

## *Qaṣaṣ* Sessions: The Skills and Conduct of the *Quṣṣāṣ*

While many people of early Islam were known as religious teachers of various specializations, only a limited number, one hundred and nine according to this research, were identified as *quṣṣāṣ*. It appears that one important reason for this was that the *quṣṣāṣ* were not simply educators of religion, be it Qurʾān recitation, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth*, and so forth, or morale officers for the military; they were performers. Of course, this is not meant to imply that they were, by virtue of being performers, merely showmen, “popular” preachers or charlatans. It does suggest, though, that a reputable *qāṣṣ* was expected to possess more than religious knowledge (*ʿilm*); he was to add to this skill the requisite oratorical skills for drawing out of his listeners some type of response, such as one to greater piety or to valor in battle.

To be sure, these traits were not characteristic of the *quṣṣāṣ* only. As we noted in the previous chapter, other public speakers, notably the *khuṭabāʾ*, were also expected to possess knowledge and oratorical skills.<sup>1</sup> The *khuṭba*, for instance, certainly entailed aspects of a performance, namely direct address to an audience, elevation of the speaker above the audience, a strong-voiced and eloquent speaker, and even props, such as a sword or a bow.<sup>2</sup> The *khuṭba*, however, was a formal monologue; the *khaṭīb* was the speaker/performer and the audience listened.<sup>3</sup> With the *quṣṣāṣ*, conversely, the performance was less formal and more interactive, incorporating both speaker and listener, so that *qaṣaṣ* sessions took on lives of their own, sometimes to their detriment. In this sense, the performance aspect of the *qaṣaṣ* session is one factor setting it apart from other religious sessions and presentations.

1 See Qutbuddin, “Khuṭba,” 180–181, 204–222.

2 Qutbuddin, “Khuṭba,” 204–214. While the leaning on the sword or bow by the *khaṭīb* was apparently a remnant of the practice of pre-Islamic judges, it certainly added to the performance of the *khuṭba*, in the least by conveying an image of authority for the *khaṭīb*. On the use of swords or bows, see Wensinck, “Khuṭba,” *EL* 2, 5:74; Qutbuddin, “Khuṭba,” 210–211.

3 Wensinck noted that the audience was to listen and be silent. He quoted a tradition in Bukhārī: “He who says to his neighbor, ‘listen,’ has spoken a superfluous word.” See Wensinck, “Khuṭba,” *EL* 2, 5:75. Qutbuddin showed that sometimes the audience could respond aloud with short answers to questions posed by the *khaṭīb*, though most often the questions were rhetorical; see her “Khuṭba,” 216.

As is true with any public performance, a number of factors were important in a *qaṣaṣ* session. For our purposes, these factors fall under two rubrics: skills and conduct. Skills reflect the set of skills and traits that the *qāṣṣ* possessed, or at least that the ideal *qāṣṣ* possessed. These skills fall into three categories: *lisān*, *bayān* and *ʿilm*.

Additionally, the execution of a *qaṣaṣ* session entailed more than a qualified practitioner. The conduct of the session was also important in establishing its traditions and reputation, in both positive and negative ways. Expectations of proper behavior, the locations and times of the sessions, as well as the presence of malpractice in the sessions are just a few of the factors contributing to establishing the reputation of the *qaṣaṣ* sessions and, by extension, the *quṣṣāṣ*. Alongside these issues of the conduct of the session lay, subtly yet still discernibly, the question of the degree of formality in *qaṣaṣ* sessions; this is an issue that will be addressed throughout the analysis of the conduct of the *quṣṣāṣ*.

### Skills

The effective performance of *qaṣaṣ* depended on a skilled practitioner. The set of skills that exemplified the skills an ideal *qāṣṣ* must possess was said to belong to one of the most respected *quṣṣāṣ* of the Umayyad period, Bilāl b. Saʿd. Bilāl enjoyed a stellar reputation as a *ḥadīth* transmitter and was known as “the Qurʾān reciter of Syria” as well as “the admonisher (*wāʿiẓ*) of Damascus.”<sup>4</sup> Not only did he excel in the religious sciences, he was also admired for his piety, and was, by all accounts, an outstanding scholar. In addition to all of this, he was the exemplary *qāṣṣ*.

According to Ibn Ḥibbān, Bilāl possessed the three traits necessary for *qaṣaṣ*: “He was among those who was given *lisān*, *bayān* and *ʿilm* in *qaṣaṣ*.”<sup>5</sup> This means that he possessed a speaker’s voice with its concomitant linguistic abilities (*lisān*), rhetorical skill (*bayān*) and religious knowledge (*ʿilm*). The combination of these skills allowed him to produce “polished *qaṣaṣ*”—he is described as being *ḥasan al-qaṣaṣ*.<sup>6</sup> Although these three traits, as a group, have been attributed only to Bilāl, the report clearly implies that the reason for his being such an effective *qāṣṣ* was that he possessed these traits and, therefore, they represent the skills that exemplified the ideal *quṣṣāṣ* in the Umayyad period. Indeed, gradations of these skills can be found among many of the

4 See the Appendix # 60.

5 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāḥir*, 115.

6 Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh*, 1:607; Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 10:482; Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 4:292.

early *quşşāş*. The skills thus provide us with a paradigm for identifying the specific characteristics expected in the *quşşāş*.

### ‘Ilm

We have already seen in Chapter Two that the *quşşāş* were spread throughout the religious space of the early Islamic community, having been associated with at least nine other religious disciplines in the community. The discussion there showed that a significant number of the *quşşāş* of the early period were considered by the community to be reputable scholars noted for their *‘ilm* in such disciplines as *Qur’ān* recitation, *tafsīr*, *ḥadīth* and *fiqh*. It is not surprising then that one of the traits distinguishing Bilāl b. Sa’d as a *qāşş* was his possession of religious knowledge, *‘ilm*.<sup>7</sup> And according to Abū Zur’a al-Dimashqī, there was no conflict between Bilal’s possession of *‘ilm* and *qaşaş*, as Bilāl to him “was one of the *‘ulamā*’ in the caliphate of Hishām and was a *qāşş* of polished *qaşaş*.”<sup>8</sup>

Of course, the *quşşāş*’s involvement in religious instruction was not new since the transmission of religious knowledge was a basic function of the *qāşş* from the beginning. To be sure, as we have already seen in Chapter Two, the overlap between *qaşaş* and *‘ilm* in the Umayyad period seems to have been more common than not, with approximately two-thirds of the *quşşāş* of this period numbered among the reputable scholars of the community. Even earlier, Tamīm al-Dārī, for example, was allegedly granted permission by the caliph ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to give *qaşaş* on the condition that he “recite the *Qur’ān* and command them [his listeners] to do good and forbid the evil.”<sup>9</sup> In the least, therefore, the early *qāşş* was expected to know the *Qur’ān* and the moral parameters of the faith.

The *quşşāş* continued to play an active role in the religious education of the early community, and the fear that the community lost *‘ilm* with the passing away of the first generation of believers was a concern for many, and even affected the *quşşāş*. This concern prompted Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān to ask ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to send people to him (i.e. in Syria) who taught the people the *Qur’ān* and the legal requirements of the faith (*yu‘allimuhum al-Qur’ān wa yufaqqihuhum*). Two of the three whom ‘Umar sent to Yazīd were renowned scholars who were identified as *quşşāş*: Mu‘ādh b. Jabal and Abū al-Dardā’.<sup>10</sup> Later, the Basran *qāşş* ‘Abd Allāh b. Ghālib considered his role as a *qāşş* to

7 Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāhīr*, 115.

8 Abū Zur’a al-Dimashqī, *Tārīkh*, 1:607.

9 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 11:80–81.

10 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 47:124, 137. The third scholar sent to Syria was ‘Ubāda b. al-Şāmit.

include three objectives: teaching religious knowledge, warning others of the nearness of death and reminding the community that it was continually losing righteous believers to death, challenging them, presumably, to take up the mantle of that lost generation. He said: “We complain to you about the foolishness of our dreams and we give *qaṣaṣ* of our religious knowledge (*naquṣṣu ‘ilmanā*), the closeness of our deaths and the departure of the righteous from among us.”<sup>11</sup> His last point echoes the statement of Ibn ‘Abbās at the passing of the scholar/*qāṣṣ* Zayd b. Thābit: “Today a great amount of religious knowledge died.”<sup>12</sup> According to the *qāṣṣ*/scholar Sa‘īd b. Jubayr, the damage to the community from the lack of religious knowledge was also a product of poor scholars; he was asked: “Why do the people perish?” He answered: “Because of their *‘ulamā’*.”<sup>13</sup>

Along with those mentioned above, a number of *quṣṣāṣ* of the Umayyad period were celebrated for their religious knowledge. In Syria, Mu‘ādh and Abū al-Dardā were joined by Ka‘b al-Aḥbār who was known for his *‘ilm* and wisdom<sup>14</sup> and Abū al-Dardā himself praised Ka‘b saying: “The son of the Ḥimyarī has much knowledge.”<sup>15</sup> The eminent Syrian scholar Makhūl (d. 112–7/730–5) commended Abū Idrīs al-Khawlanī, the *qāṣṣ*, for his great religious knowledge.<sup>16</sup> Later, in Syria, the two stepsons of Ka‘b al-Aḥbār, Nawf b. Faḍāla and Tubay‘ b. ‘Āmir, were considered among the *‘ulamā’* of the region.<sup>17</sup> In Baṣra, Muṭarrif b. ‘Abd Allāh said that he preferred *‘ilm* over *‘ibāda*, worship—a sentiment that later Islamic scholars did not normally associate with the *quṣṣāṣ*.<sup>18</sup> Mecca, prior to the turn of the first century, boasted the *qāṣṣ* Mujāhid b. Jabr as one of its great scholars.<sup>19</sup> Meanwhile, Medina, in the first quarter of the second/eighth century, contained renowned *quṣṣāṣ/‘ulamā’*, such as Muḥammad b. Ka‘b al-Qurazī,<sup>20</sup> Muḥammad b. Qays al-Madani<sup>21</sup> and ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b.

11 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Zuhd*, 247; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 6:118.

12 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 5:311. See also Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1:659–660.

13 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:380; Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 10:365.

14 Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, 5:650–651; idem, *Tahdhīb*, 3:471. See also Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 47:113.

15 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:449; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:471.

16 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 26:161–162. On Makhūl, see Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 28:464–474.

17 On Nawf, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:249–250. On Tubay‘, see Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:455.

18 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:142.

19 Ibid., 8:28.

20 Al-‘Ijlī, *Ma‘rifat al-thiqāt*, ed. ‘Abd al-‘Alīm ‘Abd al-‘Azīm al-Bastawī (Medina, 1985), 2:251; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Thiqāt*, 5:351; Ibn Manjuwayh, *Rijāl Muslim*, 2:204; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:685.

21 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7:511; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:681.

al-Qāsim.<sup>22</sup> The association of these *quşşāş* with religious knowledge certainly confirms its importance as an expected character trait of the early *qāşş*.

### Lisān

The scholar who possessed *lisān*, literally “a tongue,” is one who possessed a public speaker’s voice. This incorporated a number of vocal qualities, such as volume, melodiousness and even fluency. In the case of Bilāl b. Sa’d, his description as having “a tongue” for *qaşaş* meant that he possessed a loud voice, *kāna jahīr al-şawt*.<sup>23</sup> This trait was particularly important for Qur’ān recitation, especially in an age devoid of artificial amplification.<sup>24</sup> According to one tradition, the Prophet himself was the first to recite the Qur’ān with a loud voice and this was allegedly the reason for the revelation of Sūrat Banī Isrā’īl (17):110, “Don’t speak loudly in thy prayer and don’t be silent; adopt a middle course.”<sup>25</sup> Other traditions claim that Ibn Mas’ūd was the first person to recite the Qur’ān loudly.<sup>26</sup> As a matter of fact, strength of voice was a characteristic of the *quşşāş* from the beginning: Tamīm al-Dārī, for example, was one of only two men (the other being Mu’ādh al-Qārī’) who aroused the people from sleep because of the power of his voice in Qur’ān recitation.<sup>27</sup>

It seems having a loud voice that projected in *qaşaş* and recitation would be appreciated at all times. Even in the third/ninth century, strength of voice was still considered an essential trait for the *qāşş*. Ibrāhīm b. Hānī, an apparent contemporary of al-Jāhīz (d. 255/869), said: “Among the tools that complete the practice of *qaşaş* is that the *qāşş* be blind and a mature man (*şaykh*) whose voice travels far.”<sup>28</sup> While the need for the third trait of a loud voice seems logical, the former two are somewhat more perplexing, although they may intend to promote greater respect for the *qāşş*.

Yet not always was a loud voice in *qaşaş* and recitation appreciated. When the *qāşş* Ziyād al-Numayrī visited Anas b. Mālik, he was asked to recite from the Qur’ān. In his recitation, he raised his voice causing Anas to throw down a cloth that was covering his face and exclaim: “What is this? What is this? They

22 Bukhārī, *al-Tārīkh al-kabīr*, 5:339; Ibn Hibbān, *Thiqāt*, 7:62.

23 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 10:481; Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 4:292.

24 Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 4:292.

25 Ibn Ishāq, *al-Sīra al-nabawīyya*, ed. Ṭahā ‘Abd al-Ru’ūf Sa’d (Beirut, 1990), 2:155.

26 Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, 2:156.

