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KUFA *VS* BASRA: THE LITERARY DEBATE

Geert Jan van Gelder, Groningen

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Ḥāǧǧī Ḫalīfa, *Kašf al-ẓunūn*, Istanbul, 1941-43, (ii) col. 1834.

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

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

same topic in a more literary fashion, in a *maqāma* entitled *Sāǧiᶜat al-ḥaram fī l-mufāḫara bayn al-Madīna wa-l-Ḥaram*.[5]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Geschichte des religiösen Denkens im frühen Islam, Berlin, 1992- , ii, 1-429; Fuat Sezgin, *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*, Leiden, 1967- , ii, 455-66, 502-26 (poets), viii, 50-114 (lexicographers), ix, 28-115 (grammarians).
On Kufa, see *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New Edition, s.v. (article by Hichem Djaït), Hichem Djaït, *Al-Kufa: Naissance de la ville islamique*, Paris, 1986, Josef van Ess, *op. cit.*, i, 151-456, Fuat Sezgin, *op. cit.*, viii, 115-58 (lexicographers), ix, 116-50 (grammarians).

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

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

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

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

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

11 Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, 104, Yāqūt, *Muᶜǧam al-udabā'*, xiv, 138.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

13 al-Sharīf al-Raḍī, *Nahğ al-balāġa*, with comm. by Muḥammad ᶜAbduh, 2 vols. Cairo, n.d., i, 44-45; partly, with variants, in Abū ᶜAlī Hārūn Ibn Zakariyyā al-Hağarī, *al-Taᶜlīqāt wa-l-nawādir*, ed. by Ḥammūd ᶜAbd al-Amīr al-Ḥammādī, 2 vols. Baghdad, 1980-1981, ii, 271; cf. also Ibn Qutayba, *ᶜUyūn al-aḫbār*, Cairo, 1925-1930, i, 217, Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbih, *al-ᶜIqd al-farīd*, Cairo, 1948-1953, iv, 81, al-Masᶜūdī, *Murūğ al-ḏahab*, ed. Ch. Pellat, Beirut, 1966-1979, iii, 113, al-Ābī, *Naṯr al-durr*, Cairo, n.d.-1991, i, 315, al-Zamaḫšarī, *Rabīᶜ al-abrār*, ed. Salīm al-Nuᶜaymī, Baghdad, 1976-82, i, 308-9, Yāqūt, *Muᶜğam al-buldān*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Leipzig, 1866-1870, i, 646-47.

qāq, wa-ᶜahdukum šiqāq, wa-dīnukum nifāq, wa-mā'ukum zuᶜāq).[14] Its forcefully exploits what we may call the hybrid nature of Basra: half sea, half land: not a place where decent people should live. Its mosque looks like a ship foundering in a tempest.

This very hybridity of Basra has more than once been seen as positive rather than negative, Basra being described as a wondrous place for this reason. ᶜUmar Ibn al-Ḫaṭṭāb is told that Basra is a place where (sea-)fish and lizard are stuck on one skewer: *Mā taqūlu fī l-ḍabbi wa-l-ḥūti yuǧmaᶜu fī saffūd?* He replies: "You describe a land terrestrial and marine (*arḍan barriyyatan baḥriyyatan*)" and is pleased with the place.[15] The poet Ibn Abū ᶜUyayna praises Basra as his beloved homeland where fishes marry lizards, where there are ships like ostriches and ostriches like ships: *Zuwwiǧa ḥītānuhā l-ḍibāba bihā ... Min sufunin ka-l-naᶜāmi muqbilatin / wa-min naᶜāmin ka-annahā sufunū*.[16] Basra combines complementary opposites: *ḥaḍar/badw*, sea/land, meat/fish, highland/lowland, in the words of Abū l-ᶜAynā': *lā yuᶜrafu baladun aqrabu barran min baḥrin wa-ḥaḍaran min badwin wa-qāniṣa waḥšin wa-ṣā'ida samakin wa-naǧdan min ġawrin min al-Baṣrah ....*[17] Al-Ḫalīl Ibn Aḥmad made a verse on a place near Basra: *... min manzilin ḥāḍirin in ši'ta aw bādī, / Turfā qarāqīruhā wa-l-ᶜīsu wāqifatun / wa-l-nūnu wa-l-ḍabbu wa-l-mallāḥu wa-l-ḥādī*.[18] Much

14 For many of the words of these few sentences the sources offer variants: *daᶜā* for *raġā*, *fa-ǧi'tum* or *fa-ttabaᶜtum* for *fa-aǧabtum*, *fa-nhazamtum* or *fa-tafarraqtum* for *fa-harabtum*, *aḫlāmukum* or *aᶜmālukum* for *aḫlāqukum*, *riqāq* for *diqāq*; to say nothing of omissions or additions of words and phrases. This small-scale example is representative of what happens also on a larger scale when ᶜAlī's speech as a whole is considered.

