Introduction

Nu`aym b. Ḥammād al-Marwazī's *Kitāb al-fitan*, dating from approximately 820,[1] is the oldest complete Muslim apocalyptic text that has survived to the present. Its collection was accomplished mostly in Syria, so on this basis, we are justified in seeing it as the Syrian Muslim apocalyptic tradition. This conclusion, of course, does not mean that all of the Syrian Muslim apocalyptic traditions current in the eighth and ninth centuries are attested in it; there is no way to know what was omitted or lost due to marginalization of controversial traditions. We have virtually no Syrian sources with which to compare Nu`aym. Given the relative size of the text, the fact of the numerous unique traditions cited in it, and that the Syrian Muslim heritage overall is known from only a paltry number of sources, translation of this source is worthwhile.

[1] This date is tentative, as Nu`aym died some twenty-four years later, and is based upon the most recent dated tradition in the collection (no. 930 listing the year 204/819–20). Some of the traditions such as those of al-Walīd b. Muslim (see nos. 590, 868, 1008) that are related in the first person may have been collected as early as 790 (as al-Walīd died that year).

Nu`aym and his Times

Comparatively little is known about Nu`aym b. Ḥammād al-Khuza`ī, who was from Marv Rūdh, one of the bases for the `Abbāsid revolution.[2] It seems rather doubtful that Nu`aym was ethnically full-Arab. For someone who so thoroughly presents the Syrian apocalyptic tradition in *The Book of Tribulations*, virtually nothing is known about his time in Syria. While one can extract his sources from the chains of transmitters, none of his experiences there apparently left a mark on his personal biography. Even Ibn `Asākir's *History of the City of Damascus* just gives us a bare list of his Syrian informants, but does not cite apocalyptic traditions from him (except one, concerning moral deterioration at the end of the world).

He is said to have sought traditions assiduously in Iraq, the Hijaz and Yemen (but *not* Syria), and to have settled in Egypt. Virtually the only personal encounter with him is when he meets the great legal scholar al-Shafī`ī, but our record of this meeting is extremely abbreviated.[3] During the period of the *mihna* (inquisition), he was tortured to confess the doctrine of the creation of the Qur'ān, which he refused to acknowledge, was imprisoned at Sāmarrā', and died in prison in 228/843–4 (during the reign of al-Wāthiq). Al-Dhahabī tells us that his body was not washed, wrapped or prayed over after his death, but just thrown into a pit. Although most of *The Book of Tribulations* is well organized, the last ten traditions do not appear to have been

[2] Biographical material from *EI²* s.v. "Nu`aym b. Ḥammād" (Ch. Pellat); Fuat Sezgin, *GAS* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), i, pp. 104–5; sources are Ibn Sa`d, *Ṭabaqāt* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 1990), vii, p. 359 (no. 4085); al-Khatib al-Baghdādī, *Tā'rīkh madīnat al-salām* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islamī, 2001), xv, pp. 419–30; Ibn `Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1995–8), lxii, pp. 149–71 (no. 7909); Ibn al-Jawzī, *al-Muntaẓam fi al-tā'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 1993), xi, p. 149 (no. 1326); al-Dhahabī, *Siyar a`lām al-nubalā'* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1992), x, pp. 595–612 (no. 209); *idem*, *Tadhkirat al-ḥuffāẓ* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 2012), ii, pp. 6–7 (no. 434); al-Mizzī, *Tahdhīb al-kamāl* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1998), vii, pp. 350–3 (no. 7046); and Ibn al-`Imād, *Shajarat al-dhahab* (Damascus: Dār Ibn Kathīr, 1992), iii, pp. 133–4.

[3] Yāqūt, *Mu`jam al-udabā'* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islamī, 1993), p. 2404.

placed within their respective categories. This final disorganization suggests that Nu`aym might have been working on the text when he died (or was imprisoned), and was unable to complete it.

Nu`aym was a comparatively minor and forgotten figure within the *ḥadīth* literature overall. He is remembered for having contributed a supplement to `Abdallāh b. al-Mubārak's (d. 181/797) *Kitāb al-zuhd*,[4] but was not considered to have been an especially reliable transmitter, most probably because he involved himself in questionable subjects such as apocalyptic and ascetic traditions.[5] Historians such as al-Balādhurī, al-Tamīmī, al-Ṭabarī, and others[6] cited Nu`aym, but again this fact just serves to highlight his distance from the mainstream of Sunni legal literature. And he is not cited in any of the canonical Six Books of the Sunna, even though he is known to have taught al-Bukhārī.

The Book of Tribulations

Nu`aym's work in apocalypse, however, is almost unique, and its influence upon Islam, especially upon Sunni apocalyptic thinking, is quite inordinately huge. To date Nu`aym was the first to take the vast collection of apocalyptic traditions that had been growing since the period of the conquests, and to organize them into a reasonably coherent order. One cannot say that this order is anywhere near the level of the literary apocalypse as it was known in Judaism and

[4] See Ibn al-Mubārak, *Kitāb al-zuhd wa-l-raqā'iq* (Alexandria: Dār Ibn Khaldūn, n.d.), where pp. 377–468 are listed as *ziyādāt Nu`aym.*

[5] al-Dhahabī, *Siyar*, x, p. 604 gives a list of all the subjects on which it is forbidden to write; apocalypse is not one of them.

[6] E.g., al-Balādhurī, *Futūḥ al-buldān* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Ma`ārif, 1987), p. 169; al-Tamīmī, *Kitāb al-miḥan* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islamī, 1988), pp. 197, 389, 417, 460; extensively in al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk* (Beirut: Rawā'ī` al-Turāth, n.d.), index; also Abū Zur`a al-Dimashqī, *Tā'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 2008), i, p. 484; al-Ṣāliḥī al-Shāmī, *Subul al-hudā wa-l-rashād* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 2013); al-Musharraf b. al-Murajjā', *Faḍā'il bayt al-maqdis* (Shafar`am: Dār al-Shurūq, 1995), nos. 221, 322–7, 329–30; Ibn Rajab, *Faḍā'il al-Shām* (al-Riyāḍ: Dār al-Waṭan li-l-Nashr, 1999), p. 159 (no. 297); al-Kindī, *Kitāb wulāt Miṣr* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), p. 57; and Waqī`, *Quḍāt* (Beirut: `Ālam al-Kutub, n.d.), iii, pp. 122–3.

Christianity from Late Antiquity (below), and that sense of disorder increases once one takes into consideration the internal variants inside individual traditions that might contradict the overall order that Nu`aym established. But having said that, previous to him there was nothing like a timeline for the endtimes, and *The Book of Tribulations* establishes one.

