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Embodiments of evil : Gog and Magog : interdisciplinary studies of the "other" in literature & internet texts

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IRANIAN SERIES

EMBODIMENTS OF EVIL: GOG AND MAGOG

INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES OF THE 'OTHER' IN LITERATURE & INTERNET TEXTS

A.A. SEYED-GOHRAB, F. DOUFIKAR-AERTS AND S. MCGLINN (EDS.)

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Embodiments of Evil: Gog and Magog

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Embodiments of Evil: Gog and Magog

Interdisciplinary Studies of the 'Other' in Literature & Internet Texts

A.A. Seyed-Gohrab, F. Doufikar-Aerts and S. McGlinn (eds.)

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Dedicated to E.J. van Donzel

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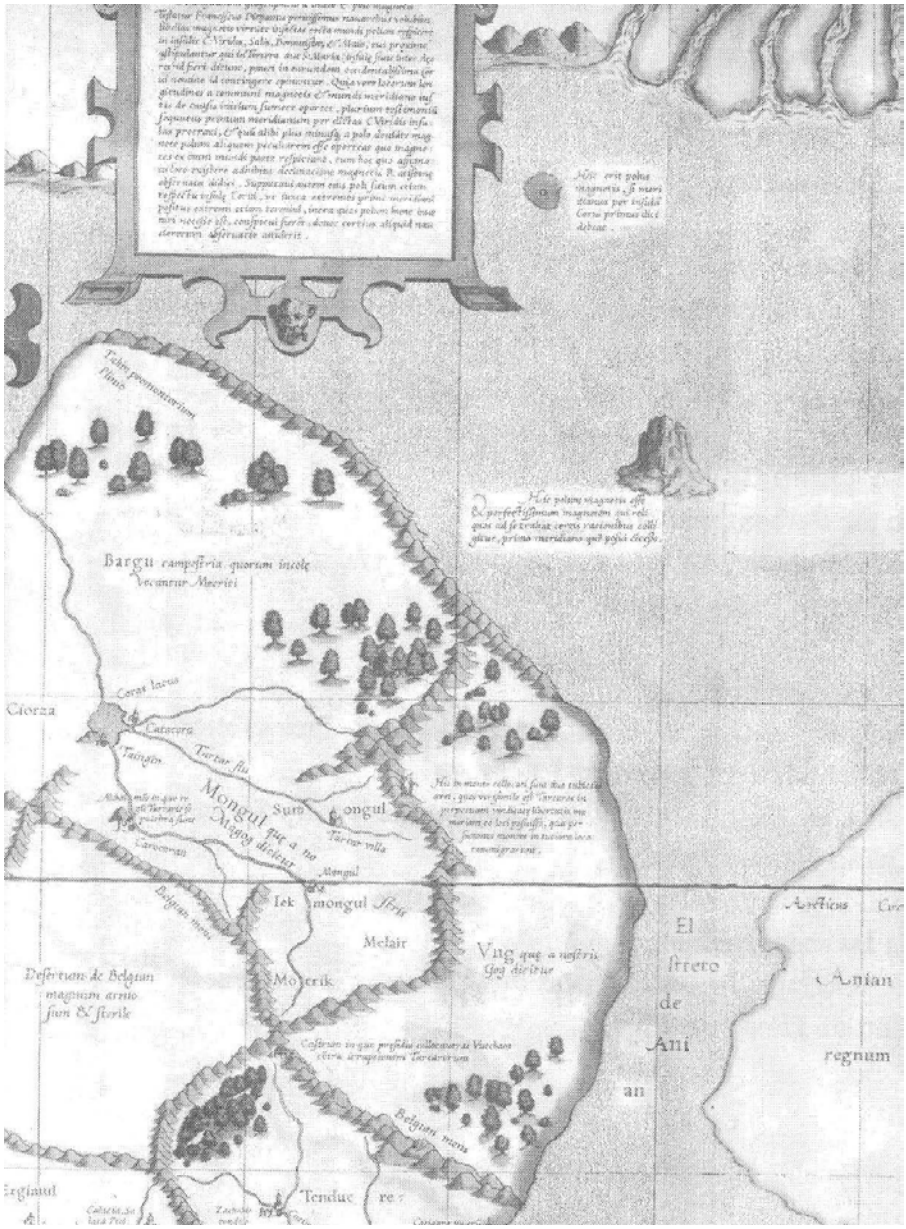

Gerard Mercator, World Map ‘ad usum navigantium’(1569), sheet 12 (detail).

Gog and Magog in Medieval and Early Modern Western Tradition

Willem P. Gerritsen
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The publication in 1569 of Gerard Mercator's Map of the World for the use of seafarers (*ad usum navigantium*) marks a decisive step in the history of cartography.[1] It was the first map devised according to Mercator's discovery of a method for projecting the globe on a flat surface in such a way as to enable seafarers to represent the course of a ship following a constant compass bearing by a straight line on a map based on a grid of meridians and parallels. The map consisted of eighteen huge sheets fitting sideways together. One of the most salient features was the enormous polar landmass which, as a result of the new projection, occupied nearly the entire width of the map. A second aspect was the way Mercator had mapped those parts of the world about which virtually no information was available. The emptiness of the unexplored interior of North America was partly veiled by a panel explaining the map's purpose.

The easternmost regions of Asia presented a similar problem. About the arctic seas, Mercator had been able to gather some information, but for the east coast of Asia and its interior he had had to rely on the accounts of medieval travellers. On Mercator's world map the easternmost part of Asia is depicted as a bulging peninsula criss-crossed by several mountain ranges.[2] One of those, which follows a winding course more or less parallel to the east coast, is transected by another chain of mountains, which stretches roughly from east to west and is called *Belgian Mons*. According to an engraved legend, the country lying in the northwesterly quadrant confined by these two mountain ranges is called *Mongul quae a nostris Magog dicitur* ("Mongul, which we call Magog"). The country on the opposite side of the mountains is labelled *Ung quae a nostris Gog dicitur* ("Ung, which we call Gog").

On the top of the mountains lying north of Ung one can discern two tiny human figures blowing trumpets. The legend explains that they represent the bronze statues of two trumpet blowers which in all probability were erected here by the Tartars, in perpetual memory of the liberty they gained when they crossed over the highest of these mountains on their way to safer regions.[3]

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1 See Crane: *Mercator*, pp. 229-37; Krämer: *Mercator*, pp. 236-48.

2 Mercator, *Weltkarte ad usum navigantium*, sheet 12 and the reproduction on p.8 .

3 Hic in monte collocati sunt due tubicines aerei, quos verisimile est Tartaros in perpetuam vindicatae libertatis memoriam eo loci [lege: loco] posuisse, qua per summos montes in tutiora loca commigrarunt.

An attempt to sort out this information can best begin with the identification of the names *Mongul* and *Ung* as Magog and Gog. It has long been known that Mercator derived this identification from the travel account of Marco Polo. He describes a country in Central Asia, lying to the west of Cathay (which is his name for China), ruled by a Christian king called George, who is a descendant of the renowned priest-king Prester John. Nowadays, Marco adds, the people are subject to the Great Khan of the Mongols:

> This is the place which we call in our language Gog and Magog; the natives call it Ung and Mungul. Each of these two provinces was inhabited by a separate race: in Ung lived the Gog, in Mungul the Tartars. [4]

By locating Gog and Magog somewhere in central Asia, Marco Polo deviates from an older tradition according to which Alexander the Great constructed a barrier in the Caucasus in order to shut out barbarian tribes (which in many accounts are identified with Gog and Magog). In fact, he mentions Alexander's construction of the Iron Gates earlier in his account, pointing out that the tribes involved were not Tartars, as the Alexander Book wrongly calls them, but Comanians, "because there were no Tartars at that time."[5] For Marco Polo, writing about 1300, the Mongol conquest of Asia was a fact of recent history. He describes how the Tartars, who previously had been subject to Prester John, had migrated to the north and had eventually settled in the land of Chorcha, "a country of far-stretching plains, with no habitations in the form of cities or towns but with good pasturage, wide rivers, and no lack of water."[6]

Marco Polo goes on to relate how in the year 1187 the Tartars elected Chinghiz [Genghis] Khan to be their leader and how he succeeded in rallying a multitude of nations under his rule. According to Marco, the nations Chinghiz conquered were happy to join his following "when they saw his good government and gracious

4 The quotation is from Marco Polo, *The Travels*, transl. Latham, p.106. Some manuscripts add: "And therefore the Tartars are sometimes called Monguls." Mercator knew Polo's account by way of Ramusio's *Navigazioni e viaggi*, which had appeared in 1559. The present quotation can be found in Ramusio, *Navigazioni e viaggi*, ed. Milanesi, vol. 3, p.146.

5 Marco Polo, *Travels*, transl. Latham, p. 49; Ramusio, *Navigazioni e viaggi*, vol. 3, p. 93 ("Ma non è vero che siano stati Tartari, perché a quel tempo non erano, anzi fu una gente chiamata Cumani, e di altre generazioni e sorti"). The editor, Marica Milanesi, provides an interesting footnote.

6 Ibid, pp. 92-3 (the translator explains that Chorcha is in Manchuria); Ramusio, *Navigazioni e viaggi*, vol. 3, p.132, mentions "Giorza e Bargu" (a footnote explains that both names refer to Mongol tribes, originally living in Manchuria and east of Lake Baikal).

bearing." Throughout the *Travels*, Marco views the conquests of the Mongols in a remarkably favourable light. At the time of his travels in Asia, between 1271 and 1292, the great Mongol empire founded by Chinghiz had disintegrated into a loose structure of rival khanates. For travellers from the West, however, the overland trade routes from the Black Sea ports to the Far East still lay open, and travellers still enjoyed a modicum of protection by Mongol rulers. In fact, this ubiquitous Mongol presence was what had enabled Marco and his kinsmen to travel without undue hindrance through territories under Chinghizide control.[7] This in part explains Marco's attitude, which deviated from the negative judgement prevailing in the West.

In Europe, the sudden emergence of the Tartars – their Latin name suggested an association with Tartarus, the classical underworld – had evoked a variety of terrified speculations. Had Ezekiel not prophesied about Gog appearing from the north with an army of horsemen, "all of them clothed in full armour, a great company, all of them with shield and buckler, wielding swords"?[8] Around the middle of the thirteenth century, however, the Mongols were usually no longer associated with apocalyptic expectations. Their dominance over the greater part of Asia (excluding Arabia, India and Indo-China) had become a political reality. At the courts of the Chinghizide empire, Christian communities of various denominations, along with Jews and Muslims, were tolerated. In 1345, Pope Innocent IV had even sent the Franciscan Friar, Giovanni di Piano Carpini, on a mission to the Great Khan with an offer of baptism. In the years 1253 to 1255, another Franciscan, the Fleming Willem van Rubroek (Willelmus de Rubruquis), had made the journey to Karakorum by order of King Louis IX of France.[9] But after the fall of Acco in 1291, all hopes an alliance with the Tartars against the Moslims had gone up in smoke.

Two and a half centuries later, when Mercator devised his world map, the situation was very different. After the Chinghizide empire and its successor states had vanished, it had become virtually impossible to travel over land to the interior of Asia. On the other hand, the sea-routes explored by European seafarers reached in

7 That Marco Polo ever visited China is a matter of debate. See Wood: *Did Marco Polo go to China?*, but also Jackson: "Marco Polo and His 'Travels'."

8 Ezekiel, chapter 38, vs.1-5. In vs. 15 Ezekiel prophesies that Gog will come out of the remotest parts of the north (in the Latin Vulgate: a lateribus aquilonis). See also Revelation, chapter 20, vs. 7-8.

9 See *Itinera et relationes fratrum minorum* and Komroff: *Contemporaries of Marco Polo*. On Willem of Rubroek: Guillaume de Rubrouck, *Voyage dans l'empire mongol*.

Mercator's time no further than Japan. So he had been forced to fall back on the reports of travellers over land. He knew Polo's account in the version printed in Giovanni Battista Ramusio's *Navigazioni e viaggi* of 1559. This provided him with the names of the Ung and the Mungul and their western equivalents Gog and Magog, giving him a rough idea of the whereabouts of these peoples. The story of the bronze trumpet blowers, however, does not occur in Marco Polo's book, nor in the other texts brought together by Ramusio. Mercator must have found it in some other source, which to my knowledge has not been identified as yet.[10]

The text of Mercator's engraved legend presents some puzzling features. It does not explain what kind of oppression the Tartars escaped by crossing the mountain range. Nor is it clear why a monument in remembrance of their exodus should have the form of two bronze trumpet blowers. These two problematic points are elucidated by a related version of the story which is found in the *Itinerarium* of Ricoldo da Montecroce.[11] Ricoldo was a Florentine Dominican friar who in 1288 was sent as a preacher to the Orient. Travelling via Acco, Erzurum, Tabriz and Mosul, he finally reached Baghdad, from where he returned around 1300 to Italy. His *Libellus ad nationes orientales* is a vigorous appeal to the peoples of the East, urging them to be converted to Christianity. In his *Itinerarium* (also known as *Liber peregrinationis*), Ricoldo describes his journey and his stay in the East, while giving due attention to positive aspects of Islamic society such as the hospitality and the dignity of his Muslim hosts. The story which I would like to compare with Mercator's notice about the bronze trumpet blowers in the Belgian mountains occurs in the account which Ricoldo gives of the origin of the Tartars.[12]

Ricoldo narrates that the Tartars once used to live beyond a range of inaccessible mountains in the Caucasus. The only pass by which the mountains could be crossed was guarded by a strong fortress, on the ramparts of which no defenders were to be seen. Everybody who ventured to come near the castle, however, was put to flight by the

10 Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog*, p. 85, mentions that trumpets are depicted on the Carta Catalana of 1375, with the inscription *Aquest son de metall, e aquests feu fer Alexandri, rey gran e poderos*. See also a Russian oral version of the legend summarized by Anderson on p.83: "Er [Alexander Makedonsky] habe ... zwölf ungeheuer grosse Trompeten verfertigen lassen und dieselben vor den Eingängen des Kaukasus so aufgestellt, dass, wenn der Wind hindurch geblasen, sie einen starken Ton von sich gegeben hätten."

11 See Laurent: *Peregrinatores medii aevi* and Monneret de Villard: *Il libro della peregrinazione*.

12 The story is told in Chapter XI (De exitu Tartarorum) of Ricoldo's *Liber peregrinationis*, p. 119 in Laurent's edition.

sudden outburst of an enormous tumult of horses and men accompanied by a terrifying din of trumpets (*maxime strepitus tubarum*). This tumult was artificially caused by wind-force; hence its description as an "artifice of the wind" (*artificium venti*). On a certain day, the story goes on, a Tartar hunter followed his dogs pursuing a hare. Looking for a refuge, the hare slipped into the fortress. The hunter, eager for prey, kept chasing after the hare, paying no heed to the tumult. Near the entrance, fear made him halt in his tracks. At that moment, an owl descended on the gate and began to screech. Then the Tartar hunter said to himself: 'Where the hare is seeking refuge and the owl is screeching is not a dwelling of humans.' And so he confidently entered the fortress and found it unoccupied. After he had inspected the fortress and had discovered how the tumult was caused, the hunter returned to his fellow tribesmen and proposed that he would act as their leader and lead them in safety through the fortress. Having gained their freedom in this way, they decided to honour the hare by depicting the animal on their shields and their tents. In the owl they saw an angel of God, assuming that God had called them. Therefore their principal dignitaries wear the feather of an owl in their head-dress.

Compared with this account, the legend on Mercator's 1569 world map reads as a condensed and garbled extract. Ricoldo's tumultuous *artificium venti* has been reduced to a pair of bronze trumpet blowers (who conceivably were thought to be activated by wind-force).

Unlike Marco Polo, Ricoldo has a very negative opinion of the Tartars, a view which probably reflects that of the Iraqi Muslims among whom he had lived for several years. He describes the Tartars as a horrible and monstrous people (*horribilem et monstruosam gentem*), differing from all other peoples in appearance, customs and religion. He is puzzled by the fact that no mention is made of so numerous a people in the Bible nor in the works of the ancient historians, and he wonders how it is possible that they have remained hidden for so long. Many authorities, Ricoldo observes, presume that they (the Tartars) originally were the ten tribes of Israel who were deported beyond the mountains of the Medes (*ultra montes Medorum*) by the Assyrian King Tiglath Pileser. When the dominion of the world was transferred to the Greeks, Alexander the Great miraculously closed the mountains so that these tribes were contained behind a barrier. According to Flavius Josephus and Methodius, they will break out at the end of the time (*circa finem mundi*) and wreak great havoc

on the human population (*magnam stragem hominum*). And this is why, Ricoldo remarks, it is widely believed that these apocalyptic raiders are the Tartars. Had the Tartars not emerged from the east, rushing over the mountains which are located at the end of the world (*circa finem mundi*)? Thus the expression *circa finem mundi* was taken to refer, in a spatial sense, to the edges of the known world, in other words: to the north-eastern regions of Asia.