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

16 Yāqūt, *Muᶜǧam al-buldān*, i, 649.

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

18 al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 70; a variant (*turfā bihi l-sufnu wa-l-ẓilmānu ḥāḍiratun / wa-l-ḍabbu wa-l-nūnu wa-l-mallāḥhu wa-l-ḥādī*) in al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, iv, 138, id., *al-Ḥayawān*, vi, 98-9, al-Ṯaᶜālibī, *Ṯimār al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1985, 527-8, id., *Yatīmat al-dahr*, Cairo, 1947, i, 134, al-Zamaḫšarī, *Rabīᶜ al-abrār*, i, 317 and al-Qazwīnī, *Āṯār al-bilād*, Beirut, 1979, 310; cf. al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 71 (here attributed to either al-Ḫalīl or Abū ᶜUyayna; cf. above): *Ṣāhara ḥītānahā l-ḍibābu ... / Min sufunin ka-l-naᶜāmi muqbilatin / wa-min naᶜāmin ka-annahā*

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

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

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

> Al-Ḥaǧǧāǧ [the governor of Iraq], together with some prominent men from Iraq, was received by ᶜAbd al-Malik Ibn Marwān. After they had entered, the matter of Kufa and Basra was mentioned. Muḥammad Ibn ᶜUmayr al-ᶜUṭāridī said, "Kufa lies lower than Syria and its hills and its cold,[22] and higher than

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sufunū); and al-Zamaḫšarī, *Rabīᶜ al-abrār*, i, 318 (Ibn al-Muᶜaḏḏal, in *saǧᶜ*): *bayna sawāriya wa-riᶜā' / wa-ḥītānin wa-ẓibā'*.

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

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

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

22 Reading *rubāhā* with Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbihi, *ᶜIqd*, vi, 249, instead of *wabā'ihā*, and assuming with De Goeje that *ᶜamalihā* is a corruption for a word meaning "cold", suggested by the context and found in a similar statement attributed to Ibn al-Qirriyya, Ibn Ḫallikān, *Wafayāt*, Beirut, 1968-72, i, 253.

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

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

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

23 Read *ġamaq* "dampness, humidity" instead of *ᶜumq*?

24 The same Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 191 (where a variant reading *bi-sā'iq* is recorded) and al-Masᶜūdī, *Murūğ*, iii, 358 (said by Ḫālid Ibn Ṣafwān); cf. iv, 190: "I always come to Basra willingly, I always leave it unwillingly" (said by al-Aḥnaf Ibn Qays in a similar context).

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

ants of Iraq whose example is followed.[26] Our land is not as cold as Syria, nor as hot as the Hejaz. We are those who killed the people of the Camel [ᶜAlī's opponents], and the people of al-Nahrawān and Ḥarūrā [referring to ᶜAlī's Ḫāriğite opponents who were defeated in 658] and the people of Ṣiffīn [ᶜAlī's Umayyad opponents, in a battle in 657 ending in a stale-mate]. We were given before you, you were given after us [this is rather obscure]. There is someone among you who maintains that he may guide his own soul [himself] or lead it astray, if he wills. [This sounds as if it is directed against the Basran Muᶜtazilite anti-predestinarian theologians]. Al-Rayyān Ibn Hawḏa al-Ḥanafī, who killed Ḏū l-Ṯudayya, is from Kufa [Ḥurqūṣ Ibn Zuhayr, nicknamed Ḏū l-Ṯudayya, was a Ḫāriğite killed at the battle of al-Nahrawān], and also Ḥağğār Ibn Abhar, Qaᶜqāᶜ Ibn Šawr, ᶜUtayba Ibn al-Naḥḥās ... [some more names follow]. Among us are the leading tribes of the Arabs: the tribe of Tamīm, the people of Ḥāğib Ibn Zurāra, the tribe of Rabīᶜa, Qays Ibn Masᶜūd of the Two Grandfathers, the tribe of Qays ᶜAylān, the people of Badr Ibn Fazāra, the tribe of Dabba, the people of Dirār Ibn al-Munḏir Ibn Ḥassān, the tribe of Kinda and the people of al-Ašᶜaṯ Ibn Qays. [To us belong] people like ᶜAbbās Ibn Mirdās [This is odd, because this *muḫaḍram* poet settled near Basra],[27] Abū Miḫğan al-Ṯaqafī [another *muḫaḍram* poet, for whom I again cannot see any connection with Kufa], the people of Ḥanẓala Ibn Sayyār al-ᶜIğlī, the man of the battle of Ḏū Qār,[28] Amīr Ibn Aḥmar Ibn Misᶜar al-Yaškurī, the governor of Ḫurāsān ... [a number of names follow, ending with:] Have you then, people of Basra, someone like him who protected the Banū Hāšim, Hānī Ibn ᶜUrwa?"[29]

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

26 Uncertain; the edition has *yḥḏywn*; but **yuḥḏayūna* surely ought to be *yuḥḏawna*.

27 See *EI*[2] s.v. al-ᶜAbbās b. Mirdās.

28 See *EI*[2] s.v. "Ḏū Kār".

29 al-Hağarī, *al-Taᶜlīqāt wa-l-nawādir*, ii, 265-71.

