

TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

ARABIC LITERATURE: POETICS AND STYLISTICS. VII: “LIFE OF THE PROPHET” BY IBN ISHĀQ—IBN HISHĀM AS A MONUMENT OF MEDIEVAL ARABIC LITERATURE. ATTEMPT AT A LITERARY ANALYSIS

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The monument “Life of the Prophet” (*al-Sīra al-nabawiyya* [1]) by the two authors Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) and Ibn Hishām (d. 218/833 or 213/828), which is well known in world studies as historical source, has been studied to a much lesser degree as a literary monument.

For example, in the “Sources” by A. E. Krymskiĭ, an analysis of the work by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām occupies a significant place [2], but it is mainly of a biographical (when it concerns the authors of the work) and source study (when it describes the monument) nature.

In another work by the scholar, “The History of Islam”, in the section entitled “Instead of a fourth chapter. Sources and manuals for studying the story of Muḥammad”, the biographical and source study material is extremely reduced compared to the previous work [3], and the characteristic of *Sīra* as a literary monument is also absent. In the works by I. Iu. Krachkovskiĭ, the authors of “Life of the Prophet”—Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām—are mentioned repeatedly, but, as a rule, in connection with the discussion of issues that aren't directly related to the topic that concerns us.

In the “History of Arabic Literature” by I. M. Fil'shtinskiĭ, “Life of the Prophet” by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām is not specially studied, although its authors are mentioned more than once [4].

The most substantial attention to the work by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām is given by O. G. Bol'shakov in his “History of the Caliphate”, but exclusively, which is quite natural, as a historical source [5].

A special study of literature analysis of *Sīra* has not been made yet by western European and Arab scholars. In the well known study by H. A. R. Gibb “Muslim Historiography”, the monument is merely characterised as a historical source [6]. A recent work by G. Schoeler sums up, in a sense, the study of “Life of the Prophet” in the framework of historiography [7]. Judging by the re-

view, the same goes for the overall direction of the book by M. 'A. Murād, published in 2001, where he subjects to a critical analysis the historical information contained in the “Life of the Prophet” by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām [8].

We are far from aspiring to any kind of complete presentation of the works of this kind. Our goal is different: we aim merely to show by some examples the main tendency in the study of the monument. As important exceptions against this background we should mention a number of articles, published in the works of the colloquium “Life of the Prophet Muḥammad” (1983) in Strasbourg [9] and especially the corresponding sections of the Cambridge “History of Arabic Literature” [10], where the essential elements of the approach to the “Life of the Prophet” by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām as a literary monument are outlined.

The utility and even necessity of this approach, which does not at all conflict with everything that has been done in the historiographical study of the monument, is determined, in our opinion, by its peculiar nature, which we should say a few preliminary words about.

The “Life of the Prophet” by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām has long since been looked upon as an historical source and, of course, first of all as a source of information about the life and work of the founder of Islam. And for almost as long, the first of the authors—and if we bear in mind the attitude towards Ibn Ishāq in al-Madīna, when he had not yet started on his work and was known merely as an expert on *ḥadīth*, then even longer—has been criticised precisely as a gatherer of historical information and *ḥadīth*, and then as the author of an historical work as well. It is well known that many *muḥaddith* doubted the authenticity of *ḥadīth* told by Ibn Ishāq. Mālik b. Anas (713—795), the head of the *ḥadīth* scholars of al-Madīna and the eponymous founder of the

Mālik theological and legal school, did everything to discredit Ibn Ishāq and called him a “liar” [11]. Among his critics one of the harshest was Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (780—855), the eponymous founder of the Ḥanbal school in jurisprudence, who used to say of Ibn Ishāq that the latter was “a great liar” (*kathīr al-tadlīs jiddān*) [12].

And indeed, what could the strict *ḥadīth* scholars think of *ḥadīth* cited by Ibn Ishāq with an *isnād* as follows:

“The Messenger of Allāh, bless him Allāh and greet him, as it became known to me, used to say: ‘There hasn't been a single man, that I called upon to adopt Islam who didn't halt, wavered and hesitated, except Abū Bakr b. Abī Quḥāfa: when I explained to him what Islam was, he [immediately accepted it], casting away indecision and doubts’” [13].

Or how could one accept *ḥadīth* with no *isnād* at all:

“The Messenger of Allāh said: ‘Every mourner lies, except the one who mourns over Sa'd b. Mu'adh’” [14].

Still even if an *isnād* was present, Ibn Ishāq's commentary could produce a negative reaction. For example, a *ḥadīth* like this:

“Ibn Ishāq said: ‘Thawr b. Yazīd told me, he heard from Khālid b. Ma'add al-Kalā'i, a man of mature age, that they asked the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, about Dhū al-Qarnayn [15], and he answered: ‘It was an angel who measured the earth under the bottom [16] using ropes’... Ibn Ishāq said: ‘Allāh knows better if the Messenger of Allāh said it or not, may Allāh bless and greet him. But, if he said that, then it is true’” [17].

This kind of citation could hardly meet with approval of the *ḥadīth* scholars of al-Madīna. The use of other materials in Ibn Ishāq's work quite often occurs completely anonymously or with a kind of references to the source that could only cast doubt upon their reliability. Let us cite some instances.

“Ibn Ishāq said: ‘One of those, who communicates the messages, told me...’” [18].

“One learned man told me that when prayer was imposed as a duty upon the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, Jibrīl came to him...”

“Ibn Ishāq said: ‘I was told by one of my friends, whose honesty I do not question, who learned it from 'Abd Allāh b. Abī Nujayh, and the latter learned it from Mujāhid b. Jubayr Abū al-Ḥajjāj, who cited 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās, and by another [man], whose honesty I [also] do not question, who learned it from [the same] 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās’” [19].

“Ibn Ishāq said: ‘Some man from bal'ajlān [tribe] told me that he had been told that Jibrīl—may peace be above him!—went to the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, and told him...’” [20].

“Ibn Ishāq said: ‘One learned man told me that the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, called 'Alī the Man of Dust (Abū Turāb) because if he gets angry with Fāṭima, he doesn't reproach her or say a bad word to her, he just takes a handful of dust and pours it over his head. So that when the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, saw him covered in dust, he knew for certain: 'Alī had got angry with Fāṭima, and simply asked him: ‘What happened, the Man of Dust?’” [21].

Things were no better, in the opinion of medieval scholars, with the verses that Ibn Ishāq included in the “Life of the Prophet”. In his time, Ibn Hishām, when describing the principles of his work on the writing of Ibn Ishāq, declared that he omitted the verses and *qaṣīdas* that “no poetry connoisseur recognises” [22]. Later, Ibn Ishāq's lack of criticality in the selection of verses for *Sīra* was noted in the philological tradition. For example, Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī (756—846 or 847) says that Ibn Ishāq included in the “Biography” “verses by people who never wrote them” [23].

Thus, according to the above-cited authoritative evidence of medieval and the conclusions of the contemporary scholars, we can establish that: (i) *Sīra* is a historical source, but not a rigorous historical source; (ii) *Sīra* contains many *ḥadīth*, but it cannot be considered a rigorous collection of *ḥadīth*; (iii) there is a considerable number of verses in *Sīra*, but in its value as a source of authentic texts it is inferior to the well known medieval anthologies of poetry. If we conducted a further review, we would note that: (iv) *Sīra* contains a considerable number of various elements peculiar to hagiographic works, but it cannot be qualified as a hagiographic monument which fully meets the requirements of the genre [24]. So what is it? It's neither this, nor that, nor the third, nor the fourth; and at the same time it's this and it's that and the third and so on together. A question arises: how can we then explain the undoubtedly important place it has occupied over many centuries in the Arabic-Muslim world, and in the whole Muslim culture in general? At first we are forced to content ourselves with a simple statement: *Sīra* is a monument of medieval Arabic written tradition with special characteristics which were precisely what ensured its success, and so it should probably be judged by special criteria.