Summarizing a contemporary debate about the origin of the Tartars, Ricoldo recalls two arguments which were adduced in support of the identification of the Tartars with the lost Jewish tribes.[13] In the first place, it is a well-known fact that any mention of the name of Alexander makes Tartars fly into a blind rage, and secondly: the script the Tartars use is similar to that of the Chaldeans, the Chaldean (Syrian) language being closely related to Hebrew. Against this view, others point out that the Tartars do not seem to have any awareness of Mosaic law nor of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Their customs are indeed very different from those of the Jews. They themselves maintain that they are descended from Gog and Magog, and hence they call themselves *Mogoli*, a corruption of *Magogoli*. Was it conceivable, then, Ricoldo wonders, that Alexander had enclosed the Jewish tribes together with Gog and Magog, as Methodius had asserted? Ricoldo confesses that he is unable to solve the riddle: *Solucionem relinquo* (I give up).

Referring to the Tartars' emerging from the mountains "at the end of the world" (*circa finem mundi*), Ricoldo implicitly rejects the theory which located the place where Alexander had locked in the lost Jewish tribes somewhere in the Caucasus. One of the first medieval authorities to put forward this view is Petrus Comestor, the twelfth-century author of the *Historia Scholastica*, a work he finished in 1173 and which was to remain a standard account of sacred history for centuries.[14] In his reworking of the Fourth Book of Kings, Comestor had explained how the Jewish tribes were deported by the Assyrian king to dwellings along the river Gozan beyond the mountains of the Medes and Persians (*iuxta fluvium Gozan ultra montes Medorum et Persarum*). Much later in the story, having progressed to the fifth chapter of the Book of Esther, Comestor narrates that Alexander the

13 Ricoldo da Montecroce, *Liber peregrinationis, chapter X (De errore Tartarorum)*, p.116-19 in Laurent's edition.

14 Petrus Comestor's *Historia scholastica* may be consulted in Migne's *Patrologia Latina*, vol. 198, pp.1053-1644. The relevant passages are quoted by Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog*, pp. 64-66.

Great, having reached the Caspian Mountains (*ad montes Caspios*), received a delegation of the Ten Jewish Tribes imploring him to lift their containment. Learning that they had openly turned away from the God of Israel and that it had been prophesied that they would forever remain in captivity, Alexander rejected their plea and decided to enclose them still more firmly. Piling up enormous blocks of stone, he began to close off the only passage through the mountains. But seeing that human labour was not sufficient, he prayed to the God of Israel to complete the work, whereupon God moved the two sides of the mountain nearer to each other. This shows, Comestor concludes, that God did not wish them to get out (*non esse Dei voluntatem ut exeant*). It will only be at the end of time (*circa finem mundi*) that they will break out of their confinement and cause havoc among the population of the earth.

It is interesting to contrast Comestor's account with that of another important medieval authority, *viz.* the Dominican friar Vincent of Beauvais (*Vincentius Bellovacensis*), who completed his world history, *Speculum historiale*, around the year 1250. Vincent firmly rejects the idea that Alexander would have enclosed the Jewish Tribes in the Caspian Mountains. He refers to enquiries made by his brothers of the Dominican monastery at Triphelis (Tiflis) in Georgia. The Triphelis friars had established that no Jewish tribes were to be found living in the vicinity of the Caspian Mountains, and that among the Jews of Georgia, no stories were known about Alexander the Great enclosing Jewish tribes in the Caspian Mountains. According to these Jewish informants, their written histories confirmed that the peoples Alexander enclosed had been barbarian cannibals (*quosdam immundos et horribiles ... qui alios homines et etiam seinvicem comedebant*) living near the Caspian Mountains.[15]

From the middle of the thirteenth century onwards, the place were Alexander was thought by western authors to have enclosed the Lost Tribes shifted to a region north of the Caucasus, and eventually to some location in Central or North-Eastern Asia. The travel account of Sir John Mandeville may be quoted as an instance of this geographical transfer. Beginning to circulate in Europe from around 1360 onwards, Mandeville's book, in manuscript form or in printed editions, was to remain popular until far into the sixteenth century. The author purports to have lived for some time at the Sultan's court at Cairo. He

15 Vincentius Bellovacensis: *Speculum historiale*, lib. XXIX, cap. 89, quoted by Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog*, p.71.

describes how, after visiting the Holy Land, he went on to travel through the various countries of the East, including China and the Land of the Christian priest-king known as Prester John. As most of the geographical and anthropological information the book contains was shown to have been borrowed directly from the reports of authentic travellers, Mandeville was long considered to have been a plagiarist who had presumably never left his home country. Fairly recently, we have begun to see that the author used a literary device which was not uncommon in his time: the introduction of a *persona* in an otherwise impersonal account. He has enlivened a description of the world, based on available geographical information, by passages in which a traveller recounts his personal reactions and experiences.[16]

According to Mandeville, the Jews of the Ten Lost Tribes, who are locally known as Gog and Magog, are shut up in the Caspian hills, which are called *Uber* (or, in other manuscripts, *Ubera*). This clearly refers to the *Ubera Aquilonis*, the 'breasts of the north wind,' which are usually located in the Caspian Mountains, but often much farther north. Mandeville locates Alexander's wall near the Caspian Sea, which he described as the biggest lake in the world, but which he situates in a country lying beyond Cathay (China). According to his account, the enclosed Jews pay tribute to the queen of the Amazons, who "has those hills guarded very well so that they do not cross into her country." People living in that region say that "in the time of the Antichrist" the Jewish tribes "will sally out and do much harm to Christian men." In case his readers are curious to know how they will get out, Mandeville provides them with what he "once heard said":

> In the time of Antichrist a fox will make his earth in the very place where King Alexander had the gates of the hills shut up, when he enclosed this people. And this fox will dig for so long in the ground that at last he will emerge among those people. When they see him, they will marvel at him greatly, for they never before have seen an animal like that. [...] they will pursue him until they come to the hole whence he came out. Then they will dig after him for so long that they will come to the gates that

16 See Deluz, *Le livre de Jehan de Mandeville*, Bennett, *Rediscovery of Sir John Mandeville*, and Moseley's introduction to his translation of Mandeville's Travels. Tzanaki, in *Mandeville's Medieval Audiences*, studies the medival reception of the book.

> Alexander had stopped up with great stones and cement, and then they will break down these gates and find the way out.[17]

Mandeville's fox looks like a reincarnation of Ricoldo's hare. The two stories are essentially the same, their main difference lying in their temporal point of view. Ricoldo looks back on an event in the past, whereas Mandeville refers to a apocalyptic future. Most late medieval versions adopt the same point of view as Mandeville, with or without the anti-semitic bias betrayed by the role which is attributed to the Lost Jewish Tribes at the coming of the Antichrist.

At the beginning of this article I quoted the world map published by Gerard Mercator in 1569. Following the account of Marco Polo, Mercator associated two peoples inhabiting the easternmost regions of Asia with Gog and Magog, whom he identified with the Tartars. He indicated the place where the Tartars had crossed a nearby mountain range on their way to liberty and world power. In 1570, one year after Mercator's world map *ad usum navigantium*, his friend and fellow-cartographer Abraham Ortelius published at Antwerp a collection of maps brought together in one big folio volume, entitled *Theatrum orbis terrarum*. In the history of cartography, Ortelius' *Theatrum* is known as the first atlas. Among the maps in the volume, there is one of *Tartaria sive Magni Chami regnum* (Tartary or the realm of the Great Khan). This map depicts the northern part of Asia including its northeastern extensions (as Ortelius imagined them to be). According to the detailed legends he provided on the map, these regions were the dwelling-places of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Their original domain had been Arsareth; from there they had migrated to a pointed peninsula extending far to the north. Here Ortelius inscribed the names of the tribe of Neftali and, even more to the north, that of Dan. The names of Gog and Magog are not to be found on Ortelius' map of Tartary.

Ortelius had derived his knowledge about the Lost Tribes living in the Asian Far-East from the works of the visionary Renaissance scholar Guillaume Postel (1510-1581). Postel had published his *De la République des Turcs, et là ou l'occasion s'offrera, des meurs et loy de tous Muhamedistes* in 1560. In the second part of this book,[18] he had expounded his theory about the Tartars. According to him, the

17 Mandeville, *Travels*, transl. Moseley, pp.166-67.

18 The second part of this book is entitled: *Histoire et consideration de l'origine, loy, et costume des Tartares, Persiens, Arabes, Turcs, et tous autres Ismaelites ou Muhamediques, dits par nous Mahometains ou Sarrazins*. See also Postel, *Thresor des propheties de l'univers*, pp.182-83.

Tartars, like the Turks, were originally Jews, descendants of the Ten Tribes. Gog and Magog belonged to the tribe of Dan, Rachel's eldest son. Preparing for the coming of the Antichrist, Satan was keeping them in readiness near the North Pole ...

***

Considered in a wider context, it seems that the tradition of Gog and Magog in its western manifestations reveals an archetypical fear harboured by medieval and early modern Europeans. In its various forms, the tradition represents the myth of an evil people contained somewhere in the East which one day will break loose from its confinement and wreak havoc all over the civilised part of the world. Stories of this type have at least two things in common: they explain how the people in question came to be shut in and how one day they will succeed in breaking out. Thus the combination of elements from the Alexander legend and Ezekiel's eschatological prophesy produced the phantom of Gog and Magog that would continue to haunt the imagination of the West for many centuries.

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Gog, Magog, Dogheads and other monsters in the Byzantine World

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The obvious sources for information about Gog and Magog in the Byzantine context are three important categories of Byzantine literature: the theological literature, historical literature, and literary compositions such as the Alexander Romance and its antecedents.

As for the theological literature: the Byzantine empire was essentially a theocratic state. This means that its existence and history were, in principal, part of the divine work of salvation. The production of apologetics and works intended to propagate Christian faith by Byzantines was massive and there was no lack of apocalyptic reflexions. However, Gog and Magog do not appear often in this category. In most cases, apocalyptic writing focuses on the prophecies of Daniel about the four world empires and the appearance of the last opponent of Christ, the Antichrist. Gog and Magog seldom play a role in this respect. This can be demonstrated for instance by a work of Cyrill of Jerusalem (4th c.), who wrote a *catechesis* (no. 15) on the Δευτέρα παρουσία (second advent) of Christ. In this long piece of work he devotes many passages to the appearance and activities of the Antichrist, but there is no reference at all to Gog and Magog (see Migne PG 33, 865-916).

In the Bible, Gog and/or Magog are mentioned only a few times. In Gen. 10:2 Magog figures among the sons of Japhet (repeated in 1 Chron. 1:5), in the Revelation of John 20:8 Gog and Magog symbolize the extremities of the earth, from where Satan, "being loosed from his prison" (20:7), "shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea" (20:8). More relevant for their presence in Byzantine apocalyptic literature are the rather elaborate mentions in Ezekiel ch. 38 and 39, where "Gog, the land of Magog" is prophesied "to come up against my people of Israel, as a cloud to cover the land. It shall be in the latter days..." (38:16), but will be defeated "upon the mountains of Israel" (39:4) and will be buried in the "valley of Hamon-gog" (39:11). There are only five references to commentaries on Ezekiel in the Patrologia Graeca of

Migne, of which only one is truly interesting: that of Theodoretus of Cyrrhus (1st half 5th c.)[1]. His verse-to-verse commentary on chapters 38 and 39 has many interesting remarks, but for our purpose the relevant ones are first of all those relating to the first two verses of chapter 38, where Gog, Magog, the ruler (of) Ros, Mosoch and Thobel are mentioned. Theodoretus' comment says that Gog and Magog are Scythian tribes; that Mosoch refers to the Cappadocians and Thobel to Iberia, i.e. Georgia.[2] He does not know what to do with "Ros": on the one hand he refers to the Hebrew word "rosj" as "head", on the other he mentions another commentator, Aquila, who interprets "rosj" as "ἄρχοντα", i.e. "commander"/"ruler", and the expression as "commander/ruler of Mosoch". This gives an impression of the character of Theodoretus' commentary.

The most striking viewpoint in his commentary is that Gog and Magog are not to be associated with the end of the world. This becomes clear from two passages in his commentary: in 38:14-16, where is said "ἐπ ́ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν ἔσται", he remarks that this is not a reference to the day of the Lord, but to the Jewish diaspora.[3] His stand is that there is no need for Gog to make Jahweh's name known under all the nations, since it is Jesus Christ whom this role has been given. In his long explanation of chapter 29, Theodoretus restates this point of view, when he writes: "I am not so much surprised about the ignorance of the Jews as well as of those who bear the name of "Christians" but nevertheless give credence to the stories of the Jews and assert that the invasion of Gog and Magog is not past history, but

1 See Migne PG 81, 1200 ff). A detailed survey of his life is to be found in Joseph Fessler, Institutiones Patrologiae, IIb 221-240, espec. p. 227, no. 5: Commentarii in omnes Prophetas majores et minores (εἰς τοὺς προφήτας). A short biography in *Tusculum Lexikon griechischer und lateinischer Autoren des Altertums und des Mittelalters* (edd. Wolfgang Buchwald, Armin Hohlweg, Otto Prinz, München 3, 1982) s.v. Theodoretos. Pierre Canivet – Alice Leroy-Molinghen, *Théodoret de Cyr, Histoire des moines de Syrie*, Sources Chrétiennes, 234, Paris 1977, Introduction.

2 Καὶ ἐγένετο λόγος Κυρίου πρός με λέγων· Υἱὲ ἀνθρώπου, στήρισον τὸ πρόσωπόν σου ἐπὶ Γὼγ καὶ τὴν γῆν Μαγώγ, ἄρχοντα Ῥώς, Μοσὸχ καὶ Θοβέλ. - Γὼγ καὶ Μαγωγ Σκυθικὰ ἔθνη· Μοσόχ δὲ Καππαδόκας εἶναί φασι, καὶ Θοβὲλ Ἴβηρρας. τὸ δὲ Ῥως ἡ Ἑβραίων φωνὴ κεφαλὴν ἡρμήνευσε, καὶ ὁ Ἀκύλας δὲ κεφαλὴν Μοσὸχ τὸ Ῥὼς ἡρμήνευσε. See also the catalogue of peoples in Gen. 10 (here 10:2), and e.g. Isidore of Seville, Etymol., IX, 2, 26 ff, e.g. "Magog, a quo arbitrantur Scythas et Gothos traxisse originem." The Iberi are in Isidore Hispani, of course.

3 Καὶ καλεῖ τὸ ἔσχατον τῶν ἡμερῶν οὐ τὴν συντέλειαν, ἀλλὰ τὸν καιρὸν ἐν ᾧ γέγονεν αὐτῶν ἡ διασπορά. "Καὶ ἀνάξω σε ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν μου, ἵνα γνῷ με πάντα ἔθνη ἐν τῷ ἁγιασθῆναί με ἐν σοὶ ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν, ὦ Γώγ". Τὰ ἔθνη νῦν οὐ χρήζει τοῦ Γὼγ εἰς διδασκαλίαν τοῦ τῶν ὅλων Θεοῦ· διὰ γὰρ τοῦ Δεσπότου Χριστοῦ τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν ταύτην ἐδέξατο. A.R. Anderson (Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations, Cambridge 1932, p. 8) speaking about the identification of Gog and Magog with Scythians, Goths or others refers, indeed, also to this passage in Ezekiel and his unique interpretation, without any comment, however. The Byzantine author Zonaras I, 5, commenting on the peoples' catalogue in Genesis ch. 10 and the identifications, identifies the "Magogs" with the Scythians, does not mention, however, anywhere the combination Gog and Magog or any relation with the day of the Lord.

something which will take place in the future."[4] Afterwards Theodoretus follows with a detailed reasoning to underpin his argument.

John Droungarios (2nd half 7th c.) has written so-called Catenes (short commentaries), among others on Ezekiel. He is said to have used works of "heretic" authors like Theodoretus, Polychronios, and Origenes. None of these Catenes, however, have been edited.[5]

A totally different note is struck in the apocalyptic passage of the famous *Vita Andreae Sali*, the "Life of Andreas, Fool for Christ's Sake", written by Nicephorus, presbyter of the Hagia Sophia in Constantinole (1st half 10th c.). From chapter 25 on (= Migne PG 111, 852) Nicephorus speculates on the coming era of the Antichrist. The break-out of the unclean nations appears in §225 (col. 868): "For in that year the Lord will force open the gate in India (?), which was closed by Alexander (king) of the Macedons, and the 72 realms with their soldiery will march out, the so-called unclean nations, the very abominable ones because of their filth and stench, and they will spread out over all the nations under the sky, eating flesh of still living people[6] and drinking their blood, but also dispatching with relish dogs, mice and frogs, and whatever in this world is filthy", etc.[7] The nations are not mentioned by name, neither Gog nor Magog, but the source can easily be identified. The passage goes back to the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, to which I shall return later. I will only remark here that the influence of Pseudo-Methodius is recognizable in a considerable number of passages in Nicephorus' work.[8]
Striking is the number 72, where 22 is 'canonical'.[9]

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4 1217A: Ἐγὼ δὲ θαυμάζω <οὐ> μόνον Ἰουδαίων τὴν α<γ>νοίαν, ἀλλὰ καί τινων τὸ Χριστιανῶν ὄνομα περικειμένων, τοῖς δὲ μύθοις προσεχόντων· καὶ τοῦ Γὼγ καὶ Μαγὼγ τὴν ἐπανάστασιν οὐ γεγενῆσθαι λεγόντων, ἀλλ ' ἔσεσθαι προσδοκώντων. I have corrected ἀνοίαν > ἀγνοίαν and added οὐ, which is lacking in Migne.

5 See H.-G. Beck, *Kirche und thelogische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich,* München 1959, p. 470.