30 See *EI*[2] s.v. "Hāni' b. ᶜUrwa al-Murādī".

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

> A number of ᶜAlīds and ᶜAbbasids, including Basrans and Kufans, came together in the presence of Abū l-ᶜAbbās al-Saffāḥ [the first ᶜAbbasid caliph, regn. 750-54]. Among them were Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī, a Basran, and Ibn ᶜAyyāš, from Kufa. Abū l-ᶜAbbās said, "Debate, so that we may know which of you is better." One of the ᶜAlīds said, "The people of Basra fought against ᶜAlī at the Battle of the Camel; they broke with the Muslim community."
>
> Abū l-ᶜAbbās said, "What do you say, Abū Bakr?" He said, "God forbid that the people of Basra should be so brutish! It was merely a little band that strayed from the true path, overcome as they were by Satan. In every people there are good ones and wicked ones. The Basrans are richer in goods and children, more obedient to the ruler, and more knowledgeable about the regulations of Islam."
>
> Ibn ᶜAyyāš answered, "We know more about conquests than you. We expelled Kisrā from the land and destroyed his armies. We took possession of his realm, we conquered the provinces. Basra is in Iraq what the bladder is in the body: the water reaches it after it has become altered and bad. Its back is pressed by the roughest and worst stones of the Hejaz; from above it is pressed by its stagnant river, even though they think its water sweet: but for that they could not live there; and from underneath it is pressed by the dark sea (...) Kufa's place is like that of the uvula and the tongue in the body; it lies at the forefront of countries. Water reaches it while still cool and sweet (...) Basra's place in Iraq is like the place of the bladder in the body."
>
> Abū Bakr answered, "In addition to what you have described, you are richer in prophets. We have but one prophet: Mohammed, God bless and preserve him! All your prophets are weavers".
>
> Then Abū l-ᶜAbbās (the Caliph) laughed so that he nearly fell off his throne. "By God, you are a one, Abū Bakr!", he exclaimed. "And", added Abū Bakr, "I have never seen prophets crucified except in Kufa". Ibn ᶜAyyāš replied, "You revile the Kufans on account of three madmen from the riffraff who pretended, in their madness, to be prophets, so God let them be crucified in Kufa. In Basra there are many who should be reviled who pretend to possess reason and nobility and knowledge of Ḥadīṯ, each of them claiming that by his own will he either follows the right path or strays from it. A mad would-be prophet

31 There exist several versions, the longest being preserved in the oldest source: Ibn al-Faqīh, *Buldān*, 167-73, followed here; see also al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 41-43, Abū l-Faraǧ Muᶜāfā Ibn Zakariyyā al-Ǧarīrī, *al-Ǧalīs al-ṣāliḥ al-kāfī*, ii (ed. Muḥammad Mursī al-Ḫawlī), Beirut, 1993, 443-46, al-Bayhaqī, al-*Maḥāsin wa-l-masāwī*, Beirut, 1970, 96-98.

> is less dangerous than a sound person claiming that he is righteous or straying by his own choice! They have claimed God-like powers by saying such things."
>
> Abū l-ᶜAbbās said, "That answers your words, Abū Bakr, with like words, or worse even!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

32 al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, 43, al-Bayhaqī, al-*Maḥāsin*, 98, al-Ǧarīrī, *Ǧalīs*, ii, 446.

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

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

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

33 Ibn Qutayba, *ᶜUyūn al-aḫbār*, i, 220-21; cf. Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, "Khālid ibn Ṣafwān — The Man and the Legend", *Studia Orientalia* (Helsinki), 73 (1994) 69-166, see 113.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

40 *Rasā'il*, iv, 142.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the performance of an improvizing poet in the market-place, is contrasted with the dullness of the latter, where the silence of the cemetery is less oppressive than the boredom and dreariness of the town itself.[45]

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

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

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

Sources:

ĀbīND: al-Ābī, *Naṯr al-durr*, Cairo, 1980-1990.

Aġ: Abū l-Faraǧ al-Iṣfahānī, *al-Aġānī*, Cairo, 1927-1974.