Basic to the understanding of the book is the word *fitna*, pl. *fitan*, which I have translated as "tribulations" or in the case of civil war, "dissension."[7] As will be seen within the translation, the word also covers political and religious dissension, and division between Muslims, or even some element which constitutes a temptation to Muslims (cf. Q 8:25, 28–9). The basic meaning of *fitna* is the process by which metal is rid of dross (see no. 1535), which is a common conception in the monotheistic traditions. All of these various meanings are reflected in the subject matter of *The Book of Tribulations*, which takes its reader through the events in roughly the following manner: firstly, definitions and warnings, secondly, signs, thirdly, political events connected to the Umayyads and `Abbasids, fourthly, the appearance of the Sufyānī and his opponent the Mahdi, fifthly, the apocalyptic wars with the Byzantines, sixthly, the appearance of the Dajjāl(Antichrist) and his opponent Jesus, seventhly, the peoples of the apocalypse (Gog and Magog, the Ethiopians, the Turks), and finally, the times of the apocalypse.

From the names and the place names, it is possible to obtain a vision, to some degree, of the world in which Nu`aym's apocalyptic informants lived. They knew Syria intimately, and were able to refer to even small place names with care and accuracy. However, this intimate knowledge is confined to the area around Ḥimṣ, Damascus and the region of the Sea of Galilee in addition to the region of the northern Jordan River valley. Curiously, they show little intimate knowledge of the region of Filasṭīn (Palestine), whose capital, Ramla, is mentioned six times in the text. Jerusalem, also, while mentioned frequently, is never given the intimate descriptions of geography that one finds for

[7] See glossary for a list of definitions.

the more northern locations. The extreme north, around Aleppo, is also not described in detail.

One of the oddities concerning intimate place-descriptions in Nu`aym is in the sequences concerning the Antichrist/Dajjāl. There we would expect to find the common tradition concerning the tribesman Tamīm al-Dārī, who supposedly met the Dajjāl while on an island (in the Mediterranean?), but is entirely absent. This is quite puzzling given the further affinities of the Tamīm al-Dārī tradition,[8] which appears in a number of the major collections, in that Tamim is associated with the tribe of Lakhm, which is featured in Nu`aym, and there are a number of allusions to cryptic events due to occur in the area of Syria prior to the Dajjāl's appearance inside the tradition. In the version cited by Ibn Māja the key questions are:

> He [the Dajjāl] said: "What is the Spring of Zughar doing?" They [Tamīm and his group] said: "Well—their crops and palm-irrigations are watered by it." He said: "And how are the palm trees between `Ammān and Beth-Shean (Baysān)?" They said: "Well—they give their fruit every year." He said: "And what is happening with the Sea of Galilee (*buḥayrat al-Ṭabariyya*)?" They said: "Its sides overflow because of the abundance of water."[9]

These questions strongly suggest a locus for the tradition in the region of the northern Jordan Valley, between Beth-Shean and Tiberias. Indeed, ultimately Tamīm and his family are closely associated with Hebron, which is featured in Nu`aym (nos. 660–2), supposedly deeded to them by Muḥammad. These different connections with the region of Syria make it virtually a certainty that the Tamīm-Dajjāl tradition originated in the region, but there is no mention of it

[8] See my "Tamīm al-Dārī," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 61 (1998), pp. 20–8; and the summary in *Studies*, pp. 227–30.

[9] Ibn Māja, *Sunan* (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, n.d.), ii, p. 1355 (no. 4074); Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan* (Beirut: Dār al-Jīl, 1988), iv, p. 117 (no. 4328); Ḥanbal b. Isḥāq, *al-Fitan* (Beirut: Dār al-Bashā'ir al-Islāmiyya, 1998), p. 89–90 (no. 1); the version in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ* (Beirut: Dār Jīl, n.d.), viii, p. 204 is slightly different; there is even an Iraqi version, Ibn Abī Shayba, *Kitāb al-muṣannaf* (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-`Ilmiyya, 1995), vii, pp. 497–8 (no. 37508).

whatsoever in *The Book of Tribulations*. Moreover, the tenor of the questions given the destruction of the earthquake of January 18, 749, strongly suggests that the apocalyptic sign to which they are pointing is this destruction, enabling us to tentatively date the tradition. One could theorize that perhaps the tradition is a southern Palestinian one rather than a northern Ḥimṣī one, but it is still odd that it would not be included within Nu`aym's collection, if the dating above is accurate.

Further afield, the apocalyptic informants had a fairly good knowledge also of the Byzantine Empire and the eastern Mediterranean. It is interesting to realize that Cyprus which can be seen from the coastline of Syria, itself lying just a few miles away from Ḥimṣ, is mentioned but twice (nos. 1382, 1412), and just as a name at that, while Crete is not mentioned at all. In general, the Mediterranean Sea in Nu`aym is seen as a hostile location. Invaders have a fairly free use of the sea, according to the traditions in his collection, and there is not much of a sense that the Muslims are or could be dominant in the Mediterranean basin. This perception is probably linked to the fact that Ḥimṣ was not a port. At a time when the Arabic language was developing a vast nautical vocabulary, there are only four of the most general words for "ship, boat" in Nuaym. Knowledge of North Africa and Spain is quite partial, and there is little reality to the figures emerging from these locations (although the One with the Mane [Dhū al-`Arf] traditions, no. 1300, etc., may reflect the rise of Charlemagne). Egypt and Ethiopia are known, although the latter more as a caricature rather than an actual place. The region around Mecca and Medina is quite well known with specific place names, but Yemen is much more shadowy, with few details of place names.

Iraq, and most especially the region around Baghdad, is well known to the Syrian apocalyptic informants, and is given full details. The Persian north road to Transoxiana through Rayy and Nishapur is the one with which the apocalyptic informants are familiar. But very quickly place names in the east become quite hazy—Küfa, for example, is frequently named, but absolutely no locations inside of it are detailed, and Baṣra is quite shadowy—and the important Umayyad Iraqi center of al-Wāsiṭ is not mentioned even once in the text. The

Turks are just "out there"—a group whose origins are not clear, who are making and will make regular depredations for no apparent reason into the Muslim world. India is the most distant, where it is even difficult to get a sense of what geographical section of the subcontinent is being referred to by the term *Hind* (see nos. 1196–1201).

All in all, the world of Nu`aym is the world of the Fertile Crescent, with the addition of Byzantium. There are no identifiable place names in Europe beyond Constantinople, other than the city of Rome. One has to say, however, that the level of detail concerning Rome is surprisingly high (nos. 1295, 1308, 1313), and may be the result of trade.[10] The historical memory demonstrated by the informants in *The Book of Tribulations* is more or less consistent with the late Umayyad and early `Abbāsid period, corresponding to the 720s until the early 800s, most especially from the 760s onwards. Mu`āwiya and the period of the early conquests are remembered fondly, sort of as "the good old days" of plenty, but there are virtually no personal recollections from this time.