27 Ibn Sa’d, *Tabaqāt*, 6:258.

28 Jāhīz, *Bayān*, 1:93. I was not able to identify Ibrāhīm b. Hānī beyond the comments made by Hārūn, the editor, at 1:93, n. 4.

never used to act in this manner!"<sup>29</sup> Why Ziyād's loud recitation was received so negatively while other *quṣṣāṣ* of the time were praised for theirs in unclear. It is worth noting, though, that, according to the tradition mentioned above, the Prophet himself was told to speak with a voice of medium strength in order to avoid driving people away with loud volume and drawing them too close by being soft.<sup>30</sup> Anas's opposition could be rooted in a tradition like this. It is also possible that the overall reputation of the scholar influenced how his *lisān* was evaluated since Tamīm and Bilāl, both of whom were respected in the community, were commended for their strength of voice, while Ziyād, who was generally scorned by the community, was reprimanded.

A second praiseworthy vocal quality possessed by the *quṣṣāṣ* was melodiousness or sweetness, of particular importance in Qurʾān recitation. The *qāṣṣ* and famous Qurʾān reciter Ibn Masʿūd was reportedly one of four men whom the Prophet endorsed for the beauty of his recitation.<sup>31</sup> Later, the pious caliph ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz praised Muslim b. Jundab, a "Successor" and *qāṣṣ*, for his beautiful recitation of the Qurʾān: "He who takes pleasure in listening to an exquisite recitation of the Qurʾān, let him listen to the recitation of Muslim b. Jundab (*man sarrahu an yasmaʿa al-Qurʾān ghaḍḍan*, *faʿl-yasmaʿ qirāʿat Muslim b. Jundab*)."<sup>32</sup> Qurʾān recitation was not the sole domain where a rapturous voice was esteemed. ʿUmar b. Dharr, for example, was blessed with such an enchanting voice that during the *ḥājj*, when he said the *talbiya* (*labbayka Allāhumma labbayk*), all other pilgrims fell silent due to the magnificence of his voice.<sup>33</sup>

A third component of someone's *lisān* was his fluency in language. By the far the most well-known possessor of this trait was the Basran *qāṣṣ* Mūsā b. Sayyār. Jāḥiẓ recorded that he was equally fluent in Arabic and Persian. In his *tafsīr* sessions, he commented on a verse in Arabic to the Arabs on his right side and then in Persian to the Persians on his left. Jāḥiẓ said of him: "Two languages when they meet in one tongue will cause harm to the tongue's owner, but not in the case of Mūsā." This ability prompted Jāḥiẓ to call him one of the wonders of the world.<sup>34</sup> Mūsā's linguistic abilities were not the only example

29 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 118 (translation taken from Swartz, 203).

30 Ibn Ishāq, *Sīra*, 2:155.

31 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 33:62.

32 Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:368. See also Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿa*, 59–60; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 7:257; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:66.

33 Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 21:337; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 9:537.

34 Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:368. See also Goldziher, *Muslim Studies II*, 153; Massignon, *Essai*, 146; Pellat, "Kāṣṣ," *El* 2 4:734; idem, *Le milieu basrien*, 110–111; ʿAthamina, "Qāṣṣ," 61.

of the proficiency of his *lisān*. Jāḥiẓ also ranked him among the best Qurʾān reciters of his era.<sup>35</sup>

Joining Mūsā as an exemplar of fluency among the *quşşās* was his younger contemporary and fellow Basran Qatāda b. Diʿāma. Qatāda b. Diʿāma was the son of a Bedouin father and a non-Arab mother who, however, was raised among the Bedouin—a *muwallada*.<sup>36</sup> As a result, Qatāda was known to have been adroit in Arabic. This strength prompted him to relate *ḥadīth* with proper Arabic and inspired his students to do likewise.<sup>37</sup> While Qatāda was sought out for his prowess in Arabic in Iraq, the *qāşş* Muslim b. Jundab was leaving his mark on the language itself in Medina. Muslim, who was previously mentioned for the rapturous tone of his voice, ostensibly contributed to the evolution of the Arabic language in the city of Medina by being the first to pronounce the *hamza* there (*kāna ahl al-Madīna lā yahmizūna ḥattā hamaza Ibn Jundab*).<sup>38</sup>

The possession of a strong, melodious and fluent *lisān* was no doubt an admirable and sought after trait for a *qāşş*, only within the proper parameters. Too little or too much of a good thing appears to have been deemed detrimental. On the one hand, according to the *qāşş* Bakr b. ʿAbd Allāh, taciturnity compromised eloquence: “Lengthy periods of silence bring speech impediments.”<sup>39</sup> Such a sentiment emanating from a *qāşş* may come as little surprise. On the other hand, excess *lisān*, as in the case of the loudness of Ziyād’s voice, was scorned. This latter point, though, surfaced as a criticism of misconduct in some *qaşaş* sessions rather than as a general condemnation of the *quşşās*, as will be discussed below.

### Bayān

A third skill possessed by the *qāşş* Bilāl b. Saʿd was *bayān*—a skill including rhetorical abilities and style of speech.<sup>40</sup> While there may be some overlap between *bayān* and *lisān*, *bayān*, here is concerned more with style while *lisān* seems to emphasize mechanics and tone quality. As a result, *bayān* most often manifested itself in one’s eloquence—a trait that also characterized other

35 Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:368.

36 Yāqūt, *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ*, 6:202.

37 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:229.

38 Ibn Mujāhid, *Sabʿa*, 59–60; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 7:257. The sporadic use of the *hamza* persisted through the mid-second/mid-eighth century; see Abbott, *Studies II*, 92.

39 Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:272.

40 On *bayān*, see G.E. von Grunebaum, “Bayān,” *El2*, 1:1114–1116. On Bilāl b. Saʿd possessing *bayān*, see Ibn Ḥibbān, *Mashāḥir*, 115.

forms of public expression such as *wa'z* and *khiṭāba*.<sup>41</sup> Al-Awzā'ī, for example, said that Bilāl was the most eloquent admonisher he had ever heard (*wa-lam asma' wā'iz<sup>an</sup> qaṭṭu ablagha minhu*).<sup>42</sup> And just as was true with the trait of *lisān* finding exemplars in the early *quṣṣās* like Tamīm al-Dārī, *bayān* among the *quṣṣās* also dates to the earliest purveyors of the phenomenon and continued to be a sought after trait after the Umayyad period.

The first *qāṣṣ* of Mecca, 'Ubayd b. 'Umayr, was praised for being eloquent and well-spoken (*baligh<sup>an</sup> wa-faṣiḥ<sup>an</sup>*).<sup>43</sup> In Medina, Muslim b. Jundab not only received praise for his contribution to language development and the beauty of his Qur'ān recitation, i.e. his *lisān*, he was also numbered among the most eloquent scholars (*al-fuṣaḥā'*) of this time.<sup>44</sup> This seemingly fundamental association between linguistic style and *qaṣaṣ* persisted beyond the Umayyad period such that the 'Abbasid-era *qāṣṣ* Abu 'Umar Muḥammad al-Bāhili al-Baṣrī (d. 300/912) was also known for "the delicacy of his linguistic style."<sup>45</sup>

*Bayān* as a component of the style of the individual *qāṣṣ* extended further than his own personal linguistic skills into the style of the sessions over which he presided. His rhetorical style therefore influenced how he framed his *qīṣaṣ*. As was observed in Chapter One, one method adopted by a number of *quṣṣās* was to express their *qīṣaṣ* through rhetorical questions. Ibrāhīm b. Yazīd, for example, asked his audience who among them expected to be kept from trials in this life knowing that even the prophet Abraham faced trials.<sup>46</sup> Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī, in order to launch into a *qīṣṣa* about John the Baptist, asked those around him if they knew who was the best person in terms of food (*mān kāna aṭyab al-nās ṭa'am<sup>an</sup>*).<sup>47</sup> The unidentified *qāṣṣ* who interpreted the verse of the smoke did likewise by asking his audience: "Do you know what that smoke is?"<sup>48</sup> And al-Faḍl b. 'Īsā told his audience to "ask the earth, "Who divided your days and planted your trees and harvested your fruit?"<sup>49</sup>

41 For the necessity of eloquence in the *khuṭba*, for example, see Qutbuddin, "Khuṭba," 205–206.

42 Ibn 'Asākir, *Dimashq*, 10:485; Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 4:293.

43 'Ijlī, *Ma'rifa*, 2:118. 'Ubayd's eloquence continued in his son, 'Abd Allāh, though he was not identified as a *qāṣṣ*. He was said to have been "among the most eloquent people of Mecca (*min aḥṣāḥ al-nās min ahl Makka*)." See Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:34.

44 Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab'a*, 59–60; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 7:257; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:66.

45 Pedersen, "Islamic Preacher," 236.

46 Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 13:228 (at Sūrat Ibrāhīm [14]:35–36). See Chapter One, 36–37.

47 Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 7:74; Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 2:53. See Chapter One, 37–38.

48 Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 25:111 (at Sūrat al-Dukhān [44]:10–12). See Chapter One, 31.

49 Jāhīz, *Bayān*, 1:308. See Chapter One, 16–17.

Some *quşşās*, like Yazīd b. Abān and ‘Awn b. ‘Abd Allāh, turned such questions back to themselves.<sup>50</sup> Yazīd b. Abān, in fact, posed questions to both himself and his audience. He asked himself: “Woe to you, Oh Yazīd! Who is going to reconcile you with your Lord? Who is going to fast for you and pray for you?” Then in an effort to elicit tears for the foreboding approach of death, he asked his listeners: “Why do you not weep?”<sup>51</sup>

By using the rhetorical and pedagogical device of posing questions to the audience, these *quşşās* sought to enhance the interaction, and therefore performance, of their session. For example, Abū Idrīs al-Khawḷānī clearly meant to play on the word *atyab*, meaning both “best” and “tastiest,” thereby leaving his listener wondering about his exact intention. His choice of words was thus not haphazard. His premeditation in constructing the question this way is, in fact, indicated in the next phrase of the report: “And when he saw that he had their attention, he said . . . (*fa-lammā raʿā al-nāsa qad nazarū ilayhi, qāla*).”<sup>52</sup> Therefore, both the posing and the construction of the question were rhetorical devices to draw the listeners into the *qişsa* and, thereby, into the performance.

This component of performance in a *qaşaş* session is fully evident in the actions of the unidentified *qāşş* from Jordan who was with Mu‘āwiya b. Abī Sufyān in al-Jābiya. This *qāşş* held sessions and: “If a man on the fringes of the group stood up to leave, he said, ‘Would you like me to tell you the words which shake the throne of God and the trees of paradise?’ We said, ‘Certainly.’”<sup>53</sup> Once the *qāşş* realized that he was losing his audience, he did what any good performer or speaker does: he changed pace and tactic in order to draw the attention of his audience back to him. He accomplished this by implying that he was privy to some type of “inside” information and was willing to divulge it to his audience. Falling for the tease, the crowd stayed, saying, “Certainly.” This is performance *par excellence*.

The ability of some *quşşās* to purposefully and effectively manipulate the emotions of the audience was further testament to the importance of style as an aspect of performance in *qaşaş*. This type of *bayān*, or rhetorical ability, was clearly a facet of the *qāşş*’s concern with performance, reflecting his awareness of the emotional wants and needs of the audience. Two *quşşās*, Sa‘īd b. Jubayr and ‘Aṭā’ b. Yasār, were particularly adept at swaying the emotions of their audiences, swinging them between the poles of sadness and joy. It was

50 On ‘Awn, see Chapter One, 21.

51 Abū Nu‘aym al-Işfahānī, *Hilya*, 3:59–60; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşās*, 75. See Chapter One, 21–22.

52 Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muşannaḡ*, 7:74. See Chapter One, 32–38.

53 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 68:128. See Chapter One, 29–30.

said of both that they gave *qiṣaṣ* that made their listeners cry, then told *qiṣaṣ* making them laugh.<sup>54</sup> These men appear to have kept their audiences needs in mind and to have left them emotionally satisfied from the performance.

This was precisely the advice ʿĀ'isha allegedly gave to ʿUbayd b. ʿUmayr, the first *qāṣṣ* of Mecca. She told him to lighten up on the people with his *qaṣaṣ* because it was “heavy” (*thaqīl*) with the potential of boring them.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, since boredom was a potential consequence of *qaṣaṣ*, ʿĀ'isha recommended to ʿUbayd that he only give *qaṣaṣ* every other day in order to allow the people to rest.<sup>56</sup> An alternate version of this tradition cautions of an even more damaging consequence for the listener. In it, ʿĀ'isha tells ʿUbayd that he go easy in his *qaṣaṣ* because “*dhikr* kills.”<sup>57</sup> She also reportedly told Ibn Abī al-Sā'ib, the *qāṣṣ* of the people of Medina, to give *qaṣaṣ* three times a week, so as not to bore the people and to only interrupt them and speak to them if they asked him.<sup>58</sup> Indeed the same sentiment has also been attributed to ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.<sup>59</sup>

Certainly boredom is the death knell of any performance. While some religious rites, by virtue of their obligatory nature, always draw the faithful into attendance, a boring *qāṣṣ* had a bleak future. ʿĀ'isha's concern is one that has already been addressed in Chapter Two. There we noted that *qaṣaṣ* maintained a close connection with *dhikr* (recollection) and *waʿz* (admonition) such that the difference between it and these two phenomena was at times indiscernible. It appears, though, that the light-heartedness ʿĀ'isha advocated and Saʿīd and ʿAtā' seem to have perfected was one characteristic setting *qaṣaṣ* apart from these other disciplines. Thus, while *waʿz* and *dhikr* always struggled to entertain because the admonition that is characteristic of them has always been, and still remains, as ʿĀ'isha said, “heavy” (*thaqīl*), *qaṣaṣ*, with its potential for levity, transcended that barrier. Herein lays the importance of *bayān* to *qaṣaṣ*.