ᶜAlawīFaḍl: Muḥ. b. ᶜAlī b. al-Ḥasan al-ᶜAlawī, *Faḍl al-Kūfa wa-faḍl ahlihā*, Beirut, 1981.

BalāḏFut: al-Balāḏurī, *al-Buldān wa-futūḥuhā wa-aḥkāmuhā*, Beirut, 1992.

BayMaḥ: al-Bayhaqī, *al-Maḥāsin wa-l-masāwī*, Beirut, 1970.

ǦāḥBT: al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn*, Cairo, 1968.

ǦāḥḤay: al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *al-Ḥayawān*, Cairo, 1965-1969.

ǦāḥRas: al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *Rasā'il*, Cairo, 1964, 1979.

ǦarǦalīs: al-Ǧarīrī, *al-Ǧalīs al-ṣāliḥ al-kāfī*, Beirut, 1993.

HaǧTaᶜl: al-Haǧarī, *al-Taᶜlīqāt wa-l-nawādir*, Baghdad, 1980-1981.

ḤarMaq: al-Ḥarīrī, *al-Maqāmāt*, ed. Paris, 1847-53.

IFaqBuld: Ibn al-Faqīh, *al-Buldān*, Leiden, 1885.

ᶜIqd: Ibn ᶜAbd Rabbih, *al-ᶜIqd al-farīd*, Cairo, 1948-1953.

IQutᶜU: Ibn Qutayba, *ᶜUyūn al-aḫbār*, Cairo, 1925-1930.

MarzNQ: al-Marzubānī, *Nūr al-qabas*, Wiesbaden, 1964.

MasMur: al-Masᶜūdī, *Murūǧ al-ḏahab*, Beirut, 1966-1979.

MuqAḥsTaq: al-Muqaddasī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm*, Leiden, 1906, transl. B.A. Collins, *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions*, Reading, 1994.

NahǧBal: *Nahǧ al-balāġa*, with comm. by Muḥammad ᶜAbduh, Cairo, n.d.

QazwAB: al-Qazwīnī, *Āṯār al-bilād*, Beirut, 1979.

RāġMuḥ: al-Rāġib al-Iṣfahānī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-udabā'*, Būlāq, 1287.

ŠarŠMaq: al-Šarīšī, *Šarḥ Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrī*, Cairo, 1952.

ṬabTār: al-Ṭabarī, *Tārīḫ*, Cairo, n.d.-1969

ṮaᶜLaṭ: al-Ṯaᶜālibī, *Laṭā'if al-maᶜārif*, Leiden, 1867, tr. C.E. Bosworth, *The Book of Curious and Entertaining Information*, Edinburgh, 1968.

ṮaᶜṮim: al-Ṯaᶜālibī, *Ṯimār al-qulūb*, Cairo, 1985.

ṮaᶜYat: al-Ṯaᶜālibī, *Yatīmat al-dahr*, Cairo, 1947.

YāqMB: Yāqūt, *Muᶜǧam al-buldān*, Leipzig, 1866-1870.

ZamRab: al-Zamaḵšarī, *Rabīᶜ al-abrār*, Baghdad, 1966-1982.

Basra

B. is more spacious than K. and has more hinterland: IFaqBuld 164, YāqMB iv, 324 (ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Ahtam al-Saᶜdī); cf. ĞāḥBT ii, 93-94 and ĞāḥRas iv, 138 (both al-Aḥnaf), YāqMB i, 324 (ᶜAbd Allāh al-Saᶜdī), IQutᶜU i, 217, RāġMuḥ (both al-Aḥnaf), ĞāḥBT ii, 93-4, MasMur iii, 358 (Ḫālid b. Ṣafwān), ĞarĞalīs ii, 44 (Ḫ. b. Ṣ.)