6 Thus with metathesis, ζώσας with ἀνθρώπων; Rydén interprets "raw flesh of people", see L. Rydén, The Andreas Salos Apocalypse, Greek Text, Translation, and Commentary", in Dumbarton Oaks Papers 28 (1974), 197-261, p. 258.

7 (§) 225. Τὸ γὰρ ἔτος ἐκεῖνο ἀποφράξει Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς τὰς πύλας τὰς ἐν * Ἰνδίᾳ, ἃς ἔκλεισεν Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ τῶν Μακεδόνων, καὶ ἐξελεύσοναι βασιλεῖαι ἑβδομήκοντα δύο ἅμα τῷ λαῷ αὐτῶν, τὰ λεγόμενα ῥυπαρὰ ἔθνη, τὰ βδελυρώτατα πάσης ** σικχασίας καὶ δυσωδίας, καὶ διασκορπισθήσονται ἐν πάσῃ τῇ γῇ ὑπ ' οὐρανόν, σαρκὰς ἀνθρώπων ζώσας ἐσθίοντες, καὶ τὸ αἷμα πίνοντες, κύνας καὶ μῦας καὶ βατράχους δαπανῶντες, καὶ πᾶσαν ῥυπαρίαν τοῦ κόσμου ἐν ἡδονῇ.

* In the mss. Ἰνδαλία. ** Thus in Migne; Rydén: συχασίας. For σικχασία, see Sophocles, Lexicon s.v.

8 §209 (col. 854, ±C) = PsM 13, 17-18; §210 (col. 856A) = PsM 13,11 ff; §212 (col. 856D= ±PsM. 14,10; §216 (col. 860C) = PsM 14, 21-23; etc.

9 For the 'canonical' number of 22 enclosed nations, see the ample discussion in Anderson, o.c., p. 33 ff. Anderson did not know the apocalyptic passage in Nicephorus. About the genesis of the number 22, see G. Reinink, *Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius (Übersetzung),* Scriptores Syri, tom. 221 (CSCO 541), Louvain 1993, p. 24, note 4 on VIII, 10). About the varying numbers in the Arabic tradition, see Faustina Doufikar-Aerts, Alexander Magnus Arabicus, Diss. Leyde 2003, 3.6.2, p. 146.

There is also an *Exposition about the Vision of Ezekiel* by Nikolaos Cabasilas Chamaëtos, a highly esteemed theologian from the 14th century (±1320-1391). [10] This text has not been edited as far as I know. From a concise description (Migne, PG 150, p. 359) one may conclude that its contents are specifically concerned with the four creatures before the throne[11] and with the dead bones which regenerate flesh.[12] If Gog and Magog are mentioned, then it is not prominently.

As for Gog and Magog in Byzantine historiography we can subdivide this literature into four manifestations: 1. historiography in imitation of the famous classical historiographers (Herodotus, Thucydides, Polybius, a.o.); 2. the world chronicle (Malálas, the Easter Chronicle, Theophanes, George the Monk, a.o.); 3. in biographical form (Psellos, Anna Comnene, John VI Cantacuzenus, Sphrantzes); 4. historiography in verse (Pisides on Heraclius, Constantine Manasses, Chronicle of Morea, etc.).[13] The world chronicle, based on the works of Eusebius and other church historiographers, clearly shows the features of church history. All the Byzantine authors of world histories cherish what can be called a "holistic" idea of history: God created the world and will also bring it to an end. In the meantime His guidance is clearly present in the course of events. One would expect to find Ezekiel's prophecies regularly in these chronicles. However, this is not the case. Within the framework of world history it is the prophecies of Daniel on the four world empires and passages in the Old Testament about Alexander the Great which play an important role. The character of these chronicles is thoroughly analysed by Heribert Gleixner in his *Das Alexanderbild der Byzantiner*, pp. 32-56.[14] As to the role of Alexander the Great, Gleixner summarizes the motifs used by the chroniclers: a) the chronology is based on Eusebius; b) the main (historical) source is the Alexander Romance; c) the idea of Alexander being cosmocrator reflects the Barbarus Scaligeri; d) the encounter with the Brahmans and the apophthegms run according to George the Monk; e) Alexander

10 On Nikolaos Cabasilas Chamaëtos, a nephew of Nilus Cabasilas, see *Tusculum* Lex. Gr. Lat. Autoren, s.v., and H.-G.Beck, *Kirche u. Theol. Lit. d. Byz.*, p. 780 ff.

11 Ezekiel, ch. 1.

12 Ezekiel, ch. 37.

13 See Willem J. Aerts, Panorama der byzantinischen Literatur, in *Neues Handbuch der Literaturwisschenschaft IV, Spätantike*, edd. H. Hofmann-L.J. Engels, p. 664-677 and 685-687.

14 Gleixner mentions Eusebius, the Barbarus Scaligeri (= Frick, Chronica Minora I), John Malálas, John of Antioch, the Chronicon Paschale, George Syncellus, George the Monk, Theodosius Melitenus, George Cedrenus, Const. Manasses, John Zonaras, Michael Glykas, Joël, George Scholarius (Gennadius) and Dorotheus (17th c.).

is typified according to Flavius Josephus. Much attention is given to Alexander's homage towards Jaddus, the highpriest of Jerusalem. Gog and Magog are nowhere mentioned.[15]

Surprisingly, connections are offered by the 'classical-oriented' historiographers. The oldest mention of a gate constructed by Alexander the Great is to be found in a passing remark of Flavius Josephus in his *Bellum Judaïcum* 7,7,4).[16] To realize their plans to organize a raid into Iran and further the Alans depend on the king of the Hyrcanes who controls the only passage which was blocked in the past by Alexander the Great by means of an iron gate. The Byzantine historiographer Procopius in his *Persian Wars* (1,10,1 ff) provides an ample description of the landscape around the Caspian Gate and its narrow passage. It was Alexander who discerned the character of the terrain and constructed the iron gate there (1,10,9).[17] The same description is verbatim repeated by Photius in his *Bibliotheca*, containing a compilation of the first book of Procopius' *Persian Wars*.[18] Gog and Magog do not appear. They wait only for the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius and his handling of the Alexander episode which becomes the source of the later Byzantine versions of the Alexander Romance (ε, γ etc.).

15 Where Magog is mentioned, as in Chron. Pasch. 1,46,12, its context is the catalogue of peoples in Genesis 10:2.

16 Τὸ δὲ τῶν Ἀλανῶν ἔθνος, ὅτι μέν εἰσι Σκύθαι περὶ τὸν Τάναϊν καὶ τὴν Μαιῶτιν Λίμνην κατοικοῦντες, πρότερον δήπου δεδηλώκαμεν. Κατὰ τούτους δὲ τοὺς χρόνους διανοηθέντες εἰς την Μηδείαν και προσωτέρω ταύτης ἔτι καθ᾽ ἁρπαγὴν ἐμβαλεῖν, τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν Ὑρκανῶν διαλέγονται. Τῆς παρόδου γοῦν οὗτος δεσπότης ἐστὶν ἣν ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀλέξανδρος πύλαις σιδηραῖς κλειστὴν ἐποίησε. [Somewhere earlier we have explained that the people of the Alans are Scythians who live around the (river) Don and the Maeotis Lake. In these times, however, they planned a raid into the territory of the Medes and even further and started negociations with the King of the Hyrcanes. For he was master of that corridor which king Alexander had blocked with an iron gate].

17 Proc., Pers. 1,10,4 δίοδος γὰρ οὐδεμία τὸ λοιπὸν φαίνεται, πλήν γε δὴ ὅτι ὥσπερ τινὰ χειροποίητον πυλίδα ἐνταῦθα ἡ φύσις ἐξεῦρεν, ἣ Κασπία ἐκ παλαιοῦ ἐκλήθη. [....] 6 οὗ δὴ τὰ Οὔννων ἔθνη σχεδόν τι ἅπαντα ἵδρυται ἄχρι ἐς την Μαιῶτιν διήκοντα λίμνην. οὗτοι ἦν μὲν διὰ τῆς πυλίδος, ἧς ἄρτι ἐμνήσθην, ἴωσιν ἐς τὰ Περσῶν τε καὶ Ῥωμαίων ἤθη, ἀκραίφνεσί τε τοῖς ἵπποις ἴασι καὶ περιόδῳ τινὶ οὐδαμῇ χρώμενοι οὐδὲ κρημνώδεσιν ἐντυχόντες χωρίοις, ὅτι μὴ τοῖς πεντήκοντα σταδίοις ἐκείνοις, οἷσπερ εἰς τοὺς Ἰβηρίους ὅρους, ὥσπερ ἐρρήθη, διήκουσιν. ἐπ᾽ ἄλλας δέ τινας ἐξόδους ἰόντες πόνῳ τε πολλῷ παραγίνονται καὶ ἵπποις οὐκέτι χρῆσθαι τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἔχοντες, περιόδους τε γὰρ αὐτοὺς περιιέναι πολλὰς ἐπάναγκες καὶ ταύτας κρημνώδεις. ὅπερ ἐπειδὴ ὁ Φιλίππου Ἀλέξανδρος κατενόησε, πύλας τε ἐν χώρῳ ἐτεκτήνατο τῷ εἰρημένῳ καὶ φυλακτήριον κατεστήσατο. [For there is further no passage, as it seems, except where nature has created a gate as it were made by human hand, which was from early days named the Caspian. [....] 6. Nearly all the tribes of the Huns are settled there as far as the Maeotic Lake. When they like to go through this gate, where I spoke about, to the habitats of the Persians and the Romans (=Byzantines), they go there without any damage for their horses and along the shortest way, not having to deal with rocky terrain, except for the distance of fifty stades which they have, as said already, to traverse up to the Iberian (=Georgian) border. If they take other exit routes they have to surmount many difficulties, being obliged to change horses, because they must make great detours and, moreover, through rocky grounds. When Philips' son Alexander discerned this, he had a gate built on the spot mentioned, and a guarded post arranged.]

18 Photius, Bibl. 22b (Migne PG 103).

The more literary compositions of the Byzantines show they had a strong belief that the Roman, or its successor the Byzantine, Empire was the fourth and last empire in the prophecies of Daniel, and that its last emperor was destined to hand over his crown, i.e. his power into the hands of Christ shortly before the Day of the Lord. This period would be preceded by the invasions of "Gog from the land Magog", or "Gog and Magog" into the Holy Land, according to the prophecies of Ezekiel and by the reign of the Antichrist. But the appearance, in the 7th century, of a new world power, the empire of the Arabs, who had adopted the new doctrine of Islam, created a problem for the Byzantines. Could the prophecies of Daniel still be trustworthy after the birth of a fifth world empire? One of the first reactions to the tempestuous expansion of Islam is the so-called *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius, an anonymous document, ± 692 written by a Syrian theologian in Singar, near Nisibis.[19] Drawing parallels between the history of the Jewish people in the Old Testament and of the Roman (=Byzantine) Empire he attempts to show that this fifth world empire is doomed to perish, if only the Byzantine emperor awakes from his lethargy. Pseudo-Methodius uses Ezekiel prolifically, and in addition to Christian Byzantium's last emperor he constructs, by means of a wonderful genealogy,[20] a proto-Christian world emperor, who is 'of course' Alexander the Great. From this point on, the supposed construction of a wall (or gate) against the tribes from the North, whether this barricade is placed in the Caucasus (the town Derbend)[21], or in Hyrcania, south-east of the Caspian Sea, is

19 See G.J. Reinink, *Die syrische Apocalypse des Pseudo-Methodius* (Übersetzung, CSCO, vol. 541, Louvain 1993) p. XIV, note 43; pp. XXVII-XXIX.

20 The genealogical construction of Pseudo-Methodius states that all the Christian rulers of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, and Aethiopia are related through the founder of the potential Christian empire of Alexander the Great. In chapter 8 Pseudo-Methodius makes his reasoning clear: the four storm winds seen by Daniel refer to a relationship between the Aethiopians and the Macedonians, between the Romans and the Greeks, for Alexander is the son of Philip of Macedon and an Aethiopian princess, Chouseth, who after the death of the childless Alexander, returns to Aethiopia. Then she enters into a second marriage with Byzas, the King of Byzantium. Their daughter Byzantia is married to Romulus, King of Rome. From this marriage three sons are born: Armelaos, Urbanus and Claudius, who are the later kings of Rome, Byzantium and Alexandria respectively. By this construction is Alexander founder of the empire that will also be the last empire.

21 See e.g. David Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity* (Oxford 1994), p. 270, and note 9. See also Anderson, o.c., Introductory Note (p. VII and VIII) and Chapt. I, p. 1-15. The medieval travellers to the Far East locate the wall or gate or defences, built by Alexander (the "Iron Gate") against the tribes from the North, always West of the Caspian Sea. So e.g. William of Rubrouck: "Next day we arrived at the Iron Gate, which was built by Alexander of Macedon. The most eastern part of this town (i.e. Derbend) touches the shore of the sea." Somewhat further on he writes: "The next day we traversed a valley, where foundations of walls were to be seen running from one mountain to another, and no way went over the crest of the mountain. These were the bolts of Alexander, which should keep off the savage tribes, namely the nomads of the steppe, lest they could set on the cultivated lands and the settlements. For the rest, there are also other bastions, in which live Jews. But I was not able to get more information about them. There

combined with the dangerous unclean nations of Ezekiel. The influence of this combination is evident in the later versions of the Alexander Romance.

Several versions exist of this Alexander Romance, as is well-known. The oldest version (α) is dated 3rd c. A.D., the oldest reworking (β) is dated 5th/6th. c. A.D. In these versions the enclosing of the unclean nations is absent. In some late manuscripts of the β-version this episode occurs, but there one has to do with interpolations.[22] The Gog episode occurs for the first time in the versions ε and γ of the Alexander Romance. The ε-version differs in many respects from the prototypes α and β. The γ-type mostly shows resemblance to the β-version, but there are a considerable number of episodes, in which γ follows the ε-version. The Gog and Magog episode is among these. As to ε and γ, there is also a dating problem. In the introduction to his edition of the ε-version, Jürgen Trumpf put the time of origin late 7th, early 8th c. A.D. This supposition was based on dating the first version of Pseudo-Methodius ±640 A.D.[23] In our editions of the Syrian original text and the first Greek and Latin translations, Reinink, Kortekaas, and I have made clear that the original text must have been written ±692 A.D. The Greek translation was made about 10 years later. The Latin one about 10 years later from the Greek version.[24] Moreover, if one takes into account that the catalogue of nations in ε considerably deviates from the one in Pseudo-Methodius and the chain of events in the Alexander passage in ε is contrary to the one in Pseudo-Methodius[25], it is obvious that the origin of the ε-version is to be dated much later than Trumpf in his edition did. In a recent article, however, in the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (Bd 155, 2006, p. 85 ff. "Pap. Berl. 21266 Ein Beleg für die historische Quelle des griechischen

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were, however, many Jews in all the cities of Persia." See Dr. H.C.A. Muller, *Voorlopers en navolgers van Marco Polo* (= Predecessors and followers of Marco Polo), Leiden 1944, p.193-194.

22 See L. Bergson, *Der griechische Alexanderroman, Rezension β*, Stockholm 1965. Bergson quotes this interpolation from the mss. B and M in Appendix B.

23 Trumpf based his supposition on the reference to the Bersile tribe, mentioned in ch. 39,1 of ε, a tribe which is indicated as Caucasian also in Theophanes Homologetes and in the *Short History* of Nicephorus.

24 The new dating came above all forth from the investigations of Sebastian Brock, see Reinink, o.c., p. XII ff. For the dates of the Greek and Latin translations, see W.J.Aerts-G.A.A. Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius; die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen*, CSCO, Subsidia 97,98, Louvain 1998, espec. 97, p. 3, 4.

25 The chain of events in PsM is as follows: establishment of the abominable behaviour of the unclean nations; Alexander's invocation of God's help to bring the two mountains closer to one another; building the gate, followed by the reference to Ezekiel and the catalogue of the enclosed nations. In ε the dislodging of the unclean nations to the North comes first, followed by Alexander's prayer to God in a very Christian way for putting the mountains together; then their enclosure and the catalogue, and at last the description of their abominable behaviour.

Alexanderromans") Trumpf gives a new date for ε: 8th/9th c., a date which is more in conformity to the facts. The (late) 9th century or even early 10th c. is perhaps a more probable option. The γ-version will have been realized considerably later.