In 1926 the well known Egyptian writer and scholar Ṭāhā Ḥusayn, undoubtedly with the specific handling of historical information in the work by Ibn Ishāq in mind, compared the latter to Alexandre Dumas [25]. The comparison with Alexandre Dumas at the time when it was expressed had rather a disparaging connotation: *Sīra* by Ibn Ishāq could not be regarded as something serious, but as *fiction*. However, in our case this comparison is shaky, as the work and the authors in question are separated from the prolific French novelist by more than a thousand years (even 1,100 years from Ibn Ishāq). But the fact of comparing authors of the 8th and 9th centuries with Alexandre Dumas Père—despite all the possible exaggeration—should arrest the attention of researchers. It is interesting at least because a connoisseur and expert of Arabic classics noticed in the “Life of the

Prophet" by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām the first distinct signs of *fictionalization of a historical work at such an early stage of the development of medieval Arabic literature*. This phenomenon merits special consideration and is one of the main reasons for raising the issue expressed in the title of our article.

With several examples of fictionalization of an historical narration in the text of *Sīra* we will try to show the grounds on which Ṭāhā Ḥusayn could have constructed his comparison of Ibn Ishāq with Alexandre Dumas.

In the narration about the battle at Badr there is the following story with typical "fictional" details.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'I was told by Ḥusayn b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abbās who heard it from 'Ikrima, a freedman of Ibn 'Abbās who said: «Abū Rafī', a freedman of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, said: 'I was a slave of al-'Abbās b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, when Islam came to our house. Both al-'Abbās and Umm al-Faḍl adopted Islam. I also adopted Islam. But al-'Abbās feared his fellow tribesmen, and didn't want to have a fight with them, and that why he concealed his conversion, for all of his large property was distributed among his congeners. And then the battle at Badr took place. Abū Lahab, who didn't take part in it, sent al-'Āsī b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra instead of himself. And others acted in the same way. Everyone who didn't take the field, put forward someone else instead of themselves. But when the news came about the Quraysh losses in the battle at Badr, Abū Lahab was humiliated and shamed by Allāh, and pride and strength awoke in our souls'.

Abū Rafī' continued: 'I am a weak man. That day I was making vessels in the tent [spring] of Zamzam. So, I sat there and did my work, and near me sat Umm al-Faḍl. Both of us, I swear to Allāh, rejoiced at the news we heard. All of a sudden Abū Lahab appeared, barely able to walk. He came up and sat near the curtain of the tent, so that we had our backs to each other divided by the curtain. No sooner had he sat down than people started shouting: "Here comes Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib"...

Abū Rafī' told us then: 'Abū Lahab called to the arrived: "Come to me, I swear to Allāh, you bring news, don't you?". Abū Sufyān sat by his side, and the rest remained standing around. Abū Lahab asked: "Tell me, nephew, how did it all happen?" The latter replied: "I swear to Allāh, as soon as came together, we let them walk all over us, and they killed [26], whoever they wanted, captured whoever they wanted, but, I swear to Allāh, I don't blame anyone, because we fought with bright faced men [27] on piebald horses that raced between heaven and earth. I swear to Allāh, they left nothing after them, and no one could resist them".

Abū Rafī' added: 'I lifted the curtain of the tent with my hand and said: "But I swear to Allāh, they were angels!" Abū Lahab lifted his hand and gave me a heavy slap in the face. I started contradicting him. Then he attacked me, threw me to the ground, kneeled on my breast and started beating me unmercifully. I, with my lack of strength, could hardly beat him. At that point Umm al-Faḍl sprang up, grabbed one of the poles that served as support

to the tent and with all her might hit Abū Lahab on the head, wounding him dreadfully. And then she said: "You thought you don't have to reckon with him since his master is not near?" Abū Lahab got up ashamed and hurried away. After that, I swear to Allāh, he lived only seven days. Allāh struck him with a sore which killed him'" [28].

Here we could also mention the subtle psychological description of the feeling of jealousy of Muḥammad's wife — 'Ā'isha. When the Muslims started dividing the loot after another successful campaign, among the female captives was a very beautiful woman Juwayriyya bint al-Ḥārith. About her 'Ā'isha said:

"She was a beautiful, very attractive woman; she touched the heart of everyone who looked at her... I swear to Allāh, the moment I saw her in the doorway of my room, I already hated her and understood that the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, would see in her what I saw".

The presentiment didn't deceive 'Ā'isha: Muḥammad right away proposed to Juwayriyya bint al-Ḥārith to be his wife [29].

Worthy of mentioning in this respect are also the descriptions in *Sīra* of the conflicting feelings in 'Umar's soul, when he pondered right after the prophet's funeral whether it would be worth it or not to address the Muslims before Abū Bakr, that is to lay claim to become, according to unwritten protocol, the first successor of Muḥammad [30], and many other episodes.

In *Sīra* are also found short but very accurate portrait descriptions of characters which answer even the contemporary idea of fiction and don't have established precedents in the early narrative tradition of the Arabs. Let us cite just one example. Here is the description of Muḥammad's worst enemy — Abū Jahl:

"He was a feeble man, with a pointed face, a sharp tongue, a quick eye" [31].

To conclude the discourse on this topic, let us give an example of a reinterpretation which is quite rare, but revealing for Ibn Ishāq's—Ibn Hishām's *Sīra*, not of an historical report, but of a quote from the Holy Book of Muslims for the sake of creating, as we would say nowadays, an artistic effect.

"Ibn Hishām said: 'I was told by *one of the learned men*, that, when 'Abbās b. Mirdās came to the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, the latter asked him: «Was it you who said:

'And my loot and the loot [of my horse] 'Ubayd is divided between al-Aqra' and 'Uyayna'».

Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq corrected him: «...between 'Uyayna and al-Aqra'». To this the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, objected: «But it is the same thing». And then Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq said: «I testify that you are like Allāh said you were: 'We did not teach him verses, and it is of no use to him'»" [32].

The dialogue between Abū Bakr and the prophet shows that the latter did not attach significance to the important elements of Arabic verse (the rearrangement of the words at the end of the line breaks the metre and rhyme). And then, to show Muḥammad's blunder, Abū Bakr, as a joke, gave a quotation from the Qur'ān, which in the Muslim Sacred Book, as we will see a little later, has other connotations.

As we said above, *Sīra* is a monument that is characterized by special features that require developing special criteria for their adequate assessment. But before we try to establish these criteria, we will say a few words about the constituent elements of the monument, and then we will try to determine the reasons for the fictionalization of some of these elements.

The prosaic elements of *Sīra* include: (i) quotations from the Qur'ān; (ii) passages with so-called *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the reasons of the sending down of the Qur'ānic *āyāt* and *sūras*); (iii) elements of *tafsīr* (interpretation) of Qur'ānic *sūras* and *āyāt*; (iv) *ḥadīth*; (v) the messenger's speeches, official documents; (vi) various kinds of by name enumerations (lists); (vii) narration about "miraculous" events and phenomena; (viii) stories (*akhbār*); (ix) historical legends.

Poetical elements in *Sīra* are represented by: (x) poetic pieces of various size and purpose.

Many of the elements listed break up into smaller constituents on more detailed analysis. Thus, for instance, poetical extracts, according to their purpose, can be tentatively divided into the following groups.

I. Verses as extra-plot elements of *Sīra*

1. Verses as an object of philological argumentation about the questionable authorship of the verses.
2. Verses as "genealogical" evidence.
3. Verses as philological evidence (lexicological, grammatical and so on).
4. Verses as toponymic evidence.

II. Verses as a constituent element of the plot

1. Verses as quasi-historical evidence.
2. Verses as historical evidence (the reflection of intra-tribal and intertribal struggle; religious propaganda and conflicts for religious reasons and so on).

III. Poetry and revelation

Let us start our analysis with long-established facts concerning the questionable authorship of many verses in *Sīra* (I.1).

Without going into details of this question, let us observe that philological argumentation by the authors of *Sīra* and other people about the authorship of various verses create compositional discrepancies and disrupt the orderliness of the plot organisation of the narrative.

Let us give an example.

"And 'Alī b. Ṭālib, may Allāh be pleased with him, made a *rajaz* on that day:

They are not equal, the one who builds mosques,
Working hard, rising to his feet and squatting,
And the one who shuns [construction] dust.

Ibn Hishām said: 'I asked several connoisseurs of poetry for their opinion of this *rajaz*, and each of them answered: «We were told that 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib made this *rajaz*, but it is unknown if it was him who made it or someone else'" [33].

The verses in *rajaz* meter, attributed to 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib, are cited as an illustration to a particular event, which is mentioned in *Sīra*, and in that way they serve the interests of the narrative, although the philological commentary by Ibn Hishām about the authorship of the verses interrupts the description of this event.