The personal recollections in Nu`aym are all of the later failures of the Umayyads against the Byzantines from the early eighth century, the worries that the Turks and Ethiopians are going to invade the Umayyad or `Abbāsid Empire, and a very strong fear concerning the Berbers (who revolted 740–3), and most especially the rise of the `Abbāsids. There is some amount of disbelief at the rise of the `Abbāsids, as parvenus, as being from Khurāsān, and a great deal of disgruntlement on the part of Syrian Muslims that their prime position in the empire had been usurped by the Iraqis. All in all, the attitude of the traditions in Nu`aym is that of remembering a lost empire (the Umayyad Empire), and being on the sidelines of a yet greater one (the `Abbasid Empire), hoping that someday primacy would come back to Syria.

It is easy to find parallels to Nu`aym's traditions, even though he is

[10] See Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce AD 300–700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 219, 622f.

not personally cited, in the canonical Six Books, especially in Muslim, Abū Dā'ūd and Ibn Māja (with the caveat described in section vii). There is a great deal of parallel material in the non-canonical *ḥadīth* collections, such as Ibn Abī Shayba and `Abd al-Razzāq. But for the most part, the citations of Nu`aym, when they appear, are to be found in other apocalyptic works, in which *The Book of Tribulations* makes a fairly consistent appearance. Only the Shi`ite scholar Ibn Ṭāwūs (d. 664/1265–6), however, reproduced whole sections of his work.[11] Fundamentally, Nu`aym serves as a bridge between the Jewish and Christian apocalypses of Late Antiquity and Islam. Therefore, when we are looking for affinities, it is to the past that we should look.

Comparative Apocalypse and Categorizations

The Book of Tribulations did not appear in a vacuum. From the Hellenistic period in Syria (second century BCE) until the rise of Islam in the early seventh century the genre of apocalypse was a common one. Although the definition of apocalypse is contested somewhat, especially in the transition that occurs between the Judeo-Christian material and the Islamic material, in its most basic form an apocalypse is a revelation from God, usually via an angel, of either future events or cosmological mysteries. Some literary apocalypses are contained within the Bible (the books of Daniel, Revelation), but more commonly the literary apocalypse was not accepted into the canon. Later apocalypses are usually pseudonymous, ascribed to prominent biblical or patristic figures, and most likely their true authors will never be known.

This hesitancy with regard to apocalypse is fairly widespread, existing in all of the mainstream monotheistic religions. Apocalypse represents a dramatic break in the natural order of authority, and along with the dream-revelation, constitutes a possible challenge to

[11] Ibn Ṭāwūs, *al-Malāḥim wa-l-fitan fi ẓuhūr al-ghā'ib al-muntaẓar* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Wafā', 1992), pp. 20–102. Note also al-Maqdisī, *al-Bad' wa-l-tā'rīkh* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), ii, pp. 165, 173; and al-Mutaqqī al-Hindī, *Kanz al-`ummāl* (Beirut: Dār al-Risāla, 1982), xiv, pp. 189–352 (nos. 38,329–38,911) both cite Nu`aym.

ecclesiastical authority on a popular level. This fact is also true of apocalypse in Islam.

Later literary Christian and Jewish literary apocalypses tended to build upon this heritage, but there is a marked change with the rise of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries among Christian authors. This period was the first one in which significant sections of the Christian world were lost to a non-Christian faith (first to the Sasanian Persians, and then to the Muslim Arabs) that were not recovered. The most dramatic Christian response to this loss is the Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, probably composed in northern Syria-Iraq around the end of the seventh century in Syriac, and quickly translated into Greek and then into Latin.[12] Although this apocalypse is still rooted in the classical narrative of the Book of Revelation and other biblical apocalypses, it is striking that most of the biblical citations are not of an apocalyptic but a theological nature.

At the core of apocalypse stands the ideal of a just society, or at least a fulfillment of the cardinal ordinances of a given religious tradition. Usually the messianic figure, either Jesus or the Mahdi, is designed to create the society that the believers to whom the original apocalypse is addressed can envision but are unable to bring to fruition. The critique of present-day society—and it is possible to use this in a continuous fashion, because the critique is always true—is the moral apocalypse: the litany of the evils of society. This material is very graphic in nature, but is still generic enough that popular preachers can and do use it for the condemnation of social ills (from

[12] Francisco Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic Literature* (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, Catholic University of America, 1985); trans. Gerrit Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (Louvain: Peeters, 1993 [CSCO vols 540–1]); trans. Aerts, and Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius: Die ältesten Griechischen und Lateinischen übersetzungen* (Louvain: Peeters, 1998 [CSCO vols. 569–70]); and trans. Benjamin Garstad, *Apocalypse: Pseudo-Methodius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012) (Greek and Latin). There are also partial translations in Andrew Palmer, *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), pp. 230–42 (trans. Sebastian Brock); and Michael Philip Penn (trans.), *When Christians first met Muslims: A Sourcebook of the Earliest Syriac Writings on Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), pp. 116–29.

their perspective) as if those are being foretold by an authority. Moral apocalypse is a major theme in Christian and Muslim apocalyptic, but curiously it is lacking in Nu`aym to a large degree. Most apocalypse for him and his informants is political and social.

One should also note that in contradistinction to Jewish and Christian apocalypses, in Islamic apocalyptic traditions the role of angels is comparatively muted. None are used to transfer the secret knowledge of apocalypse, as this function was already performed at the dawn of Islam by the angel Gabriel to Muḥammad. Although angels, such as Gabriel and Michael, appear in Nu`aym, their role is that of conversants with God and of fighters and supporters in the human arena.

Apocalypse also focuses attention upon a pure subset of the larger religious community, sometimes called "the remnant" or the "saved group" (in Arabic, either *al-firqa al-nājiya* or *al-ṭā'ifa al-manṣūra*) that will make it through the tribulations into the just or messianic society. Nu`aym offers two possibilities for being part of that remnant: one is quietistic and involves a radical, almost Gandhian non-violence, where it is preferable to be slaughtered than to take part in the political dissensions of the end (no. 431), while the second involves the salvational struggle (*jihād*), usually against the Byzantines. Fighting the outside non-Muslim enemy can at least preserve the true believer from the inter-Muslim fighting that is likely to corrupt his faith. The historical connections of the fighting against the Byzantines will be examined below.

The traditions in *The Book of Tribulations* give voice to the nexus of a number of divisions, some of them overlapping, between believers and unbelievers, religions, ethnicity, tribes and languages, and these are not easy to categorize or to separate. To explain these divisions, I will prefer to use the language of the text itself, rather than what we "know" about these terms, especially from later texts. In short, in the *Book of Tribulations* we find all the disorganization and messiness in definition that we would expect to find from what would later be called "Islam" in its formative period.