The catalogue of the unclean nations in the versions that follow is an unholy mess. Most striking is the spelling Γώθ and Μαγώθ in ε. In the lists of the unclean nations prepared by A. Lolos, in his edition of the first and second recensions of PsM, this spelling only occurs in the manuscripts B,Q and E.[26] The identification of Gog and Magog with the Goths is of regular occurrence. So, in Isidore of Seville, *Etym*. IX, 2, 26-27: *Filii igitur Iaphet septem nominantur: Gomer, ex quo Galatae, id est Galli. Magog, a quo arbitrantur Scythas et Gothos traxisse originem.* And again, *Etym*. IX, 2, 89: *Gothi a Magog filio Iaphet nominati putantur, de similitudine ultimae syllabae, quos veteres magis Getas quam Gothos vocaverunt*.[27]

In the (later) Alexander Romances we find two types of the enclosed nations episode: as a story told in the third person, and in the form of a letter (sent to his mother Olympias) in the first person. In the first type Alexander directs his prayer to "τὸ θεῖον"[28], in the second, it is "ἡ ἄνω πρόνοια" ("the providence from above")[29] to whom he sends up his prayer. The first context mentions 22 names, the second only

26 Though it is to be noticed that B and Q write Μεγώθ, E Μηγώθ. Moreover, the names Ἀγείς , Ἐξενάχ, Νεύνιοι, Ναζάρται, Θεανοί, Φισολονικαῖοι, Ἀλκιναῖοι and Σαλτάριοι do not have any equivalent in the lists of Lolos. With one or more of the mss. B,Q and E agree further only the names Ἀνούγ, Διφάρ (or Δηφάρ), Φωτιναῖοι, Φαριζαῖοι, Ζαρματιανοί, Ἀνθρωποφάγοι (often with the nomen sacrum abbreviation Ἀνουφάγοι), Κυνοκέφαλοι, Ἄλανες. Instead of Χαχόνιοι B.Q, E reads Χανώνιοι. In a small number of cases, names in ε agree with another of the 19 mss. registered by Lolos. e.g. Δεκλημοί in five other mss. (D,N,R,L,J) or Θαρβαῖοι (only J; others mostly Θάρβιοι). The number of 22 nations originated from the Syrian sources, such as Pseudo-Ephrem, the *Cavern of Treasures* and the Syrian *Alexander Legend*. Some of the names seem to be derived from the peoples lists of Genesis 10:2. Most of the Syrian names are recognisable in the Greek transcriptions, see Reinink, *Die Syrische Apokalyse* (Übersetzung, CSCO 541) p. 24-26 and notes, and Aerts-Kortekaas, *Die Apokalypse des PsM, ältesten Gr. u. Lat. Übers*. (CSCO 569) p. 116-118 and app. crit.

27 See also *Alessandreida in Rima* (Joachim Storost, *Studien zur Alexandersage in der älteren italienischen Literatur)*, Canto XI (p. 203): "in der Tartarei ziehen Alexander so zahlreiche Feinde entgegen, daß er keine Schlacht wagen kann; deswegen läßt er die Gebirgspässe zumauern. Die Völker heißen Gothi oder Gotti Magotthi und stammen von Magothi ab, einem der drei Söhne des Rubeo, des jüngsten Sohnes von Sephe. Sie fressen rohes Fleisch wie die Hunde, "in ogni cosa sono disordinati". See also Anderson, o.c., p. 11, 12.

28 Ms Q reads "τὸν θεὸν", ms. K and the γ- tradition have "τὸ θεῖον", see ed. Trumpf, app. crit. PsM 8, 6 also reads "τὸν θεὸν", but there the text is clearly Christian, whereas in the Alexander Romance the term is 'translated back' to a pagan situation. The first type figures in ε §39,4-§40 (ed. Trumpf), the second in AlexR III 29 (ed. Muller) and Bergson (ed. AlexR β), Anhang B. The Byz. Alex. Poem also uses the form of a letter.

29 The Byzantine Alexander Poem (5754) combines both ideas: "τὴν ἄνω θείαν πρόνοιαν".

12, and only Magog, not Gog. The tribe which is always mentioned is the Alans.[30]

Another standard element in the lists are the Dogheads. In general, these are not typified as maneaters, as they are here in PsM and the AlexR. The Dogheads have a long history. They are mentioned in Herodotus, who seems to see them as baboons rather than men.[31] Ctesias, who wrote about Persian history, makes them a people of 120,000 souls.[32] The tragedian Aeschylus (frg. 603) localizes them in Aethiopia. Other ancient writers such as Hesiod, Eratosthenes and Megasthenes mention people with eyes in their chest, "semidogs", "bigheads", etc. Strabo in his *Geography* criticizes this nonsense.[33] The mocker Lucian 'creates' in his *True Histories*

30 The Alans are already mentioned in Flavius Josephus, e.g. in the passage on the building of the gate by *Alexander*, *Bell*. Jud. 7,7,4. Their presence is maintained also after Gog and Magog being the central figures in the enclosure scene.

31 See Hdt. IV, 191, in his description of Lybia. There are also the "headless ones (ἀκέφαλοι) with eyes in the chest", "as the Lybians typify them". Besides, there are also "savage men and women". Seen the context, most commentaries on Herodotus agree that the "Dogheads" are baboons or apes. Descriptions such as these, but also of India or Persia, stimulated the imagination of other writers about unknown regions, but also evoked severe criticisms as Plutarch criticizing Herodotus or mockery as Lucian demonstrates in his *True Histories* , see note 35. In the context of the Pentecost miracle not seldom Dogheads are depicted as missionaries at the periphery of the world, evangelizing other peripherians. Thus e.g. in the Queen Keran-Gospel Book fol. 349, see B. Narkiss, *Armenische Kunst*, Stuttgart/Zürich 1980, p. 67. Saint Christophorus also often appears as a Doghead.

32 Ctesias, ch. 20. They live near the Indus, bark like dogs, but understand each other very well. They are black, very honest and associate with Indians. In ch. 22 their way of life is analysed: they dwell in caves, they are hunters, they done the meat in the sun and pay a yearly tribute of 1000 talents electron to the king of India, etc. See also Plinius, *Nat. Hist*., 7,23. Aelian, *Hist. Anim*. 4, 46. Plinius, *Nat. Hist*. 7, 31 talks about dogheady animals, who produce milk. In the §§ 23 and 31 Plinius presents another choice of fabulous beings.

33 Strabo I, 2, 35, p. 43, 5-20 (ed. S. Radt) τὰ μὲν γὰρ Ὁμήρου τὰ περὶ τὸν Πόντον καὶ τὴν Αἴγυπτον παρατίθησιν ἄγνοιαν αἰτιώμενος, ὡς λέγειν μὲν τὰ ὄντα βουλομένου, μὴ λέγοντος δὲ τὰ ὄντα, ἀλλὰ τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα κατ᾽ ἄγνοιαν. Ἡσιόδου δ᾽ οὐκ ἄν τις αἰτιάσαιτο ἄγνοιαν, ἡμίκυνας λέγοντος καὶ μακροκεφάλους καὶ πυγμαίους· οὐδὲ γὰρ αὐτοῦ Ὁμήρου τοιαῦτα μυθεύοντος, ὧν εἰσι καὶ οὗτοι οἱ πυγμαῖοι, οὐδ᾽ Ἀλκμᾶνος στεγανόποδας ἱστοροῦντος, οὐδ᾽ Αἰσχύλου κυνοκεφάλους καὶ στερνοφθάλμους καὶ μονομμάτους, ὅπου γε οὐδὲ τοῖς πεζῇ συγγράφουσιν ἐν ἱστορίας σχήματι προσέχομεν περὶ πολλῶν, κἂν μὴ ἐξομολογῶνται τὴν μυθογραφίαν. φαίνεται γὰρ εὐθὺς ὅτι μύθους παραπλέκουσιν εἰκότες οὐκ ἀγνοίᾳ τῶν ὄντων, ἀλλὰ πλάσει τῶν ἀδυνάτων τερατείας καὶ τέρψεως χάριν. δοκοῦσι δὲ κατ᾽ ἄγνοιαν, ὅτι μάλιστα καὶ πιθανῶς τὰ τοιαῦτα μυθεύουσι περὶ τῶν ἀδήλων καὶ τῶν ἀγνοουμένων. Θεόπομπος δὲ ἐξομολογεῖται φήσας ὅτι καὶ μύθους ἐν ταῖς ἱστορίαις ἐρεῖ, κρεῖττον ἢ ὡς Ἡρόδοτος καὶ Κτησίας καὶ Ἑλλάνικος καὶ οἱ τὰ Ἰνδικὰ συγγράψαντες.

[He (= Apollodorus) brings to the fore what is said by Homer about the Pontus and Egypt, accusing him of ignorance, as having the intention to tell the real situation, without, however, describing the real situation, by presenting the unreal as real by ignorance. And nobody can accuse Hesiod of ignorance, when he speaks about semidogs, longheads and pygmies, not any more than Homer himself where he speaks about what these Pygmies have to deal with, or than Alcman who makes mention of people who cover themselves by one foot, or than Aeschylus who records Dogheads, 'Eyes-in-the-chest-ers' and One-eyed people, whereas we do not pay any more attention to the prose writers on many occasions, even if they do not confess to mythography. For it is immediately clear that they love it to tell stories, not because of ignorance of the facts, but by fabricating impossibilities for amazement's or amusement's sake. They give the impression of ignorance, because they write so convincingly about these obscure and unknown things. But Theopompus confesses that he will also tell myths in his histories, even more than is done by Herodotus, Ctesias, Hellanicus and the authors on India.]

even more absurd beings such as "horsevultures", "garlicfighters"[34], etc. The Byzantine 'multipoet' John Tzetzes (±1110-1180/85) presents in his *Historiae* VII, 621-760 a survey of all the fabulous animals he knows about[35], and in some versions of the AlexR (III,17), in the Letters of Alexander to Aristotle, and to his mother Olympias there are battles with the most fantastic beings and monsters.

The Byzantine Alexanderpoem, probably written late 13th - early 14th century, but handed down in only one manuscript dated 1388, also contains an ample description of the enclosure of the unclean nations. One of the extended γ-versions, such as the one in the illuminated Venetian manuscript, executed in Trebizond, has served as a model. The passage extends over more than one hundred verses (5710-5813 ed. Reichmann). As to Gog and Magog, verse 5737 announces that 22 nations are closed in, but in verses 5787-5790 no more than 13 or 14 are mentioned. Gog, strangely enough, is corrupted into Og. Among the enclosed kings, whose names show a very corrupted transmission, we find a "Doghead" and a Ἰμαντοδάπης ("Beltman"/"Spindleman" (?))[36]. As to the form Og instead of Gog, this looks like a transmission fault. But we find this form also in another writing, namely in the *Refutatio Mohammetis* ("Refutation of Mohammed" 7, 76 = PG 105 767B) of Nicetas Byzantius (late 9 th c.), a contemporary of Patriarch Photius. He refers to Dhū 'l Qarnain in the Qur'ān, who has seen the place "where the sun sets into the warm sea" and went to the North, where he enclosed the peoples Og and Magog. The idea that Alexander cherished the monotheist doctrine in accordance with Abraham, is dismissed by Nicetas as being pure nonsense. A connection between the Og of Nicetas and the Og of the Alexander Poem is not very probable, but it cannot be entirely ruled out.

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34 See e.g. W.J. Aerts, "Alexander the Great and Ancient Travel Stories" in: Zweder von Martels (ed.), *Travel Fact and Travel Fiction* (Leyde 1994), p. 30-38, espec. 35 ff.

35 Tzetzes, Hist. (ed. P.A.M. Leone, Naples 1968) VII, 621-760 mentions the Σκιάποδες ("Shadowfeet") and Ὠτόλικνοι ("People with ears as large as a winnowing-fan") (632, cp. 712-13), the Μονόφθαλμοι ("One-eyed people") and the Ἐνοτίκτοντες ("One-child-bearers"(?)) (630), περὶ δρακόντων Λιβυκῶν ("on Libyan dragons/serpents") (645), the "one-eyed Issidones" (678-683), "semidogs" and "dogheads" (685), again "semidogs" (695,700) and "dogheads" (707, quoting Ctesias about India), Ἀκέφαλοι ("Acephalous people"), Δεκακέφαλοι ("Tenheads"), Τετραχειρόποδες ("Four-handed-and-footed men") (714-715, quoting Strabo I, 13, VII 298, VIII etc.). Further Ἡμίκυνες, Μακρόκρανοι, Πυγμαῖοι, Στεγανόποδες, Στερνόφθαλμοι, Κυνοκέφαλοι, Μονόματοι, Ἰμαντόποδες (cp. Ps.-Call. III,17, Strabo II, 70), Μονοτοκῆται, Ἄρρινες, Ἄστομοι, Ὀπισθοδάκτυλοι, Ἀγελαστοῦντες (755-760, quoting Apollodorus).

36 This form of the name probably is a metrical adaptation of the Ἰμαντόπους ("Mr spindle-shanked"), mentioned in Strabo and Tzetzes, see note 35, with the help of the ending -(δ)απός or -(δ)απῆ (cp. AlexR II, 21,4), e.g. ἀλλοδαπός "from elsewhere". In an earlier passage (5588-5594 = PsC III, 28) Alexander and his army meet with "dogheads", "eyes-in-the-chesters", people with six arms, with bullheads, with lion's snouts, with goat's bodies, etc.

My conclusion is: the "great career" of Gog and Magog in the Byzantine world begins with Pseudo-Methodius and has a clear Syrian background. The integration of the Pseudo-Methodius material into the later versions of the Alexander Romance (starting with the versions ε and γ) determined their further application. The fabulous animals and monsters, however, have a very long tradition going back to folk tales from times immemorial.

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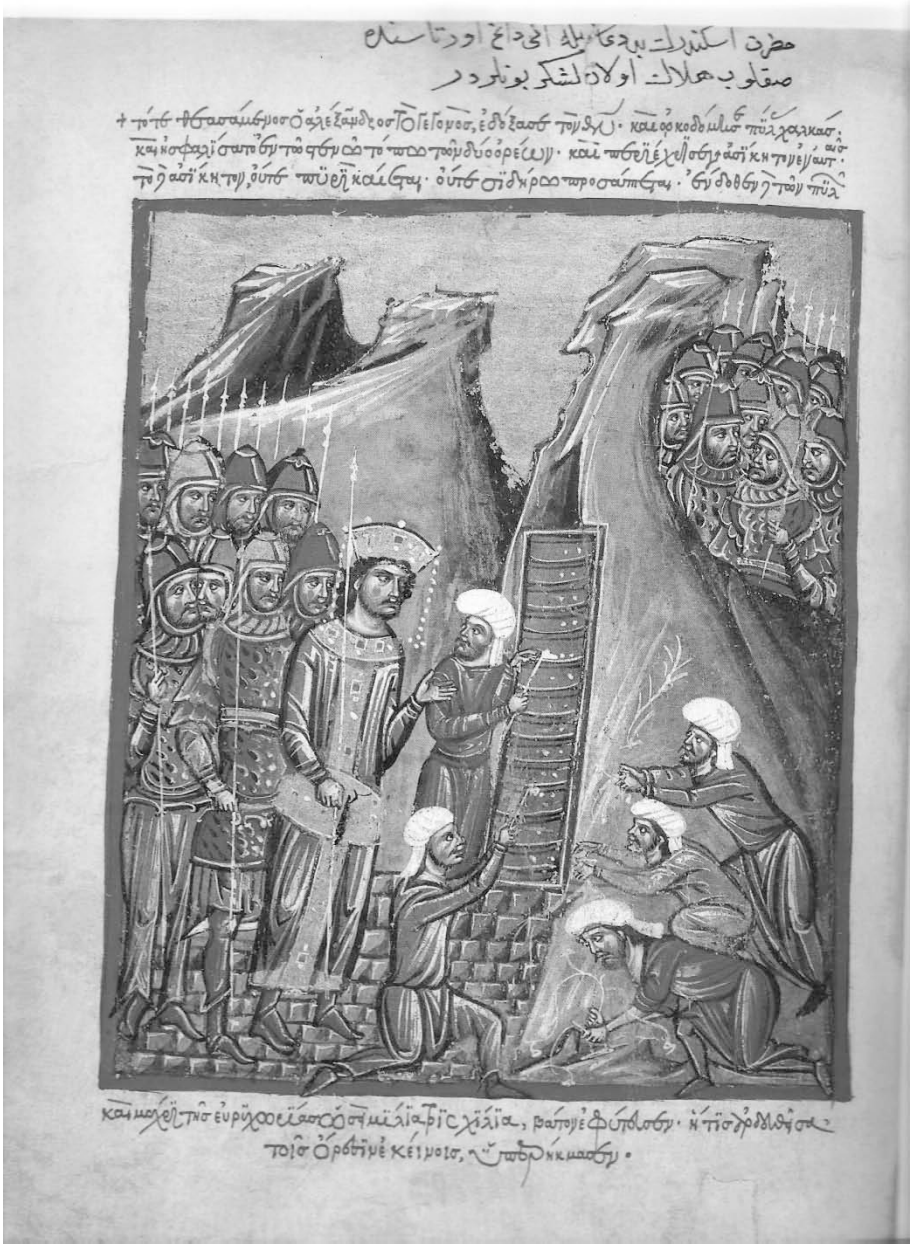

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Dogfaces, Snake-tongues, and the Wall against Gog and Magog

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In unsettled times and eras of cultural, religious, and political tremors, contemporaries have often read events as signs of the imminent end of time. Gog and Magog often play a role in eschatological visions, as report has it that they will break through their wall on the threshold of Doomsday. Even today, recent views and calculations of the exact moment of their escape are proclaimed in large numbers on the internet and in ominous writings. Some deem it will take place in the year 2019 or 2020 – depending on the diverse methods of calculation – which sounds, as compared to the world's age, as if we were on the brink of disaster.

Be that as it may, it is not my purpose to judge these claims, but to place an example of this phenomenon in a broader, literary-historical framework. In 1855, an article was published in the Dutch periodical *De Gids* written by Luitenant C.M. de Jong van Rodenburgh, entitled 'The Khrouän, something about Islamism in North Africa'.[1] The author presents his observations concerning the religious practices in Kabylia and other parts of North Africa. He dwells, in particular, on the role of prophecies by *marabout*s in popular belief.

