, El-Shamy's *DOTTI* (2004) lists 21 occurrences of this tale-type in the Arab World. These include ten (10) texts in European languages none of which were included in the AT Type Index.

Additionally, a sub-Saharan African text from Guinea, with obvious connections to North African traditions was detected in Klipple: p. 416--under: "S268".

These findings are included in the updating of the Aarne-Thompson index by Hans-Jörg Uther, *The Types of International Folktales: A Classification and Bibliography*. Folklore Fellows Communications No. 284. (Helsinki, 2004).

The negative effects of the absence of Arab World narrative traditions from serious scholarship cannot be overestimated. See for examples Hasan El-Shamy, "Towards A demographically Oriented Type Index for Tales of the Arab World." In: *Cahiers de Littérature Oraie*, n°. 23: *La tradition au présent (Monde arabe)*, Praline Gay-Para, ed. (Paris, 1988), pp. 15-40, especially nn. 36-39.

Conclusion:

Fidelity and conscientiousness, as highly valued traits of character, have been maintained as part of the image of al-Samaw'al ibn ġÂdiyâ as a "Jew" for nearly fifteen centuries. Starting in pre-Islamic time, this association has continued throughout the various phases of Arab and Muslim history--high and low, proud and humble--until the present time. Perhaps the assumption of the existence of "Anti Semitism"--with Jewishness as the sole identifying trait--among the Semitic Arabs needs to be reconsidered under more scrutinizing criteria. In this regard, it may be worthwhile to observe how street performers in Egypt (such as jugglers and acrobats) address the issue of religious faith:

Before beginning a show, the performer addresses the spectators who form the circle around him (or her):

"Mohammed is Prophet, Jesus is Prophet, and Moses is Prophet. And every one of you who follows a prophet should bless him."

[("Mĥammad *nabî*, wi ġÎsâ *nabî*, wi Mûsâ *nabî*; wi koll 'illî loh *nabî fîkom yişallî ġalaih*".)]

Simple as it is, this practical suggestion takes into consideration the diversity of beliefs among the viewers and the importance of these beliefs. It calls for adhering to one's own faith and at the same time respecting the faiths of others.⁴⁵

⁴⁵ El-Shamy, "Foreword" to "Folktales Told throughout the Arab World"--the "Arabic section." In: *The Tradition of Moses and Mohammed: Jewish and Arab Folktales*, Blanche L. Serwer-Bernstein, ed., pp. 176-77. Arabic transliteration is added.

APPENDIX 1

Lâmiyyah: 'inna al-kirâma qalîl
(Selected Verses)

Arabic transliteration--a sample (by El-Shamy)

1. 'idhâ al-mar'u lam yadnas mina al-lu'mi ħirḍuhu .∴ fa kullu ridâ'in yartadîhi jamîlu
2. wa in huwa lam yaḥmil ħalâ al-nafsî ḍaymahâ .∴ fa laysa 'ilâ ḥusni al-thanâ'i sabîlu
3. tuḥayyirunâ 'annâ qalîlun ħadîdunâ, .∴ fa qultu lahâ: "'inna al-kirâmâ qalîlu"
4. wa mâ qalla man kânat baqâ'yâhu mithlanâ .∴ shabâbun tasâmâ li-l-ḥulâ wa kuhûlu
5. wa mâ ḍarrunâ 'annâ qalîlun wa jârunâ .∴ ħazîzun, wa jâru al-'aktharîna dhalîlu
6. lanâ jabalun yaḥtalluh man nujrûhu .∴ manîḥun yarrudu aṭ-ṭarfa wa huwa kalîl
7. rasâ 'aşluhu taḥta al-tharâ wa samâ bihi .∴ 'ilâ an-najmi farḥun lâ yunâlu ṭawîlu
- [7.1 huwa al-'ablaqu al-fardu alladhî shâḥa dhikrûhu .∴ yaḥizzu ħalâ man râmahu wa yaṭûlu]
8. wa 'innâ la-qâwmun lâ narâ al-qatala subbatan .∴ 'idhâ mâ ra'athu ħĀmirun wa Salûlu
9. yuḡarribu ḥubbu al-mawta 'âjâlunâ lanâ .∴ wa takrahuhu 'âjâlulum fa tatûlu
-
21. salî 'in jahilti an-nâsa ħannâ wa ħanhumu .∴ fa laysa sawâ'un ħâlimun wa jahûlu
22. fa 'inna banî al-Rayyâni quṭbun li qawmihim .∴ tadûru raḥahum ḥawlahum wa tajûlu.