Comparatively the terms believer (*mu'min*) and unbeliever (*kāfir*

or *mushrik*) are the easiest, as both polarities have considerable roots in the Qur`ān. Donner has argued for the existence of some type of ecumenical group of "believers" of which the caliph (or commander of the believers) would be the head.[13] There is no evidence for such a community inside *The Book of Tribulations.* However, there is considerable latitude as to what constitutes the "in-community" of believers. For the most part the definitions are ethnic or tribal in nature. The Arabs, who are seen as the "settled" Arabs (as opposed to the desert or "tent-pole" Arabs) are in three basic groupings: the Yemenites, southern Arabs, who are considered to be the Emigrants, and whose tribal chauvinism is frequently expressed in Nu`aym; the Quḍā`a grouping, which is more or less those tribes identified as "southern" that had been settled in Syria and adjoining regions for some time, and who were (because of the Umayyads' efforts) being joined together with the Yemenites; and the northern tribal grouping of Qays (also called Muḍar and Nizār), to whom many of the traditions in Nu`aym are hostile. However, it is worth noting that at several key points unity is urged between the southern and the northern tribes (no. 1281).

These three groupings can be considered to be "proto-Muslims" or even "Muslims" (although what meaning this term had during the Umayyad period is problematic), but there are a number of tribes who were clearly reluctant to be "Muslims." These are called the *musallimat al-`arab* (no. 1216), and from the list given of them, they would appear to have all been those originally Christian tribes long allied with the Byzantines (during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries), who are considered by the Emigrants to be likely to desert in the case of any war situation. Since we know from Christian sources that tribes such as Tanūkh were still largely Christian during the early `Abbāsid period[14] it is not surprising that the apocalyptic traditions from this same period would be suspicious of them.

[13] Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

[14] Michael the Great, p. 517 (the time of al-Mahdi).

Far more problematic are the two groups that are also part of the proto-Muslims, but are not ethnically Arab. The first and most loyal of these are the *mawālī* (clients), who were attached to the various tribes. In Nu`aym their loyalty is occasionally doubted, and they are even sometimes invited to join the Byzantines (nos. 1218, 1269, 1310), but they never do and are usually said to be angry at the suggestion. As a matter of fact, consistently the *mawālī* are said to be the "noblest of the Arabs" (nos. 1303, 1372), whatever this means. It is not at all unusual for the *mawālī* to take the initiative and fight the Byzantines, or demonstrate other methods of loyalty to Islam. The other ethnicity is the skin color of *aḥmar/ḥamrā'* ("red", but said to indicate "white"[15]), which here is taken to mean "non-Arab" and includes those who either have converted to proto-Islam but are retaining their local identity, or are fighting for the Muslims (such as the well-known groups *zuṭṭ* and *sayābija* perhaps) without having converted at all. These are also invited to join the Byzantines, but unlike the *mawālī* they occasionally betray the proto-Muslims (e.g., no. 1256).

From the Byzantines' perspective (according to Nu`aym of course—one should not take what the Byzantines are said to be thinking as authoritative), the conflict was ethnic. The Byzantines never refer to their opponents as "Muslims", but always as Arabs, which one should see as equivalent to the term "Saracen" that is commonly employed by the Byzantines in reality.[16] Consistently, while there are religious issues that are in the front, such as the question of who wins victories—the Cross or God (Allah)[17]—when the apocalypse describes how the Byzantines *themselves* describe the conflict, it is never couched in religious terms. After their cross is broken, the Byzantines usually report to their ruler "the Arabs betrayed us" rather than speaking of the religious issues involved.

[15] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāya fi gharīb al-ḥadīth* (Beirut: Dār Iḥya al-Kutub al-`Arabiyya, n.d.), i, pp. 437–8 (Ibn al-Athīr is dubious about the idea that every time Arabs use the term *aḥmar* they mean *abyaḍ*, "white," though).

[16] Alexis Savvides, "Some notes on the terms *Agarenoi*, *Ismaelitai* and *Sarakenoi* in Byzantine sources," *Byzantion* 67 (1997), pp. 89–96

[17] See nos. 1253, 1256.

When the Byzantines and Muslims fight in Syria, and the Byzantines' objectives are discussed, consistently those are said to be returning territory said to have belonged originally to their ancestors (such as the coastal region of Palestine, no. 1384 or Ḥimṣ, no. 1253), or to have people who the Byzantines consider to be originally theirs returned. Never do they make any claims to Jerusalem (even though according to the accounts below it is briefly recaptured), nor do they make any claims to desire new, not previously held territory. While the apocalyptic texts recognize that the end result of a Byzantine victory would probably be the end of Islam, this is not stated to be one of the Byzantines' goals.

It is interesting that one of the most common Muslim terms, that of *umma* (community) is used quite pejoratively in Nu`aym, other than when it is specifically "my [Muḥammad's] community." The *umam* (peoples) are invariably negative, and in other cases, such as with Gog and Magog (no. 1605) or with the locust being described as an *umma* (no. 627) the attitudes are not positive.

At all times the genre of apocalypse has been used to channel social frustrations from a given population. This is also true of Nu`aym's *Book of Tribulations*, which in general focuses upon Syria—a recently dispossessed population—and most especially upon the town of Ḥimṣ, which also felt a sense of lost grandeur and power. This feeling of loss is palpable throughout the entire book, and stands behind the idea of apocalypse: what was once will be yet again. Glory will be returned at the end of the world, because of divine justice.

Textual Sources and Language

The primary source for *The Book of Tribulations* is a group of informants, who were mostly Syrian, but also including a range of Iraqis, Medinans and Egyptians. Names such as that of al-Walīd b. Muslim, who were close to the later Umayyad regime, continually crop up in Nu`aym. When we look at the initial narrators, which are the ones listed in the translation below, it is easy to see the predominance of Abū Hurayra (104 traditions), Ḥudayfa b. al-Yamān (83 tradi-

tions), Ka`b al-Aḥbār[18] (265 traditions), `Abdallāh b. `Amr (114 traditions), `Abdallāh b. `Umar (44 traditions),[19] Abū Sa`īd al-Khudarī (35 traditions), and a few others. Taken together, this group is said to be responsible for 673 out of a total of 1959 traditions (I have not counted duplicates). However, this number obscures the overwhelming role of Ka`b al-Aḥbār, who is the backbone of the book. Ka`b is the only person who is represented throughout the book, and is responsible for many of the longer traditions. Additionally, while others cite on the authority of Muḥammad (for the most part), Ka`b is his own authority. The apocalyptic material, however, at this early stage lacks complete chains of transmission, and there are numerous historical interpolations or comments by onlookers. These asides are some of the most interesting elements of Nu`aym, and should be considered in some cases to be historical.