One of these visions concerns the coming of 'Mouleï Skâ, the master of the hour,' as understood by the author. [2] He states that the Arabs await this messianic figure with fear and trembling, because he will uproot society. Though he will expel the Christians from their lands, he will also sit in judgment upon the Muslims. After much bloodshed he will establish a temporary golden age of happiness and merriment. Subsequently, the gate will be opened and a coarse nation, which is held locked up by this gate behind two huge mountains in inner Africa, will assault the living. The total destruction of the world by these wild people, after which they will be annihilated themselves, preludes the end of time.[3] De Jong van Rodenburgh further remarks

1 "De Khrouän, Iets over het Islamisme in Noord-Afrika," in *De Gids*, 19, n.s. 8/2, (1855) 447-467. The term 'Islamism' has to be understood in its nineteenth-century context as an equivalent term for Islam, and not as it is sometimes used in modern times to indicate new forms of radical or political Islam.
2 What he probably meant is *moulay sā'a*, the master of the hour, i.e. the end of time.
3 *Op.cit.*, p. 457.

that the unquestioning belief of the Arabs in the irrefutable truth of these ominous prophecies causes them to live in a permanent state of insecurity and restlessness. According to the author's analysis the French [colonial] government can never succeed in transforming the population into a nation of quietly living peasants and winning the hearts of their noblemen and *marabout*s, because they consider the French presence as a transitory state, awaiting the moment of their expulsion from above at the appearance of 'Mouleï Skâ.'

These nineteenth-century socio-cultural observations by lieutenant De Jong traveling in outlying districts have a completely outdated spirit, making it hard for the modern reader to take the information seriously. Yet, the document is of interest for the subject matter, the evolution of the Gog and Magog motif. It is easy to recognize this motif in the above prophecy, the coarse nation – representing Gog and Magog – and their confinement behind two huge mountains, which is the core of several seventh-century apocalyptic texts. The question is, why did nineteenth-century French rule in North Africa elicit from the local *marabout*s, predictions which remind the prophecies of Ezekiel and Daniel's Apocalypse? The answer lies in the scope of the Gog and Magog motif, which will be considered here from a historical-religious, and legendary-literary point of view.

The terms Gog and Magog can be traced back to names occurring in the Old Testament in *Genesis* and *Ezekiel*, and in John's *Revelation* in the New Testament.[4] In *Genesis* these names denote the descendents of Japheth, in *Ezekiel* and *Revelation* the terms refer to nations acting at the end of time. In later eschatological representations of Gog and Magog we find several re-occurring elements:

1. Gog and Magog are two of a series of names of wild tribes or their kings.
2. Gog and Magog burst out, from the North, at the end of time.
3. Gog and Magog will harass the nations on earth and assault their lands, possessions and cultures.

In the history of the Gog and Magog tradition, two turning points can be distinguished. The first was when Gog and Magog were connected – in Christian apocalyptic literature – to Alexander the Great. Alexander came to be portrayed here as a monotheist who protected

4 Genesis 10:2-4, the sons of Japheth: Gomer (Gog?) and Magog etc.; Ezekiel 18:6, 37:28, 38:1-4, 38:15-23, 39:1; Revelation 20:6-10.

the world from these coarse nations, Gog and Magog, by shutting them in behind a gate.

It is not quite clear whether the introduction of Alexander in these apocalypses originated in the accounts of Flavius Josephus in *Historia de Bello Judaico*, which claimed that the king of Hyrcania allowed the Alans to attack the Medes through a passage in the Caucasus that had been closed by King Alexander centuries earlier.[5] It seems plausible, however, that Flavius Josephus' account of Alexander in *Antiquitates Judaicorum*, in which he dwells on the king's visit to Jerusalem and his reverence for the God of the Jews, paved the way for Alexander's monotheistic repute in Christian apocalypses.[6]

The connection of the eschatological nations Gog and Magog to Alexander the Great first occurs in the anonymous *Christian Syriac Alexander Legend* (*AL*), an apocalyptic text which is dated, currently, around 630 A.D.. The *AL* probably took root as a reaction to the glorious victory of the Byzantine King Heraclius over the Persian Shah Khosrau II in 628. The euphoria emanating from this victory fostered the conviction that the triumph heralded a divine plan in which the Christian Byzantine Empire would gain supremacy over the world in the period preceding the end of time. The *AL* explicitly pays attention to Gog and Magog, their wickedness and repulsive behavior, and has Alexander build a gate to exclude these nations from entering the civilized world until they will be released on divine command to destroy the world and to be destroyed themselves.

The author of *AL* seems to have deliberately chosen Alexander, the antique cosmocrator, as the protagonist of his apocalyptic manifesto, connecting him with the eschatological nations known from biblical sources. It served his purpose to emphasize the universal importance of Heraclius' exploits and to interpret the events of his time as the fulfillment of the predestined course of history in the divine Plan of Salvation of the world. Alexander was depicted as the founder of the Greek-Roman-Byzantine 'Christian' empire and predecessor of Heraclius, whose victory meant the restoration of the realm and marked the beginning of the fourth and final empire as predicted in the Book of Daniel (2.44).[7] To make the Alexander-

5 Flavius Josephus (37 A.D.-circa 100 A.D.) *The Wars of the Jews* vii, 7,4.

6 Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicorum*, xi, 8.4-6.

7 G.J. Reinink, "Heraclius, the New Alexander: Apocalyptic Prophecies During the Reign of Heraclius," in *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* in*:* Groningen Studies in Cultural Change *2*, eds. G.J. Reinink and B.H. Stolte, Louvain, 2002, pp 81-94.

Heraclius typology created in *AL*[8] work, Alexander was presented with the features of a monotheist, missionary king and associated with biblical prophecies.

It is hard to tell whether this was a reshape of Alexander made on the basis of his profane character in the famed Alexander Romance by Pseudo-Callisthenes.[9] This originally Greek legendary biography of Alexander the Great is held to have been translated into Syriac around 600 A.D., which makes it chronologically possible that Syrians were acquainted with it, and especially with the cosmocratic aspects of its protagonist. This may have provided a basis, but it is obvious that Alexander's eschatological profile was inspired by biblical sources.[10]

Once the connection between Gog and Magog and Alexander in an eschatological context had been established in the *AL*, several other apocalypses embroidered on this theme in the following decades.

A few years after *AL*, a homily known as the *Alexander Poem* saw the light of day.[11] This *mēmrā* or homily had a different – doctrinal and edifying – character, but it was mainly, although not exclusively, based on *AL*. In the *Alexander Poem*, the building of the gate and the revelation of its eschatological role are the leading motifs. The *Poem* is void, however, of the politico-religious pretensions of *AL*, as described above.[12] The text is full of references to biblical prophets, such as Jeremiah, Isaiah and Daniel, and Alexander himself is made a prophet when he is ordered by an angel to write down and teach to the world the prophecies revealed to him by the angel.

In both the *AL* and the *AP*, the release of Gog and Magog on divine command is a prelude to the end of time. *AL* tends to add distinct data, such as a precise year for the escape "at the conclusion of eight hundred and twenty-six years,"[13] and defines Gog and Magog as two of the kings of the Huns. *AP* describes the moment vaguely as

8 See G.J. Reinink, "Alexander the Great in Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalyptic Texts," in *Byzantinorossica*, *2* (2003), pp 150-178, 164.

9 See below, note 30.

10 Especially the Book of Daniel. For the influence of Flavius Josephus, see above, note 7.

11 Formerly ascribed to Jacob of Serugh († 521), but currently dated after 630 A.D.. Its *terminus ante quem* is the Arab invasion of Syria (636) or Mesopotamia (640).

12 The reasons for this and the role of Chalcedonian and Monophysite aspirations have been given in detail by G.J. Reinink, "Alexander the Great in Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalyptic Texts," *opus cit.* pp. 163-168.

13 E.A. Wallis Budge, *The History of Alexander the Great being the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Cambridge 1889, (1) repr. Amsterdam 1976, p. 154. As concerns the second date, 'nine hundred and forty years,' it is not sure that it points to the year of the end of time, because the text seems to be corrupt here. See G.J. Reinink, "Die Entstehung der Syrische Alexanderlegende als politisch-religiöse Propagandaschrift für Herakleios' Kirchenpolitik," in *Orientalia Lovensiana Analecta* 18. 'After Chalcedon,' eds. F.C. Laga, J.A. Munitiz, L. van Rompay, Louvain 1985, pp. 261-281, pp. 268-269, note 27.

"in the seven thousandth year"[14] and while Gog and Magog are defined as the descendants of the mighty house of Japheth, they are described as coarse nations of an indeterminate sort.

In the course of time, all kinds of hordes on the move, such as the Scythians, the Huns, the Mongols, the Tatars and many others have been identified as the escaped hordes of Gog and Magog. Speculation with regard to their 'real' identity continues to the present day.[15]

Shortly after the appearance of the *Alexander Poem*, circumstances in the Near East were to undergo unanticipated radical changes. Heraclius' restoration of the Byzantine territories, which in *AL*'s propagandistic interpretation stood for the reinstallation of the 'last empire,' actually lasted for barely seven years. From 635 onward, Jerusalem, and gradually the whole of Heraclius' dominion, came under the control of the Arabs, the new political power in the region, which brought a new long-term religion: Islam. These developments did not stop the emergence of apocalypses, but definitely influenced their purport, since the events urged the re-interpretation of the *status quo* within the concept of history.

The poem *Sermo de Fine Extremo*, ascribed to Ephrem Syrus (4th c.), but presently dated between 640 and 683 A.D., is the first known apocalyptic text responding to the Islamic invasion.[16] Pseudo-Ephrem considers this conquest as a temporary chastisement of the Byzantines for their persecution of the Monophisyte Christians. The *Sermo* is quite elaborate about the passing invasion of the Arabs, the offspring of Hagar with Abraham, from the desert, and even more about the final assault by Agog and Magog, the Huns, from behind the gate: on which point the *Sermo* has a lot in common with *AL*. [17] There is no prominent role in Pseudo-Ephrem's apocalypse for Alexander, but in line with the reputation by then established, he figures as the builder of the gate. The author gives no details about its construction, nor

14 A.E. Wallis Budge, "A Discourse Composed by Mâr Jacob upon Alexander, the Believed King, and upon the Gate Which He Made Against Âgôg and Mâgôg," in *The History of Alexander the Great being the Syriac version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Cambridge 1889, (3) repr. Amsterdam, 163-200, pp. 187 and 189.

15 Manṣūr ʿAbd al-Ḥakīm, prolific writer of works on Islamic eschatology, expounds the theory that a part of the descendants of Gog and Magog currently live in the People's Republic of Mongolia, mixed with the population of that state. The greater part, however, lives in enclosure, under the surface of the earth, underneath all regions of the world. See *Yajūj wa Majūj min al-Wujūd ḥattā al-Fanā*' ("Gog and Magog, from Existence to Annihilation"), Damascus/Cairo 2004, pp. 239-244.

16 G.J. Reinink, "Alexander the Great in Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalyptic Texts", *opus cit.* pp 168-171.

17 Pseudo-Ephrem gives a very extensive list of 30 names of nations, composed from different sources. See G.J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Ephrems 'Rede über das Ende' und die Syrische eschatologische Literatur des Siebenten Jahrhunderts," in *Aram*, 5 (1993), pp. 448-451, pp. 437-463.

about predictions written on it by Alexander. He refers particularly to the prophecies of Ezekiel and inserts allusions to the gospel of Matthew.[18] While the *Sermo* is less explicit as to the founder of the Roman/Byzantine empire, its author sticks to the concept of final world-dominion of the Byzantines as predicted by Alexander in the *AL*.[19]

A second and most influential Syriac apocalypse from the second half of the seventh century is the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius. It was soon translated into Greek and Latin, through which it became well known in western and eastern European (apocalyptic) literature. [20] This *Apocalypse* differs greatly in tenor and structure from the previous one. Pseudo-Methodius assigns a major role to Alexander the Great as the founder and master of the fourth realm of Daniel and in eschatology. The main issue in the text concerns Alexander's involvement with Gog and Magog. With divine assistance he shuts them in behind a gate in the mountains of the north in order that the prophecy of Ezekiel (38:14-16) may be fulfilled. In short, Alexander is given the role of founder of the last Byzantine Empire and indirectly as the ancestor of its imperial dynasty, and he is granted a key position in the outcome of the biblical prediction relating the arrival of Gog from the lands of the north to invade Israel at the end of time.[21] Pseudo-Methodius became the apogee of the apocalypses concerned with Alexander and Gog and Magog. Once parts of the *Apocalypse* had been incorporated in several recensions of the legendary Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes, Alexander's eschatological role and association with Gog and Magog became a recurrent theme.[22]

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18 See "Des Heiligen Ephrem des Syrers Sermones III, übersetzt von Edmund Beck," in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 321 Scriptores Syri tom. 139, Louvain, 1972, pp. 79-94.

19 *Sermo* 349-354, *opus cit.* p. 89.

20 See the editions of W.J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas, "Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. De älteste griechische und lateinische Übersetzung," in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium* I and II, vols. 569, tom. 97 and 570, tom. 98, Louvain, 1998. For the German translation from Syriac see G.J. Reinink "Die Syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius," in *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, vol. 541, tom. 221, Louvain, 1993.

21 The interpretation of the *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius has been treated previously, and will not be reviewed here. See G.J. Reinink, "Pseudo-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam," in *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East I. Problems in the Literary Source Material. Studies in Late Antiquity and Early Islam 1*, eds. A. Cameron and L.I. Conrad, Princeton, 1992, 149-187. Also G.J. Reinink, "Alexander the Great in Seventh-Century Syriac Apocalyptic texts," *opus cit*. pp.171-177. See also P.J. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, London 1985, especially "The Syriac Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius," pp. 13-38.

22 The Gog and Magog episode from the Greek translation of Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalype* has been interpolated in the Greek ε and γ recensions of Pseudo-Callisthenes, which are dated at present in the 8th/9th and 9th/10th century respectively. In the 5th-century β recension it has been incorporated afterwards. The Latin translation of Pseudo-Methodius found its way into the *Historia de Preliis* I^2.

From the above it is clear that the Syriac apocalyptic tradition was crucial for the development of the connection between Gog and Magog and Alexander. Unlike the earlier *AL* and the *AP*, the late 7th-century apocalypses of Pseudo-Ephrem and Pseudo-Methodius expressed a reaction to the Arab conquest and the spread of Islamic rule in the region, which were the new historical events of their time. They unambiguously placed these 'incidents' in the projected concept of history; the Arab supremacy as a temporary punishment for the sins of the Christians. Ironically, the origin of these same historical events brought about the second major turning point in the Gog and Magog tradition.

Approximately at the same time as the appearance of the *Alexander Legend* and the *Alexander Poem*, the Arabs – or more precisely, the first generation of Muslims – learned about Gog and Magog in the Quran, in verses 18:92-98. These referred to the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, 'the man with two horns', who built a wall to confine Yājūj and Mājūj until the end of time. The Muslims' acquaintance with Gog and Magog was to modify the Gog and Magog tradition in the entire Islamic world, and beyond.

Islam developed its own remarkable tradition with regard to Gog and Magog. First occurring in the Commentaries on the Quran (*tafsīr*) and in the Traditions (*ḥadīth*), the Gog and Magog motif spread through the collections of Tales of the Prophets, the *qiṣaṣ al-'anbiyā'*, and popular narratives, the *siyar*. Quite often the reports are ascribed to the notorious transmitters of *isrā'īlīyāt*, Wahb ibn Munabbih and Kaʿb al-Aḥbār. The Muslim Gog and Magog tradition mainly focused on the descriptions of Gog and Magog and the building of the wall by Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. Because this denomination, 'the Two-horned,' looked like an epithet rather than a person's name, it became subject to all kinds of interpretations. Authoritative exegetes of the Quran, including Ṭabarī († 923), show their awareness of the fact that Alexander (the Great) had been associated with the exclusion of Gog and Magog. Although the identification of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn as Alexander remained unresolved among exegetes, this did not prevent Arabic literature, of Christian and Muslim provenance alike, presenting King Al-Iskandar as the Two-horned builder of the wall against Gog and Magog.[23] Subsequently, this representation became

23 This development has been described in detail in my exposé on the Dhū 'l-Qarnayn tradition in *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, diss. Leiden 2003, 3.1, 3.3 and 3.4. An English translation of this book is forthcoming (Louvain 2007).

current in the Middle East, parts of Africa, Central Asia and South East Asia.

From the above we can observe that two Gog and Magog traditions developed, more or less independently, in their Christian and Muslim contexts. But the results were quite similar, in part because their points of departure had much in common. It may also be assumed that interchange of motifs has contributed. To throw some light on the relation between the two traditions and to place the *marabouts'* eschatological vision in its proper perspective, I will briefly consider the central motifs in the two traditions: descriptions of Gog and Magog; the construction of the rampart; and eschatological predictions.

The descriptions of the physical features of Yājūj and Mājūj show some resemblances to Gog and Magog in the Syriac apocalypses. The latter dwell on their repulsive behaviour, which is characterised, in particular, by the fact that they are cannibals, drinking blood and devouring snakes and scorpions. These characteristics also occur frequently in Arab reports.[24] One notable case will serve as an example:[25]

> He [Dhū 'l-Qarnayn] sealed the letter and gave it to his envoy to have it delivered to the people of Tārīs,[26] a nation whose multitude is only known to God, the most High. They are of various shapes; they have human bodies (*adamī*) but the faces of dogs (*wujūh al-kilāb*). Their stature is like that of a tall cedar tree. … The height of a man is eighty cubits. They have claws instead of fingernails. Their canines are like the fangs of the lion. They have palates like those of camels which produce a loud noise when they chew, like the chewing of a strong horse, and their faces are like dog faces, while their bodies are like those of humans.