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

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

B. stinks: YāqMB i, 648

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

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

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

B. combines complementary opposites: *ḥaḍar/badw*, sea/land, meat/fish, highland/lowland: MarzNQ 173 (Abū l-ᶜAynā'): *lā yuᶜrafu baladun aqrabu barran min baḥrin wa-ḥaḍaran min badwin wa-qāniṣa waḥšin wa-ṣā'ida samakin wa-naǧdan min ġawrin min al-B.* ...; in verse by al-Ḫalīl b. Aḥm. on a place near B.: MarzNQ 70 (... *min manzilin ḥāḍirin in ši'ta aw bādī, / Turfā qarāqīruhū wa-l-ᶜīsu wāqifatun / wa-l-nūnu wa-l-ḍabbu wa-l-mallāḥu wa-l-ḥādī*); NB var. in ĞāḥRas iv, 138, ĞāḥḤay vi, 98-9, Ṯaᶜṯim 527-8, Ṯaᶜyat i, 134, ZamRab i, 317 and QazwAB 310 (*turfā bihi l-sufnu wa-l-ẓilmānu ḥāḍiratun / wa-l-ḍabbu wa-l-nūnu wa-l-mallāḥu wa-l-ḥādī*); cf. MarzNQ 71 (either al-Ḫalīl or Abū ᶜUyayna:) *Ṣāhara ḥītānahā l-ḍibābu ... / Min sufunin ka-l-naᶜāmi muqbilatin / wa-min naᶜāmin ka-annahā sufunū*); and ZamRab i, 318, Ibn al-Muᶜaḏḏal (*saǧᶜ*): *bayna sawāriya wa-riᶜā' / wa-ḥītānin wa-ẓibā'*; cf. ḤarMaq 671 (*bihi taltaqī l-fulku wa-l-rikāb / wa-l-ḥītānu wa-l-ḍibāb / wa-l-ḥādī wa-l-mallāḥ / wa-l-qāniṣu wa-l-fallāḥ / wa-l-nāšibu wa-l-rāmiḥ / wa-l-sāriḥu wa-l-sābiḥ*).

B. is "oppressed" (*maḍġūṭa*) by its surroundings: IFaqBuld 168 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš)

B. is characterized by *ṭāᶜūn*: ᶜIqd vi, 249 (Ḥuḏayfa)

B.'s people open Error's door and do not open True Guidance's door: ᶜIqd vi, 249 (Ḥuḏayfa)

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

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

B. has good *azāḏ* dates: IFaqBuld 166, 175 (Ḫālid b. Ṣafwān), IQutᶜU i, 220-21 (Ḫālid b. Ṣ.); cf. MuqAḥsTaq tr. Collins 119: 49 varieties of dates at B. (as well as 24 kinds of fish)

B. has the best food: ĞāḥRas iv, 145

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

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

B. has more cash and candy (*qandan wa-naqdan*): IFaqBuld 164 (ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Ahtam al-Saᶜdī); cf. MasMur iii, 358 (*qandan wa-ᶜāǧan ...*) (Ḫālid b. Ṣafwān), Ğar-Ğalīs ii, 44 (*fayḍan wa-naqdan*) (Ḫ. b. S.)

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

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

B.: *manābitunā qaṣab wa-anhārunā ᶜaǧab wa-samā'unā ruṭab wa-arḍunā ḏahab*: ĞāḥBT ii, 93 (Ḫālid b. Ṣafwān); cf. IFaqBuld 192, IQutᶜU i, 217, ĞarĞalīs ii, 44 (Ḫ. b. Ṣ.), YāqMB i, 649-50

B. is *akṯaru sāǧan wa-ᶜāǧan wa-dībāǧan wa-nahran ᶜaǧǧāǧan wa-ḥarāǧan* than K.: IFaqBuld 190 (Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī); cf. ĞāḥBT i, 357, ii, 94, IQutᶜU i, 217 (all Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī), ĞāḥRas iv, 147; *akṯaru ᶜāǧan wa-sāǧan wa-ḥazzan wa-dībāǧan wa-birḏawnan himlāǧan wa-ḥarīdatan miġnāǧan*: IFaqBuld 192 (Ḫālid b. Ṣafwān), Ğar-Ğalīs ii, 44 (Ḫ. b. Ṣ.), YāqMB i, 649 (Ḫ. b. Ṣ.); *akṯaru qandan wa-ᶜāǧan wa-sāǧan*: MasMur iii, 358 (Ḫālid b. Ṣ.); *akṯaru sāǧan wa-ᶜāǧan wa-dībāǧan wa- ... akṯaru qandan wa-naqdan* MasMur iv, 190 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays), *akṯaru minkum ᶜāǧan wa-sāǧan wa-dībāǧan wa-ḥarāǧan*: ĞāḥḤay vii, 232 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays, or Ḫālid b. Ṣ., or Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī)

B. is *ḫayr bilād Allāh li-l-ǧā'iᶜ wa-l-ġarīb wa-l-muflis*: IFaqBuld 190, IQutᶜU i, 221, YāqMB i, 647

B. is eagerly sought, unwillingly left: IFaqBuld 164, 191 (both ᶜAbd Allāh b. al-Ahtam al-Saᶜdī), MasMur iii, 358 (Ḫālid b. Ṣafwān), MasMur iv, 190 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays)

B., if lost, should have K. for its ransom: IFaqBuld 190, IQutᶜU i, 216, ᶜIqd vi, 249, YāqMB i, 649 (all Ziyād); whoever brings me to B. may have K. as reward from me: ZamRab i, 308 (Abū ᶜUbayda)

B. is *ᶜayn al-ᶜIrāq* (which is *ᶜayn al-dunyā*): ĞāḥRas iv, 139 (Ğaᶜfar b. Sulaymān), ᶜIqd vi, 249 (Ğaᶜfar b. Sul.), IQutᶜU i, 222 (Ğ. b. S.), Ṯaᶜlaṯ 102/tr. Bosw. 123 (Ğ. b. S.)