Not all scholars concurred on the importance of cheerfulness in meetings of religious instruction, however. The medieval scholar Ibn al-Jawzī, drawing on

54 On Saʿd, see al-Ibshihī, *al-Mustaṭraf fī kull fann mustaṭraf*, ed. Muḥammad Qumayḥa (Beirut, 1983), 2:505. On ʿAtā', see Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 40:447.

55 Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:24; Ibn Abī Khaythama, *Akhbār al-Makkīyyīn*, 248.

56 Fākihī, *Akhbār*, 2:339.

57 Ibn Abī Khaythama, *Akhbār al-Makkīyyīn*, 250–251.

58 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 6:217; Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:13; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 3:258. In an almost identical version of the report, for which Ibn ʿAbbās is the transmitter, there is no mention of Ibn Abī al-Sā'ib and the verb that he uses is not *qaṣṣa* but *ḥaddithu*; see Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5:2334. See also Abū Ya'lā, *Musnad*, 7:448; Ṭabarānī, *Duʿā'*, 37; Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *ʿIlal*, 2:248.

59 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi' al-ʿulūm wa-l-ḥikam*, eds. Shuʿayb al-Arnāʿūṭ and Ibrāhīm Bājīs (Beirut, 1997), 267.

traditions from ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib and al-Sha‘bī, advocated that the *qāşş* refrain from connecting too closely with his audience through humor and interpersonal associations; ‘Alī purportedly commanded: “Do not mix learning with laughing, for the people will not be able to assimilate it (learning).”<sup>60</sup>

Clearly, the *qāşş*, as a performer, had as his goal the assimilation of his message by his listeners. In addition to using humor to achieve this goal, some *quşşāş* allegedly employed *saj‘*, commonly known as rhymed prose and another somewhat controversial practice in Islam.<sup>61</sup> As Frolov has pointed out, *saj‘* was widespread prior to and subsequent to the rise of Islam in spite of being shunned by some Muslims.<sup>62</sup> Thus, even though it was condemned after the rise of Islam for its association with the pre-Islamic soothsayers (*kuhhān*), in reality it continued to be used throughout the early period and beyond.<sup>63</sup> In the tradition mentioned above, ‘Ā’isha, or possibly Ibn ‘Abbās, warned the Medinan *qāşş* Ibn Abī al-Sā’ib to not bore the people with his *qaşaş*; she also warned him to avoid *saj‘* in his statements, arguing that the Prophet did not do this and his Companions hated it.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of the authenticity of this tradition, it certainly implies that the *quşşāş* used *saj‘* and seeks to limit its practice. Jāḥiẓ, on the other hand, specifically identified the *qāşş* al-Faḍl b. ‘Īsā al-Riqāshī as having used *saj‘* in his *qaşaş*.<sup>65</sup> As ‘Athamina has noted, Jāḥiẓ did not oppose the use of *saj‘*; rather, he saw in its rejection an attempt to repulse any potential influence exerted by the *kuhhān al-‘arab* of the Jāhiliyya. Once this potential threat was suppressed, *saj‘* was allowed.<sup>66</sup>

According to al-Najm, *saj‘* was an important method used by the *quşşāş* to influence their listeners, to play on their emotions and to draw them into their pronouncements.<sup>67</sup> ‘Athamina, however, believed that the *quşşāş*’s use of *saj‘* in statements to the masses was counter-productive and “interfered with the instructional aims to which *qaşaş* was devoted,” since the people, because of their limited and possibly non-existent education, were not able to understand

60 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşāş*, 136.

61 Frolov, following Goldziher, argued that the identification of *saj‘* as “rhymed prose” is accurate when applied to later expressions such as *maqāmāt* or *rasā’il*, but that *saj‘* in earlier times was “nothing but primitive verse.” See his *Arabic Verse*, 98.

62 See his excellent summary of the use of *saj‘* in early Islam and the mixed response by Muslim scholars to it, even in regard to its use in the Qur’ān; *Arabic Verse*, 105–110.

63 Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:290. Abū Nu‘aym gives examples of al-Faḍl’s *saj‘* sayings; see his *Hilya*, 6:223–224; al-Najm, *Quşşāş*, 75–76.

66 ‘Athamina, “*Qaşaş*,” 62. He is citing here Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:289–290.

67 Al-Najm, *Quşşāş*, 68–69, 73, 75.

their statements.<sup>68</sup> The reality seems to lie somewhere between these two poles. In fact, in spite of the above traditions, it does not seem that *saj'* was a major component of *qaṣaṣ*. It is noteworthy, for instance, that there are no examples of *saj'* among the *qaṣaṣ* listed in Chapter One. Furthermore, it is hard to imagine that the tradition attributed to 'Ā'isha forbidding the *quṣṣāṣ* to use *saj'* was transmitted (or, for that matter, fabricated) if *saj'* had not been perceived, at least in some circles, as potentially damaging to broad segments of society. If the masses failed to understand *saj'* (for instance), then little need for a tradition prohibiting it remained. In addition, the widespread use of *saj'* in early Islam, including its presence in the Qur'<sup>ān</sup>, in statements prior to battles, in orations by prominent men of early Islam, such as Abū Bakr, Ibn al-Zubayr and al-Ḥajjāj, and in other forums, suggests that it was readily comprehensible by the simple folk of the time.<sup>69</sup>

A third and equally contentious expression of *bayān* in *qaṣaṣ* was poetry. In spite of reports demeaning poetry, like that from the Prophet alleging that he liked neither poets nor the insane/possessed (*majnūn*),<sup>70</sup> poetry remained important in the Islamic community, even during the lifetime of the Prophet, who used Ḥassān b. Thābit as "his accredited panegyrist."<sup>71</sup> The community's knotty rapport with poetry is evident in the *qāṣṣ* al-Aswad b. Sari's relationship with the Prophet.<sup>72</sup> According to Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, al-Aswad, the eventual first *qāṣṣ* of Basra, was a polished poet (*shā'ir muḥsin*),<sup>73</sup> and indeed the one recorded example of his *qīṣaṣ* is a verse of poetry.<sup>74</sup> His attachment to poetry was, in fact, long, harkening back to the era of the Prophet. He allegedly recited poetry to the Prophet, except when 'Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb entered into their presence. At such times, the Prophet told al-Aswad to stop his recitation because 'Umar "is a man who does not like trivial pleasures (*hadhā rajal lā yuḥibb al-bāṭil*)."<sup>75</sup>

Along with al-Aswad, two other *quṣṣāṣ* gave poetry as part of their *qaṣaṣ*. Abū Hurayra, a contemporary of al-Aswad and also close Companion of the Prophet, gave a *qīṣṣa* including a poem about the virtues of the Prophet.<sup>76</sup> In

68 'Athamina, "Qaṣaṣ," 62.

69 For the extent of the use of *saj'* in early Islam, see Frolov, *Arabic Verse*, 105–134.

70 Fākihī, *Akhhbār*, 4:87.

71 T. Fahd, "Shā'ir," *El2*, 9:226–227.

72 Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:41; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb*, 1:89; Abū Nu'aym al-Isfahānī, *Ma'rifat al-ṣaḥāba*, ed. 'Ādil b. Yūsuf al-'Azzāzī (Riyadh, 1998), 1:270.

73 Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Istī'āb*, 1:89.

74 See a discussion of this *qīṣṣa*/poem in Chapter One, 25.

75 Abū Nu'aym, *Ma'rifa*, 1:271.

76 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 25:13–14. See Chapter One, 39.

Basra, the eminent al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī gave a *qīṣṣa* containing verses on the meaning of death.<sup>77</sup>

Some *quṣṣās* were known to be poets although it is unclear if they ever used poetry as part of their *qaṣaṣ*. Indeed, the various perceptions of poetry found throughout the community are reflected in the reputations of these *quṣṣās*/poets. For the reputable Qatāda, his expertise in poetry was an advantage and was sought after by other scholars of his time.<sup>78</sup> For ‘Imrān b. ‘Iṣām and al-Nahhās b. Qahm, on the other hand, their involvement in poetry seems to have in no way ameliorated their bad reputations.<sup>79</sup>

Finally, *bayān* was a useful, yet potentially dangerous, trait for the *qāṣṣ* in the political sphere. The influence of an eloquent *qāṣṣ* is evident in the lives of Dharr b. ‘Abd Allāh and his son ‘Umar b. Dharr who were used as propaganda tools in the internecine conflicts of the community. Dharr, for example, was identified as one of the most eloquent *quṣṣās* of his time and was likewise pegged by Ibn al-Ash‘ath to deliver politically-oriented *qaṣaṣ* against al-Ḥajjāj.<sup>80</sup> In spite of the fact that Ibn al-Ash‘ath previously ordered Dharr flogged and imprisoned for supporting the rebel’s brother, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad, against him, he removed him from prison when he set out against al-Ḥajjāj, showering him with a mount, clothes and other gifts, and utilized him as a *qāṣṣ* and *khaṭīb* in his rebellion.<sup>81</sup> Dharr was commanded to incite the people against al-Ḥajjāj. He did so every day and allegedly caused much damage to al-Ḥajjāj.<sup>82</sup> In this instance, the expediency of an effective *qāṣṣ* trumped past animosities.

Dharr’s eloquence and usefulness in the political struggles of the community seems to have been bequeathed to his son ‘Umar, and it is through his experience that the danger associated with *qaṣaṣ* becomes evident. ‘Umar, whom we have already encountered as one who possessed a spell-binding

77 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 3:220. See Chapter One, 23.

78 Yāqūt, *Muṣjam al-udabā’*, 6:202; Ibn Khallikhān, *Wafayāt*, 2:513–514.

79 On ‘Imrān, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:320; Appendix # 32. On al-Nahhās, see Fākihī, *Akhbār*, 1:307; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:243; Appendix # 103. It is noteworthy that al-Nahhās, who was considered an untrustworthy *ḥadīth* transmitter, has only a few *ḥadīth* connected to him, one of which is that the Companions of the Prophet recited poetry while circumambulating the Ka’ba. This practice apparently had roots in the pre-Islamic period as attested in Hishām b. al-Kalbī’s *Kitāb al-aṣnām* in which he noted that Quraysh would circumambulate the Ka’ba while reciting verses in praise of their three goddesses (Manāt, Allāt and al-‘Uzza), verses which became known notoriously as the “Satanic Verses.” See Hishām b. al-Kalbī *The Book of Idols*, trans. by Nabih Amin Faris (Princeton, 1952), 16–17.

80 Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:410; Khalifa, *Tārīkh*, 280; Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2:1055.

81 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2:1055.

82 Khalifa, *Tārīkh*, 280.

voice, was, like his father, an eloquent (*balīgh*) *qāṣṣ* and effective propagandizing force. He gave *qaṣaṣ* and incited the supporters of the Umayyads in Wāsiṭ against the ‘Abbāsids in 132/750.<sup>83</sup> He was joined in this venture by al-‘Awwām b. Ḥawshab, and it was by virtue of their apparent effectiveness in rousing the populace against the ‘Abbāsids that they were two of the three men who were not granted amnesty when the region fell to the new dynasty.<sup>84</sup> ‘Umar’s life, though, was eventually spared because of the intercession of Ziyād b. ‘Ubayd Allāh.<sup>85</sup>

It is worth noting that ‘Umar and al-‘Awwām were quite similar in scholarly reputation and political practice. Both men were considered reputable *ḥadīth* and religious scholars and both engaged in a somewhat usual “*qaṣaṣ*” practice of inciting soldiers to fight. However, according to the sources, only ‘Umar was a *qāṣṣ*, and a major trait possessed by ‘Umar not by al-‘Awwām was the former’s possession of eloquence and a beautiful voice. It may be, then, that ‘Umar’s *bayān* was the trait that set him apart from al-‘Awwām as a *qāṣṣ*.

### Conduct

The performance of the *qāṣṣ* depended not only on his own skills as a scholar and speaker, it also incorporated practical aspects associated with the conduct of the session itself. The conduct in a *qaṣaṣ* session included both the actions of the *qāṣṣ* as well as the format of his sessions. Five issues appear to be particularly relevant in this regard: the decorum of the session, the posture of the *qāṣṣ*, the location of the sessions, the times they were held and various malpractices of the *quṣṣāṣ*. It is these five features that the sources emphasize when describing the sessions themselves. An attendant issue lingering just below the surface of each of these is a question about the degree of formality of the *qaṣaṣ* sessions, i.e. the degree to which a *qaṣaṣ* session was a formal or informal meeting, aspects located in a number of the practices of the *quṣṣāṣ*.

### Decorum

The type of decorum expected in a *qaṣaṣ* session indicates much about how the *quṣṣāṣ* were perceived by the community. The Meccan legal scholar ‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ (d.c. 115/733) described the etiquette expected in a *qaṣaṣ* session by

83 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 3:69–70; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 16:94; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 8:404–405.

84 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 3:69–70; Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 8:404–405.