Let us cite another example, characteristic of the work by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām: after quoting one of *qaṣīdas* within the limits of the extensive narration about the battle at Badr, Ibn Hishām argues that "this is the most authentic (*aṣaḥḥ*) *qaṣīda*" about this event [34], that is, in other words, he maintains that other works on this topic may be apocryphal. This can be assumed because before that Ibn Hishām many times noted the doubtful character of other pieces on this topic, every time interrupting the narrative about the battle itself [35].

We have noted elements of group (I.1) in *Sīra* by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām at least 50 times; they bring it together with literary-critical works (anthologies, collections of verses of one or another tribe), filled with similar philological commentaries.

Let us now consider the verses of *Sīra* that are cited as "genealogical" evidence (I.2).

Let us cite an example.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'Kḥuzā'a said: «We are banū 'Amr b. 'Amir from Yemen'».

Ibn Hishām said: 'Kḥuzā'a say: «We are banū 'Amr b. Rabī'a b. Hāritha b. 'Amr b. 'Amir b. Hāritha b. Imru' al-Qays b. Ṭha'laba b. Māzin b. al-Asad b. al-Gḥawṣ'. Their mother is Kḥindif, according to what I was told by Abū 'Ubayda and other scholars. They also say: 'Kḥuzā'a banū Hāritha b. 'Amr b. 'Amir'. And they were called Kḥuzā'a because they separated (*takhāzza'u*) from the children of 'Amr b. 'Amir, when they left Yemen headed for Syria; they stopped in Marr al-Zahrān and settled there. It was said by 'Awn b. Ayyūb al-Anṣārī, one of banū 'Amr b. Sawād b. Ghannam b. Ka'b b. Salama from al-Kḥazraj [tribe] in the times of Islam:

'When we came down into Marr valley, Kḥuzā'a separated from us with the herds of horses.

They guarded every *wādī* in Tihāma and defended themselves with solid spears and sharp swords..." [36].

In the text of the monument we have counted about 20 poetic examples that could be ascribed to group I.2. In all cases without exception they play the role of accessory material and do not serve the main purposes of the narrative.

Group I.3 — philological evidence (lexicological, grammatical and so on), that the authors of *Sīra* draw upon with different purposes.

A. Explanation of difficult Qur'ānic words with specification of various meanings of one or another cited

word, idiomatic expression and so on with references to the corresponding poetic texts: more than 110 extracts.

Thus, in one of the cases the Qur'anic expression *li yuwāṭi'u* ("to agree" [37]) is explained. In poetical theory it means repetition of a particular word in the capacity of a rhyme. A corresponding example is given from *urjūza* (a work written in *rajaz* meter) by al-'Ajjāj with the rhyming word *al-mursali* [38].

B. Explanation of difficult and terminologically significant words in the reports about the prophet Muḥammad and *hadīth* with reference to the corresponding poetic text, sometimes with phonetic commentary.

Let us give an example.

"The Messenger of Allāh every year spent a month in solitude and meditation on the [mountain] of Ḥirā', that was how Quraysh in the times of paganism (*jāhiliyya*) showed their piety (*taḥannuth*)"... "Ibn Hishām says: 'Arabs say *taḥannuth* and *taḥannuf*, meaning *ḥanifiyya* and replacing letters «th» and «f», the same way they say *jadath* and *jadaf*, meaning grave'". "Ru'ba b. al-'Ajjāj said:

'If my stones were near the graves (*ajdāf*)... — meaning *ajdāth*...' [39].

Let us cite another example.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'Dhu al-Khalaṣa was the [idol] of Daws, al-Khath'am, Bajīla and those Arabs, who were in their area, in Tabāla.

Ibn Hishām said: 'They pronounce it also Dhu al-Khuluṣa. A man from the Arabs said:

'If you, oh Dhu al-Khuluṣ, would crave revenge,
And your *shaykh* lay in the ground,
You wouldn't stand the false ban on killing enemies».

He said: «His father was killed, and he wanted to avenge him; he came to Dhu al-Khalaṣa and started to tell his fortune by arrows, and an arrow fell for him interdicting it, then it was that he uttered these *bayts*. And some people ascribe these verses to Imru' al-Qays b. Ḥujra al-Kindī...' [40].

As we see from this example, commentary may include several aspects at the same time (in this case: phonetics, commentary to the legend and argumentation about the authorship).

C. Explanation of difficult words in the cited in *Sīra* utterances by different people with the help of poetic evidence.

As an example we will cite poetic evidence for the explanation of a difficult word in one of the utterances cited in *Sīra*.

"And then Abū Jahl said: 'Why are you crying for him — insignificant (*qull*) among other insignificant'. Ibn Hishām said: '*Qull* means *one* [in the sense of *insignificant amount* — A. K.]. Labīd b. Rabī'a says: 'All the children of a noble woman will have one (*qull*) destiny, even if there will be a lot of them'" [41].

Group I.3, by our estimate, includes more than 120 poetic extracts. As the cited examples show, they

played an accessory part and were not directly a plot element.

Let us turn now to the last group in the first subdivision, in which verses are used as toponymic evidence (I.4).

Let us give an example.

"Ibn Hishām said: 'Abū 'Ubayda told me that Bakka is the name of a valley in Mecca, because they *yatabākkūna* in it, i. e. they crowd around. And he quoted to me:

'If your partner is suffering from the fierce heat at the watering place,
Then leave him, so that [the camels] rush [to the water] and begin crowding around».

That is, do not interfere with him, until his camels rush [to the water], in other words, until he brings them to the water and they start crowding around. This is the place of the [Holy] House and Mosque. These two *bayts* belong to 'Aman b. Ka'b b. 'Amr b. Sa'd b. Zayd Manāt b. Tamīm'" [42].

We have counted in *Sīra* about 10 cases of the use of verses as toponymic evidence; as the verses in the other groups of this subdivision, they have an accessory function in the monument under examination.

Verses as a constituent component of the plot. Verses as quasi-historical evidence (II.1).

Let us cite an example.

"Ibn Hishām said: '...They say that al-Mustawghir lived 330 years, in all the Muḍar [tribe] he lived longer than anyone else. It was he who said:

'I got tired of life and its duration; the number of the years of my life amounted to hundreds:

After the first hundred followed another two, and many months increased the number of my years [even more]»...

Some people attribute these *bayts* to Zuhayr b. Janāb al-Kalbi'" [43].

The verses serve as a confirmation of the legendary report, i. e. they serve the interests of the plot; at the same time they are also an object of argument about the authorship.

We have counted about 110 similar extracts in *Sīra*. The information given in it is mostly half-legendary and, as a rule, confirms what is said in the prosaic text. On the whole this can be considered to be an essential part of the plot.

II.2. Verses as historical evidence (the reflection of intra-tribal and intertribal struggle; religious propaganda and conflicts because of religion and so on).

Let us cite some examples.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'I was told by a man who I trust that the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, said, when he was in Medina: «Who will bring 'Ayyāsh b. Abī Rabī' and Hishām b. al-'Āṣ to me?» Then al-Walīd b. al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra said: «I will bring them to you, oh Messenger of Allāh». And he went to Mecca and secretly got into the city. There he met a woman, who was carrying food, and asked her: «Where are you going, oh

slave of God?» — She said: «I am going to these two prisoners» (meaning 'Ayyāsh and Hishām). He followed her in order to find out where they were kept. They were imprisoned in a house without a roof. At night he climbed to them [up the wall], took a stone and put it under their chains, struck them with his sword and cut them. That is why they called his sword «the Master of stone». Then he put them on his camel and took them away. At this moment he tripped over and hurt his finger, and it started bleeding. Then he said:

'But you are only a bleeding finger,
and on Allāh's way, what did you meet?' [44].

Let us give two more poetic examples.

"And when the warriors met and approached each other, Hind bint 'Utba and the women that were with her, stood behind the fighting, took up tambourines and started beating them, inspiring their warriors to fight. And Hind sang, among other calls:

'Courage, oh sons of 'Abd al-Dār!
Courage, oh you, defending the rear!
Cut with a thin sword!'

And she also sang:

'If you go forward, we will take you in our arms and lay out small pillows,
But if you move back, we will part with you as with odious people'" [45].