B. is *ḫizānat al-ᶜarab wa-qubbat al-islām*: ZamRab i, 317.

B. is one of the two wings of the bird that is the world: IQutᶜU i, 216 (Abū Hurayra), MarzNQ 171 (Iyās b. Muᶜāwiya), ḤarMaq 670-71

B. as bladder in body: HağTaᶜl ii, 266, IFaqBuld 168 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš), IQutᶜU i, 220 (IᶜAyyāš), ᶜIqd vi, 249 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš), Ṯaᶜlaṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123 (Ziyād [b. Abīhi])

B. is *asraᶜ al-arḍ ḫarāban wa-aḫbaṯuhā turāban*, furthest from heaven, quickest to drown: ĞāḥRas iv, 139, HağTaᶜl ii, 271, MasMur iv, 191, YāqMB i, 647 (ᶜAlī)

B. is *ašadd al-arḍ ᶜaḏāban wa-šarruhā turāban wa-asraᶜuhā ḫarāban*: IQutᶜU i, 216 (Ḫālid b. Maymūn)

B. as ugly rich old woman: IFaqBuld 164 (al-Ḥağğāğ), ĞāḥRas iv, 136 (Ziyād), YāqMB iv, 325 (al-Ḥağğāğ), IQutᶜU i, 220 (al-Ḥağğāğ), MasMur iii, 358 (al-Ḥağğāğ), MasMur iv, 190 (anon.), ᶜIqd vi, 249, Ṯaᶜlaṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123, QazwAB 250 (all al-Ḥağğāğ)

B.'s people fought ᶜAlī at the Battle of the Camel and were defeated: IFaqBuld 166 (Aᶜšā Hamdān, poetry, also MarzNQ 245, Aġ vi, 55, ĞarĞalīs iv, 111), IFaqBuld 167, 168-69 (al-Ḥasan b. Zayd & Ibn ᶜAyyāš), HağTaᶜl ii, 266

B.'s people are *baqāyā Ṯamūd*: IQutᶜU i, 216, YāqMB i, 646-47, ŠarŠMaq iv, 255 (all ᶜAlī)

B.'s people are *ğund al-mar'a* [=ᶜĀ'iša], *atbāᶜ al-bahīma* [= ᶜĀ'iša's camel] etc.: IQutᶜU i, 216, 217, NahğBal i, 44, HağTaᶜl ii, 271, ᶜIqd iv, 81, MasMur iii, 113, ĀbīND i, 315, YāqMB i, 646-47, ŠarŠMaq iv, 255 (all ᶜAlī)

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

B.: to be deposed as its governor and then to be made K.'s governor (like al-Muġīra) is a great punishment: IQutᶜU i, 216-17, YāqMB i, 649 (both Ibn Sīrīn)

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

B. may boast of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, Ṭalḥa b. ᶜAbd Allāh, Ibn Sīrīn, Mālik b. Dīnār, al-Ḫalīl b. Aḥmad: IFaqBuld 190, cf. ḤarMaq 672

B. is renowned for its *ᶜibāda*: MarzNQ 234 (Ṯābit al-Bunānī)

B. has *aḥlam al-nās* (al-Aḥnaf), the most generous one (Ṭalḥa b. ᶜAbd Allāh b. Ḫalaf), the bravest (ᶜAbbād b. Ḥusayn and al-Ḥarīš) and the most pious (ᶜĀmir b. ᶜAbd Qays): IFaqBuld 167 (Saᶜīd b. Masᶜūd al-Māzinī)

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

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

B.'s people are *aṭwaᶜ li-l-sulṭān*: IFaqBuld 167 (Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī), ḤarMaq 671

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

B. houses heretics believing in freewill: IFaqBuld 168 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš), HağTaᶜl ii, 266

B.'s people possess the excitability (*ḥidda*) and the frivolity (*nazaq*) of the Ḫūz: MarzNQ 25 (Abū ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜAlā')

Kufa

K. *arḍ sahla maᶜrūfa taᶜrifuhā ǧimālunā al-maᶜlūfa*: IFaqBuld 163 (ᶜAlī)

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

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

K. lies lower than cold Syria, higher than hot B. etc.: IFaqBuld 163-64, 164 (Muḥ. b. ᶜUmayr al-ᶜUṭāridī = Muḥ. b. ᶜUmayr b. ᶜUṭārid), IQutᶜU i, 220 (Muḥ. b. ᶜUmayr b. ᶜUṭ.), cf. HağTaᶜl ii, 266, MasMur iii, 358 (Muḥ. b. ᶜU. b. ᶜU.), ᶜIqd vi, 249 (Muḥ. b. ᶜU. b. ᶜU.), YāqMB iv, 324 (Muḥ. b. ᶜU, al-ᶜU.)