85 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 3:69–70. Why ‘Umar was spared and al-‘Awwām was not is unclear. Could it be that his prowess as a *qāṣṣ* made him particularly valuable to Ziyād?

comparing it to the most formal expression of religious education, the official sermon (*khuṭba*).<sup>86</sup> His evaluation suggests that the difference between the *khuṭba* and the *qāṣṣa* is based on the conduct/decorum of the session rather than the content of the teaching, particularly in regard to the degree of formality expected in each. Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) posed the problem to ‘Aṭā’:

“So, the *qaṣaṣ* of the *qāṣṣ*, is something different than the *khuṭba* of the *imām* on Friday. Can I engage in *dhikr* to God while listening to him (i.e. the *qāṣṣ*) and trying to pay attention to him?” He [‘Aṭā’] said, “Yes. You can sit with him if you want and leave him if you want and raise your voice during some of the recollections.” I [Ibn Jurayj] said, “So if someone sneezed and said ‘*al-ḥamdu li-llāh*’, can I bless him?” He said, “Certainly.” I said, “Can another person and I talk while listening to him?” He said, “Yes, but if you praised God (*tasabbuḥ*) and recalled God (*tadhakkur*), this would be preferable to me.”<sup>87</sup>

‘Aṭā’ confirmed for Ibn Jurayj that the atmosphere in the *qaṣaṣ* session was more lax and freewheeling than the *khuṭba*. Since the Friday oration of the *imām* was a formal meeting, strict decorum, in particular silence and attention to the oration, was preserved.<sup>88</sup> In the *qaṣaṣ* sessions, conversely, little discipline was required.

According to ‘Aṭā’, the laxity in the *qaṣaṣ* session was expressed in a number of ways. First, the *qāṣṣ* did not demand one’s full attention. While sitting in his session, the listener engaged in his own religious exercise of *dhikr* and essentially ignored the instruction of the *qāṣṣ*. Thus, secondly, the listener came and went as he saw fit and said his *dhikr* audibly and not simply to himself. This aspect of the atmosphere in the *qaṣaṣ* session was apparent in the sessions of the Jordanian *qāṣṣ* at al-Jābiya with Mu‘āwiya. At some point in the session, someone stood up to leave the session, obviously having felt no obligation to wait until the *qāṣṣ* was finished.<sup>89</sup> Thirdly, interaction between the attendees was also allowed so that if someone sneezed, he received a blessing, and was able to carry on a conversation with a friend (if he desired).

However, while ‘Aṭā’ portrayed the *qaṣaṣ* session as an unfettered affair such that one *did* almost as he pleased in it, this did not mean that he believed one

86 On ‘Aṭā’, see J. Schacht, “‘Aṭā’ b. Abī Rabāḥ,” *El2*, 1:730.

87 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 3:218. Ibn Jurayj is ‘Abd al-Malik b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz b. Jurayj; on him, see Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 18:338–354.

88 See above 153, n. 3.

89 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 68:128.

act in a *laissez-faire* manner. In fact, according to this report, ‘Atā’ personally maintained that one actively and reverently participate in the session, suggesting that he viewed the session as worthy of respect and demureness.

Yet ‘Atā’ allegedly did not always uphold his own standard. A certain Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. Kurayz (n.d.)<sup>90</sup> saw ‘Atā’ engaged in a conversation with the distinguished scholar and *qāṣṣ* ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr while another, unidentified *qāṣṣ* was giving his *qaṣaṣ* near-by. Ṭalḥa said to ‘Atā’ and ‘Ubayd:

“Do you not want to listen to the *dhikr* and to be deemed worthy at the appointed time [before God]?” They (‘Atā’ and ‘Ubayd) looked at me (Ṭalḥa) and then continued their conversation. So I (Ṭalḥa) repeated it to them and they continued their conversation. So I did it a third time and they looked at me and said, “That [meaning, “listening”] is for prayer time.” Then they recited the verse: “And when the Qur’ān is recited, give ear to it and heed it” (Sūrat al-A‘rāf [7]:204).<sup>91</sup>

The two scholars, one of whom, ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr, was himself a famous *qāṣṣ*, felt no compulsion to listen to the unidentified *qāṣṣ* because the conditions that demanded silence and giving heed, i.e. prayer time and the recitation of the Qur’ān, did not exist during the *qaṣaṣ* session. Nonetheless, while ‘Atā’ and ‘Ubayd upheld the letter of the law, they did not abide by its spirit, even according to ‘Atā’s own opinion, which, as was mentioned above, encouraged active participation in the session.

Not only was interaction between the attendees during a *qaṣaṣ* session apparently acceptable, it also appears that *qaṣaṣ* sessions were in essence interactive sessions in which the *qāṣṣ* allowed for and, at times, even encouraged input and questions from the audience. As we saw in Chapter One, the Prophet, while giving *qaṣaṣ* from the pulpit of the mosque, allowed Abū al-Dardā’ to interject a question about the meaning of a verse from the Qur’ān.<sup>92</sup> Ibn ‘Umar also interrupted Ibn Mas‘ūd while he was standing and giving *qaṣaṣ* by asking him about “the straight path (*al-ṣirāṭ al-mustaqīm*).”<sup>93</sup> Likewise, the eminent

90 Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 13:424–426. He is not to be confused with the famous Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Uthmān; see W. Madelung, “Ṭalḥa b. ‘Ubayd Allāh,” *EL*, 10:161–162; Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 13:412–424.

91 Ṭabarī, *Tafsīr*, 9:163; Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, 2:282. Tha‘labī identified the speaker as a Qur’ān reciter (*al-qārī*); see his *Kashf*, 4:321.

92 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 14:311–312, 45:483. See also the discussion of the *qiṣṣa* in Chapter One, 23.

93 Ibn Waḍḍāḥ, *Bida’*, 177.

Syrian *qāşş* Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī purportedly sat on the steps of the mosque in the evenings where he gave *qaşaş*, related *ḥadīth* and fielded questions from his listeners who sat on the steps below him.<sup>94</sup> Abū Idrīs also gave *qaşaş* in the mosque in response to inquiries made by those who attended Qurʾān recitation and study circles in the mosque. When a group came across a *sajda* verse, they sought out Abū Idrīs to recite the verse for them. He then led them in prostrations repeating the *sajda* up to twelve times, presumably in order to solidify the proper recitation of the verse in the minds of the inquirers. Then, when the circle of students finished their recitation, Abū Idrīs began giving *qaşaş*.<sup>95</sup> At some later time, this order was reversed so that *qaşaş* came first and the recitation came afterward (*thumma quddīma al-qaşaş baʿda dhālika wa akhkhārū al-qirāʾa*).<sup>96</sup>

These reports indicate that *qaşaş* sessions were collegial affairs, promoting interaction between the *qāşş* as teacher and his students. Only when the student was obstinate or directly challenged the teaching of the *qāşş* does the *qāşş* seem to have taken offense. Thus, we have the example of the Prophet's frustration with Abū al-Dardāʾ for repeating the same question as if the Companion was surprised by the Prophet's response and not entirely convinced of its validity.<sup>97</sup> Also, Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī allegedly expelled a student from his *qaşaş* session when the student challenged him on a *ḥadīth* that he related.<sup>98</sup> Even the report we encountered in Chapter One about the unlearned *qāşş* whom al-Shaʿbī confronted for having alleged that the end of days would be announced by two trumpets instead of one indicates that the *quşşāş* faced limits in the amount of opposition they allowed in their sessions.<sup>99</sup> Nevertheless, *qaşaş* sessions were essentially teaching sessions fostering an environment of open inquiry. This aspect set it apart from other public pronouncements, namely the *khuṭba*, both decidedly more formal and requiring a level of decorum not demanded in *qaşaş* sessions.

94 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 26:163.

95 The text gives no indication about the content of his *qaşaş* but it seems safe to say that it had something to do with Qurʾān recitation and interpretation (*tafsīr*) since this was the context in which he gave his *qaşaş*, not unlike those of the Prophet and Ibn Masʿūd.

96 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 26:162–163. It seems likely that the last portion of the report which tells of the reversal of order merely indicates that when a group would come to Abū Idrīs he would give *qaşaş* (*tafsīr*?) to them before answering their question about the recitation of the verse or that he would answer their question in the process of giving *qaşaş*. It is unclear what prompted the change.

97 See Chapter One, 23.

98 Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 26:163.

99 See Chapter One, 30.

### *Posture*

The distinguished scholar Adam Mez claimed that the difference between “official” preachers, by whom he meant “the Friday preacher,” and “unofficial” preachers, or as he calls them elsewhere, “popular” preachers, was that “while the former preached standing, the latter did so sitting on a stool.”<sup>100</sup> However, he also noted that the early *quṣṣāṣ* of Egypt combined both positions by reciting the Qur’ān while standing and delivering *qaṣaṣ* while seated.<sup>101</sup> Later, Merlin Swartz, building on Mez’s evaluation, noted that ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb’s decision to allow Tamīm al-Dārī to relate *qaṣaṣ* while standing indicated that Tamīm was acting in an official capacity, as opposed to “the free *qāṣṣ*” who gave his *qaṣaṣ* while seated.<sup>102</sup> Indeed, the fact that the sources, at times, emphasize whether a *qāṣṣ* was standing or sitting does seem to imply that there is a connection between that posture and how “official,” or formal, the *qaṣaṣ* session was. In the case of the report of ‘Umar granting permission to Tamīm, standing may be a sign he had been “officially appointed.”<sup>103</sup> Yet, as we have noted above, *qaṣaṣ* sessions were conducted along a graded line of formality, such that even when standing, certain expectations in decorum were not enforced, although we expected the posture of standing to have required greater decorum from both the speaker and the audience than the posture of sitting. In spite of this, the distinction between an “official,” or formal, meeting and an “unofficial,” or informal, meeting does not seem to have hinged on the posture of the *qāṣṣ* as either standing or sitting; other factors seem to have been active.

The sources preserve for us a number of references to the posture of the *quṣṣāṣ* of early Islam while they related *qaṣaṣ*. According to a tradition about the Prophet, as we have already seen above, he gave a *qiṣṣa*, engaging in Qur’ānic exegesis, while standing at the pulpit of the mosque.<sup>104</sup> Ibn Mas‘ūd also stood when giving *qaṣaṣ* on Mondays and Thursdays, as was noted above as well.<sup>105</sup> Another Companion of the Prophet Abū Hurayra gave a *qiṣṣa* while standing on Friday, the day of congregational prayer, as did an unknown *qāṣṣ* identified only as Abū Shayba.<sup>106</sup> Tamīm al-Dārī was granted permission from

100 Mez, *Renaissance*, 331–332. Swartz followed Mez in this assessment, see his translation of Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Quṣṣāṣ* (108, n. 2).

101 Mez, *Renaissance*, 332.

102 See Swartz’s translation of Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣāṣ*, 108, n. 2.

103 Ibid.

104 See above 168, n. 92.

105 See Chapter One, 14, 46.

106 ‘Abd al-Ghanī al-Maqdisī, *Aḥādīth al-shi‘r*, ed. Khayr Allāh al-Sharīf (Damascus, 1993), 53. On Abū Shayba, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 11:290.

the Caliph ‘Umar to give *qaşas* once a week while standing.<sup>107</sup> This was eventually increased by ‘Uthmān to three times a week while standing.<sup>108</sup> The first *qāşş* of Egypt, Sulaym b. ‘Itr, as well as one of his successors, Marthad b. Wadā’a, also gave *qaşas* while standing.<sup>109</sup>

These examples show that the meaning behind standing when giving *qaşas* is unclear. First, standing when giving *qaşas* was practiced both during the Friday meeting, as in the case of Abū Hurayra and Abū Shayba, and at other times during the week, as in the case of Ibn Mas‘ūd and Tamīm al-Dārī. Moreover, the day when the Prophet, Sulaym b. ‘Itr and Marthad b. Wadā’a gave *qaşas* is unknown. Thus, contrary to Mez’s assessment, “official” status was not necessarily connected to standing when preaching on Friday. Secondly, even when standing, the *quşşās*, namely the Prophet and Ibn Mas‘ūd, interacted with their audiences suggesting that their sessions were conducted according to a lesser degree of formality than what was expected from the “official” *khuṭba*, for example.

Although a number of *quşşās* gave their *qişas* while standing, the default posture of *qaşas* seems to have been sitting down. This practice, like that of giving *qaşas* while standing, allegedly found precedent in the practice of the Prophet.<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, the practice of sitting while giving *qaşas* existed during the time of the Prophet’s Companions, as evident in reports about ‘Abd Allāh b. Rawāḥa, Abū Dharr, Ibn Mas‘ūd and al-Aswad b. Sarī‘.<sup>111</sup> In fact, most references to *qaşas* sessions tell of the *qāşş* and his listeners seated together.<sup>112</sup> As we noted above, Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī, for example, gave *qaşas* while sitting on the steps of the mosque where he received and answered questions from his listeners.<sup>113</sup> This practice appears to be more of an informal and, therefore, unofficial forum for *qaşas*, even though the public nature of his discourses and his position as an appointee of ‘Abd al-Malik as both a *qāşş* and a judge suggested that while his sessions seemed to be “unofficial,” he himself may have been “official.” The *qāşş* Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī expressed

107 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşās*, 22.

108 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muşannaḥ*, 3:219. For more analysis of this tradition, see Chapter Four.

109 For Sulaym, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 72:277; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşās*, 128. For Marthad, see Fasawī, *Ma’rifā*, 2:248.