24 See for example Ṭabarī (Abū Jaʿfar Muḥammad ibn Jarīr aṭ-) († 923), *Kitāb Jāmiʿ al-Bayān fī Tafsīr al-Qur'ān* ('Commentarius in Coranum') 31 vols, 16, Cairo 1323-29 H., p.14 and Ibn al-Wardī (Sirāj ad-Dīn Abū Hafṣ ʿUmar) († 1456), *Kharīda al-ʿAjā'ib wa Farīda al-Gharā'ib* ('The Virgin of Marvels and the Pearl of Wonders'), ed. Maḥmūd Fakhūrī, Beirut 1991, p. 304.

25 The passage has not been referred to elsewhere; it is part of an unknown, as yet unpublished manuscript. For other characteristics, please refer to the general survey 'Yādjūj wa Mādjūj' by E. van Donzel and C. Ott in *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, New edition, vol. xi, fasc. 183-184, Leiden, 2001, pp. 231-234.

26 Identified in the text as Yājūj and Mājūj. Tārīs is linked to Tiras, mentioned as one of the sons of Japheth in Genisis X.2.

This is the portrayal of Gog and Magog in the *Qiṣṣat Dhī 'l-Qarnayn* ('Story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn') by one Abū ʿAbd al-Malik.[27] The most notable part is the comment that Gog and Magog are considered to have 'dog faces,' which almost certainly is an allusion to the Cynocephali. The occurrence of dog-headed or dog-faced creatures is not uncommon in Arabic geographical literature and travel accounts,[28] but as a feature of Gog and Magog it is notable, because it points to the Syriac *AL* and *Apocalypse* of Pseudo-Methodius. In the *AL* Alexander asks if there are any living creatures beyond Gog and Magog. The answer is: "Those of Bêth-Āmardāth and the Dog-men; and beyond the Dog-men is the nation of the Měnînê."[29] In Pseudo-Methodius' *Apocalypse*, the Dog-men are integrated in the list of tribes of the race of Gog and Magog who were shut in together by Alexander. They are characterized as "Anthropophagoi (men-eaters), who are called Kynokephaloi (dogheads)." In the Arabic version of this part of the *AL* we find a paraphrase which states that beyond Gog and Magog live 'the Nafāyis, that is to say the Najāyis, dogheads.'[30] It is quite unintelligible why the composer/translator cares to 'gloss' the term *nafāyis* ('precious') as *najāyis* ('unclean'). A possible explanation is that the translator was aware that Nafāyis represented the Anthropophagoi – in other elaborations also named Anafagius/Anouphagoi.[31] In the Ethiopic version we find here: "There

27 Ms. Rabat, Biblithèque Générale D 1427, ff. 75-118, pp. 91a-91b. My analysis of this text, which contains an Arabic version of the Aljamiado *Rrekontamiento del Rrey Alisandere*, can be found in *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, *opus cit*. 1.6.3-1.6.3b.

28 Qazwīnī (c.1203-1283) reports of the inhabitants of an island in the Sea of the Zanj: 'their heads are like dogheads and they have human bodies.' It is noteworthy that this description is next to his description of Yājūj and Mājūj and their neighbors. Ibn al-Wardī makes mention of similar island-dwellers and he even states that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn's men fought with them. See Zakarija Ben Muhammed Ben Mahmud el-Cazwini's *Kosmographie (ʿAjā'ib al-Makhlūqāt)*, ed. F. Wüstenfeld, Göttingen, 1849, 2 vols, 1, p. 449 and Ibn al-Wardī, *Kharīda al-ʿAjā'ib wa Farīda al-Gharā'ib* ('The Virgin of Marvels and the Pearl of Wonders'), ed. Maḥmūd Fakhūrī, Beirut 1991, p. 126.

29 E.A. Wallis Budge, "A Christian Legend Concerning Alexander," in The *History of Alexander the Great being the Syriac Version of the Pseudo-Callisthenes*, Cambridge, 1889 (2), pp. 144-158, p. 152.

30 Ms. BN 3687, p. 74vo. This episode of the *AL* has been incorporated in *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar*, the Arabic adapted translation of the Syriac Alexander Romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes. See *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, opus cit. 3.6.1. P.M. Fraser, *The Cities of Alexander the Great*, Oxford 1996, gives an elaborate and useful survey and stemma of the Alexander Romance, although it now has to be revised on the point of the Arabic derivatives. For more than a century, the Arabic translation, presumably made in the ninth century, was considered lost. During my investigation of the Arabic Alexander tradition I discovered a hand-written text, entitled *Sīrat Al-Malik Iskandar*, which appeared to represent the sought-after Arabic Alexander Romance. I am currently preparing an edition of this text, which I have provisionally named after its copyist, Quzmān. This Arabic recension is intermediary to the Syriac and Ethiopic recensions of Pseudo-Callishtenes' Alexander Romance and incorporates parts of *AL*, in particular the building of the gate against Gog and Magog.

31 In the Latin translation and in the γ recension of Pseudo-Callisthenes (iii 26), respectively. See C.S.F. Burnett, "An Apocryphal Letter from the Arabic Philosopher al-Kindi to Theodore, Frederick II's Astrologer, Concerning Gog and Magog, the Enclosed Nations, and the Scourge of the Mongols," in *Viator: Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, 15 (1984), 151-167, p.167.

are nations living beyond them, namely the Taftās, that is to say the Nagāshāwīyān, [who have] faces like dogs."[32] Despite the corruption of the names – the last ones apparently through an Arabic intermediary text – it is clear that all the descriptions probably depend on the Dog-men, the neighbouring tribes of Gog and Magog, in the *AL*.[33] This illustrates the connection between the 'occidental' and 'oriental' Gog and Magog traditions, which seems to have continued through the ages, and a cross-cultural connection, because the *Qiṣṣat Dhī 'l-Qarnayn* of Abū ʿAbd al-Malik is of Islamic provenance, whereas the Arabic translation of the *AL* has a Christian background.[34]

Another motif which reveals the acquaintance of Arab authors with the Syriac tradition is the building of the rampart. In general, there are two stereotype descriptions of the construction of the *sadd* (barrier), which sometimes occur side by side in the same text. The common feature is that the space between two mountains is filled with alternate layers of copper and iron. In one version, the layers are melted together using firewood, in the other, the structure is built of metal bricks, and molten copper is poured over them.[35] A third type is found in the above-mentioned Arabic Alexander Romance, *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar*. It is mainly based on the equivalent part in the *AL*, but also on Pseudo-Methodius, and inspired by details in the Quran commentaries and *qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. The important aspect here is the fact that Gog and Magog are shut behind a *bāb* (gate), an element which is actually alien to the Islamic tradition. Several geographers, however, also mention a gate instead of a wall. Primarily, they transmit the story of Sallām at-Turjumānī's who is reported to have been sent to inspect the wall of Gog and Magog by order of Caliph

32 E.A.Wallis Budge, *Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great. Ethiopic Histories of Alexander by Pseudo-Callisthenes and other Writers*, London, 1896, p. 234.

33 In the Spanish-Arabic Alexander Romance *Hadīth Dhī 'l-Qarnayn* one phrase can be identified – by its context – as also referring to the same passage. 'Beyond this nation are people who are called the Naʿāshiyūn, beyond whom is nothing but air and wind.' Unfortunately the detail of the dogheads is missing. See *Un texto occidental de la Leyenda de Alejandro*, ed. E. Garcia Gomez, Madrid, 1929, p. 31. Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam († 870) and Ṭabari († 923) also refer to a people living beyond Gog and Magog as the 'dog-faces.' See *The History of the Conquest of Egypt, North Africa and Spain Known as Futuh Misr of Ibn Abdal Ḥakam*, ed. Charles C. Torrey, Yale Oriental Series III, New Haven 1922, 39 and Ṭabari, *opus cit*, p. 6.

34 See F. Doufikar-Aerts, "Alexander the Flexible Friend. Some Reflections on the Representation of Alexander the Great in the Arabic Alexander Romance," in *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies*, 55 (2003) 3/4, pp. 195-210.

35 The classification was made on the basis of reports by Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Faqih al-Hamadhānī, Ibn al-Athīr, Thaʿlabī, Abū ʿAbd al-Malik, Bayḍāwī and Pseudo-Aṣmaʿī. See F. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, diss. Leiden 2003, 3.6.1.

Wāthiq bi-'llāh († 847).[36] The description of the gate shows considerable resemblances to the gate depicted in the Arabic version of the *AL*. The clearest example is the intriguing fact that the gate is said to have a key with twelve wards: this detail is known uniquely from the *Arabic* version of the *AL* in *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar*.[37]

In spite of the reference in Sallām's story to this twelve-warded key, which is supposedly made to open the gate (*bāb*) at the appointed time, there is generally no reference to a key. In most accounts, Gog and Magog are to escape from behind the closed barrier (*sadd/ radm*) in a less civilized way. They are said to apply all means and ruses to demolish the wall, by undermining it, or scratching the wall with their claws. A variant of this method is given by ʿUmāra ibn Zayd:

> When he [Dhū 'l-Qarnayn] had finished the wall and had constructed it strongly and solidly, he placed above it a stone talisman in the shape of an eagle's statue. On its breast he inscribed one of the names of God the Exalted; it is known here that this is placed in the middle of the wall. If Gog and Magog come near to *lick* the wall until it becomes so thin that they are very near to what lies behind it, the eagle shrieks so loudly that everyone near the wall will know.[38]

Gog and Magog try to break out by licking the wall, as their mouths and tongues are like 'rasps' and 'saws.' This representation coincides with the one in the above mentioned *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar*:

> At all times, in every period, in every year, the people [Gog and Magog] will try to open the gate. They will leave nothing untried and will even *lick* it with their tongues, which are as sharp as a *snake's tongue*, but they will not succeed in opening it until the moment that God orders it.' [39]

The example proves the mutual derivation of motifs, since the 'Islamic' features of Gog and Magog appear here in a 'Christian'

36 Ibn Khurdādhbeh, al-Maqdisī, Idrīsī, Abū Ḥamīd al-Gharnāṭī, Ibn al-Wardī. The story has also been transmitted by Thaʿlabī.

37 It has been maintained in Ethiopic translation, based on it. See A.E. Wallis Budge, *Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great. Ethiopic Histories of Alexander by Pseudo-Callisthenes and other Writers*, London, 1896, p. 238. In the *AL, opus cit*. p 153 the key was described as twelve cubits long.

38 ʿUmāra ibn Zayd, ms. London, B.M. Add. 5928, 23a. *See Alexander Magnus Arabicus, opus cit*. 3.6.1.

39 *Sīrat al-Malik Iskandar*, ms. Paris B.N. Arabe, 3687, 76ro.

apocalyptic text. A slightly different version of the destruction by Gog and Magog's snake-tongues is the story recorded recently by a Dutch anthropologist visiting Mali:

> Beyond the world, on the other side of a barrier of rocks and stones live the Madjoudjou. The Madjoudjou want to reach the civilized world. Therefore they swallow the stones which block the way. They do this on a daily basis, but when they are almost finished and come back the next day, they find the barrier is the same size as when they first started. But one day a woman will give birth to a son, who will be called Inshallah. When Inshallah has become a boy he will accompany his father to swallow stones. At the end of the day when there is only a handful of rocks left, his father will call, 'we are going home now, and tomorrow, Inshallah, we will reach the world.

That day will coincide with Doomsday, according to the *marabout* in Djenné from whom the anthropologist recorded the story.[40] In this current variant of the popular escape of Gog and Magog, which is frequently ascribed to Kaʿb al-Aḥbār, their method seems to have gained in efficiency, for they are eating their way through.

This has brought us back to Africa and the *marabout*s. So let us turn now to the salient observations by De Jong van Rodenburgh about the 'Mouleï Skâ.'

'The master of the hour' is most probably to be identified as the Mahdī, concerning whom many traditions have been passed down. A small detail in the lieutenant's report gives a clue. According to his source, 'Sidi-el-Boukrari'[41] wrote that the 'master of the hour' has the prophet's name, and his parents have the same names as the prophet's parents. He will resemble the prophet in nature, but not in physical features, and he will fill the earth with justice.

In the *Sunan* ('Traditions') of Abū Dāwūd, and in similar traditions, we find precisely these predictions about the Mahdī: he is said to be of the house of the Prophet Muḥammad, he will bear the prophet's name, and his father the name of the prophet's father, and he will spread justice all over the world, replacing the injustice which has entirely filled it. There will be rain in plenty and an abundance of

40 Geert Mommersteeg, *In de stad van de Marabouts*, Amsterdam, 1998, pp. 87-88. See below p. 87, 1.6

41 The 'writer' who is probably meant here is the famous traditionist al-Bukhārī.

plants will grow. He will rule for seven years. In addition it is stated that the Mahdī resembles the prophet in his nature (*khuluq*), not in his appearance (*khalq*).[42]

As to the marabouts' forecast of the expulsion of the Christians from North Africa, this vision may be prompted by certain traditions about the Rūm or Banū Aṣfār, in particular ones similar to those transmitted by al-Qurṭubī in his *Tadhkira* ('Reminder').[43] He reports that a king of Rūm called Ḍamāra, the fifth of the Heraclides, will be sent by divine command. He will ask the Mahdī for peace, since the Muslims have appeared before the idolaters. He will grant them peace for seven years. But after a while they will violate the truce and gather against the Muslims under the sign of the Cross. The Mahdī will encounter them with the armies of the Muslims and a terrible fight will take place, in which the Muslims will triumph. Then, they will conquer the territory of the Rūm and destroy their cities and fortresses, and abuse the women and children. The Mahdī will rule for forty years until death comes upon him unexpectedly.

With reference to these predictions about the Mahdī in the Islamic eschatological tradition it is clear that what De Jong van Rodenburgh described as '*zonderlinge voorspellingen*,' bizarre predictions, were in fact allusions to an age-old motif, developing over time and still very much alive. It is not surprising, in this case, that Gog and Magog's wall and its mountain-range from Asia could move to the heart of Africa: what was vital was that their abode, their dog faces and snake tongues should remain carefully hidden in *terra incognita*.

42 Abū Dāwud Sulaymān ibn al-Ash'ath as-Sijistānī († 888), *Sunan*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī 'd-Dīn ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd, Cairo, 1935, originally appeared in 4 vols, but is reprinted in 2 vols, 3, pp. 106-108.

43 Abū ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī († 1272), *At-Tadhkira fī Aḥwāl al-Mawtā wa Umūr al-Ākhira* ('The Reminder, about the Affairs of the Dead and Matters of the Hereafter'), ed. ʿIṣam ad-Dīn Sayyid aṣ-Ṣababiṭī, Cairo, 1999, pp. 493-494.

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Gog and Magog in Modern Garb

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Since the late nineteen eighties, a stream of religious books and pamphlets has started to flood bookshops and bookstalls all over the Islamic world. They all focus on aspects of Islamic belief and practice, with the aim of providing guidelines for being a "good Muslim" according to strict orthodox belief.[1] Their method usually consists of quoting relevant passages from the Quran, the *ḥadīth* (not necessarily restricted to canonical *ḥadīth*) and occasionally also from the works of prominent religious authorities from medieval and modern times, such as Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya and, for current day traditional scholarship, al-Albānī. To this, any stray material that may serve to strengthen the argument may be added.

In a recent volume of *Oriente Moderno* devoted to the role of ḥadīth in modern Islam,[2] Roberto Tottoli (2002: 55-75) and David Cook (2002: 115-126), both discussing aspects of modern Muslim apocalyptic literature, have highlighted some of the noteworthy characteristics of this kind of literature: the exclusive focus on the contents of the ḥadīth, the omission of any but the first transmitter, and little or no discussion of its authenticity; also the indiscriminate use of early, canonical, and later ḥadīth works (Tottoli 2002: 58-61, 72). To this may be added that many of these books consist of little more than topically arranged quotations from religious works: the connecting text provided by their "authors" is often very minimal. The angle mostly taken is that they focus on a specific current day phenomenon, either in politics or in everyday life and practice, and try to appreciate or interpret it from an orthodox religious point of view. This usually results in moral admonitions.

Many of these authors clearly are not trained religious scholars at all, but have all kinds of backgrounds, occasionally even in things such as engineering. They have taken up dabbling in religious matters, using the classical texts without proper scholarly training in traditional Islamic scholarship. This leads to an indiscriminate use of sources,

1 See, for instance, my "Harry Potter in the Gulf; Contemporary Islam and the occult," in *BJMES* 32, 1, pp. 47-73.

2 Roberto Tottoli (ed.), *Hadith in Modern Islam.* Thematic volume of *Oriente Moderno*, XXI (LXXXII), 1-2002.

analysed by Cook (2002: 39-53) on the basis of some modern apocalyptic texts: without any qualms, they mix material from the Bible or the Dead Sea scrolls with Islamic sources whenever it fits their argument, and quote all manner of modern Western thinkers whenever they see fit, sometimes not hesitating to twist their words in order to fit their own particular agendas.