APPENDIX 1-A

The Poem

[*'Inna al-kirâma qalîlu*]*⁴⁶

- 1 When a man's honour is not defiled by baseness, then every cloake cloaks himself in is comely;
- 2 And if he has never constrained himself to endure despite, then there is no way (for him) to (attain) goodly praise.
- 3 She (was) reproaching us, that we were few in numbers; so I said to her, "Indeed, noble men are few."^[1]
- 4 Not few are they whose remnants are like to us--youths who have climbed to the heights, and old men (too).
- 5 It harms us not that we are few, seeing that our kinsman is mighty, whereas the kinsman of the most part of men is abased.
- 6 We have a mountain where those we protect come to dwell, impregnable, turning back the eye and it a-weary;
- 7 Its trunk is anchored beneath the soil, and a branch (of it) soars with it to the stars, unattainable, tall.
- [7.1. It is the unique piebald whose fame spread far; it proves inviolable to whoever targets it, and grows lofty].
- 8 We indeed are a folk who deem not being killed a disgrace, though 'Âmir and Salûl may (so) consider it.
- 9 The love of death brings our term (of life) near to us, but their term hates death, and is therefore prolonged.

[Arberry's notes:]

1. Sources: Abû Tammâm, *al-Hamâsa* (ed. Freytag), 49-54. J. W. Hirschberg, *Der Dîvân des as-Samau'al ibn 'Adijâ'* (Cracow, 1931), 21-3. Metre: *tawîl*

For a full discussion and analysis of this celebrated poem see Hirschberg, *op. cit.*

2. The usual meaning of *daim* is "wrong, injustice"; here the intention is clearly "being unjust to oneself" in the sense of compelling oneself to endure intolerable hardships.

3. Presumably the taunt was shouted by a woman accompanying into battle the warriors of a rival tribe.

5. "Kinsman": or, "neighbour, protector". See Lane *s.v.* The line may also be construed (with *mâ* taken as interrogative) as a question.

6. The "mountain" is either to be taken metaphorically ("Our glory is so high that its summit cannot be scanned") or literally, as referring to the mountain-fortress of al-Ablaq (al-Fard), the famous redoubt of al-Samau'al.

8. 'Âmir and Salûl are the names of rival tribes; see *Encycl. of Isl.*² I, 441-2; *Encycl. of Isl.*¹, IV, 119.

9. Sc. our warriors die young, those of our rivals live on into old age.

⁴⁶ *From: Arthur Arberry, *Arabic Poetry. A Primer for Students*. (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1965) pp. 30-33. Data in brackets "[]" are added by El-Shamy.

- 10 Not one sayyid of ours ever died a natural death, nor was any slain of ours ever left where he lay unavenged.
- 11 Our souls flow out along the edge of the swordblades, and do not flow out along other than the swordblades.
- 12 We have remained pure and unsullied, and females and stallions who bore us in goodly fame kept intact our stock.
- 13 We climbed on to the best of backs, and a descending brought us down in due time to the best of bellies.
14. So we are as the water of the rain-shower--in our metal is no bluntness, neither is any miser numbered amongst us.
15. We disapprove if we will of what other men say, but they disavow never words spoken by us.
16. Whenever a sayyid of ours disappears, (another) sayyid arises, one eloquent to speak as noble men speak, and strong to act moreover.
17. No fire of ours was ever doused against a night-visitor, neither has any casual guest alighting found fault with us.
18. Our 'days' are famous amongst our foes; they have well-marked blazes and white pasterns;
19. And our swords--in all west and east they have been blunted from smiting against armoured warriors;
20. Their blades are accustomed not to be drawn and then sheathed until the blood of a host is spilled.
21. If you are ignorant, ask the people concerning us and them--and he who knows and he who is ignorant are (assuredly) not equal."
22. Surely the Banu 'l-Daiyân are (as a) pole for their people, their mills turn and rotate around them.