110 See the discussion about the Prophet seated while giving *qaşas* in Chapter Four.

111 On ‘Abd Allāh, see Makkī, *Qūt*, 2:204. On Abū Dharr, see Majlisī, *Biḥār*, 22:395. On Ibn Mas‘ūd, see Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu’jam al-kabīr*, 9:128. On al-Aswad, see Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 1:232.

112 For other examples, see ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr (Jāḥiẓ, *Bayān*, 1:367); Sulaym b. ‘Itr (Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 72:273), and Ibn Hujayra (Dulābī, *Kunā*, 1:314).

113 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muşannaḥ*, 7:74; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 26:163. See also the Appendix # 31.

the reality clearly when he admonished his own students: “Do not *sit* with the *quṣṣāṣ* except with Abū al-Aḥwāṣ (*lā tajālasū al-quṣṣāṣ ghayr Abī al-Aḥwāṣ*).”<sup>114</sup>

All this seems to indicate that attempting to describe a session as either “official” or “unofficial” or as either “formal” or “informal” based on the posture of the *qāṣṣ* as standing (i.e. official/formal) or seated (i.e. unofficial/informal) is, at the very least, imprecise. If “official” is meant to indicate a governmentally-appointed preacher, for instance, then we have examples of appointed *quṣṣāṣ* who gave their sessions while standing (i.e. Tamīm al-Dārī) as well as while sitting (i.e. Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī). Furthermore, the designation between “formal” and “informal” also seem indistinct because, in comparison to the “formal” *khuṭba*, the *qaṣaṣ* session, whether the *qāṣṣ* was standing or sitting, was in its essence informal since it allowed for interaction between the speaker and the audience, as ‘Aṭā’ noted in the report discussed above and as we have seen in the practices of some *quṣṣāṣ*, most notably the Prophet himself who gave *qaṣaṣ* while standing at the pulpit of the mosque and while seated in a circle of students.<sup>115</sup>

### *Location*

The impression drawn from the posture of the *qāṣṣ* that *qaṣaṣ* was a flexible medium is reflected also in the variety of locations where *qaṣaṣ* sessions were held. The most common forum for *qaṣaṣ* was certainly the mosque of the city. ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr held sessions in the *Masjid al-Ḥarām* of Mecca.<sup>116</sup> Muslim b. Jundab was the *qāṣṣ* of the Prophet’s mosque in Medina.<sup>117</sup> Ibn Mas‘ūd and Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī gave *qaṣaṣ* in the mosque in Damascus, presumably the Umayyad mosque.<sup>118</sup> In Iraq, Ibn Mas‘ūd observed a *qaṣaṣ* session in a mosque in Kufa,<sup>119</sup> while al-Aswad b. Sarī’ was the first to give *qaṣaṣ* in the mosque in

114 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:293.

115 It may also be helpful to note that a similar debate about standing and sitting was waged around the Friday *khuṭba* during the reign of al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik in which the *qāṣṣ* and Umayyad political advisor Rajā’ b. Ḥaywa capitulated that he was unable to correct the Umayyad caliphs’ practice of sitting during the first sermon and standing during the second since they believed, erroneously according to him, that this was the custom of the caliphs dating back to ‘Uthmān; see Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2:1233–1234.

116 Ibn Abī Khaythama, *Akhbār al-Makkiyyīn*, 1:160.

117 Jāhīz, *Bayān*, 1:367–368.

118 For Ibn Mas‘ūd, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 33:52. For Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 26:151, 160.

119 Ṭabarānī, *al-Mu‘jam al-kabīr*, 9:128. The *matn* does not indicate that the mosque was in Kufa but the fact that the first transmitter of the tradition, al-Aswad b. Hilāl, was Kufan suggests that it was.

Basra and another Basran, ‘Abd Allāh b. Ghālib, gave *qaşaş* there in “the congregational mosque (*al-masjid al-jāmi‘*).<sup>120</sup> On the other side of the empire, Sulaym b. ‘Itr, Egypt’s first *qāşş* gave *qaşaş* in the mosque of Fustāt (the mosque of ‘Amr b. al-Āṣ).<sup>121</sup> Since these sessions were held in the main mosque of the city, we deduce that the *qāşş* must have been a reputable man in the community in order to have his name connected so firmly with the primary mosque of the city, and, indeed with some of the more famous mosques of the empire, and, furthermore, that the rulers of the city were aware, at the very least, of his sessions in the mosque.

Not only did *quşşāş* work in mosques of the cities of the empire, they also delivered their *qaşaş* in tribal mosques. The mosque of the Banū Nabhān in Kūfa at one point housed the *qāşş* Abū ‘Amr.<sup>122</sup> There was even a mosque in Kūfa known as the “the mosque of the *quşşāş*” where people congregated to listen to *qaşaş*; it was also known as the Mosque of Abū Dāwūd and was located in the tribal district of Wādī‘a.<sup>123</sup> In Basra, a few *quşşāş* were associated with tribal mosques. Zurāra b. ‘Awfā, for example, the pro-Umayyad *qāşş* known as one of the *imāms* of the people of Başra gave his *qaşaş* at the mosque of the Banū Qushayr.<sup>124</sup> Likewise, the anti-Umayyad *qāşş* ‘Imrān b. ‘Işām gave *qaşaş* in the mosque of the Banū Ḍubay‘a.<sup>125</sup>

Even though holding a session in a mosque appeared to grant the session a certain degree of legitimacy, the precise location of the session within the mosque also seems to have influenced perceptions of the sessions conveying a feeling of respect for or criticism of the relevant *qāşş*. Certainly, when the Prophet was said to have given *qaşaş* from the pulpit of the mosque, both his own reputation and the place where he spoke demanded the respect of the audience, as was true for others who spoke from the pulpit. In addition, the practice in Mecca, during at least the lifetime of ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr, was that the *qāşş* stood behind the *maqām*, presumably meaning the *maqām Ibrāhīm*.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, by simply mentioning that the *qāşş* conducted his session near such

120 On al-Aswad, see Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:41; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Istī‘āb*, 1:89–90. On ‘Abd Allāh, Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 2:291.

121 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 72:273.

122 Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī *Mūdiḥ awḥām al-jam‘ wa-l-tafriq*, ed. ‘Abd al-Mu‘ṭī Amīn Qal‘ajī (Beirut, 1987), 2:394.

123 Ṭabarī, *Tārīkh*, 2:656.

124 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:150; Ibn Ḥanbal, *Zuhd*, 1:247; Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, 4:516.

125 Dhahabī, *Tārīkh*, 6:159.

126 Fākihī, *Akḥbār*, 2:338. On the *maqām*, see A.J. Wensinck, “al-Masjd al-Ḥarām,” *El2*, 6:708–709 and M.J. Kister, “Maḳām Ibrāhīm,” *El2*, 6:104–107.

a highly honored place in the mosque, the report projects greater status upon the *qāṣṣ*.

Other traditions express the opposite sentiment and seem to marginalize the *quṣṣāṣ* by confining them to the deep corners of the mosque. Al-Aswad b. Sarīʿ in Basra allegedly held his sessions in the back-part (*muʿakkhar*)/corner (*nāḥiya*) of the mosque, and even then, though sitting in the furthest reaches of the mosque, the noise from his session was heard by others.<sup>127</sup> The Basran *qāṣṣ* Sumayr b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān also gave *qaṣaṣ* in the corner of the mosque.<sup>128</sup> These references to space and the access to space carry meaning. By noting that a *qāṣṣ* was on the pulpit or at a recognized position in the mosque, such as behind the *maqām Ibrāhīm*, or that he held his sessions at the “back-part” or “corner” of the mosque, the reports convey a clear impression about the legitimacy, or at least about the status, of his sessions. Some reports, like those describing *quṣṣāṣ* speaking from the stairs of the mosque, do not portray a distinct image concerning the status of the *qāṣṣ* and his session and, therefore, may reiterate the flexibility inherent in *qaṣaṣ*.<sup>129</sup>

Not all *qaṣaṣ* meetings, though, were held in mosques. This fact, however, was not unusual for teachers and mirrored the varied practices of the scholarly community in general. As Nabia Abbott has noted, scholars and judges in early Islam often held sessions in their homes and legal rulings were even handed down in the marketplace.<sup>130</sup> Thus, even “official” or “formal” meetings were held outside the mosque. A strikingly similar situation obtained with the *quṣṣāṣ*. We know of one *qāṣṣ*, the Basran Zurāra b. Awfā, who held his *qaṣaṣ* sessions in his home and that the governor al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf allegedly attended some of his sessions.<sup>131</sup> Furthermore, *quṣṣāṣ* also worked in the marketplace (*sūq*) as indicated in a report about the caliph ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib being impressed

127 Ibn al-Mubārak (*Zuhd*, 1:232) and Ibn Saʿd (*Ṭabaqāt*, 9:41) say he was in the back-part of the mosque. Ibn Sallām says he was in the corner; see his *Gharīb*, 4:304.

128 Dārimī, *Sunan*, 1:110.

129 Ibn Masʿūd (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 33:52), Abū Idrīs al-Khawlānī (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 26:163) and Abū Shayba (Ibn ʿAsākir, *Dimashq*, 68:128) gave *qaṣaṣ* from the stairs of the mosque.

130 Abbott, *Studies II*, 13. See also the report of Ibn ʿAbbās holding sessions in his house in which he would give legal rulings, teach and interpret the Qurʾān and even feed his guests; see Balādhurī, *Ansāb*, ed. al-ʿAẓm, 3:63.

131 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Zuhd*, 247; Abū Nuʿaym, *Ḥilya*, 2:293; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifa*, 3:230. It is not entirely clear if the sessions that al-Ḥajjāj attended were *qaṣaṣ* session or were of another type; see Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:150–151.

with the religious knowledge of a *qāşş* holding sessions in the *sūq* of Kufa.<sup>132</sup> Among the more odd places where a *qāşş* gave *qaşaş* was “the wilderness (*al-barriyya*).”<sup>133</sup>

The *quşşās* were also active in Mecca during the *hajj*. ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib ostensibly heard al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī giving *qaşaş* while on the pilgrimage although variants of the report as well as allegations by later scholars that ‘Alī never saw al-Ḥasan have called into question the reliability of the report.<sup>134</sup> Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh also gave *qaşaş* during the pilgrimage on the Day of Standing at Mt. ‘Arafat after the afternoon (*‘aşr*) prayers.<sup>135</sup> Of course, religious instruction during the *hajj* was not unusual and so we hear from ‘Ā’isha that, after circumambulating the Ka’ba in the morning, some people sat with the *mudhakkir*.<sup>136</sup>

Besides the open spaces of Mt. ‘Arafat, the locations of the sessions mentioned above suggest that the sessions themselves were small, and if small, then they were limited in attendance and presumably somewhat exclusive. Indeed, in one instance, when Ibn ‘Umar sat with ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr, the session was so private that when some inquirers interrupted them asking Ibn ‘Umar questions of legal import, he shunned them saying: “Leave us and our *qāşş* alone (*khallū baynanā wa-bayna qāşşinā*).”<sup>137</sup> In light of the locations where the early *quşşās* held their sessions, the assumption that the early *quşşās* addressed the masses and enjoyed wide, popular appeal may have been overstated.

### *Time*

Just as the locations of the *qaşaş* sessions varied so did the times when they met. We have already encountered some references to when *qaşaş* was given. For example, the Prophet appears to have given *qaşaş* at various times. Earlier citations of his *qaşaş* do not specify the times this occurred and a later scholar, Ibn Rajab (d. 795/1392), confirmed that the Prophet did not have a specific time for *qaşaş*, although he added that he did so on Fridays and holidays (*fa-inna al-nabī lam yakun la-hu waqt<sup>un</sup> mu‘ayyin<sup>un</sup> yaquşşu ‘alā aşḥābihi fī-hi ghayr khuṭbatihī al-rātiba fī-l-juma‘ wa-l-a‘yād*).<sup>138</sup>

132 Waki‘, *Quḍāt*, 2:196; Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 4:148–149; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşās*, 25; Suyūṭī, *Tahdhīr*, 193. See the discussion in Chapter Four.

133 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, 3:222.

134 Ibn Khāllikān *Wafayāt*, 2:70.

135 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Zuhd*, 1:304.

136 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:588.

137 Ibn Abī Khaythama, *Akhbār al-Makkīyyīn*, 251.

138 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi‘*, 267. Ibn Rajab alleged that the Prophet would give *tadhkīr* whenever it was needed (*innamā kāna yudhakkiruhum ahyān<sup>an</sup> aw ‘inda ḥudūth amryahtāja ilā tadhkīr ‘indahū*); see his *Jāmi‘*, 267. According to a report recorded by Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya,

*Qaṣaṣ*, in fact, was given on almost any day of the week in early Islam. Ibn Mas‘ūd did so twice a week, on Mondays and Thursdays.<sup>139</sup> A handful of reports about Tamīm al-Dārī give mixed information on when he was allowed to give *qaṣaṣ*. Some reports allege that ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb told him to give *qaṣaṣ* only once a week though the day varied, with one report claiming it was Friday and another Saturday.<sup>140</sup> The first report claims that he was later allowed by ‘Uthmān to increase this to twice per week.<sup>141</sup> Another report claims that Tamīm gave *qaṣaṣ* twice a week and that ‘Uthmān increased this to three times per week, though without specifying days.<sup>142</sup> Likewise, ‘Ā’isha allegedly told a *qāṣṣ* to give *qaṣaṣ* once a week and, if he desired, to increase that number to twice or even three times a week.<sup>143</sup> A slight variation of this routine, still approximating three times per week, was suggested by ‘Ā’isha for the Meccan *qāṣṣ* ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr. She told him to give *qaṣaṣ* every other day so that his listeners would not get bored.<sup>144</sup> The option for giving *qaṣaṣ* twice or three times a week persisted into the caliphate of ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz who, on one occasion, commanded a *qāṣṣ* to give *qaṣaṣ* on Tuesday or Saturday, but also ostensibly allowed for *qaṣaṣ* three times per week.<sup>145</sup> It is quite evident, therefore, that there was no consensus as to when *qaṣaṣ* was given. It appears that it occurred at a number of possible times and that the sources themselves were unsure about its routine.<sup>146</sup>

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*al-khuṭba al-rātiba* (“the established *khuṭba*”) is the traditional Friday sermon, as opposed to the *al-khuṭba al-‘arīḍa* (“the non-essential *khuṭba*”) which is a supererogatory sermon; see his *Zād al-ma‘ād*, ed. Shu‘ayb al-Arnā‘ūt and ‘Abd al-Qādir al-Arnā‘ūt (Beirut, 1979), 1:191.