A significant place in the group II.2 is occupied by works about battles among Muslims and their enemies. An important property of the last subgroup is that Ibn Ishāq included in it verses by both, and they, naturally, often contain directly opposite assessments of the events that took place. Thus, here *Sīra* deviates from the pronounced pro-Muslim bias of the prosaic narration about the same battles. In prosaic passages "polytheists" receive detailed descriptions, give remarks and so on, in short, they have a "voice", but not for a single moment will the reader doubt on whose side the truth is. Verses are quite another matter: in them both Muslims, and their opponents state their position on equal terms, and the author of "Life" takes the stand of a would-be exterior observer, a passionless chronicler of the events. Let us cite an example from the selection of verses about the battle at Badr.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'From the poetic works about the battle at Badr, that the participants of it from the both sides have exchanged, we will mention first of all verses by Ḥamza b. 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib (Ibn Hishām said: 'The majority of people expert in poetry do not recognize [their authenticity], as well as verses made in response to them):

'Look, a deed not witnessed before has been done:
For the first time people were led — and brought [46] — to death

(Considering that death has certain reasons)

By their adherence to disobedience and lack of faith!
The day before they started out for Badr altogether
And became hostages of the well of Badr.

While we were looking only for a caravan and nothing else,

They set out to meet us, and we met as the Fate had willed.

And when we met, we had no choice,
But to turn dark spears against them
And to unsheathe white smashing swords,
Blinding with their shine.
And we left lost 'Utba to lie on the ground,
And threw Shayba along with the other dead into a big well;

And 'Amr lay among the Quraysh defenders,
And the mourners tore their shirts, bewailing 'Amr;
The shirts of noble women of the Lu'ayy b. Ghālib [clan],

That belong to the noblest families by Fihr.

These people were killed, when they were deluded
And they abandoned the banner, that wasn't destined for victory.

The banner of delusion — Iblīs led people, who went with it

And he betrayed them: for vile Iblīs is inclined to treachery.

And he told them, when he saw the end of the battle clearly:

'I don't care about you, and today I don't want to wait any longer,

Because I see, what you don't see, and I

Am afraid of Allāh's punishment, and Allāh is powerful!

He pushed them towards death, and they died
Although he knew what they didn't know.

On the day of the battle at the Well there were a thousand of them, and

Three hundred of us, and we were like white camels.

And among us were also Allāh's warriors, when he with their help

Supported us at a certain point [of the battle];

And, having joined our ranks, Jibrīl together with them
Doomed our enemies to certain death [47].

Al-Ḥārith b. Hishām al-Mughīra replied to him in the following verses:

'«Oh my beloved fellow-tribesmen, what [suffering I go through] because of

Parting with you and the sorrow and fever in my breast,
Because of the tears running from my eyes abundantly,
that are like

Pearls that have fallen from the thread of the one stringing them,

Tears shed over the hero, full of superior merits,

When he fell, having become a hostage at the well of Badr [48].

Oh 'Amr, do not move away from the relative,

From the table companion, a man of generous nature.
And if it happens that people turn away from you,

Then it will certainly be that the Fate will go otherwise.
For in former times you often made

Them walk down the rough ways of shame.

If only I am alive, I will not leave you, oh 'Amr, un-avenged,

And I will not spare my brother, or brother-in-law.

And I will kill as many people from their noble Clans, as they killed among my people.

Weren't they deluded by people without kin that they gathered, but we are
Noble people from tribes descending from Fihir.
Oh Lu'ayy clan, guard your sanctuary
And your deities, do not leave them to the mercy of 'the Most Glorious'.

Your forefathers inherited them from each other, and you

Inherited foundations and the House with roof and curtain.

For what reason had the 'Gentle' wished your death, Do not give him, oh Ghālib clan, forgiveness!

Show some zeal in fighting the enemies, help each other,

Be together in the days of sorrow and severe trials. So may you succeed in avenging your brother,

But you are nought, if you don't take revenge on 'Amr's murderers,

Taking in your hands the swords like lightning, which Will take off enemies' heads and show new glorious deeds.

On their blades [you can see] the likeness of ants' tracks [49],

On the day when these swords are unsheathed against haughty enemies'.

Ibn Hishām said: 'We replaced two words in the last *qaṣīda*, that were in the Ibn Ishāq's version, with the following words: *al-fakhr* at the end of the *bayt* [No. 10] and *famā li ḥalīmīn* at the beginning of the *bayt* [No. 12], because the poet offends the Prophet with them, may Allāh bless and greet him" [50].

The last two works attract special attention. But before we turn to them, we should say a few words about the rules according to which such "twin" works were written. In the "reply" verses the rhyme (the overwhelming majority of medieval Arabic poetic works are monorhymes), the meter, many motives and individual marked figurative elements of the work to which the "reply" was written were always repeated. In the "reply", which in the medieval tradition was called *naqīda* (plural *naqā'id*), which literally means "refutation", the author entered into a "competition" in absentia with the poet who initiated the poetic duel. And it is important to note that the contenders in the eyes of the judges (if we exclude the fellow-tribesmen of each of them) initially had equal rights [51].

In accordance with the last statement Ibn Ishāq and Ibn Hishām, citing *naqā'id* about the battle at Badr, abstract their minds, as it were, from the position of their authors in the struggle between Islam and paganism. Thanks to this circumstance, it is from verses, and not from the prosaic passages of *Sīra*, that the contemporary researcher can often get a more or less complete idea about what Muḥammad's enemies said. In these circumstances Ibn Hishām's remark about him having replaced some words in the reply by an enemy of the Muslims also becomes valuable historical and literary evidence [52].

In all cases like this (and the number of them is great, because Ibn Ishāq also furnishes the narrative

about several other battles with selections of verses by conflicting sides) the verses without doubt considerably influence the plot side of the monument.

Altogether in group II.2 we have counted about 400 poetic quotations.

III. A large body of material in *Sīra* is made up of verses and corresponding prosaic passages that could be conventionally joined under the heading "Poetry and revelation". This material also has a direct bearing on the subject of our article, but it applies to both groups, as it were: it can be characterized both as an accessory element, and as an immediate constituent of the plot of the monument (as historical and other kind of *evidence*). The second characteristic property of this material is that prosaic passages, where this subject is touched upon, need to be examined along with the mixed (verses and prose) and poetic segments proper of the text, because they form an ideological context, out of which it is hardly possible to correctly interpret the segments mentioned.

After making these observations, let us try to outline the preliminary division of this material.

III.1. Prosaic reports about the polemics of Muḥammad with the pagans of Mecca, who claimed that he wasn't the prophet and the messenger of Allāh, but a soothsayer (*kāhin*) and a poet (*shā'ir*).

As we will see later, this topic has a direct connection with the theoretical understanding of the problem of fictionalization of the poetic components of the monument.

This topic arises in *Sīra* many times. Let us consult some examples and references.

"Several Quraysh gathered around al-Walīd b. al-Mughīra, who was of the same age of them, when the time for the pilgrimage had come, and the latter told them: 'Oh Quraysh, the time of pilgrimage has come, when deputations of Arabs will come to you, who have heard of this man of yours'. So stick to one opinion about him, and not to different opinions, do not disprove each other, do not contradict each other. They replied: 'Then you, oh Abū 'Abd Shams, tell us and determine for us the opinion that we will express'. He said: 'No, you express your thoughts, and I will listen'. They said: 'We say that he is *kāhin*'. — 'No, I swear to Allāh, he is not *kāhin*. We have seen *kāhins*, he doesn't have the whisper or *saj'* of *kāhins*'. — 'We say he is possessed (*majnūn*)'. — 'No, he is not possessed, we have seen the possessed and come to know them, he doesn't choke from suffocation like they do, his limbs don't tremble and he doesn't mumble incoherent words like they do'. — 'But we say he is also a *shā'ir*'. — 'No, he is not a *shā'ir*, we have become acquainted with all of the poetry — *rajaz*, *hazaj*, *qarīd*, *maqḥūḍ* and *mabsūt*, and [what he says] is not poetry'. — 'But we say he is also a magician (*sāhir*)'. — 'No, he is not a magician, we have seen magicians and their magic, but he doesn't blow like they do, and he doesn't have their knots [53]'. — 'So what should we say, O Abū 'Abd Shams?' — 'I swear to Allāh, his speech is sweet, his origin is sound as a palm tree root, his branch is fruitful... and you won't say anything about this except that which will be considered false. And the most exact words about him would be if you said that he

was a magician, who came with words that are magic, with which he separates one man from his father, another from his brother, a third one from his wife, a fourth from his tribe" [54].