The role of the Qur'ān in Nu`aym is comparatively minimal. Citations occur inside traditions,[20] and occasionally there is some attempt to comment on the holy text. However, the fact was that the Qur'ānic apocalypse is an immediate one, rather than one in the apocalyptic future (near or far). Therefore, it is not easy to make use of the Qur'ān in these historical apocalyptic traditions. The major exceptions to this rule are the Qur'ānic sequences of Gog and Magog, where there is invariably citation of Q 21:96 (however it is odd that the parallel text of 18:94 is not cited at all), and the sequence of *dābbat al-arḍ* (the Beast from the earth, cf. Q 27:82). By far the most common Qur`ānic citation is 47:4 "when the war shall lay down its burdens,"[21] which parallels the biblical messianic ideal of Is. 2:4. Other Qur`ānic citations, such as 6:65, 158 (each cited seven times) very much

[18] Although in the text of Nu`aym Ka`b receives this appellation only four times (nos. 638, 1203, 1417, 1933).

[19] A further thirty-six traditions are marked "`Abdallāh" so it is impossible to know which `Abdallāh is being cited.

[20] There are eighty-five Qur'ānic citations in the text; there are a further twenty-nine Qur'ānic allusions.

[21] Cited eight times out of the eighty-five total citations.

parallel the use of the Bible in Ps. Meth in that the citations tend to be non-apocalyptic in content.

From a comparative point of view there are several elements in Nu`aym of special interest. The first of these are the numerous foreign words, such as Syriac/Aramaic (nos. 2, 1407, 1551), Farsi (nos. 511, 1260), Hebrew (nos. 8, 42, 1252, 1597, 1845), Ge`ez (possibly no. 1836), Greek (no. 1499), mock Greek (no. 720), Old South Arabian (no. 1217) and mock Old South Arabian (nos. 247, 1117). However, it is striking that for a comprehensive body of apocalyptic materials being produced in Syria not 100 years after Greek was the official language, there are so few traceable Greek words in Nu`aym.

There are also numerous foreign names and place names, the significance of which has been discussed. Some of those names indicate a direct dependency upon foreign, mainly Christian, materials. The major example would be the list of the peoples of Gog and Magog (no. 1605), which although partial in Nu`aym, closely parallels the list found in Pseudo-Methodius, and the sequence of the Dajjāl and Jesus. The latter sequence has direct linguistic and stylistic affinities with extant Christian apocalypses.

An anomalous apocalypse contained within Nu`aym is the Apocalypse of Weeks (no. 1949), which has been discussed previously.[22] This apocalypse is unique because of its comparative length, and because it is associated with an unknown prophet, named Nāth. I have speculated elsewhere that perhaps this is a radical misreading for "Baba" the Harranian, whose ecstatic statements sometimes resemble the Apocalypse of Weeks. There is also the anomalous importance of the city of Harran within the Apocalypse of Weeks that indicates its origin. However, the fact remains that this speculation is unproven, and may be unprovable. It is not clear why Nu`aym, otherwise so steeped in the mainstream of Sunni Islam, would casually accept an otherwise unknown "Nāth" as a prophet, without further explanation. The names in the chain indicate a Christian origin, but

[22] Michael Cook, "A Muslim Apocalyptic Chronicle," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 52 (1993), pp. 25–9.

forcing any Christian or biblical prophetic figure into the name "Nāth" is difficult. The first element of the text has a very Daniel-esque aspect to it, with weeks being emphasized (cf. Daniel 9:24).

Of special interest to comparativists is the group of apocalypses associated with Yashū` (nos. 206, 257, 490, 1933), identified as a monk. These have certain common characteristics, such as being a conversation between Yashū` and Ka`b, as well as a heavy focus upon the political future of the Muslim states. These represent transmissions from Christian sources, and are markedly less filled with Muslim themes. Both this family of apocalypses and the Apocalypse of Weeks should be compared to the Christian Apocalypse of Daniel from the same period (translated in the appendix).

Similarly, we can speak about dating the traditions that call Jerusalem *iliyā'* versus those utilizing *bayt al-maqdis.* Most probably these date from different times, with the *iliyā'* traditions being the earlier of the two (note the gloss for the term *iliyā'* to *bayt al-maqdis* in no. 530).[23] It is striking to note the correlations between the use of the terms *mu'min* (believer) in the *iliya'* traditions, as opposed to the use of terms like Muslim or Emigrant in the *bayt al-maqdis* traditions.[24] The most obvious conclusion to be drawn from this terminology is that the *mu'min* traditions are indeed the older ones, and that the section of Valleys (A`maq) traditions (nos. 1212–1415), in which the term *mu'min* is virtually absent, is the later one.

When we turn to the question of political theology, it is clear that Nu`aym in a number of places represents almost the sole remaining example of what Umayyad legitimacy would have looked like. The standard traditions of the "four rightly-guided" caliphs (*rāshidūn*) appear here frequently minus `Alī b. Abī Ṭālib. Although this type of "three caliphs" tradition is not well represented in Sunni materials as they now stand, one cannot doubt that these are in fact the earlier versions. Such a conclusion is proven absolutely by similar rejections of

[23] Note the odd term *bayt iliyā'* in no. 1312.

[24] There are two traditions (nos. 1562, 1625) in which believer is used in a *bayt al-maqdis* tradition, and one in which *muslim* is used with *iliyā'* (no. 1332).

`Alī in the Christian sources, who had no need to knuckle under to the rehabilitation of `Alī that occurred during the `Abbasid period.[25] The Umayyad political religious legitimacy emphasized the continuity of the caliphate from the time of Abū Bakr through `Umar and `Uthmān to the first Umayyads, and simply ignored `Alī altogether. In *The Book of Tribulations* `Alī is reduced occasionally to begging his own followers not to oppose Mu`āwiya (no. 267), and predicting his own defeat (nos. 262, 347). While one cannot say that the picture of `Alī in Nu`aym is negative, it is far less heroic than what one sees in Shi`ite or Sufi-influenced literature.

A great deal of Nu`aym concerns the killing of the caliph `Uthmān, the first Umayyad to rule. If one were to take literally the copious citations of statements supposedly said on the day of his assassination, then `Uthmān is portrayed in almost a Gandhian manner of passive resistance to mob rule. He stands as the centerpiece for the ideology of *The Book of Tribulations*, which is that during a time of violence one should withdraw, saying "a plague on both your houses." Although `Uthmān is not the absolute best fit for this ideal—he was, after all, the caliph, and did not actually withdraw from the situation—he is the best personality in early Islam to exemplify a passive martyrdom (Shi`ites such as al-Ḥusayn were active in their martyrdoms). And this very passivity was both key to the apocalyptic outlook of passivity, as well as to the Umayyad political legitimacy that fed off of sympathy for `Uthmān.