139 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 33:180.

140 See both reports in Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:11.

141 Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:11.

142 Ibid., 1:12.

143 For ‘Ā’isha, see Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:13. A strikingly similar tradition was attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās in which he uses the phrase *ḥaddith al-nās*, instead of *quṣṣ*, which is the command in the reports from ‘Ā’isha. However, Ibn ‘Abbās, in the same tradition, instructed that the teacher should give *qaṣaṣ* as well, “*taquṣṣu ‘alayhim*.” This suggests that these may be two variants of the same tradition. See Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh*, 5:2334.

144 Fākihī, *Akḥbār*, 2:339.

145 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi‘*, 267.

146 In fact, *qaṣaṣ* seems to have maintained its flexibility into the medieval period when Ibn al-Jawzī gave his presentations which were a combination of Qur’ān recitation, a *khuṭba* and *wa‘iz*, in sessions allegedly attended by thousands on Thursdays and Saturdays; see Pedersen, “Islamic Preacher,” 240–241. See also Swartz’s Introduction to Ibn al-Jawzī’s *Quṣṣāṣ*, 34–35.

This same flexibility can be seen in the time of day when *qaşaş* was given. On at least two occasions during the first few decades of Islamic history, the session was held after the *maghrib* prayers. During the lifetime of Ibn Mas‘ūd, an unidentified *qāşş* appears to have assembled his listeners in the evening between the *maghrib* and the *‘ishā’* prayers.<sup>147</sup> Tamīm al-Dārī, during the caliphate of ‘Uthmān, also allegedly gave his *qaşaş* at this time, although another report claims that he was told by ‘Umar to give *qaşaş* twice: “mornings and evenings (*bukra wa-‘ashiyya*).”<sup>148</sup> Similarly, ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr, the first *qāşş* in Mecca, gave *qaşaş* once a day after the morning (*ṣubḥ*) prayer<sup>149</sup> and/or twice a day after the morning (*al-ṣubḥ*) and afternoon prayers (*al-‘aṣr*).<sup>150</sup> Also, while ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz allowed the *quşşās* to give *qaşaş* three times a week, as mentioned above, they allegedly only held sessions one time during the day.<sup>151</sup> The ‘Abbāsīd *qāşş* al-Qāsim b. Mujāshī‘ adopted the practice of giving *qaşaş* once a day after the evening prayer, when speaking against the Umayyads.<sup>152</sup>

However, the practice alluded to in the reports about Tamīm and ‘Ubayd giving *qaşaş* twice a day seems to have emerged as the most common custom of the *quşşās* of the Umayyad period. The two times a day were usually around the morning (*al-fajr* or *al-ṣubḥ*) and afternoon (*al-‘aṣr*) prayers. While ‘Ubayd seems to have been the first to be connected with giving *qaşaş* at these specific times, others maintained the practice. The famous Sa‘īd b. Jubayr and two Medinan *quşşās*, ‘Atā’ b. Yasār (d. 103/721) and his older contemporary Salama b. Dīnār (d. 130–40/747–57), all purportedly held their *qaşaş* sessions at these times.<sup>153</sup> Abū ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī held sessions during these times, teaching twenty verses of the Qur’ān in each session.<sup>154</sup>

Slight variations on this routine did occur, though. ‘Abd al-Malik, in fact, commanded that his *quşşās* give *qaşaş* in the morning (*al-ghadāt*) and the

147 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 3:221.

148 For the report about ‘Uthmān, see Ibn Wahb, *al-Jāmi‘ fi-l-ḥadīth*, ed. Muṣṭafā Ḥasan Ḥusayn Muḥammad Abū al-Khayr (Al-Dammam, Saudia Arabia, 1996), 2:664. For the report about ‘Umar, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 11:81.

149 Fākihī, *Akhbār*, 2:338.

150 Fasawī, *Ma‘rifā*, 1:542.

151 Ibn Rajab, *Jāmi‘*, 267.

152 See the Appendix # 100.

153 On Sa‘d, see Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:377; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 4:336. On ‘Atā’, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 40:447 and the Appendix # 59. On Salama, see Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 22:20; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, 8:32; Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 11:272; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 6:101; al-Şafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-l-wafayāt*, eds. Aḥmad al-Arnā’ūt and Turkī Muṣṭafā (Beirut, 2000), 15:199.

154 Ibn Sa‘d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:291.

evening (*al-‘ashīyya*).<sup>155</sup> Another report even alleged that the practice of teaching the Qur’ān after morning prayer began in the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik with Hishām b. Ismā‘īl al-Makhzūmī and his *mawlā* Rāfi‘.<sup>156</sup> However, later *quṣṣāṣ*, such as the Medinan Muslim b. Jundab and the Basran Zurāra b. Awfā, continued to give *qaṣāṣ* twice a day, and Muslim, who, as was mentioned above, was known for his fine recitation of the Qur’ān, used this time to teach his audience thirty verses of the Qur’ān.<sup>157</sup>

### *Malpractices*

The danger with *qaṣāṣ* was that it existed on a fine line between virtue and vice. The traits and set of skills advocated for an effective *qāṣṣ* were, when misused, the same traits that led to his excoriation. Thus, loudness of voice easily became a scourge when the session as a whole became loud. The weeping that signified piety and devotion was interpreted as dissimulation when done *en masse*. The gaiety encouraged in a *qāṣṣ* became irreverence when entertainment superseded religiosity. And, eventually, the negative expressions of these generally positive tendencies came to define the practice of *qaṣāṣ* as a phenomenon, while the orthodox manifestations of the practice came to represent the exception, not the rule. The examples of misconduct attributed to the *quṣṣāṣ* range from the relatively innocuous, such as the pride of the *qāṣṣ*, to the more deplorable, such as mixing genders in the same session and even allowing women to give *qaṣāṣ*.

#### Pride: “Know me (*i’rifūnī*)!”

A number of reports accuse the *quṣṣāṣ* of pride and, therefore, of trying to attract attention to themselves unjustifiably. This accusation is expressed ubiquitously by alleging that the real, though unspoken, objective of the *qāṣṣ* is to declare, “Know me!” This charge proposes to expose a flaw in the *qāṣṣ* that is more seminal than merely undisciplined or inappropriate behavior in his ses-

155 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 4/1:30.

156 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 18:24. ‘Athamina claimed that Rāfi‘ was a *qāṣṣ* citing the second Badrān edition as his source; see his “Qaṣāṣ,” 60. I was unable to locate this edition but was able to check the first Badrān edition ([Damascus, 1911–1913], 5:295) which does not identify Rāfi‘ as a *qāṣṣ* nor does the more recent al-‘Amrawī edition. Hishām b. Ismā‘īl b. Hishām al-Makhzūmī was a religious scholar, father-in-law to ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwan, who appointed him governor of Medina, and grandfather to the future caliph Hishām b. ‘Abd al-Malik; see Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 7:240–241.

157 On Muslim, see Ibn Mujāhid, *Sab‘a*, 59, 82. On Zurāra, see Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 9:150.

sions. According to these reports, the *qāşş* himself is to blame for improper motives.<sup>158</sup>

When Tamīm al-Dārī requested the permission of ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb to give *qaşaş*, ‘Umar told him that in giving *qaşaş* he only wanted to say: “I am Tamīm al-Dārī, so know me (*anā Tamīm al-Dārī, fa-i-rifūnī*)!”<sup>159</sup> According to another variant of the report, ‘Umar underscored the tendency towards increased pride through giving *qaşaş* by telling Tamīm that giving *qaşaş* is “slaughter” (*al-dhabh*); by it, Tamīm exalted himself (to the level of Pleiades), to the extent that God would need to humble him.<sup>160</sup>

This same opinion was ascribed to ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib when he purportedly criticized an unnamed Kufan *qāşş*. ‘Alī described the *qāşş* by saying: “This one is saying, “Know me!” So know him (*inna hādhā yaqūlu i-rifūnī fa-i-rifūhu*)!”<sup>161</sup> A variant of the report alleges that ‘Alī asked the *qāşş* to identify himself by his *kunya*. When he replied, “Abū Yaḥyā,” ‘Alī answered, “You are Abū I-rifūnī!”<sup>162</sup> ‘Alī’s sardonic alteration of the *qāşş*’s *kunya* conveys, in no uncertain terms, his disapproval of the *qāşş*. Other variants portray the *qāşş* in an even more

158 The sources also indicate that similar expressions using the Arabic root ‘-r-f were used as means for announcing one’s identity to an audience. Two examples from *quşşāş* illustrate this practice. Abū Dharr al-Ghifārī identified himself to those people of Mecca who did know him (*li-man ‘arafanī*) as “Jundab b. Junāda” and to those who did not yet know him (*li-man lam ya-rifnū*) as “Abū Dharr.” See al-Tūsī, *Ikhtiyār ma-rifa al-rijāl (Rijāl al-Kaštī)*, ed. al-Sayyid Mahdī al-Rajā’ī (Qumm, 1984), 1:115. It must be noted here, however, that this was not said in a *qaşaş* session. Ibn Mas‘ūd also announced his identity in this way and did so in a *qaşaş* session though he was not the *qāşş* of the session. After listening to a *qāşş* who was leading his audience in the repetition of *dhikr* phrases, Ibn Mas‘ūd, who disagreed with the practice of the *qāşş*, announced his presence to the group, before correcting their *qāşş*, by saying: “He who knows me, knows who I am. As for he who does not know me, I am ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd (*man ‘arafanī fa-qad ‘arafanī wa-man lam ya-rifnū, anā ‘Abd Allāh b. Mas‘ūd*).” See ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, 3:221.

159 Ibn Wahb, *Jāmi‘*, 2:664; Al-Tamīmī, *al-Miḥan*, ed. Yahyā Wahīb Jabbūrī (Tunis, 2006), 245.

160 Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:10, 12; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dīnashq*, 11:81.

161 Ibn Wahb, *Jāmi‘*, 2:663; Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:69.

162 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaḥ*, 3:220. Some variants do not identify Abū Yaḥyā beyond his *kunya*; see al-Naḥḥās, *al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*, ed. Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Salām Muḥammad (Kuwait, 1987), 47–48, 52; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Navāsikh al-Qur‘ān* (Beirut, 1984), 30–31. Others identify him as either ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Dāb (Ibn Salāma, *al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*, ed. Zuhayr al-Shāwīsh and Muḥammad Kan‘ān [Beirut, 1984], 18–19; Ibn Ḥazm, *al-Nāsikh wa-l-mansūkh*, ed. ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Sulaymān al-Bandārī [Beirut, 1986], 6; Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ghawāmiḍ al-asmā’ al-mubhama al-wāqī’a fī mutūn al-aḥādīth al-musnada*, eds. ‘Izz al-Dīn ‘Alī al-Sayyid and Muḥammad Kamāl al-Dīn ‘Izz al-Dīn [Beirut, 1986], 4:259) or Abū Yaḥyā al-Mu’arqab (Ibn Bashkuwāl, *Ghawāmiḍ*, 4:257–258, Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:82–83).

unfavorable light noting that ‘Alī reprimanded him only when he discovered that the *qāṣṣ* did not know the difference between the abrogating and abrogated verses of the Qur’ān.<sup>163</sup> These latter variants not only depict the *qāṣṣ* as a man of pride, they also allege that his pride was wholly unjustified.

A third example of the use of the expression “Know me” as a critical judgment leveled on a *qāṣṣ* comes from the distinguished ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb. Even though a number of sources report that Ibn ‘Umar, indeed, visited *quṣṣāṣ*, he allegedly reiterated to at least one *qāṣṣ* the same accusation that his father had thrown at Tamīm al-Dārī. While passing through the Masjid al-Ḥarām in Mecca, Ibn ‘Umar’s son asked about a *qāṣṣ* holding a session in the mosque. The boy said: “What is this one saying?” His father answered: “This one is saying, “Know me, know me (*i’rifūnī, i’rifūnī*)!”<sup>164</sup> Clearly, the intention here, as was the case with the previous reports, is to show that the *qāṣṣ* was proud and self-absorbed. And even though the similarity of the statements is conspicuous and hints at a trope (analogous statements are attributed also to Ibn Mas‘ūd<sup>165</sup> and Ibn ‘Abbās<sup>166</sup>), the same sentiment, conveyed by the phrase “know me,” was applied to *ḥadīth* transmitters who placed an inordinate emphasis upon pronunciation of the *ḥadīth* to the expense of meaning, or to any person who claimed to have knowledge in fact having none.<sup>167</sup>

### Loudness

While a strong voice was a meritorious quality of the *qāṣṣ*, it came with limits. In fact, loud volume among the *quṣṣāṣ* was not universally appreciated.<sup>168</sup> ‘Ā’isha allegedly complained to Ibn ‘Umar about a *qāṣṣ* who held his session

163 Naḥḥās, *Nāsikh*, 48, 51–52; Ibn Salāma, *Nāsikh*, 18–19; Ibn Ḥazm, *Nāsikh*, 5–6. Abū Nu‘aym claimed that Ibn Mas‘ūd said the same thing though I have not been able to confirm this. The closest report that I have been able to find is the one mentioned above in n. 158. That report, however, does not mention the issue of abrogation.