Tottoli and Cook, in the articles just cited, focus on apocalyptic texts, the role of the Dajjāl in Tottoli's case and the general approach of modern apocalyptic authors in Cook's article. Books that deal with the Last Things and the hereafter (the *ukhrāwīyāt*) take a predominant place among the books and pamphlets that nowadays abound in Muslim bookshops. The punishment in the grave, the Portents of the Hour (*fitan*), the Day of Judgment, Paradise and Hell, they are all there, described in colourful booklets with vivid and horrible covers, and contents that largely consist of passages from the *ḥadīth* and related literature. Among this literature, the apocalyptic treatises, dealing with the Portents of the Hour and the historical events that will precede the Last Day, form an interesting and very substantial sub-genre. The Dajjāl is a very prominent topic. His appearance is one of "major signs," the Portents of the Hour announcing the end of times. These "signs," the *'alamāt al-sā'a*, are a favourite topic in this literature, and are dealt with *in extenso*, the "major" as well as the "minor" signs. Many of the signs invite attempts at modern identification, as Tottoli and Cook have demonstrated. Such use of apocalyptic material is well established in the Islamic tradition, in which apocalyptic arguments have been used from the very beginning to support particular moral or political agendas.[3]

To remind the reader of what these signs entail, we may briefly summarize them on the basis of Uri Rubin's article "Sā'a" in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (2nd edition, vol. VIII, 656-7), where the "major signs" as given in the *Muṣannaf* of 'Abd al-Razzāq (d. 211/827) are summed up. They are the following: three different instances of people being swallowed up by the earth; the appearance of the Dajjāl,

3 See especially the many publications of Wilferd Madelung on the subject; a full overview can be found in F. Daftari and J.W.Meri (eds.), *Culture and memory in Medieval Islam. Essays in honour of Wilferd Madelung.* London and New York: I.B. Tauris. 2003. An example from the 13th century is described in my "History and Apocalypse: Ibn an-Nafīs' justification of Mamluk rule," in *Der Islam*, 72, 2, 1995, pp. 324-37. David Cook's *Studies in Muslim apocalyptic*, Princeton: The Darwin Press, 2002, gives a full overview and analysis of the genre. The use of apocalyptic threats for political manipulation has even become a motif in traditional Arabic popular fiction: there is an episode in Sīrat Dhât al-Himma in which an evil ruler keeps a hold over people by means of the statue of a jewelled bird which announces the nearness of the Hour and so urges the people to follow its commands. See M.C. Lyons, *The Arabian Epic*, Cambridge 1993, III: 448, 452.

the Antichrist; the descent of ʿĪsā, Jesus; the emergence of the Beast; of smoke rising from the South obscuring the sky; the appearance of Gog and Magog; the rising of a chilly wind, taking away the souls of the believers; and the rising of the sun from the West. This is by no means a complete list of all the apocalyptic phenomena that one may come across in Muslim sources, for authors are at variance about the signs, and also about the order in which they will occur. Political agendas play an important role there, as in the case of the capture of Constantinople and such apocalyptic figures as the Sufyānī and the Qaḥṭānī, which are not mentioned in the *Muṣannaf*.

The "lesser signs," which include all kinds of religious and moral degeneration, offer ample opportunity for modern authors to utter dire warnings against un-islamic behaviour. Most of these signs can be identified in our day, indicating the nearness of the Hour. As an illustration, we may cite what Shaykh Muḥammad Abu l-ʿĀrif's treatise *Al-Mahdī; bayyināt wa-ʿalāmāt* (The Mahdi; indications and signs, Jeddah 1413/1992) has to say on the subject (pp. 83-100). It dwells on the taking of usury, widespread in our day in modern banking; women shedding all modesty and showing themselves naked in public, a practice widely manifest in our day, as is another un-islamic phenomenon, listening to music. What can also be observed is the adoration of idols, for instance in the case of Atatürk's statues. It has been foretold that, at the end of times, wild animals will start speaking to man, and this is bound to occur within the near future: already it is possible in many ways to hear the voices of people that we cannot see, and it will not be long before understanding the speech of animals will also be a fact.

The tribes of Gog and Magog and their apocalyptic onslaught do not make an appearance in Abu l-ʿĀrif's book. This is not exceptional. Not all apocalyptic phenomena and figures that are announced in traditional sources have received equal attention in the modern religious literature under review. Moral decay, the Jews gaining global power, the return of the Jews to Israel, these are prominent points of discussion, and so are the Dajjāl and the Mahdī, both of which lend themselves to identification with contemporary figures. Signs such as the appearance of the Beast (*dābba*) and the Smoke (*dukhān*) have far less attraction for modern apocalyptic writers. As to Gog and Magog, the approach varies: this article will take a closer look at some of the approaches taken.

The names of Gog and Magog do turn up on the covers of many modern apocalyptic treatises, as can be seen from the bibliography to

this article. The interesting question is how the various authors handle the onslaught of these ferocious tribes, which is announced in Biblical and Muslim apocalyptic literature, and which has often been connected, from the 13th century onwards, with the attacks of the Mongols, Huns and Tatars. Do the modern authors go along with this, presenting the appearance of Gog and Magog as something that has already taken place, or do they make an attempt to place it in the future, even the near future? If so, in what guise and manner will they appear?

Perusal of a number of these booklets shows that the authors were not always comfortable with these mysterious tribes, who – given their vast numbers – could in these days of airplanes and satellites hardly have gone unnoticed till the time of their sudden apocalyptic onslaught. Accordingly, some authors leave them out altogether in their survey of the events preceding the onset of the Last Things, concentrating instead on the Mahdī and the Dajjāl, or on the moral decay that is seen as an indication of the end of times. Others mention them briefly, quoting the relevant Quranic passages and an occasional *ḥadīth*, making no attempt to fit them into the modern picture. Examples can be found for instance in Ayyūb 1999/1420: 291-2, Manṣūr 1998: 220-1, Murād 1418/1997: 54-5 and Salāma 1419/1999: 63-7.

We will take a closer look at some of the books and see what they have to say on the subject, starting with Majdī Muḥammad Shahāwī's *Al-masīḥ al-dajjāl wa-Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj*, "The false Messiah and Gog and Magog," Cairo 1993.

From what will be said about this book, the reader may have the impression that Shahāwī is somewhat out of touch with the modern world, but this is not so. Another of his many booklet titles is *Al-Aṭbāq al-ṭā'ira wa-muthallath Barmūdā: bayna al-ḥaqīqā wa-l-khurāfā*, "Flying saucers and the Bermuda Triangle: between truth and fable." For the diligent amateur of this type of literature, there is nothing remarkable in this: flying saucers and the Bermuda Triangle are a favourite topic in modern Muslim apocalyptic literature. The Bermuda Triangle is seen as an excellent hideout for the creatures that have to disappear and bide their time till the moment has arrived to make their apocalyptic appearance. The Dajjāl (the Antichrist), Gog and Magog, and various demonic creatures are all seen as likely candidates for a prolonged stay in the Triangle; we will hear more of this later in this article.

In *Al-masīḥ al-dajjāl wa-Ya'jūj wa-Ma'jūj*, Shahāwī's approach consists of summarizing, by no means exhaustively, what traditional literature has to say about these mysterious tribes. Much of the information provided there has already come up elsewhere in this volume, in some form or other. Shahāwī's little work gives us an idea of what the *ḥadīth* literature has to offer in this respect to the modern pious Muslim, but disregards its contradictions and puzzling aspects in connection with the modern world.

The booklet consists of two parts, the first describing the appearance of the Dajjāl, the second the emergence of Gog and Magog (pp. 57-74). Successively, we hear about their predicted onslaught during the Last Days; about the etymology of their names, the number of tribes belonging to them and about their progeny. As to the latter: several *ḥadith*s (one of them qualified as weak, *ḍa'īf*) say that they will have abundant progeny, all of them bearing arms. Another question, discussed at length, is whether they belong to the human race or not. Are they descended from Adam and Eve, or from only one of them? Different views circulate on this matter according to various religious authorities, but the majority of the *ḥadīth*s cited here agree that they are descendants of Adam and Eve. Some say that Japheth, son of Noah, is their ancestor, for he is said to be the ancestor of the Turks, and it is to this tribe that Gog and Magog belong according to many authorities. There is, for instance, the *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra, found in al-Bukhārī, which says that according to the Prophet "the Hour will not arrive before you have to battle with the Turks, small of eyes, ruddy of faces, with finely ciselled (*dhulaf*) noses, and faces like shields covered with leather" (p. 64).

Ibn al-Kathīr, in his *al-Bidāya wa-l-Nihāya*, is quoted to the effect that although most people agree on their descent from Adam and Eve, there is one scholar (according to our author this is al-Nawawī in his commentary on al-Bukhārī's *Ṣaḥīḥ*) who denies this and says that they descend from Adam only and not from Eve: they are the result of Adam's night ejaculation in which his semen mixed with earth, from which God created Gog and Magog. Ibn al-Kathīr considers this "weak" (*ḍa'īf*), and warns against belief in the unfounded talk of the Jews and Christians, explicitly mentioning Ka'b al-Aḥbār, the famous transmitter of tales of Jewish origin (*isrā'īlīyāt).*

The *ḥadīth* of Abū Hurayra which describes Gog and Magog's outward appearance is by no means the only one to do so. Other *ḥadīth*s, not considered very trustworthy, have other details to offer: Ibn Mundhir informs us that there are three different types among Gog

and Magog: one that has the stature of an *urz*, a tree that is a hundred and twenty cubits high, one that is just as broad as it is tall, and one that has ears so big that when they go to sleep they use one as a mattress and the other as a blanket. There is an interesting connection here to the Plinian races, described by Ṭabarī in his Quran commentary and later on by Qazwīnī (13th century A.D.) in his *ʻAjāʻib al-Makhlūqāt*, a passage that is often beautifully illustrated in the Qazwīnī MSS.

To this description, Hudhayfa b. al-Yamān, in a tradition going back to the Prophet, is reported to add that they devour every animal that they come across, be it an elephant, camel or pig, and that they also eat the dead bodies of their own kind. Another source, al-Qurṭubī, elaborates on this by explaining (pp. 66) that they eat all the "creeping things" (*ḥasharāt*) that they find, even snakes and scorpions, and in general anything that has "spirit" (*rūḥ)*, i.e. that is alive. They grow exceptionally fast, only needing one year to grow up. They make sounds like pigeons and dogs, and mate like animals whenever they run into each other.

Wahb ibn Munabbih is reported to say (p. 67) that they have claws and fangs, and palates like those of camels, so that they make a lot of noise when they eat. Their bodies are covered with coarse hair and they have huge ears. One ear has thick fur on the inside and the outside, the other has light fuzz on both sides. Thus they offer maximum comfort when used for sleeping purposes in different seasons. Ibn Kathīr, reacting to this, says that this is nonsense. The truth is that they descend from Adam and Eve and look like them. As to their exceptional height: that is not unique in humankind, for Adam is reported to have been sixty cubits tall. Only later did humans gradually become shorter.

Subsequently, attention is paid to the Wall and its being built by Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. Reports to the Prophet about the Wall are mentioned, as is the story of Salām, who was sent by the caliph al-Wāthiq to investigate it. Of course this has to lead up to the question: does the Wall still exist in our day? (p. 70). Certainly it does. It is to be found in a narrow mountain pass between two high and steep mountain ranges; the pass is called "Dariyāl" and is, he says, marked on every map of Russia and Georgia. Iron and copper have been used in the construction of the Wall, which looks like a stupendous hill. Here Shahāwī refers to another book, unknown to me, namely Prof. ʻAbd al- ʻAzīz ibn ʻAbd al-Raḥmān's *Al-Ṣīn – Yaʼjūj wa-Maʼjūj*, "China – Gog and Magog."

More *ḥadīth* are quoted about the daily attempts of Gog and Magog to scratch a hole in the wall, a hole that miraculously fills up again during the night. And then: will they actually appear near the end of times? Of course they will, as is implied by a series of *ḥadīth*s to that effect, quoted without any comment. This brings us to the final question: how will they be annihilated in the end? Another series of *ḥadīth*s, also simply presented without comment, offers a range of possibilities as to the method of their destruction and how the earth will be cleansed of their dead bodies. Here are some of the views that are quoted in the *ḥadīth*: Abū Sa'īd al-Khidrī says that one of them will cast his lance towards the sky, and it will fall down tainted with blood, causing strife and misery. Al-Nuwās ibn Samʿān reports that God will send down worms that dig into their necks and destroy them. Not worms, but locust larvae, says the aforementioned Abū Saʿīd. The earth will be covered by their bodies, on which the beasts will fatten themselves. And then, says Al-Nuwās, God will send birds looking like the necks of camels, and these will pick them up and throw them wherever God wills. According to Ibn Mas'ūd, however, God will send down rain that washes their bodies into the sea. And after all is done, their bows, arrows and shields will serve the Muslims as firewood for seven years, according to al-Nuwās.

A line from the author's own hand concludes the book: "This last *ḥadīth* indicates that Gog and Magog will have ample weaponry and equipment, of which the Muslims will make good use, if God wills."

The above may serve to illustrate Shahāwī's approach. His book consists almost exclusively of passages from the *ḥadīth*, and could easily have been computer-generated. Occasionally he mentions the qualifications given by *ḥadith* authorities to certain *ḥadīth*s: weak, for instance. The author does not make any attempt to harmonize the contents of mutually contradictory *ḥadīth*s and does not add any views of his own. Nor does he give any indication that he is aware of the problems that the existence of the Wall and these huge ferocious tribes creates in these days of global observation. It is just one more example of the way in which orthodox belief (and not only Muslim belief) insists on a two-tracked approach to reality, that of the texts and that of modern science.

The approach is not basically different in 'Abd al-Wahhāb 'Abd al-Salām Ṭuwayla (sometimes spelled Ṭawīla)'s *Al-Masīḥ al-muntaẓar wa-nihāyat al-ʿālam*, "The expected Messiah and the end of the world," Cairo 1419/1999, a substantial book of 365 pages. Gog and Magog are treated on pp. 225-40, in the usual manner already seen

above. In addition to Quran and *ḥadīth*, fairly extensive use is made of Biblical material, and a source such as Flavius Josephus (quoted as "the Jewish historian Būsīfūs") is also mentioned (p. 229). For a modern angle, the commentary on Sūrat al-Kahf by the famous modern Pakistani scholar Abu l-Aʻlā al-Mawdūdī is cited (p. 229) to the effect that Gog and Magog must be the Northern Russian tribes known as the Tatars, Mongols, Huns, Scythians etcetera, who have attacked the civilized world from time immemorial. No attempt, however, is made to fit them into a modern context, although it is just these attacks that have been used by some authors as a means to solve the problem of Gog and Magog's existence, and their still-awaited onslaught, for current day believers.

The central argument here is that for a sound understanding of what is said in the Quran and the *ḥadīth*, the texts have to be interpreted as referring not to a single event, but to various events taking place in different periods. There is the breaking of the Wall, and the subsequent onslaught on Islamic lands: this has already taken place in the shape of the various Mongol (etc.) attacks. Then there is the apocalyptic onslaught of ferocious tribes named Gog and Magog, which is still in the future. It should not, however, be connected directly to the destruction of the Wall.

Another example of this approach, with an interesting fresh angle, is found in Manṣūr ʻAbd al-Ḥākim's *Yaʼjūj wa-Maʼjūj min al-wujūd ḥattā al-fanā*', "Gog and Magog, from Existence to Annihilation," Cairo 2004. He says that the larger part of Gog and Magog, who streamed out when the wall of Alexander broke down, participated in the Mongol attacks and later retreated to the area of the Baikal sea. However some of Gog and Magog were buried beneath the rubble of the wall, and have continued to live there in holes under the ground, waiting the time for their final outbreak. People might express their doubts about this solution but, he argues, it has been shown that life under such conditions is possible: in 1992 a boy was discovered in a cave in France who had kept himself alive in the dark by eating insects and such, just like Gog and Magog (2004: 249).

Another booklet, also exclusively devoted to Gog and Magog, has yet another solution for the continuing existence of Gog and Magog and their still imminent appearance. This is Hishām Kamāl ʻAbd al-Ḥamīd's *Gog and Magog are coming! Who are Gog and Magog? Where do they stem from? Has the Wall of Dhū l-Qarnayn been destroyed? What have the holy book and the historical works to say about them? (Yājūj wa-Mājūj qādimūna: Man hum Yājūj wa-Mājūj?*

Wa-mā hiya judhūruhum? Wa-hal hudima sadd Dhī l-Qarnayn? Wa-mādhā qālat al-kutub al-samāwiyya wa-t-ta'rīkhīya ᶜanhum? (Cairo 1997). All of its 160 pages deal with Gog and Magog, which gives the author ample room to present all the information he has been able to dig up about them from a variety of sources. The list of sources found at the end of the book is indeed impressive: thirty-six Muslim Arabic sources, ranging from *ḥadīth* works and a number of old and modern Quran commentaries to historical works such as Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-Buldān* and Ibn al-Athīr's *Kamil*. Remarkably, the title of Ṭabarī's historical work is given as *Ta'rīkh al-umam wa-l-mulūk* instead of *Ta'rīkh al-rusul wa-l-mulūk*. Ibn al-Kathīr, with the *Bidāya*, and a minor work of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya, *Ighātha al-lahfān min maṣayid al-shayṭān*, are also present. There are also modern historical studies, for instance about the Mongols. It is noteworthy that a number of modern booklets of the type discussed in this article are also included.