But because Nu`aym straddles the divide between the Umayyads and the `Abbasids, there is also a great deal of `Abbasid imperial messianic propaganda that is represented here as well. Probably only a collector at the time of Nu`aym could have gathered such a unique selection, since within a couple of generations the Umayyad materials began to die out even in Syria—although some were preserved a bit later in Umayyad Spain—and were replaced with a slightly different conception of Sunni legitimacy. However, the major source of

[25] See Palmer, *The Seventh Century*, pp. 43 (list of caliphs composed after 705), 49 (a list of caliphs trans. from Arabic around 724), 51 (account of 775), etc.

Nu`aym's material appears to have been Syrian-Palestinian Muslims. We should not discount or depreciate the level of imagination and ingenuity on a popular level that is represented by the apocalyptic fragments of Nu`aym. It is easy to see how the fragments jostle with each other, sometimes changing phraseology slightly in order to communicate an idea better, often stitched together into longer pieces, which then become mini-literary apocalypses.

Political, Social and Military History

One of the tangled scholarly debates concerning the genre of apocalypse is the extent to which the material can be relied upon for historical purposes.[26] There can be no doubt that a great deal of the apocalyptic traditions are in fact wild predictions or cryptic allusions that might never be "solved" (see notes). The apocalyptic writer is under no obligation to relay events as they actually occurred; only to place them in such a manner so as to prove that the end of the world is nigh. But many would argue that the role of "salvation history" such as *sīra* (biography of the Prophet Muhammad), and the early conquest materials is hardly much better.

That apocalypse communicated the vast social changes that happened with the rise of Islam cannot be doubted. A tradition appearing in the Syrian collection of al-Ṭabarānī gives us a sense of the change that occurred for the Arabs with the coming of Islam:

> `Abdallāh b. Ḥawwāla[27] said: We were with the Messenger of God, and we complained to him about the poverty, the nakedness and the general lack of things. The Messenger of God said: "Take heart, because I am more worried about the plethora of things for you. This matter [of Islam] will continue until you have conquered the lands of Persia and the Byzantines and Ḥimyar [Yemen]—you will have three army-provinces (*ajnād*): one in Syria, one in Iraq and one in Yemen—and until a man will be given 100 dinars and be

[26] Paul Alexander, "Medieval Apocalypses as Historical sources," *American Historical Review* 73 (1968), pp. 997–1018.

[27] Companion, lived in al-Urdunn, or Damascus, d. 58/677–8.

> insulted by it [because of the general wealth]." Ibn Ḥawwāla said: "O Messenger of God, who could possibly take Syria when the many-horned Byzantines (*al-rūm dhāt al-qurūn*) are in it?" He said: "God will conquer it for you and appoint you as successors in it, until a group of them [the Byzantines] will become white-robed, with shaved necks, standing in service for a little black man (*al-ruwayjil al-usayawid*)—whatever he tells them to do, they do it. [This will happen] even though today there are men in it [Syria] who view you as more contemptible than the lice which inhabit the buttocks of camels (*aḥqar fī aʿyūnihim min al-qirḍān fī aʿjāz al-ibl)*."[28]

This type of tradition is reflected inside *The Book of Tribulations* (no. 1215), where the Arabs' previously humble status is contrasted with their present exalted one, or where especially the Byzantines are presented as desiring to return the Arabs back to the Arabian Peninsula. Although these fears might not accurately represent what the Byzantines felt, there can be no doubt that such traditions reflected the Arab Muslims' insecurities.

These insecurities are most evident in the Valleys (Aʿmāq) section (nos. 1212–1415), which detail a possible alliance between the Arab Muslims of Syria and the Byzantines, which is projected to break down under strains of religious differences focused upon the Cross (nos. 1216, 1223, 1226). Some fifty plus pages of almost unique traditions (with some cited in the collections of Muslim, Abū Dā'ūd or Ibn Māja) give us a taste of the frontier atmosphere current in Ḥimṣ during the early and middle eighth century, when the wars with the Byzantines were at their peak. Probably the most astonishing revelation to come from this section is the idea that the apocalyptic writers, although extremely hostile at times to the Byzantines, were at other times willing to ally themselves with them under fairly equal terms—to attack their respective enemies. That the Syrian Muslims' "enemy" would actually be the Iraqi Muslims, most especially those of Kūfa, is

[28] Al-Ṭabarānī, *Musnad al-Shāmiyyīn* (Beirut: Mu'assasat al-Risāla, 1996), iii, p. 396 (no. 2540).

not a conclusion that one would naturally draw from the religious and historical sources currently available.

Whether or not this apocalyptic alliance was ever a reality, the other sections of the A`maq that deal with the internal politics and social tensions of Ḥimṣ strike one as being quite believable. For one thing, as previously noted, the apocalyptic materials give us a wealth of geographical and sociopolitical knowledge that is not found in any other source. Only Ibn `Asākir's *History of the City of Damascus* occasionally alludes to such a richness in source material.[29] Monasteries, topographical features, springs, lakes and rivers, and even the location of prominent stones and trees are featured in Nu`aym. Since it seems unlikely that an early city-history of Ḥimṣ will ever emerge, it is possible to see *The Book of Tribulations* in that light.

Historical material concerning Ḥimṣ abounds within *The Book of Tribulations.* An excellent example is in no. 491, which is a detailed description of Marwan II's siege of Ḥimṣ in 746. This is a siege that is mentioned in a number of sources—Balādhurī, Ṭabarī, Michael the Great—and given little prominence in any of them.[30] The description of the siege is not related to any of the apocalypses at all, and inside the text appears to be more illustrative of the sort of sieges that could happen at the end of the world, and could be a unique source for a section of Syrian history that is little documented.

Another example of historical allusions is the section on natural events, most specifically the earthquakes of the 700s (no. 590) and the sightings of comets. The description of the comet (no. 590) could be the earliest documented sighting of Halley's Comet, of 760, in the Arabic sources (although there are some problems with the dating

[29] Some of the other city-histories of Syria, like Ibn al-`Adīm, *Bughyat al-ṭālib fi tā'rīkh Ḥalab*, would perhaps have filled this gap, but only a quarter of Ibn al-`Adīm has survived. Al-Musharraf b. al-Murajjā', *Faḍā'il al-bayt al-maqdis* does fill this gap to some extent.

[30] Al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (Damascus: Dār al-Yaqẓa al-`Arabiyya, 1997), vii, p. 175; al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rīkh*, vii, pp. 312–13; Michael the Great, *The Syriac Chronicle of Michael Rabo (the Great)*. Trans. Matti Moosa (Teaneck, NJ: Beth Antioch Press, 2014), p. 503; Bar Hebraeus, *Chronography*, trans. Budge (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2003) (vol. 1), pp. 111–12.

discussed in the notes). Further semi-historical material would be the detailed fears concerning the Turks, from a period approximately 100 years previous to the large-scale importation of Turkish slave-soldiers under al-Mu`taṣim (833–42). These traditions also no doubt reflect the fears of the population at that time.