K. combines river and land: *arḍ barriyya baḥriyya, arḍ šīḥ wa-qayṣūm wa-arḍ ḍabb wa-ḥūt*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 57-8; *ṭarfuhā fī baḥr aǧǧāǧ wa-ṭarfuhā l-āḫar fī l-falāh*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 67; *manzilan barriyyan baḥriyyan*: ṬabTār iv, 41, 42; *manzilan ... barriyyan baḥriyyan yunbitu l-ḥaliyy wa-l-naṣiyy*: ṬabTār iv, 43

K. is placed like the uvula or the tongue in the body: IFaqBuld 168, IQutᶜU i, 220, ᶜIqd vi, 249 (all Ibn ᶜAyyāš), Ṯaᶜlaṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123 (Ziyād [b. Abīhi]), QazwAB 250 (Ibn ᶜAbbās [sic] al-Hamdānī)

K. has pleasant winds: IFaqBuld 164, ᶜIqd vi, 249, YāqMB iv, 324 (all Muḥ. b. ᶜUmayr b. ᶜUṭārid)

K.'s water is fresh & sweet: IFaqBuld 164 twice (Muḥ. b. ᶜUmayr b. ᶜUṭārid), cf. ibid. 166, 168 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš); brackish, but drinkable: MuqAḥsTaq 117/tr. Collins 106

K. has broader rivers (*awsaᶜ anhāran)*: MarzNQ 42 (Ibn Abī Laylā)

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

K. has better fruit: IFaqBuld 164 (Muḥ. b. ᶜUmayr al-ᶜUṭāridī), ibid. 166 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays); cf. IFaqBuld 175 (ᶜAbd al-Raḥmān b. Bašīr al-ᶜIǧlī), IQutᶜU i, 220-21 (ᶜAbd al-Raḥm. b. B.)

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

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

K. is *akṯaru ḫarāǧan* than B. [but cf. *supra*]: MarzNQ 41, ǦarǦalīs ii, 444 (both Muh. b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥm. b. Abī Laylā)

K. is the site where Ibrāhīm was born and where Nūḥ built his ark: MuqAḥsTaq 130/tr. Collins 118

K. contains [Ibrāhīm's] oven, Nūḥ's ark, Mūsā's staff and four Paradisial rivers: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 106 (Salmān), IFaqBuld 173 (ᶜAlī)

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

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

K. is *kanz al-īmān wa-ǧumǧumat al-islām wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: IFaqBuld 163 (ᶜAlī), HağTaᶜl ii, 271 (ᶜAlī); is *rumḥ Allāh wa-kanz al-īmān wa-ǧumǧumat al-ᶜarab*: BalāḏFut 334 and ᶜAlawīFaḍl 91 (both ᶜAlī); is *kanz al-īmān wa-ǧumǧumat al-ᶜarab wa-rumḥ Allāh al-aṭwal*: ZamRab i, 308 (ᶜUmar); is *sayyid al-amṣār wa-ǧumǧumat al-ᶜarab*: IFaqBuld 164 (ᶜUmar); is *rumḥ Allāh wa-ǧumǧumat al-ᶜarab wa-masqaṭ al-ᶜilm*: HağTaᶜl ii, 271 (ᶜUmar); is *rumḥ Allāh wa-qubbat al-islām*: ṬabTār 2515 (ᶜUmar); is *ǧumǧumat al-ᶜarab wa-kanz al-īmān wa-rumḥ al-Allāh fī l-arḍ wa-māddat al-amṣār*: ᶜIqd vi, 248 (ᶜUmar); is *kanz al-īmān wa-ḥuǧǧat al-islām wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: YāqMB iv, 325 (ᶜAlī); is *kanz al-īmān wa-hāmat al-islām wa-hum sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 85 (ᶜAlī); *kanz al-īmān wa-maṣābīḥ al-hudā wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 84 (ᶜAlī); is *ǧumǧumat al-islām wa-kanz al-īmān wa-sayf Allāh wa-rumḥuh*: MarzNQ 233, ᶜAlawīFaḍl 71-2, 74-5 (all ᶜAlī); is *ǧumǧumat al-ᶜarab wa-ra'suhā wa-sahmī llaḏī armī bihi*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 88 (ᶜUmar); is *ra's al-ᶜarab wa-ǧumǧumatuhā*: MarzNQ 233 (ᶜUmar); is *ǧamāǧim al-ᶜarab wa-kanz al-ᶜilm wa-rumḥ Allāh al-aṭwal*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 93 (ᶜUmar); is *maᶜdin al-ᶜilm wa-ǧamāǧim al-ᶜarab wa-qubbat al-islām*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 105 (Salmān); is *ra's al-ᶜarab*: BalāḏFut 333 (ᶜUmar); is *ra's al-ᶜarab wa-dimāġuhā*: ᶜAlawīFaḍl 89 (ᶜUmar); is *ra's al-islām*: BalāḏFut 334 (ᶜUmar), ᶜAlawīFaḍl 93 (ᶜUmar)