[Arberry's notes, continued:]

11. The commentator al-Tibrizî explains the second half of this verse as excluding death by the dishonourable instruments of sticks and staves and the like.
12. For this use of *sirr*, see Lane 1338, col. 2.
13. A reference to the loins and wombs of the ancestors of the tribe.
14. A rain-cloud is a common simile for generosity. "In our metal": lit. "in our stock, handle".
16. For the form *qa'ûlun* see Wright, I, 135^B.
17. The poet refers to the Bedouin practice of lighting a fire on the top of the nearest hill to guide night-travellers to the encampment and as a sign that hospitality was to be found there.
18. "Our 'days'": i.e. the famous battles in which the tribe has engaged. The white parts of the noble horse describe the "outstanding" achievements.
20. A *qabil* is a collection of men descended from various fathers; a *qabila is* descended all from one father.
22. This verse is assigned by al-Tibrizî not to al-Samaw'al, who was not of the Banu 'l-Daiyân, but to a certain 'Abd al-Malik b. 'Abd al-Rahîm al-Hârithî; see Hirschberg, *op. cit.* 23.

APPENDIX 3

A sample (by El-Shamy)

"Ḥillî's *takhmîs qaṣîdat 'inna al-kirâma qalîlu*"

(The Noble are Few)

It is said that "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery." In Arabic literary traditions this practice is labelled *nahj* (i.e., to follow the course/style of ..., [serious] parody).

The Iraqi poet Ṣafiyy al-Dîn al-Ḥillî (1258- ca 1350)--born in Hilla (Iraq), known for his panegyrics poems addressed at the rulers of his time. He also showed strong interest in forms of folk and popular poetry. An Instance of these forms is his creation--or perhaps more accurately: re-creation--of Al-Samaw'al's celebrated poem.⁴⁷

Samaw'al:

1 _____ uh ∴ _____ *jamîlu*Ḥillî: *khamsâwî*-stanzaic

1: _____ uh
 _____ uh
 _____ uh
 _____ *uh*
 _____ *jamîlu*

Samaw'al:

2 _____ ha ∴ _____ *sabîlu*Ḥillî: *khamsâwî*-stanzaic

2 _____ ha
 _____ lu
 _____ y
 _____ y
 _____ *sabîlu*

Samaw'al:

3 _____ nâ ∴ _____ *qalîlu*Ḥillî: *khamsâwî*-stanzaic

3 _____ nâ
 _____ nâ
 _____ nâ
 _____ nâ
 _____ *qalîlu*

etc.

⁴⁷ Ṣafiyy al-Dîn al-Ḥillî, *Dîwân*. After Sâbâ, pp. 93-99.

Arabic transliteration

"Hillī's *takhmīs qaṣīdat* 'inna al-kirāma qalīlu'"

Quotes from Smaw'al are italicized

1. Qabīhun bi-man dāqat ʿan al-rizqi 'arḍuhu
wa tūlu al-falâ rahbun 'alayhi wa ʿarḍuhu
wa lam yubli sirbâl ad-dujâ minhu rakḍuhu
*'idhâ al-mar'u lam yadnas mina al-lu'mi ʿirḍuhu
fa kullu ridâ'in yartadîhi jamîlu*

2. 'idhâ al-mar'u lam yahjib ʿan al-ʿayni nawmahâ
wa lam yughli min al-nafsi an-nafisati sawmaha
'uḍîʿa wa lam ta'man maʿâlîhi lawmahâ
*wa 'in huwa lam yahmil ʿalâ al-nafsî ḍaymahâ,
fa laysa 'ilâ ḥusni al-thanâ'i sabîlu*

3. wa ʿuṣbatu ghadrin arghamat-hâ judûdunâ
fa-batat wa minhâ ḍiddunâ wa ḥasûdunâ
'idhâ ʿajazat ʿan fiʿli kaydîn yakîdunâ
*tuʿayyirunâ 'annâ qalîlun ʿadîdunâ,
fa qultu lahâ: "inna al-kirâmâ qalîlu."*

Etc.

Translation by El-Shamy

1. It is a shame on him whose land proves too narrow to provide livelihood, while the length of the world is wide open to him, and its breadth as well; [and] without him wearing out the cloak of night with brisk search.
*"If a man's honor is not defiled by wickedness,
then, any garment he may wear is beautiful."*
2. If one does not veil his eye against sleep, and hold his precious self above bargaining (compromise), he will be wasted, and his high aspirations will not be secure from blame.
*"And if he has not constrained himself to endure spite, then
there is no way (for him) to (attain) goodly praise."*
3. A band of treachery that our forefathers beat into the dust, [it] recoiled, while including the adversary to us and the envier. When incapable of committing a wily act to spite us,
*"she [the band] would reproach us, that we were few in numbers.
So I [would] say to her, 'Indeed, the noble are few.'"*

etc.

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