There is a great deal of social history to be extracted from *The Book of Tribulations.* It is easy to see the social isolation of the Muslim Arabs and their insecurities with regard to the local Christian population (who are not featured very much, but are in the background). This insecurity is reflected in the fear that the local Christians will betray the Muslims while the latter are out fighting and violate their families inside Ḥimṣ. One surprise is that there is comparatively little mention of the role of plagues and locust in the region of Syria, which from other Syrian-based chronicles are known to have been omnipresent (or even characteristic of Syria). It is curious that not more use is made of these types of disasters in the attempt to build up the suspense. On the positive side, technological developments such as the widespread use of waterwheels (no. 321, 1387) are mentioned, as are the components of basic shipbuilding (no. 1331). But of course the majority of these allusions are in fact symbolic.

Symbols and Visual Imagery

The use of symbols helps us understand a religious system at its basic level of communication. Apocalypse is more than the sum of its parts, but there are continually recurring symbols and imagery that help us locate the apocalyptic informants' world. Since Nu`aym includes so many fragments, we can see in the text how those partial or "failed" apocalypses interact with the more successful longer pieces. Even the materials that ultimately were not accepted by the Muslim community influenced the growth of its traditions.

The world of Nu`aym is an agrarian-nomadic one. Most of the symbols and imagery are taken from the Syrian-Palestinian world of the time. Sheep and goats are easily transportable in difficult times, horses are the symbols of the rider's power and authority, cattle are the symbols of peace and plenty, while dogs bark to annoy passers-by.

Camels are surprisingly almost absent in Nu`aym, and are definitely the feature of the Arabian Peninsula rather than that of Syria-Palestine. There is a contrast agriculturally between the plenty of Syria, exemplified by the saffron (nos. 834 and apocalypse of weeks, 1949) or wheat (no. 1232) as opposed to the waste of Arabia (nos. 1286, 1479). When Constantinople is destroyed, its location will be planted with mallows and the thorny carob (no. 1280). And fighters when they reach Rome, hang their swords on acacia trees (no. 1340), whatever those were in reality.

Both horses and donkeys for riding purposes are highly symbolic. Horses are divided up into the *birdhawn* (nag ponies) and the roan types, which are both associated with Arabs,[31] while regular horses are associated with nomadic peoples like the Turks. The donkey is not associated with any type of power, except that the Dajjāl is always pictured riding upon one.

Women are present in the apocalyptic materials mainly as symbols, although it is worthy of note that a number of women appear in the chains of transmitters, such as `Abda, the daughter of Khālid b. Ma`dān, Asmā' bint Yazīd al-Anṣāriyya. Four of the Prophet's wives, `Ā'isha, Ḥafṣa, Umm Ḥabība, and Zaynab, daughter of Jaḥsh, are cited in the text as authorities. Inside the traditions, there are symbolic descriptions such as that of the Sufyānī's having female captives' bellies split open (no. 519) or the picture of a woman walking the path to the Byzantine Empire in safety (nos. 1222, 1284, 1334), making the pilgrimage safely without male companionship (no. 995), or the woman walking provocatively in the marketplace (nos. 1126, 1152, 1180).[32] However, there are only a few named women who have actual prominence in *The Book of Tribulations*, such as the women of the Prophet's family (nos. 889, 1934), who are often brutalized, or the female witness, Ṭayyiba, who stands against the Dajjāl (no. 1427), and is probably taken from the Christian tradition.

[31] See al-Ghassānī, *al-Aqwāl al-kāfiya wa-l-fuḍūl al-shāfiya fī al-khayl* (Beirut: Dār al-Gharb al-Islamī, 1987), pp. 88, 160–1 for the various classifications.

[32] It is surprising to find a reference to lesbianism (no. 1760) in such an early text, but comparatively minimal references to male homosexuality.

Symbolism serves to communicate what are perceived to be eternal truths to the audience and enables it to visualize quickly and effectively the world of the end-times. This issue is more critical in Islam than it is in Christianity because of the comparatively minimal artistic role of apocalypse in Islam. While it was possible to communicate themes of peace and verdancy in Islamically acceptable art forms—such as are apparent in the Dome of the Rock, and at Hishām's palace at Khirbet al-Mafjar (Jericho)[33]—depictions of the horrors of the apocalypse are much more difficult. One might speculate, therefore, that this gap is the driving force in the creation of a rich apocalyptic heritage such as Nu`aym. Primarily we can expect that this material would have been communicated orally, embellished and retold, much in the same way as sagas and epics would have been from later, more documented, periods in Islamic history.

One should always remember that the symbolism and imagery of *The Book of Tribulations* is ultimately the result of the frustrations and impotence of the northern Syrian Muslims during the later Umayyad and early `Abbāsid periods. Not only had they failed to conquer the Byzantine Empire during the Umayyad dynasty's rule, but by the time Nu`aym was collecting traditions, political power had long been stripped from them.[34] The Syrian Muslims were reduced to apocalyptic fantasies and memories of bygone glories.

Present-day Relevance of Nu`aym

There have been several points in the recent past when Nu`aym has attracted attention. The first one was during the Gulf War (1990–1) when a number of apocalyptic prophecies, usually those favoring the putative victory of Saddam Hussein (d. 2006) were published. With the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan in 1994–6 there was frequent mention of the "black banners from the east" family of traditions, heralding the possible re-establishment of the caliphate. Indeed, the

[33] See Hannah Taragan, *Patronut ve-omanut bi-armon ha-Umayyi bi-Yeriho* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben Zvi, 1997), pp. 85f.

[34] Paul Cobb, *White Banners: Contention in `Abbasid Syria, 750–880.* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2001), pp. 58–60, 85.

Taliban leader, Mullah `Umar (d. 2013), did take the caliphal title of *amīr al-mu'minīn* (Commander of the Believers), although it is not clear that he intended by that to make a pan-Islamic claim. The publication history of Nu`aym is reflected in these expectations, as it was edited by Suhayl Zakkar in 1993.

However, with the beginning of the Syrian Civil War (2011–present) significant use of the apocalyptic heritage began to be mainstream.[35] The Islamic State's proclamation of the caliphate on June 29, 2014 and the publication of its online magazine *Dābiq* has fueled massive interest in the apocalypse,[36] especially as so many of the names are taken from the apocalyptic literature.