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

K. is *bilād al-adab wa-wağh al-ᶜIrāq* ...: IFaqBuld 173 (al-Saffāḥ)

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

K. has more *fuqahā'* and *ašrāf* than B.: IFaqBuld 170 (al-Ḥasan b. Zayd); cf. HağTaᶜl ii, 266-670, ĞarĞalīs ii, 445 (Muḥ. b. ᶜAbd al-Raḥm. b. Abī Laylā), MarzNQ 42 (Ibn Abī Laylā), MarzNQ 233 (al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī)

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

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

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

K. was ᶜAlī's residence: IFaqBuld 166

K.'s people supported ᶜAlī at the Battle of the Camel, at al-Nahrawān, at al-Ḥarūrā, at Ṣiffīn: HağTaᶜl ii, 266

K. has the bravest man (al-Aštar), the most generous one (Ḫālid b. ᶜAttāb), the ...est (*aḥmal*) (ᶜIkrima al-Fayyāḍ), the most pious (ᶜAmr b. ᶜUtba b. Farqad): IFaqBul 167

K. will one day be beloved by all believers: IFaqBuld 163 (ᶜAlī)

K. most favoured in having the Mahdī (?): IFaqBuld 164 (ᶜAbd Allāh b. ᶜUmar)

K. is rich in false prophets from the rabble: IFaqBuld 168, 185, ĞarĞalīs ii, 444, MarzNQ 42 (all Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī)

K.'s people are often rebellious; *lā yarḍawna bi-amīr wa-lā yarḍāhum amīr*: IFaqBuld 184 (ᶜUmar), cf. ᶜIqd vi, 249; *lā yurḍīhimu llāhu ᶜan wālin wa-lā yurḍī wāliyan ᶜanhum*: QazwAB 251 (Saᶜd Ibn Abī Waqqāṣ)

K.'s people are treacherous: IFaqBuld 186 (ᶜAlī; Sukayna bt al-Ḥusayn), MasMur iv, 191, ᶜIqd vi, 249, Ṯaᶜlaṭ 104/tr. Bosw. 124 (*al-Kūfī lā yūfī*)

K.'s people are stingy: MasMur iv, 191

K. has more conceitedness (*kibriyā'*) and fewer God-fearing people (*atqiyā'*) than B.: MarzNQ 42, ĞarĞalīs ii, 444, BayMaḥ 97 (all Abū Bakr al-Huḏalī)

K.'s men copulate with their cows rather than their wives: IFaqBuld 185 (al-Naǧāšī, poetry)

K.'s people are thieves in the night: IFaqBuld 185 (al-Naǧāšī, poetry)

K. boasts of its role in the conquests: IFaqBuld 165, 168 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš)

K.'s people dwell in Kisrā's palaces & gardens: IFaqBuld 165-66 (al-Aḥnaf b. Qays), cf. ibid. 167-68 (Ibn ᶜAyyāš), HağTaᶜl ii, 266, MarzNQ 172 and 234 (al-Aḥnaf b. Q.)

K. as pretty poor girl: MasMur iv, 190 (anon.), IFaqBuld 164 (al-Ḥağğāğ), ibid. 165 (Ziyād), ĞāḥRas iv, 136 (Ziyād), YāqMB iv, 324, IQutᶜU i, 220, MasMur iii, 358, ᶜIqd vi, 249, Ṯaᶜlaṭ 102/tr. Bosw. 123, QazwAB 250 (all al-Ḥağğāğ)

K. is a beautiful girl that pleases her husband: ᶜIqd vi, 248 (ᶜAlī b. Muḥ. al-Madīnī)

K. is mostly ruins, merely a village: ĞāḥRas iv, 142; dilapidated, its suburbs in ruins: MuqAḥsTaq 117/tr. Collins 106

K. has a ruined mosque which once was ᶜAlī's (in B. it would have been kept in good shape): ĞāḥRas iv, 143

K.'s people possess the pedantry (*ḥaḏlaqa*) and arrogance (*ṣalaf*) of the Nabaṭ: MarzNQ 25 (Abū ᶜAmr b. al-ᶜAlā')