The authors of *Sīra* return to this topic several more times, and every time the accusations against the messenger or judgements about him (as in the extract just quoted) are built on whether or not he is a *kāhin*, *majnūn*, *shā'ir* and *sāhir* [55].

These episodes carry us right into the centre of discussing the problem of general (allegedly critical) attitude of the Qur'ān towards poets and poetry, which is given various explanations. For an examination of this issue we need to analyse the role of *shā'ir*, which is most often seen as a common poet, in pre-Islamic and early Islamic Arabia.

The name *shā'ir* is a substantivized participle from the verb *shā'ra*, which has the first meaning of 'alima' ("to know"). In the Qur'ān this verb is used with the meaning "to know intuitively". See, for example:

"They would trick God and the believers, and only themselves they deceive, and they are not aware (*mā yash'urūn*)... Truly, they are the workers of corruption but they are not aware (*lā yash'urūn*). When it is said to them, 'Believe as the people believe', they say, 'Shall we believe, as fools believe?' Truly, they are the foolish ones, but they do not know (*lā ya'lamūn*) [56]".

Thus, the name of *shā'ir* designates "someone who knows intuitively" [57], which is roughly what can be designated by a concept from Russian culture — *vedun*.

Shā'ir was connected, according to the ideas of pre-Islamic Arabs, to supernatural beings — *jinn*s and *shayṭans* [58], which were seen as his mediators and inspirers in contacting the other world.

The aim of this article requires us to examine in greater detail the thesis about distinguishing in Islamic doctrine the nature of inspiration of pre-Islamic and early Islamic *shā'irs*, on the one hand, and prophetic inspiration on the other. If we jump ahead somewhat, we will say that this analysis is bound to bring us to an understanding of the reasons of the radical reconsideration of *shā'irs* function and their new status they gained on the Arabian Peninsula after the coming of Islam.

The propagation of Islam in Mecca had raised this problem acutely. Many of Muḥammad's contemporaries saw his similarity to *kāhins* (soothsayers) and *shā'irs*. At first, even Muḥammad himself, when the revelations started to come to him, got scared that he was becoming a *shā'ir* or *kāhin*. In the Qur'ān there are typical, in this respect, testimonies of "sinners" (the pagans of Mecca):

"...for when it was said to them, 'There is no god but God', they were ever waxing proud, saying, 'What, shall we forsake our gods for a poet possessed (*shā'ir majnūn*)?' [59].

And a firm denial of Muḥammad's ability to make verses:

"We have not taught him poetry (*shā'ir*); it is not seemly for him" [60].

It is appropriate to give here another quotation from the Qur'ān, where just as categorically it is denied that there is any similarity whatsoever between his preaching and the words of *shā'irs* and *kāhins*:

"...it is the speech of a noble Messenger. It is not the speech of a poet (*shā'ir*) (little do you believe) nor the speech of a soothsayer (*kāhin*) (little do you remember). A sending down from the Lord of all Being" [61].

And, at last, let us quote well known *āyāt*, in which the attitude of the Qur'ān strictly to *shā'irs* is defined:

"And the poets (*shu'arā'* is the plural from *shā'ir*) — the perverse follow them; hast thou not seen how they wander in every valley and how they say that which they do not? Save those that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God oft, and help themselves after being wronged" [62].

With precisely the last *āyāt* in mind, European scholars of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century pointed to the negative attitude of the Qur'ān, Muḥammad and his closest associates towards *shā'irs* and poetry on the whole, which was accounted for, in their opinion, by the fact that poetry was the "incarnation of paganism", and could raise disapproval out of fear that it might rouse intertribal, religious and other clashes again; researchers have also noted that an exception was made only "for poets of Muslim tendency" [63].

These ideas can be expanded and made more exact today. As R. Blachère correctly observes, the Qur'ān virtually contains no prohibition of poetry as such anywhere (and the above given quotations confirm it). The information from *ḥadīth* and other sources (regardless of the degree of their reliability), in view of their contradictoriness, also do not allow them to be used to demonstrate an aversion of the prophet, his family and his circle to all poetry in general [64]. Indeed, on the other hand, for many believers, who cited authoritative sayings, love for poetry was incompatible with their faith. "It is better to have a stomach full of pus, than poetry" — this was what Muḥammad said, according to a *ḥadīth* [65]. However, on the other hand, *ḥadīth* put the aphorism into Muḥammad's mouth: "Wisdom comes from poetry" [66].

According to *ḥadīth*, the prophet highly regards and also asks to be read to him verses by poets of the pre-Islamic and early Islamic period because they are full of wisdom similar to wisdom of the new religion, and for other reasons [67].

Thus, the evidence cited gives a rather contradictory picture. Let us try to examine it. Let us single out the most important things for us from what is said in the Qur'ān about *shā'irs* and verses. It stresses the difference between "words of a noble messenger" and words of *shā'ir* and *kāhin* (1); Muḥammad's inability to make verses (*shā'ir*) and the incompatibility of this ability with his status of prophet (2); it is maintained that *shā'irs*

"say that which they do not" (3); except for *shā'irs* "that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God oft" (4).

From the theses listed the clearest are Nos. 1—2 and 4. The idea of the emphasis on the difference between words of a messenger and words of *kāhins* and *shā'irs*, according to medieval and contemporary authors, lies in demonstrating that Muḥammad and his preaching do not have anything to do with the prophecies of either of them. The interpretation of the reservation about pious *shā'irs* creates no serious problems. An authoritative Sunnite commentator of the Qur'ān al-Bayḍāwī (d. between 1284 and 1316), specifically explains that *shā'irs*, "that believe, and do righteous deeds, and remember God oft", can also refer to 'Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥa, Ḥassān b. Thābit, Ka'b b. Zuhayr and Ka'b b. Mālik. His commentary al-Bayḍāwī supported with a reference to a *hadīth*, according to which the prophet said, encouraging Ḥassān b. Thābit, who spoke in support of Muḥammad and the followers of the new dogma: "Read [verses] and the Holy Spirit (*rūh al-qudus*) will be with you" [68].

Thesis No. 3: *shā'irs* "say that which they do not" also serves to deny any similarity of Muḥammad to them whatsoever. According to al-Bayḍāwī's commentary, most *shā'irs*' verses are full of tales, groundless, false (*kādhīb*) promises, unlikely self-praises and glorifying of the unworthy [69].

In another well known commentary (15th century) it is said that in their praise and defamation, *shā'irs* don't know when to stop, and tell lies (*yakdhībūn*) [70]. In short, the emphasis of the thesis No. 3 is in contrasting the falsehood of *shā'irs*' verses with the truth contained in the words of the prophet.

In the light of sending down the revelation this connection receives a negative assessment: *shā'irs* spread false (i. e. conflicting with the truth) information, received from *jinn*s, and so they are reprehensible. The verses of *shā'irs* who broke off with *jinn*s and came to believe in Allāh (like Ḥassān b. Thābit), are not false, since they make them with the approval of the "Holy Spirit" itself.

Hadīth cited by al-Bayḍāwī recorded a gradual change of the function of *shā'irs* in the first half of the 7th century. It is at this time that they are less and less like *veduns* and become more and more like poets. This process also is reflected in the interpretation of the concept of "falsehood" in poetry. In the Islamic period "falsehood" is not perceived as an antithesis of the prophetic truth any more, but started to be qualified as artistic imagination. This radical reinterpretation later allowed Qudāma b. Ja'far (d. 948) to formulate the famous principle: "The best poetry is the falsest (*akdhābu*)" [71], that is, where imagination, unlikelihood, which has reached a high level and cannot be compared with the truths of the revelation, show the superior poetic mastery of a particular author. Al-'Askarī (d. after 1005) supports Qudāma regarding this issue:

"Some philosopher was told: 'So-and-so lies (*yakdhību*) in his verses'. And he answered: 'From a poet beauty of speech is required, but the truth one seeks from prophets'" [72].

Ibn Rashīq (d. 1063 or 1071), reviewing the discussion of this problem in the medieval philology, insists that:

"Among the merits of poetry should be considered that falsehood (*kidhb*), in itself disgusting in people's opinion, in poetry is beautiful" [73].

Thus, we see that in the epoch of Muḥammad, preparatory work started for a new understanding of the function of poetry and poet in medieval Islamic society, which lasted several centuries. An important component of this process was a reassessment of ancient Arabic poetry in the spirit of Islam, which created, one might say, objective grounds for its *rehabilitation* (R. Blachère's expression). After the completion of this process the *shā'ir-vedun*, inspired by a *jinn*, turns into a master poet, the laws of whose trade are determined, in the opinion of Islamic ideologists, in the end, by high Providence.