164 Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 12:264.

165 Makkī, *Qūt*, 2:218; Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:69.

166 Ibn Sallām, *Nāsikh*, 3; Ṭabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr*, 10:259; Naḥḥās, *Nāsikh*, 5; Ibn Salāma, *Nāsikh*, 19.

167 Makkī recorded a report from Sufyān (al-Thawrī?) in which the *ḥadīth* scholar allegedly said: “If you see a man stressing the pronunciation of the *ḥadīth* in the meeting then know that he is saying, ‘Know me.’ (*idha ra’ayta al-rajul yushaddid fi alfāz al-ḥadīth fi-l-majlis, fa-i’lam innahu yaqūlu i’rifūnī*).” See Makkī, *Qūt al-qulūb*, ed. Sa’d Nasīb Makārim (Beirut, 1995), 1:357. The report itself is somewhat suspect since I found it only in Makārim’s edition of *Qūt al-qulūb*. Al-Mawārdī used the phrase “Know me” to apply to any person who claims to be a scholar even though they know nothing; see his *Adab al-dunya wa-l-dīn*, ed. Muṣṭafā al-Saqqā (Cairo, 1955), 40–41.

168 See also the discussion above, 157–159.

right outside her home. She told Ibn ‘Umar: “This guy disturbed me and made it so that I was not able to hear a sound (*hādhā qad ādhānī wa tarakanī lā asma‘ al-ṣawt*).”<sup>169</sup> Ibn ‘Umar resolved the situation by beating the *qāşş*.

A number of reports about the practices of the *quşşāş* of Basra tell of inordinate volume from the *qāşş* and his sessions. From the very beginnings of *qaşaş* in Basra, the decibel level of the session was a problematic issue. Al-Aswad b. Sarī‘, the first *qāşş* of Basra, was rebuked by Mujālid b. Mas‘ūd al-Sulamī (d. 36/656) because his session became loud and was a distraction to others in the mosque.<sup>170</sup> Mujālid’s rebuke was humbly accepted by the attendees who replied in conciliation: “We receive your advice.”<sup>171</sup> Later, and again in Basra, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī reproved a *qāşş* for allowing three negative innovations (*bida‘*) in his session: mixing men and women together, raising hands, and raising voices.<sup>172</sup>

Not all *quşşāş*, however, were guilty of raising their voices. The reputable Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh wept while giving *qaşaş* after the morning prayer on the Day of the Standing at ‘Arafat during the pilgrimage. Even though he wept, he did not raise his voice.<sup>173</sup>

### Raising Hands

As the above report from al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī stated, the *quşşāş* of his era engaged in another behavior provoking even greater debate about its legitimacy, namely the raising of hands. The relative importance of this topic is reflected in the amount of ink it received in the early *ḥadīth* compilations, all containing sections devoted to it. These sources contain citations about its practice during funeral processions (*janāza*),<sup>174</sup> during the *khuṭba*,<sup>175</sup> during *qunūt*,<sup>176</sup>

169 Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:15. Another variant of the report suggests that the *qāşş* disturbed ‘Ā’isha while she was involved in an act of supererogatory devotion: “This guy disturbed me with his *qaşaş* and distracted me from performing my supererogatory prayers (*hādhā qad ādhānī bi-qaşāşihī wa shagalanī ‘an subḥatī*).” See Makkī, *Qūt*, ed. Madkūr and al-Najjār, 1:371; Ghazālī, *Iḥyā’*, 1:185. The term *subḥa* seems to mean either the act of using prayer beads for the repetition of phrases of praise to God or of praying supererogatory prayers; see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (Repr. Beirut, 1997), *s-b-h*.

170 On Mujālid, see Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 27:227.

171 Ibn al-Mubārak, *Zuhd*, 1:232–233.

172 Makkī, *Qūt*, 2:197.

173 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Zuhd*, 304.

174 ‘Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 3:469–470; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 3:388.

175 In particular, during the *khuṭba* given when praying for rain; see Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīh*, 1:315.

176 Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, 2:211–212. *Qunūt* has multiple meanings depending upon the context in which it is used; see A.J. Wensinck, “*Qunūt*,” *EL*, 5:395.

during an eclipse of the sun,<sup>177</sup> upon seeing the Ka'ba during the *ḥājj*,<sup>178</sup> and, of course, during prayer itself.<sup>179</sup> While raising hands may have been appropriate at certain times, it remained a topic of debate in the community.<sup>180</sup>

In regard to the *quṣṣās*, it seems that raising hands was actually a common practice in their sessions and just as there were various opinions as to its legitimacy in other acts of religious devotion, it was also controversial as part of the *qaṣaṣ* sessions. We know of at least two leading scholars of the first century, 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz and 'Aṭā' b. Abī Rabāh, who attended *qaṣaṣ* session with all joining the *qāṣṣ* in raising their hands.<sup>181</sup> The distinguished Companion Ibn 'Umar seems to have held mixed views on the necessity of raising hands, based on the degree of one's attachment to the *qaṣaṣ* session in question. According to one report, 'Abda b. Abī Lubāba (d.c. mid-late second/eighth century) claimed that he prayed the afternoon prayer (*al-ʿaṣr*) with Ibn 'Umar.<sup>182</sup> Afterwards, Ibn 'Umar turned his back to the *qāṣṣ* and began to relate *ḥadīth*. Then the *qāṣṣ* raised his hands in supplication (*yad'ū*) while Ibn 'Umar did not.<sup>183</sup> A second report states that 'Ubayd Allāh b. Abī Yazīd (d. 126/744) said: "I saw Ibn 'Umar raising his hands while with the *qāṣṣ*."<sup>184</sup> In another tradition, al-Qāsim b. Muḥammad (d. 112/730), whose son 'Abd Allāh was a *qāṣṣ*, said: "I saw Ibn 'Umar in the meeting of a *qāṣṣ* raising his hands while in supplication (*yad'ū*), until they were even with his shoulders."<sup>185</sup>

177 Ibn Khuzayma, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-A'zamī (Beirut, 1970), 2:310.

178 Ṭaḥāwī, *Sharḥ*, 2:176–178.

179 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 2:247–252; Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:257–259; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:612; Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1:191, 289, 303; Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī (Cairo, 1952–53), 1:279–282, 2:1271–1272; Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 2:121–123, 205–206, 231–234; Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, 2:35–44.

180 See, for example, Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, 1:197. In an excellent overview of the issue of raising hands, Swartz, drawing in part on Goldziher, argued that the mixed perception of the practice may have been a product of its pre-Islamic usage in both pagan and monotheistic traditions, "those who opposed *raf' al-yadain* were those who were aware of, and concerned about, its pagan roots; those who admitted it were those, on the other hand, who saw its monotheistic background or, at least, saw in it nothing incompatible with monotheistic conceptions." See Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣās*, 120, n. 5.

181 On 'Umar, see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣās*, 36; idem, *Sīrat 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Azīz*, ed. Muḥibb al-Dīn al-Khaṭīb (Cairo, 1912), 172. On 'Aṭā', see Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣās*, 35–36.

182 'Abda b. Abī Lubāba was a Kufan legal scholar who allegedly met Ibn 'Umar in Syria. Ibn Ḥajar does not record a death date for him but does give a report which indicates that he was alive in 123/740; see his *Tahdhīb*, 2:644.

183 'Abd al-Razzāq, *Muṣannaf*, 3:218.

184 Ibid., 3:220. For 'Ubayd Allāh, see Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 19:178–179.

185 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣās*, 33–4. For al-Qāsim, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:419–420.

Ibn ʿUmar’s practice indicates that the deciding factor regarding the necessity of raising hands depended on whether or not one was an active participant in the session. Ibn ʿUmar, for example, did not raise his hands when he turned his back to the *qāşş* (*wa-jaʿala zahrahu naḥwa al-qāşş*), indicating that he excused himself from the session. Conversely, he raised his hands if he was attending the session (*inda al-qāşş*). These two reactions to the raising of hands clearly suggest that the practice was expected only when in attendance at a *qaşaş* session. In fact, as we have seen above, similar standards applied to other religious practices. During prayer time or Qurʾān recitation, silence was expected. At other times, like during *qaşaş* sessions, neither silence nor paying attention was obligatory.<sup>186</sup>

In addition to the unidentified *quşşās* who presided over the sessions mentioned above, a number of other named *quşşās* allowed raising hands in their sessions. Egypt’s Sulaym b. ʿItr, the first *qāşş* of the province, raised his hands in his *qaşaş* while he was invoking God (*duʿā*).<sup>187</sup> Across the empire in Basra, al-Aswad b. Sarī, that city’s first *qāşş*, raised his hands although he was rebuked for it by Mujālid b. Masʿūd.<sup>188</sup> The practice appears to have continued in Basra with the famous al-Ḥasan al-Başrī. He raised his hands with their backs upward during the *duʿā* portion of his *qaşaş* session and then closed his session with a special prayer after finishing his “story (*ḥadīth*).”<sup>189</sup> However, a separate report claims that al-Ḥasan held the exact opposite opinion about the *quşşās* raising their hands. According to Makkī’s *Qūt al-qulūb*, which we have already noted above as being particularly antagonistic towards the *quşşās*, al-Ḥasan allegedly described the raising of voices and the extending of hands in *duʿā* by the *quşşās* as *bidʿa*.<sup>190</sup> Yet, even here, the meaning is not entirely clear, for al-Ḥasan at one time reportedly admitted that *qaşaş* was *bidʿa*, then confessed that it was, in fact, a good innovation: “How many a prayer is answered, request granted, companion won, and how great is the knowledge received through it (*al-qaşaş bidʿa, wa-niʿmat al-bidʿa kam min daʿwa mustajāba, wa-suʿl muʿṭā wa-akh mustafād, wa-ʿilm yuṣāb*).”<sup>191</sup> Al-Ḥasan al-Başrī’s precise opinion on the *quşşās* and their practices seems nuanced, at best, or indiscernible, at worst.

186 See above, 166–169.

187 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 4/1:30.

188 Ibn Sallām, *Gharīb*, 4:304.

189 Ibn Saʿd, *Tabaqāt*, 9:167. See also Pedersen, “Criticism,” 218.

190 Makkī, *Qūt*, 2:197.

191 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşās*, 18 (translation taken from Swartz, 103). It is important to note here that care must be taken in interpreting reports about the *quşşās* from al-Makkī since he often betrays a distinct anti-*quşşās* bias. This could be the case here since Makkī’s variant

Things became formalized during the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān who made the ostensibly discretionary practice of raising hands during invocation compulsory, ordering all the *quṣṣās* of his empire to raise their hands in invocation during their sessions, mornings and evenings.<sup>192</sup> Indeed, both *qaṣaṣ* and raising hands appear to have been controversial topics during ‘Abd al-Malik’s reign and he attempted to set the situation straight in one fell swoop. He proudly exclaimed to Ghudayf b. al-Ḥārith al-Kindī al-Ḥimṣī, a Companion of the Prophet, that he united the people together in raising their hands on the pulpit during Friday prayers and during *qaṣaṣ* after the morning and afternoon prayers (*innā qad jama’nā al-nās ‘alā amrayn . . . raf’u al-aydī ‘alā al-manābiri yawm al-jum’a wa-l-qaṣaṣ ba’d al-ṣubḥ wa-l-‘aṣr*). Ghudayf, however, was not impressed. So, when ‘Abd al-Malik told Ghudayf that he wanted him to raise his hand on the pulpit, Ghudayf refused and rebuked the caliph, telling him that his decree was a sign that he was falling into *bid’a* (*amā innahumā amthalu bid’atikum ‘indī, wa-lastu mujībaka ilā shay’in minhumā*). When ‘Abd al-Malik asked why he disagreed with the order, Ghudayf responded with a Prophetic tradition: “No group of people makes some new innovation without removing something in the *sunna* similar to it. Therefore, adhering to the *sunna* is better than making some new innovation (*mā aḥdatha qawm<sup>un</sup> bid’at<sup>an</sup> illā rafa’a mithlahā min al-sunna, fa-tamassuk<sup>un</sup> bi-sunnat<sup>in</sup> khayr<sup>un</sup> min ihdāthi bid’at<sup>in</sup>*).<sup>193</sup>

While it is not clear what happened to Ghudayf in light of his open refusal to abide by a caliphal decree, the seriousness with which ‘Abd al-Malik took his order is evident by his dismissal of the famous Abū Idrīs al-Khawlanī from his position as *qāṣṣ* because he also refused to abide by the order.<sup>194</sup> In spite of the official decree, the raising of hands during religious practices continued to be an issue of dispute in the Umayyad period. The Basran Iṣḥāq b. Suwayd (d. 131/748) expressed, in poetry, his objection to a *qāṣṣ* who raised his hands frequently:

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does not have the description of *qaṣaṣ* as a good innovation but rather simply that *qaṣaṣ* is *bid’a*; see his *Qūt*, 2:197. Whether Makki omitted this description or Ibn al-Jawzī added it cannot be determined at present.