Probably the most interesting revival is the name of Dābiq itself, which appears just once in the *ḥadīth* literature, in the authoritative collection of Muslim:

> The Hour will not arise until the Byzantines descend upon the A`māq (valleys) or in Dābiq, so an army from Medina will emerge against them, who are the best of the earth's people at that time. When they will line up for battle, the Byzantines will say: "Give way between us and those who were made captive from among us, so we can fight them," but the Muslims will say: "We will never make way between you and our brothers," so they will fight them. One third will retreat, who God will never accept their repentance, one third will be killed, who are the best martyrs (*shuhadā'*) in God's eyes, and one third will conquer, who will never be tempted (*yuftanuna*), then they will conquer Constantinople. While they are dividing the spoils, having hung up their swords on olive trees, Satan will shout among them: "The [false] Messiah is behind you, among your families!"[37]

[35] Nu`aym is cited and translated (partially) on a number of websites: http://anderbal.blogspot.com/2012/12/escatologia-Islamīca-otras-guerras-y.html (accessed January 16, 2016); http://www.inter-islam.org/faith/mahdi1.htm (accessed March 8, 2016); and see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QDq8SypJEpM.

[36] Issues of *Dābiq* are found at http://www.clarionproject.org/news/Islamīc-state-isis-isil-propaganda-magazine-dabiq#.

[37] Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, viii, pp. 175–6. Ironically, Mango and Scott (trans.), *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 624, does mention Dabiq (Dabekon).

The tradition then continues into the saga of the Dajjāl, of which below. Probably the most interesting element of this tradition is that it upends expectations. In Nu`aym we clearly see the process by which canonical traditions were created: there are a massive number of traditions circulating during the seventh and eighth centuries, products of the confusion created by the first conquests, the people movement out of Arabia, and the beginnings of conversion to Islam. During the ninth and tenth centuries these traditions are gradually winnowed out, with the usual paradigm being that whatever is most specific in the earlier traditions is accepted in the canonical versions in the most generic form. Alternatively, if there are names, then they are focused upon the Muslim holy figures and locations, not allowed to be spread out to numerous other people and sites. (An excellent example of this tendency is the comparison of the cities of refuge from the Dajjāl in Nu`aym to those in al-Bukhārī: while Nu`aym mentions numerous locations throughout Syria, Bukhārī only mentions Mecca and Medina.) From Nu`aym, this process is easily seen—the vast number of names and dates are ignored by the canonical collections.

However, here we have a rare example of Nu`aym being the more generic. The name of Dābiq, known from the historical and military literature of the Umayyad period as the staging ground for Muslim Arab armies invading the Byzantine Empire, is not mentioned in Nu`aym, although the alternate location of al-A`māq (the more generic one) is. The Islamic State has latched on to the only occurence of the name in all the tradition literature. Thus it is possible for a highly Salafi and literalist group to focus upon an apocalyptic location that is outside the general "holy sites" of Islam—Mecca, Medina and Jerusalem—in order to complete its fulfillment of the apocalypse.

The texts, the Research and the Translation

There are three published editions of Nu`aym, all of which have their deficiencies. The standard manuscript is BL Or 9449.[38] I have used the

[38] It is mentioned by Ḥajjī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-ẓunūn* (Beirut: Dār Ṣādir, n.d.), v, p. 128 as *Kitāb al-fitan wa-l-malāḥim.*

Suhayl Zakkar edition of 1993 as the basis for the translation below (marked SZ), with corrections from the manuscript (marked BL), and from the two other editions (marked MM and DKI). It seems probable on the basis of the text that we have that Nu`aym was in the process of completing *The Book of Tribulations*, but had not finished it. There are several sections that have minimal traditions, which seem to be waiting to be fleshed out. The final ten traditions of the book are rather a grab bag, and make one wonder whether the original intention was to complete the text with the lengthy "Apocalypse of Weeks."

Jorge Aguadé is the first scholar who made use of Nu`aym,[39] although F. Krenkow was the first who noticed his importance.[40] However, the two most significant scholars who have worked on Nu`aym have been Wilferd Madelung in a series of articles published during the 1980s,[41] and Suliman Bashear, also with a series of articles during the later 1980s and early 1990s.[42] Others since then have made use of Nu`aym, especially my *Studies in Muslim Apocalyptic* (2002), however, the text is rarely cited in the broader historical literature on the critical time-period of the seventh and eighth centuries. It is to publicize it that this translation has been made.

I have not repeated those traditions that are exact duplicates, but marked them **(1)**, **(2)**, which mean double and triple repetition, etc. Some very short traditions have been omitted if they have nothing new in content. Otherwise the translation is of the entire text. The goal of the translation has been to be as literal as possible, and in general to use the same translated words across the translation. However, because of the nuances of the Arabic, that is not always possible.

[39] *Messianismus zur Zeit der frühen Abbasiden: das Kitāb al-fitan des Nu'aim ibn Ḥammād* (Unpub. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Tübingen, 1978).

[40] F. Krenkow, "The book of strife (i.e., the *Kitāb al-fitan* of Nu`aim b. Ḥammad al-Marwazī)," *Islamic Culture* 3 (1929), pp. 561–8.

[41] "Apocalyptic Prophecies in Ḥimṣ during the Umayyad Age." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 41 (1986), pp. 141–85; "The Sufyānī." *Studia Islamīca* 63 (1986), pp. 5–48, among others.

[42] "Early Muslim Apocalyptic Materials." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1991, pp. 173–207; "Muslim Apocalypses and the Hour: a Case-Study in Traditional Interpretation." *Israel Oriental Studies* 13 (1993), pp. 75–99.

Place names are translated in the following manner: when the name is common, and commonly known in English (e.g., Constantinople, Mecca, Medina), then it is left in the English form throughout. The only exceptions to this rule are when there are sub-names such as Bizantiya (Byzantium) for Constantinople, and the variants on Jerusalem. When a name is reasonably certain, but exists in both an Arabic and a foreign version, then the foreign one is placed first while the Arabic one for a given section is placed in parentheses. When an identification is tenuous or unknown, then either the name or the translation of the name will be in the text, with the Arabic original in the notes for explanation. Most personal names are left in Arabic transliteration. Titles and nicknames are translated so that the reader can understand the nuances.

Probably the most controversial issue of names has to do with the Arabic regions of Syria. I have chosen to translate the name of *al-shām* as "Syria" even though its true translation should be "Greater Syria" (inclusive of the countries of Syria, parts of Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan and Israel, plus the Palestinian Territories). I have left *filasṭīn*, "Palestine," untranslated, as the region in the classical period was the southern half of the British mandate territory of Palestine (today Israel and the Palestinian Authority territories). Similarly, *al-urdunn*, "Jordan," is also untranslated, as the region in the classical period is that of northern Israel and southern Lebanon around the Sea of Galilee. Unfortunately, the fact is that the classical names Filasṭīn and al-Urdunn do not convey any meaning to the contemporary reader that would offset the misapprehensions conveyed by the use of the names Palestine and Jordan.