In the historical and poetological respect the process described can be viewed as acquiring by text in the Arabic "oral literature" of 6th—7th centuries, in many ways identified in the beginning of that period with reality itself, a *status of an image of reality* towards its end [74]. At the same time, the author plays an increasingly greater part in the creation of a text, whose "falsehood" is now perceived not as lying prophecy, pseudo-reality, but as "the truth of his art" [75], as evidence of his ever-growing individual skill in portraying reality.

III.2. Prosaic reports (with citing of verses) about the facts of the life of the prophet that give an idea about the role of poetry in Muslim community, about the correlation of poetry and religious propaganda in the sphere of practice. Here we should note that Muḥammad by his opinions and actions, shows: (a) approval and disapproval of particular verses; (b) change of opinion about one or another person because of their verses; (c) request to recite or make verses on particular topics; (d) delegating a poet-Muslim to participate in negotiations-contests with poets-pagans; (e) personal participation of the head of Muslim community in making collective verses and so on—providing irrefutable proof of the significance he attached to poetry in the decisive period of the formation of Islam.

Let us cite an example.

"Ibn Hishām said: 'Qutayla bint al-Ḥārith, the sister of al-Naḍr b. al-Ḥārith, said:

«...Oh Muḥammad, oh the best son of the noblest mother and father, descended from an ancient clan!

What damage would it be to you, if you take pity — a magnanimous man often shows mercy even in rage and fury, —

Or if you took a ransom (and then without fail the most precious would be paid from what people pay)?

Isn't it true that al-Naḍr is the closest of kin [to you] among those who you took prisoners, and the worthiest to be set free among them, if [prisoners] were freed...»

Ibn Hishām said: 'They say, and Allāh knows better, that, when the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, was told these lines, he said: «If they had become known to me before his execution, I would certainly pardon him»" [76].

Let us cite another example.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'And He (the Messenger of Allāh) gave 'Abbās b. Mirdās [several] camels, and the latter was dissatisfied [with his share of the loot] and started to blame the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him. And 'Abbās b. Mirdās said, blaming the Prophet, may Allāh bless and greet him:

«It was the loot that I captured thanks to my attack on the horse in the valley,

And thanks to my warning to the people not to sleep, and when they slept, I didn't sleep.

And my loot and the loot of [my horse] 'Ubayd is divided between 'Uyayna and al-Aqra'.

And although I had been the protection for my people in the battle, nothing was given to me, and no one protected me,

Nothing except young camels, that were given to me by the number of their four hooves.

But neither Ḥiṣn, nor Ḥābis excel my father in assembly,

And I am not lower than either of them, and the one who You humiliate today will not be raised».

Ibn Hishām said: 'Yūnus the Grammarian cited to me [the last *bayt* differently]:

«Still neither Ḥiṣn, nor Ḥābis excel Mirdās in assembly».

Ibn Ishāq said: 'the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, said: «Take him away and cut off his tongue by my order». And they gave more to 'Abbās b. Mirdās from the loot until he was satisfied. And this was the cutting off of the tongue, executed by the order of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him" [77].

III.3. Prosaic reports about the enemies of Muslims with citations of their verses that can be correlated with the topic at hand: (a) pagans' declaration in the presence of the head of Muslim community of the adoption of Islam, that is done in poetic form; (b) praising of the prophet by his former enemies; (c) offensive verses about the prophet and his associates; (d) deteriorative nicknames of the prophet; (e) versed derision of the elements of the doctrine that Muḥammad supported; (f) bewailing of the worst enemies of Muḥammad, who died fighting Muslims and so on.

To this subgroup can be ascribed a considerable number of poetic pieces in *Sīra*. Let us limit ourselves with a few examples.

III.3a:

"Abū Sufyān b. al-Ḥārith read to him (the Messenger of Allāh) his verses about the adoption of Islam and asked forgiveness for his past behaviour:

'I swear on my life, that on that day, when I will raise the banner so

That al-Lāt's [78] cavalry defeats Muḥammad's cavalry [79],

I will become like a confused night traveller in the pitch darkness; so the time has come for me to be guided and to get on the right track.

And I was put on the right track by the Leader, and by myself, and together with Allāh, the one who I persecuted with all my might did [a good deed] for me'.

Ibn Ishāq said: 'They say, that when Abū Sufyān read to the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, the words: «...and together with Allāh did [a good deed] for me the one, who I persecuted with all my might», the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, hit him in the chest and said: «Weren't you the one who persecuted me with all your might?»" [80].

Of great interest are the verses that could be ascribed to the subgroup III.3b. As in the case with *naqā'id*, we are dealing here with a rather unexpected objectivist approach of the authors of *Sīra* in citing anti-Islamic verses, which directly contradicts their ideological purpose in the prosaic parts of the monument.

The "Life of the Prophet" contains frequent mentions of the hostile activities of one of the most dangerous adversaries of Muḥammad and the Muslim community as a whole, Abū Jahl. That is why his death in the battle at Badr is described as a great victory of Islam.

Let us cite the dialogue between Ibn Mas'ūd, who killed Abū Jahl, and Muḥammad:

"The Messenger of Allāh! Here is the head of the enemy of Allāh Abū Jahl!' The Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, exclaimed: 'Has it really happened? I swear to Allāh, there is no deity but Him' — such was the oath of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him. I answered: 'Yes, I swear to Allāh, there is no deity but Him', then threw the head in front of the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, and he praised Allāh" [81].

Abū Jahl is condemned in the Qur'ān too. He is, in the opinion of Muslim commentators, precisely the "sinner" which is mentioned in the following *āyāt*: "Lo, the Tree of Ez-Zakkoum is the food of the guilty" [82].

This makes it all the more surprising to read in the "Life of the Prophet" "mourning" for Abū Jahl, where, according to the tradition of this genre of medieval Arabic poetry, posthumous praise is given to the "enemy of Allāh".

"Dirār b. al-Khaṭṭāb al-Fihri said, mourning over Abū Jahl b. Hishām:

'What happened to the eyes that spend the night without sleep and watch the stars in dark of night?

It is as if specks of dust had got into them, but they are not specks of dust, but tears, flowing continuously.

So tell the Quraysh, that the best of their assembly and the noblest of the mortal people,

Became on the day of the battle at Badr a hostage of a narrow well, and this hostage is a man of noble deeds, not low-born and not miserly...

You see the debris of Khaṭṭi [83] spears, that defeated his horse, which stick out of the lacerated wounds in his breast.

And the lion that lives in the heart of Bīsha [84] near the water which flows down the river-bed in the thick of the forest,

There are none more valiant than he, when in battle spears meet and the cry is heard: «Dismount!», addressed to courageous noble men.

So do not grieve, clan of al-Mughīra, and be firm, the one who grieves over him does not deserve to be blamed.

So be firm [in fighting], indeed death is an honour for you, because at the end of life after his [Abū Jahl's] death nothing remains that you could be sorry for!»

And I said: 'No sensible person doubts that the wind is favourable [85] to you and that you will gain power [86]'».

As we can see, the author of the "mourning" doesn't limit himself to expressing his condolences, he also calls for firmness in fighting Muslims and hopes for revenge.

Let us cite another example to show that quoting verses like this is not accidental at all.

"Ibn Ishāq said: 'Al-Ḥārith b. Hishām said, bewailing his brother Abū Jahl:

«Oh, how my soul grieves after the death of 'Amr [87], but is it that doleful sorrow can bring back the dead?

I was told that 'Amr is the first among all [the noble men] who lie in the well,

But I have long since thought that it is so, and you have only confirmed the accuracy of what has been well known for a long time.

I prospered, while you were alive, and now I am like a splinter thrown into a stormy torrent.

Before, in the eventide, when he was not near, I felt weak-willed, burdened with heavy cares;

And now I pass my evenings in recollections of 'Amr, and because of them my eyes become dim»" [88].

The second verse, although it is not as hostile towards the victors of the battle at Badr as the first, is still made in the spirit of posthumous praise of the merits of the man who in the prosaic part is described by the authors of *Sīra* as "the enemy of Allāh".