192 Maqrīzī, *Khiṭaṭ*, 4/1:30.

193 Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 28:172–173. See also the variants in Ibn Shabba, *Madīna*, 1:10; Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 48:82; Suyūṭī, *Tahdhīr*, 203. We will look at this tradition again in an analysis of *qaṣaṣ* as *bid’a* in Chapter Four. Ghudayf is said to have died in the caliphate of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān; see Mizzi, *Tahdhīb*, 23:112–116; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:377.

194 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 26:166.

I swear by the One who created the heavens,  
 The strata, and who created me,  
 I pray to God and I neither moved my hands  
 When I prayed nor my tongue  
 Being fully convinced  
 That the one to whom I pray sees me.  
 For He sees and hears what I say  
 So if I rely on Him, that is enough for me.<sup>195</sup>

For Ishāq, he was content with the fact that God saw him and heard him even if he did not speak or make demonstrable movements with his hands. Though he may not have interpreted the practice as a negative innovation and a violation of Prophetic *sunna*, as did his predecessor Ghudayf, the practice was, in Ishāq's opinion, unnecessary in light of God's omniscience.

#### Mixed-gender Meetings

Some *quşşāş* engaged in the even more reprehensible conduct of allowing men and women to mix together in their sessions, the third innovation attributed to them by al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Indeed, when Abū al-Tayyāḥ (d. 130/747) complained to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī about the conduct of the *qaşaş* sessions, he named this issue first in his list of their offenses.<sup>196</sup> The practice appears to have persisted beyond the Umayyad period such that the mother of the famous Abū Ḥanīfa, for example, refused to accept the ruling of her famous son, preferring the advice of the *qāşş* whose sessions she frequented.<sup>197</sup> Centuries later, Ibn al-Jawzī even allowed the two genders to be in the same session on the condition a partition separate them.<sup>198</sup>

It merits stress here that the issue of dispute was the mixing of genders and not that women attended *qaşaş* sessions. In fact, in one instance, women convened their own *qaşaş* session presided over by their own *qāşş* (*qāşşā?*), the mother of the famous al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. Usāma b. Zayd (d. 153/770)<sup>199</sup> related that his mother saw al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's mother giving *qaşaş* to women (*ra'aytu*

195 Yahyā b. Ma'īn, *Tārīkh*, 4:178.

196 Makki, *Qūt*, 1:297; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşāş*, 97; Suyūṭī, *Tahdhīr*, 227. Abū al-Tayyāḥ is Yazīd b. Ḥumayd; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:409.

197 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quşşāş*, 108.

198 *Ibid.*, 142.

199 Mizzī, *Tahdhīb*, 2:347–351.

*umm al-Ḥasan taquṣṣu ‘alā al-nisā’*).<sup>200</sup> She is the only woman from the rise of Islam until the close of the Umayyad period who is reported to have given *qaṣaṣ* legitimately to women. She was not, however, the only woman to give *qaṣaṣ*.

An even more scandalous situation than men and women meeting together in a *qaṣaṣ* session was that of a woman giving *qaṣaṣ* to men and, while doing so, reciting the Qur’ān in intonation (*alḥān*). Making this egregious behavior worse, her *mawlā*, the distinguished Kufan scholar and *qāṣṣ* ‘Awn b. ‘Abd Allāh, condoned her actions.

The event comes to us in two reports. First, al-Mughīra b. Miqṣam (d.c. 136/753)<sup>201</sup> reported that when ‘Awn stopped giving *qaṣaṣ*: “He ordered his female servant to give *qaṣaṣ* and to sing (*amara jāriya lahu taquṣṣu wa-tuṭribu*).” Al-Mughīra sent him a message saying: “You are among a trustworthy people (*min ahli bayt ṣidq*). God did not send His Prophet with foolishness (*bi-l-ḥumq*) and this thing that you are doing is foolish.”<sup>202</sup> The prospect that a distinguished scholar allowed such a thing continued to be scandalous into the late medieval period when Ibn al-Jawzī refused to believe that these events happened in this way. He sought to preserve ‘Awn’s dignity by alleging that he did not command the female servant to sing in front of the men, rather, to him personally, alone (*munfarid<sup>an</sup>*). Nonetheless, Ibn al-Jawzī admitted that al-Mughīra’s reprimand showed that he did not approve of even that behavior.<sup>203</sup>

A second report of this event comes to us through an interesting convergence of *quṣṣāṣ* since, in addition to describing what happened between the *qāṣṣ* ‘Awn and his female servant, who also acted as a “*qāṣṣ*”, it was transmitted by another *qāṣṣ*, Thābit al-Bunānī. While his report does not say specifically that the female servant, who is named in this report, gave *qaṣaṣ*, it most likely describes the same event. According to Thābit’s recollection,

‘Awn employed a female servant named Bushrā, who recited the Qur’ān in intonation (*bi-l-alḥān*). He [‘Awn] said to her one day, “Recite to my colleagues (*iqrā’ī ‘alā ikhwānī*)!” She recited with a voice of grief and sadness (*bi-ṣawt rajī’ ḥazīn*). So I [Thābit] saw them (the listeners) throwing off their turbans and crying. And he [‘Awn] said to her one day, “O Bushrā, I have given you 1000 *dīnār* because of your wonderful voice. Now go. No

200 Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 10:442.

201 Ibn Sa’d, *Ṭabaqāt*, 8:456; ‘Ijlī, *Ma’rifā*, 2:293; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:138–139.

202 Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 47:89.

203 Ibn al-Jawzī, *Talbīs Iblīs*, ed. Al-Sayyid al-Jumaylī (Beirut, 1985), 297–298.

one owns you but me and you are free, for the sake of God (*idhhabī fa-lā yamlīkuki ‘alayya aḥad<sup>um</sup> fa-anti ḥurra<sup>tum</sup> li-wajh Allāh*).”<sup>204</sup>

Thābit then noted that she remained in Kufa until she died.<sup>205</sup>

Thābit’s description of these events is much more gracious to ‘Awn and his female servant than that of al-Mughīra. Even the ostentatious display of emotion from the listeners received no explicit condemnation from him. In fact, that aspect of the story is followed by an account of ‘Awn rewarding his servant with a large sum of money and freeing her from his ownership. It may be that the positive perception conveyed by the report lay in the fact that Thābit himself was a *qāşş* and was thus trying to justify the actions of the *quşşāş*. However, neither ‘Awn nor Thābit was considered to have been a charlatan, nor was their trustworthiness as scholars questioned. Consequently, it is perhaps premature to simply write this tradition off as an attempt by the *quşşāş* to validate their controversial conduct and to defend their own.

Regardless of the intent of the transmitters, both accounts affirm that *qaşaş* was a performance and, according to Mughīra, the performance aspect of the practice at times crossed over into sheer folly. In both instances, though, the *qāşş* was not the only performer. As was noted above, the show also featured the audience. This was, therefore, an interactive performance at its peak with both actor and observers contributing flamboyantly to the performance. The female servant gave *qaşaş*, sang and recited the Qur’ān in intonation and the listeners tossed off their turbans and wept.<sup>206</sup> To an outside observer, like Mughīra or, even later on, Ibn al-Jawzī, the whole scenario is that of a show, and a reprehensible one at that.

### Swooning

An equally controversial practice ostensibly occurring during the *qaşaş* sessions was the losing of consciousness by those in the session at the reading of the Qur’ān, i.e. swooning. Condemnations of swooning can be traced back to

<sup>204</sup> Ibn ‘Asākir, *Dimashq*, 47:89.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>206</sup> It should be noted that reciting the Qur’ān in intonation (*alḥān al-ghinā’*) was not always condemned. ‘Aṭā’b. Abī Rabāḥ allegedly said that it was permissible and based his opinion on a tradition from the *qāşş* ‘Ubayd b. ‘Umayr who related that the Prophet David would recite while playing music and that the echo of his music and recitation would cause him to weep; see Fākihī, *Akḥbār*, 3:24–25.

early Companions of the Prophet, such as ‘Ā’isha,<sup>207</sup> Ibn ‘Umar<sup>208</sup> and the other daughter of the first caliph, Asmā’ bt. Abī Bakr.<sup>209</sup> Another Companion, Anas b. Malik, claimed that the Khawārij were the ones who fainted—an assessment appearing to be a tendentious ascription of any controversial practice to them.<sup>210</sup> In fact, the practice was so questionable that Ibn Sirīn believed it to be a sham. In order to determine the genuineness of the display, he proposed that the swooners “sit on a wall and the Qur’ān will be recited to them from beginning to end. If they swooned, they [would fall and] die. Then the situation will be as they said it was.”<sup>211</sup> A more effective, although potentially fatal, test was not to be found.

The connection between the *quṣṣās* and swooning, however, is tenuous. The only report that directly connects the two comes from a certain Qays b. Jubayr al-Nahshalī, who alleged: “The swooning that occurs at the *quṣṣās* comes from Satan (*al-sa‘qa ‘inda al-quṣṣās min al-Shayṭān*).”<sup>212</sup> This report, though, is problematic on two levels. First, the identity of Qays b. Jubayr is unknown—a fact that led Ibn Ḥajar, drawing from Ibn Ḥazm, to claim that he was Qays b. Jabtar.<sup>213</sup> Secondly, the earliest citation that I have been able to find of this tradition is in Ibn Abī Shayba’s (d. 235/849) *Muṣannaf* and it does not mention the *quṣṣās* simply saying: “Swooning is from Satan (*al-sa‘qa min al-Shayṭān*).”<sup>214</sup> The first

207 She reportedly said: “The Qur’ān is more dignified than to have men lose their minds when it is read, but as God said (*al-Qur’ān akram an tanzifa ‘anhu ‘uqūlu al-rijāl, wa lakinnahu kamā qāla Allāh*), ‘Whereat shivers the flesh of those who fear their Lord, so that their flesh and their hearts soften to the remembrance of God (al-Zumar [39]:23).” See Ibn Sallām, *Faḍā’il al-Qur’ān*, 214–215; Ibn Baṭṭāl, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. Yāsir b. Ibrāhīm (Riyadh, 2000), 10:282; al-Zamakhsharī, *Rabī‘ al-abrār*, ed. ‘Abd al-Amīr Muḥannā (Beirut, 1992), 4:301; Ibshihī, *Mustaṭraf*, 1:225.

208 He said: “We fear God but do not fall down (*innanā li-nakhsha‘ Allāh wa mā nasquṭ*).” See Ibn Baṭṭāl, *Sharḥ*, 10:282.

209 She was asked if the first believers (*al-salaf*) lost consciousness at the recitation of the Qur’ān and she said: “No, but they used to weep (*lā, wa-lakkinahum kānū yabkūn*).” See Ibn Baṭṭāl, *Sharḥ*, 10:282.

210 Ibn Sallām, *Faḍā’il*, 215; Zamakhsharī, *Rabī‘*, 4:302. It is important to note here that the rise of the *quṣṣās* was also connected by some to the Kharijites. This issue will be addressed below in Chapter Four.

211 Ibn Baṭṭā, *al-Ibāna ‘an sharī‘at al-firqa al-nājiya*, eds. Riḍā b. Na’sān Mu’tī et al. (Riyadh, 1994), 3:200; Ibshihī, *Mustaṭraf*, 1:225.

212 Ibn Baṭṭā, *Ibāna*, 3:200; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Quṣṣās*, 118; Ibshihī, *Mustaṭraf*, 1:225.

213 The orthographical similarity between Jubayr (جبیر) and Jabtar (جبتار) is obvious; see Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:446.

214 Ibn Abī Shayba, *Muṣannaf*, 7:207.

citation adding the *quşşāş* to the report is that of Ibn Baţţā (d. 387/997).<sup>215</sup> It remains possible, then, that this report was only later attached to the *quşşāş*.

### *Qaşaş Sessions*

Each of these instances of misconduct shows how the performance of a *qaşaş* session might easily go awry. In the face of mounting cases of malpractice such as these, the reputation of the *quşşāş* suffered. Yet not all was lost. To be sure, if the *qāşş* effectively balanced the three skills of *‘ilm*, *lisān* and *bayān*, and kept his sessions under reasonable control, he joined the ranks of the best of the *quşşāş*, if not the best of the scholars in general, of their time, as the example of Bilāl b. Sa‘d illustrates.

The *quşşāş* of early Islam, then, seem to have existed in a constant state of flux between respectability and impropriety. As we saw in Chapter Two, this tension was manifested in reports challenging the efficacy of the *quşşāş* as religious scholars, in spite of a significant amount of evidence that a large percentage of the early *quşşāş* were well-respected scholars. And, as has been shown above, the performance aspect of a *qaşaş* session exacerbated this tension by demonstrating how admirable traits easily became detrimental when not utilized properly. All of this contributed to a very mixed view of the early *quşşāş* teetering between seeing them as conformist scholars or as innovators. As we will see now, the debate about whether the *quşşāş* were conformists or innovators incorporated a number of issues, foremost among them being the question of when *qaşaş* originated and, concomitantly, if *qaşaş* was at all a negative innovation (*bid‘a*).

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215 Ibn Baţţā, *Ibāna*, 3:200.