As is evident from the examples cited, the poetic elements of the groups II and III are to a considerable extent significant elements of the narration. The poetic component is not restricted to the function of an illustration to the prosaic parts, but often plays an independent role. It not only supplements, but is also often discordant with the prosaic reports, on which the main burden of the plot in the "Life of the Prophet" by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām falls.

It should be added that even a fleeting glance at the poetic extracts from the groups II and III, allows us to say that as well as many prosaic elements, they have a high level of fictionalization.

The observations about the change of the function of poetry with the coming of Islam help us to understand how verses at a particular moment increasingly became literature. But their explanatory power goes beyond that. They represent, in our opinion, a starting point for understanding the important elements of the process of fictionalization not only of poetic material in *Sīra*, but also of the whole work. It appears that in this light the facts cited in the article give grounds to consider the "Life of the Prophet" by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām a work where a considerable number of elements (even though they don't constitute a systematic whole) have features peculiar to components of a monument of literature. At the same time, the gradual evolution of the concept of "falsehood" within the limits of the earlier Muslim culture could give Ibn Ishāq's contemporaries and nearest descendants grounds to give the expression *kathīr al-tadlīs jiddān* not only — and even not so much — the meaning "a great liar", as "a great inventor", and even "great dreamer", since they understood that the daring imagination and bright innovation of its author were precisely what gave rise to the creation of a remarkable work of medieval Arabic literature.

Notes

1. Two different names of this work exist, and none of them belongs either to Ibn Ishāq or to Ibn Hishām. See: M. B. Piotrovskii, "Vvedenie i primechania" ("Introduction and notes"), *Razdel I. Muhammad i nachalo islama. Khrestomatia po islamu* (Moscow, 1994), pp. 11, 24. In the popular edition of *Das Leben Muhammed's nach Muhammad Ibn Ishāk bearbeitet von Abd el-Malik Ibn Hishām*, herausgegeben von F. Wüstenfeld (Göttingen, 1858—60), i—ii, they give the name: "Sīrat sayyidinā Muḥammad rasūl Allāh" ("Life of our Lord Muḥammad, Allāh's messenger"). We cite the name by one of the most authoritative editions, specifically taking into consideration its brevity *Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ed. M. al-Saqqā et alii (Cairo, 1936), i—iv.

2. A. E. Krymskii, *Istochniki dlia istorii Mohammeda i literatura o nem* (Sources for the History of Muḥammad and Literature About Him) (Moscow, 1902), pp. 134—44.

3. *Istoriia musul'manstva. Samostoiatelnye ocherki, obrabotki i dopolnennye perevody iz Dozi i Gol'dciera A. Krymskogo* (History of Mohammedanism. Original Studies, Adaptations and Supplemented Translations from Dozy and Goldziher by A. Krymskii) (Moscow, 1904), pp. 1, 145—6.

4. I. M. Fil'shtinskii, *Istoriia arabskoĭ literatury. V—nachalo X veka* (The History of Arabic Literature. 5th—the Beginning of 10th Century) (Moscow, 1985), pp. 117, 465, etc.

5. O. G. Bol'shakov, *Istoriia Khalifata. I. Islam v Aravii (570—633)* (History of Caliphate. I. Islam in Arabia (570—633)) (Moscow, 1989).

6. H. A. R. Gibb, "Musul'manskaia istoriografiia" ("Muslim historiography"), *Arabskaia literatura. Klassicheskii period* (Moscow, 1960), pp. 123—4.

7. G. Schoeler, *Charakter und Authentie der muslimischen Überlieferung über das Leben Mohammeds* (Berlin, 1996).

8. M. 'A. Murād, *Sīrat Rasūl Allāh* (Cairo, 2001).

9. *La vie du Prophète Mahomet. Colloque de Strasbourg (octobre 1980)* (Paris, 1983).

10. M. J. Kister, "The Sīrah literature", *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature. Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 352—67; J. T. Monroe, "The poetry of the Sīrah literature", *ibid.*, pp. 368—73.

11. "When they asked Mālik b. Anas why he said it, he answered that Hishām b. 'Urwa had said: 'I testify that he is a liar'. And when they asked Hishām b. 'Urwa, why he said this, he answered: 'Because he tells *hadīth* citing my wife, Fāṭima'" (Ibn Ishāq, *La vie du prophète Muḥammad...*, traduction française avec introduction et notes par 'A. Badawī (Beyrouth, 2001), pp. IV—V).

12. *Ibid.*, p. V.

13. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 162.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 699.

15. "Two-horned" — a nickname usually associated with Alexander the Great. It is mentioned in the Qur'ān (18:83/82—102). For more details see: Piotrovskii, "Dhu al-Qarnayn", *Islam. Ėnciklopedicheskii slovar'* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 78—9.

16. The utterance is evidently based on the supposition that the Earth is not of a spherical shape and has a flat bottom.

17. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 197.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 357.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 505. The question of the absence of a proper *isnād* in *Sīra* is discussed in detail in many works (see, for example, Kister, *op. cit.*; Schoeler, *op. cit.* and others). It must also be observed that accounts introduced into *Sīra* by Ibn Hishām often take a similar shape. For example: "Ibn Hishām said: 'A certain man, that I trust, told me, that the Messenger of Allāh, may Allāh bless and greet him, said...'" (*Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 320).

22. *Ibid.*, p. 4. Let us add here that throughout his entire work Ibn Hishām deletes or abridges invective verses about Muḥammad, eliminates or replaces rude words in the derisions and so on.

23. Ibn Sallām al-Jumāhī, *Ṭabaqāt al-shu'arā' al-jāhiliyyīn wa al-islāmiyyīn* (s. l., s. a.), pp. 7—8; I. Iu. Krachkovskii, "Ob izdaniĭ 'Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Ġumāhī. Die Klassen der Dichter' (1917)" ("About the edition 'Muḥammad b. Sallām al-Ġumāhī. Die Klassen der Dichter'" (1917)), *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow—Leningrad, 1956), ii, p. 199; as well as: Fil'shtinskii, *op. cit.*, p. 465; especially: Kister, *op. cit.*; Monroe, *op. cit.*

24. The elements of the "miraculous" in *Sīra* by Ibn Ishāq—Ibn Hishām — despite all the importance of their role — do not give grounds to define this work as a monument of hagiography. Since the 9th century, stories about "miracles" connected with the life of the messenger, began to be gathered in works of a special genre, *dalā'il, a'lāmāt* or *imārāt al-nubuwwa*. The most well known works of this genre belong to 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 1025), Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn al-Bayhaqī (d. 1066), Abū Nu'aym al-Iṣfāhānī (d. 1038) and al-Māwardī (d. 1058) (for more details see: Kister, *op. cit.*).

25. Krachkovskii, "Takha Khusein o doislamskoĭ poezii arabov i ego kritiki" ("Tāhā Ḥusayn about pre-Islamic Arabic poetry and his critiques"), *Izbrannye sochineniia* (Moscow—Leningrad, 1956), iii, p. 205.

26. An expressive version is in the Egyptian edition: instead of 'yaqtulūnānā' *kayfa shā'u* (lit.: "they killed those among us who they wanted to") 'yaqtulūnānā' *kayfa shā'u* (lit.: "they ruled over us as they wanted") (*Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, i/2, p. 647).

27. A traditional element of a description of a character's appearance, a "bright (and even 'radiant') face", is evidence of his nobleness. The character can also be dark-skinned; in the Medina army, as is well known, there were many dark-skinned freedmen.

28. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, pp. 460—1.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 729.

30. *Ibid.*, p. 1016.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 430.

32. 36:69. Here and subsequently all the quotations from the Qur'ān are in the translation by A. J. Arberry.

33. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 337.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 533—5.

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 516—8, 521, 524, 526—7, 529, 530.

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 59—60.

37. 9:37.

38. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 30.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 152.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 55—6. Compare with one of the most important episodes in the history by the poet Imru' al-Qays: A. B. Kudelin, *Aravīskaia slovesnost' VI—VIII vv.: opyt rassmotreniia v fol'klorno-mifologicheskome aspekte* (Arabian Literature in 7th—8th Centuries: an Attempt of an Examination in the Folklore-Mythological Perspective) (Moscow, 1999), p. 239; "Den' Khujra. Dni arabov" (Day of Ḥujr. Days of the Arabs), *Aravīskaia starina. Iz drevnei arabskoĭ poezii i prozy*, transl. from Arabic by A. A. Dolina and V. V. Polosin (Moscow, 1983), p. 107.

41. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 317.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 56—7.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 320—1. Here an important circumstance should be noted which was disregarded by both medieval commentators and contemporary editors, researchers and translators of *Sīra*. Authoritative sources (for example, the collection of *ḥadīth* “*Ṣaḥīḥ*” by al-Bukhārī) attribute this *rajaz* verse to Muḥammad himself (for more details see: Kudelin, *Araviškaia slovesnost'*, p. 248). There are two possible interpretations of this case: (i) al-Walīd b. al-Walīd quotes a well known verse by the prophet, and the authors of *Sīra* do not consider it necessary — on account of it being well known — to comment on this circumstance; (ii) or they simply didn't know about this and the verse acquired a second author's attribution, as it were.

45. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 562. According to al-Suhaylī and the “Dictionary of the Arabs”, these *rajaz* verses belong to Hind bint ʿArīq b. Bayāda al-Iyādiyya, which she sang in the war against Persians, inspiring Iyād, and Hind bint ʿUtba cited him as an example (*Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, iii, p. 68, n. 4).

46. We give the translation according to the Cairo edition: *fahānū* (lit.: “and they died”) (*ibid.*, p. 9); Wüstenfeld has: *fakhānū* (“and they betrayed”) (*Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 516).

47. Iblīs — *shayṭān*, “the name of the angel who fell from Heaven and become an enemy of Allāh” (for more details see: Piotrovskii, “Iblīs”, *Islam. Ėnciklopedicheskii slovar'*, pp. 81—2. “White camels” are particularly valuable camels (because of their unusual colour). Jibrīl is “the name of the angel, closest to Allāh, the main mediator between Him and the prophets, Muḥammad in particular” (for more details see: idem, “Jibrīl”, *ibid.*, p. 64—5).

48. A direct echo of the third *bayt* of the preceding chapter.

49. A conventional descriptive motive: the pattern on the sword's blade is likened to ants' tracks.

50. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, pp. 516—7.

51. For more details about the tradition of writing “answers” see: Kudelin, “K probleme sootnosheniia tradicionnogo i original'nogo v srednevekovoi poëtike (o ‘podrazhanii’ v klassicheskikh literaturakh Blizhnego i Srednego Vostoka)” (“On the problem of correlation of the traditional and the original in medieval poetics (about ‘imitation’ in classical literatures of the Near and the Middle East”), *Rossia—Vostok—Zapad* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 256—64.

52. Relying on Ibn Hishām's observation, contemporary researchers propose to correct the original Arabic text. In the first case the English translator Guillaume, and after him also the French translator Badawī propose to read instead of *dhu al-fakhr* (“the Most Glorious”, literally “possessor of glory”), which doesn't agree with the context of the work *dhu al-fajr* (“libertine”) (Ibn Ishāq, *La vie du prophète Muḥammad...*, i, p. 618, n. 393). In the second case A. Badawī proposes instead of *ḥalīm* (“meek”) — which in the original applies to Muḥammad and doesn't agree with the context — to read *la'im* (“mean”) (*ibid.*, n. 394).

53. According to the commentary of the Cairo edition (*Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, i, p. 270): an allusion to a wizard who knots a rope, and then blows on it; compare with the indication of sorcery in the Qur'ān “...from the evil of the women who blow on knots...” (113:4).

54. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 171.

55. See, for example: *ibid.*, pp. 183, 186, etc.

56. 2:8, 11—13.

57. See: I. Goldziher, *Abhandlungen zur arabischen Philologie* (Leiden, 1896), i, p. 2.

58. About the correspondence of *shayṭāns* and *jinn*s for more details see: Piotrovskii, “Jinn”, *Islam. Ėnciklopedicheskii slovar'*, p. 66; idem, “*Shayṭān*”, *ibid.*, p. 289.

59. 37:34—35.

60. 36:69.

61. 69:40—43.

62. 26:224—228.

63. Krymskii, *Arabskaia literatura v ocherkakh i obrazcakh* (Arabic Literature in Studies and Examples) (Moscow, 1911), i, pp. 32—3.

64. R. Blachère, *Histoire de la Littérature Arabe des origines à la fin du XV-e siècle de J.-C.* (Paris, 1952, 1964, 1966), p. 355, etc.

65. Al-Bukhārī, *Al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Cairo, 1887), iv, p. 47.

66. *Ibid.*, p. 46.

67. *Ibid.* For more details see: Blachère, *op. cit.*, p. 355, n. 7.

68. Al-Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-tanzīl wa-asrār al-ta'wīl* (Cairo, 1926), p. 528. Gabriel (Jibrīl) is meant by “the Holy Spirit”, according to Muslim commentators (See: Piotrovskii, “Jibrīl”, *Islam. Ėnciklopedicheskii slovar'*, pp. 64—5). In the sources the *ḥadīth* is told in different versions (in one of them Jibrīl is openly mentioned). See: Al-Bukhārī, *op. cit.*, p. 47; Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣfahānī, *Kitāb al-aghānī* (Cairo, 1925—1974), iv, pp. 137, 143.

69. Al-Bayḍāwī, *op. cit.*, p. 527.

70. *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (Damascus, 1964), p. 498.

71. Qudāma b. Ja'far, *Naqd al-shi'r* (Cairo, 1963), p. 65.

72. Al-'Askarī, *Kitāb al-ṣinā'atayn* (Cairo, 1971), p. 143.

73. Ibn Raṣḥīq, *Al-'Umda fī maḥāsīn al-shi'r wa-adabih wa-naqdih* (Beirut, 1972), i, p. 22.

74. E. M. Meletinskiĭ, S. Iu. Nekliudov, E. S. Novik, “Status slova i poniatie zhanra v fol'klore” (“The status of word and the concept of genre in folklore”), *Istoricheskaia poëtika. Literaturnye épokhi i tipy khudozhestvennogo soznania* (Moscow, 1994), pp. 59, 67.

75. S. S. Averintsev, “Avtorstvo i avtoritet” (“Authorship and authority”), *ibid.*, pp. 118—9.

76. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 539.

77. *Ibid.*, pp. 881—2.

78. Al-Lāt is one of the three main deities of pre-Islamic Arabia.

79. Depending on the placing of vocalisations in this verse, its meaning can change. Our translation is cited from Wüstenfeld's edition, in al-Saqqā edition and others the vocalisation gives another meaning: “...Muḥammad's cavalry will certainly defeat the cavalry of al-Lāt” (*Al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya*, ii, p. 401). In our opinion, the first version looks more convincing.

80. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, pp. 811—2.

81. *Ibid.*, p. 452.

82. 44:43—44. See: *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (Damascus, 1964), p. 658 and commentary in *Koran* (The Qur'ān), transl. and commented by I. Iu. Krachkovskii (Moscow, 1986), p. 607.

83. *Khattī* — from the name of the al-*Khatt* harbour in Baḥrayn, where these kinds of spears are sold.

84. *Bīsha* is a place in Yemen, in the wooded valley of which lived a great number of lions.

85. Arabic commentators interpret the expression *al-rīḥu ṭayyibatun lakum* (literally “fair wind to you”) as a prophecy of victory and see here a Qur'ānic allusion: “And obey God, and His Messenger, and do not quarrel together, and so lose heart, and your power depart...” (8:48). “Your power” — *rīḥukum*; Krachkovskii comments on this translation: “literally ‘[fair] wind to you’ = a moment of luck” (*Koran*, p. 550).

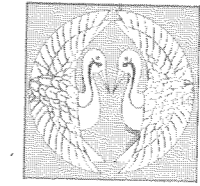
86. *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 529.

87. Abū Jahl's full name: 'Amr Abū al-Ḥakam b. Hishām b. al-Mughīra b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar b. Makhzūm b. Yaqaza b. Murra b. Ka'b b. Lu'ayy (see: *Das Leben Muhammed's*, p. 167).

88. *Ibid.*, p. 530.

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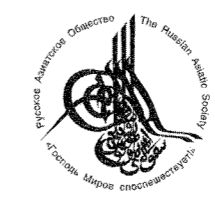
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Front cover:

Muḥammad Yūsuf, "Darwīsh Holding a Rosary", 25.5×7.8 cm. Iran, mid 17th century. The State Hermitage Museum, VR-740/XXV. Courtesy of the Museum.

Back cover:

The wedding sheet *rōyjo*, 250×162 cm. Samarqand, end of the 19th—beginning of the 20th century. MAE RAS, No. 7304-4. Courtesy of the Museum.



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