There is a separate, not very long, list of Christian sources, including various Bible editions, commentaries on specific Bible books such as Ezekiel and the Revelation of John, and connected reference works.

This indicates that the author really has attempted a modern scholarly approach, even though this has not extended to including source references or providing his list of (exclusively Arabic) titles with year and place of publication. Yet this book is quite different from that of, for instance, Shahāwī, presented above. Instead of simply putting a number of *ḥadīth*s into a certain order, the author tells his own story. He starts with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, whom he tries to identify: was he the Persian Cyrus or a king of Yemen? The latter seems more likely. The where and how of the building of the Wall is discussed, and then a chapter is devoted to the place where Gog and Magog can be located on the old Arab maps such as those of Ibn Ḥawqal, Qazwīnī, Idrisī, Jayhānī (an author who is the subject of considerable scholarly discussion, but that is overlooked here), Mustawfī and al-Ṣfāqsī. Pictures of the maps are shown, and the itinerary followed by al-Wāthiq's envoy, Salām, is also sketched.

We get the usual discussion about the question whether Gog and Magog are to be identified as the Mongols and Tatars: Mawdūdī's Quran commentary is again cited. Physical descriptions of Gog and Magog are given. None of this is different from what we have already learnt from the books mentioned earlier, since the source material is the same, but the presentation aims at a higher level of sophistication.

However the account becomes interesting when it comes to the question of what the identification of Gog and Magog with the Mongols and Tatars implies for the predicted arrival of Gog and Magog after the apocalyptic event of Jesus' appearance and killing of the Dajjāl, the Antichrist. Is this not one of the ten major apocalyptic signs? Instead of simply quoting the relevant *ḥadīth*s without any comment, the author makes a serious effort to fit Gog and Magog into the modern scheme of things, along with other apocalyptic developments. These are sketched in the last chapter of the book, and the description shows that we are already well under way towards the final judgment.

The final chapter of the book is about the political events leading up to the Last Judgment. Ample use is made of Biblical sources, entirely in line with what Cook, in the article cited earlier, has observed. The appearance of Gog and Magog is the third of the "major signs," by which time 95% of the "minor signs" must already have occurred. The following events, all modern interpretations of what has been foretold in the texts, are to be expected or have already taken place:

The Jews have returned to Palestine, and gained world power through control of international and financial organizations and of the media, such as the press and the film industry.

Three great empires have fallen: the German, the British, and the Russian.

The United States has emerged as a world power; the Zionists will gain power over it; an earthquake will divide it into three parts; epidemics will occur.

Europe will become a power independent from America. Muslim states in the East, including the former Soviet states, will form an alliance.

The Mahdī will appear and unite the Muslims.

The great battle (*malḥama*) between Europe and the Muslims in the Middle East will take place (The author has written a separate book about this event).

The Dajjāl will appear with flying saucers from the Bermuda Triangle and attack the Mahdī. The Beast (*dābba*) and the donkey of the Dajjāl are among the demons that will perform strange events on the Dajjāl's behalf.

ʿĪsā will descend to help the Mahdī.

Gog and Magog will appear and attack ʿĪsā and his armies. God will destroy them, and together ʿĪsā and the Mahdī will conquer the world.

Meanwhile, the remaining lesser signs will appear, starting with the destruction of the Kaʿba, followed by increasing moral and religious decay.

But let us return to the explanation given in Chapter 4 about the actual manner of Gog and Magog's appearance. Here (p. 124) the author cites another book of the same type, namely pp. 79-80 of ʿĀshūr's *Thalātha yantaẓiruhum al-ʿālam*, "Three are awaited by the world." This is a rare instance of source referencing as well as of cross-reference between these booklets (cf. Tottoli 2002: 57, who remarks on the absence of such references). ʿĀshūr is cited as observing that in these days of advanced observation technology, the existence of two huge and dangerous tribes such as Gog and Magog could not have remained unnoticed. He suggests the following explanation. In the Sūrat al-Kahf, Gog and Magog are tribes shut in behind the wall of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, which will be destroyed to let out these destructive tribes. As to Gog and Magog who are the people referred to in the surat al-Anbiyā' and the prophetic *ḥadīth*, they are *another* dangerous tribe, that will appear in the days of ʿĪsā, and their appearance is one of the signs of the Hour.

Our author agrees with this, and has new insights to add. His analysis of the problem of Gog and Magog's appearance in modern times centres on two elements. The first is that it can be deduced from the texts that a certain time will elapse between the breaking of the Wall and the apocalyptic onslaught of Gog and Magog. The basis of this lies in what is said about Gog and Magog in Sūrat al-Kahf, where there is first talk of the Wall, and then verse 98 continues: "He said: This is a blessing from my Lord. But when my Lord's promise has been fulfilled, He will level it to dust. The promise of my Lord is ever true." and, verse 99: (translation N.J. Dawood): "On that day We will let them come in tumultuous throngs. The Trumpet shall be sounded and We will gather them all together." This, says our author, implies that there will be a lapse of time between the "levelling to dust" of the Wall and the subsequent onslaught of Gog and Magog and the arrival of the Final Hour. In Sūrat al-Anbiyā', verse 96-97, Gog and Magog are also mentioned, but there is no talk of the Wall. The Quran just says "But when Gog and Magog are let loose and rush headlong down every hill." The conclusion must be that there are in fact *two* onslaughts, at different times. The first one has already taken place: this was the attack of the Mongols, which took place about 600 years after the days of the Prophet. It is this attack that the *ḥadīth*s describing the physical characteristics of Gog and Magog allude to. It should be

noted, he explains, that the Prophet does not speak about the Wall in the *ḥadīth* which says that they will come in the days of ʿĪsā, using the Qur'anic words: "and they will rush headlong down every hill."

The second point is the interpretation of two words used in the relevant passage in Sūrat al-Anbiyā' 96, namely *ḥadab* and *yansilūna*. *Ḥadab* means "a hill, a place elevated above the ground." From such a place Gog and Magog will descend upon ʿĪsā. Since we are now in the days of airplanes, balloons and zeppelins, maybe we should not think of hills, but look for another interpretation of *ḥadab*. One of the meanings of the verb *ḥadiba* is "to be convex," and *ḥaddaba* means "to vault, to make convex." We should thus look for a "convex place", keeping in mind that it has to be a place from which one could rush headlong down. Aeroplanes come to mind, and the author adds an explanatory picture indicating distinctly convex (*muḥaddab*) parts of the aeroplane.

As to *yansilūna*, which Dawood translates as "rushing headlong," it has the general connotation of "descending." In connection with the aeroplanes, the solution is obvious: Gog and Magog will be parachuted down from aeroplanes. This leaves the question of their identity, but that is not a real problem. They must be people belonging to the same tribes as those of the Mongol and Hun invasions, the first Gog and Magog onslaught. These tribes now form part of the Soviet Union: Mongolia, Korea (sic), Uzbekistan. Turkmenistan, Tadjikistan, Azerbeijan, Armenia, Turkey, North China, all of them inhabitants of the North that later converted to Islam. We can safely say that Gog and Magog will come from those countries among them that have not converted to Islam. They will descend on ʿĪsā and his Muslim, Christian and Jewish armies after they have defeated the Dajjāl.

As to how this new Gog and Magog will meet their end, our author follows a well-known *ḥadīth*, which he had mentioned earlier (p. 129-30): when Gog and Magog have almost killed ʿĪsā and his army by cutting off their food supplies and their water, by drinking and emptying the Sea of Galilee, God will send down worms that eat into the necks of the Gog and Magog warriors, killing them all. Is this, says our author, not a perfect metaphor for what we today know as viruses and virulent diseases?

Christians have slightly different views on all this, we hear in the next chapter. In their view, the Russians and the states of North-East Asia are the most likely candidates for being Gog and Magog. Plunder is the main purpose of their attack on ʿĪsā, and the American fundamentalist preacher Jerry Falwell is cited with a suggestion as to

the nature of this plunder: a slight abbreviation of the word for plunder, "spoil," gives us the answer: oil! (p. 142). The reference to Falwell is taken from what is apparently an Arabic translation of Grace Halsell's study of modern American fundamentalist preachers, *Prophecy and Politics; Militant evangelists on the road to nuclear war* (1986).[4]

So far Hishām Kamāl ʿAbd al-Ḥamīd. He presents himself as a clear example of what has been said earlier in this article about the background of many of those modern pamphleteers, namely that they are not professional religious scholars educated at one of the Islamic institutions of higher learning, but are amateurs who have taken up studying Muslim religious literature. This, in itself, is interesting. It demonstrates the deep-felt need among modern Muslims to return to what they consider as the Muslim basic texts and tradition, and to find ways in which their contents can be made to fit a modern worldview.

It also demonstrates how all kinds of people have appropriated the right to interpret what they take to be "the sources," without feeling the need to first get thoroughly acquainted with the methods of traditional Muslim scholarship, and possibly without even being aware of the fact that such a scholarly tradition exists, as is the case with many "born-again" Muslims living in the West.

4 My sincere thanks to Sen McGlinn for identifying this study.

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Is my firewall secure?
Gog and Magog on the Internet

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Perhaps it is repeating old news to say that, with a computer, a person can fulfil his very old dream of somehow obtaining the Magic Ball, Carpet and Ring in one! However it is true: the computer and the internet help to make some cherished wishes, and especially the wish to communicate with others at any time or place, achievable. This was my feeling when I began surfing Hebrew and Arabic internet sites, concentrating on the Middle East where the location is identifiable, to find Gog and Magog.[1] I found them among questions such as:
- do angels enter our homes?
- from what age is it forbidden to let children play outside at night?
- what kind of watermelon was the favourite of the Prophet Mohammad?
- is eating chocolate bad for teenagers?

These are questions that evidently concern people in their everyday lives. But during war times there are different questions:
- is it permissible for an orthodox Jew to take shelter in a church?
- is it permissible for a Jew to pray for the safety of a Druze soldier in the Israeli army?

Modern technologies have produced their own questions:
- may an orthodox Jew use a computer?
- do we have to pray when thunder and lightning is shown on the computer?
- are computers, made by IBM, a sign that the Messiah is coming soon? (In Hebrew IBM is MBI, an acronym for Messiah son of Yusuf).[2]

Amidst all of this voluble religious discussion, we find questions dealing with Paradise and Hell: when will the Day of Judgment come, who will fight the war preceding that day, and who will win it? And within that imminent eschatological context: who are Gog and Magog? Where is the wall that holds them back?

1 Hebrew and Arabic searches were used to narrow the initial search (since a search on 'magog' in Latin script produces an impracticable number of hits), but where sites have parallel English versions these are cited here.

2 http://news.haaretz.co.il on 19.12.2005 and 22.07.2006.

ISLAMIC SITES: SIGNS OF THE END

The first striking feature of the Islamic sites is the citation of the many Quranic verses and traditions, describing the *yawm al-qiyaamah*,[3] the day of resurrection and the signs of its coming. With some exceptions, there is a strong attempt to justify what is said by reference to the canons of orthodoxy. Although this produces a substantial body of generally accepted 'signs' of the imminence of the Day, and although there is a general agreement that only God knows the hour, there is room enough for disagreement, regarding the number of the signs and the order in which they will occur, and the interpretation of each sign.

'Nana' (writing on a Sunni site) knows that there are 27 signs, eight of which I will share: (1) the siege (*muhaasarah*) of Iraq (2) the collapse of the USA, (12) an Islamic Caliphate in Jerusalem, (14) the coming of al-Mahdi, (19) his opponent, ad-Dajjal, and (20) Jesus, the irruption of (24) Gog and Magog, and finally (25) peace on earth.[4]

'Ajrodi,' (writing on an Egyptian Sunni site), [5] has been digging in old books. He has found that there are 31 signs, classified as minor and major signs.[6] The minor signs in turn are in three groups: the eight that have already occurred, such as the revelation of Muḥammad and the capture of Constantinople; the nine that are occurring now, such as the spread of corruption; and the three signs that are still to occur, such as the appearance of al-Mahdi. The major signs are 11 in number, and one of them is the irruption of Gog and Magog, which will be discussed below.

On a mainstream Shiah site, Ayatullah as-Sayyid Mohammad al-Ḥusayn al- Ḥusayni at-Tahiri says that there are ten signs, one of which is the coming of Gog and Magog, the last being the appearance of Jesus.[7] This is in line with the formal Sunni sources regarding the eschatological signs. The unusual features of a site dedicated to the Iraqi Shiah leader, Ayatollah Sistani, will be discussed in the following section.

Sites dedicated to the thought of the popular but highly unorthodox Sunni Rashad Khalifa, who rejected the hadith and developed his own numerical analysis 'proving' the divine origin of the text of the Qur'an (excepting 9:128-129), take a different tack. Rashad Khalifa claims to be

3 I have adopted the internet convention of representing long vowels with double letters rather than with diacritics.
4 http://www.montada.com. This list contains 25, not 27 signs.
5 http://www.elosboa.com
6 See Remke Kruk's contribution in this volume for the origin of this classification.
7 http://www.maarefislam.org

a divine messenger,[8] and thus exempted from the general ban on revealing future events (see below).

The Internet is said to be one of minor signs of the Judgment Day because there is a tradition that "the hour will not come, until there is disorder and lies multiply and markets and times are close to one another."[9] As in the question about the permissibility of computers for orthodox Jews, the negative evaluation of the internet in general does not prevent the author expecting answers from those who use it.

ISLAMIC SITES: GOG AND MAGOG

Although a search for pages on this subject in Arabic produces some 50,000 'hits,' the majority have much the same content, while differing in form. We have not searched Farsi, Turkish or Urdu sites, and the Shiah are certainly under-represented in our sample. The articles we found focus on the role of Gog and Magog in the Last Day and on the location of the wall which shuts them off from the rest of the world.

The Lahore Ahmadiyya think that Gog and Magog are equivalent to ad-Dajjal (interpreted as 'a group of liars').[10] By collapsing these two signs, they broaden their possible applications. Gog and Magog are "a faithful picture of the irresistible inroads of materialistic Europe and the Christianity," acting "at the bidding of the Jews," drawn in prophetic language. But they are also historical fact represented in prophetic language: the figure of Dhu'l-Qarneyn in Surah 18 is understood as Darius I of Persia (rather than Alexander the Great), and this enables the place between two mountains to be identified as Armenia and Azerbaijan. The wall is at Derbent (or Darband) on the Caspian sea, and the two dangerous hordes are the Slavs and Teutons – Russian and Europe – as in the eschatological interpretation of the story.

A site inaugurated by Ayatollah Sistani and hosted by the *markaz al-mustafa* (Centre of the Chosen One), hosts a large library of Shiah texts. One of these[11] cites postmillennial traditions in which the Mahdi, or twelve mahdis, come first and inaugurate a long period of justice, followed by disorder. According to one of these, there will be twelve just

8 http://www.submission.org/AP02.htm
9 www.dar-alqassem.com
10 http://www.aaiil.org/text/books/mali/gog/sgmnt1.shtml;
http://www.aaiil.org/text/books/mali/gog/sgmnt4.shtml.
Al-Mu'tazela (the Mutazalites) also equate Gog and Magog with ad-Dajjal. See
http://www.geocities.com/mutazela/abhath/qawm.html
11 http://www.aqaed.com/1.html, 'ayaat al-ghadeer limarkaz al-mustafaa lildaraasaat el-islaamiyyah, see especially page 61.

Caliphs in the whole history of Islam leading up to the resurrection, two of them from the house of the Prophet,[12] one of whom lives for forty years and the other thirty years. Only after that can the time of disorder arrive, the hour of resurrection and the coming of Gog and Magog. The interesting points about this account are that the imamate and caliphate are clearly distinguished (in line with Ayatollah Sistani's understanding of the distinction between religious and political authorities), and that the end times are set in some indefinite far future.

As we move from the more formal web publications to Arabic web discussions, the focus of interest moves from gathering and interpreting specific religious texts to searching for contemporary applications of the figures of Gog and Magog. At least in the Sunni discussions, the identification is based on the writers' political preferences, with little reference to what could be inferred from Quranic and Old Testament material. The most popular candidates are USA and Israel, with Europe, Russia and China also being mentioned.

There are some critical voices, focusing on the impossibility of literal interpretations of the signs rather than on the xenophobia shown in interpretations of the signs. The Association of Non-Religious Arabs sum up points from Islamic sources about Gog and Magog, asking logical questions which they hope will make the more literal-minded believers think:

> If the number of Gog and Magog is 10 times the number of the Moslems in the world, then they are around ten billion! Where are they hiding? Where can they obtain their food? If they are behind an iron-copper wall, how is it that satellites cannot discover them? And if their arrows can reach heaven, returning with blood, whose blood is this?[13]

Others have solved these problems: Gog and Magog will be huge clone armies, because the Quran uses *yansiloon* in Surah 21:96 (swiftly swarming), whereas if they were naturally born the word *yatanaasaloon* (propagate) would have been used.[14] We can see that the speculation here is entirely future-oriented, without any thought of the meaning of the Quran itself, which asserts that Gog and Magog lived in pre-Islamic,

12 Thus these are not the twelve Shiah Imams, who must naturally be from the House of the Prophet.
13 http://www.ladeeni.net, my translation from the Arabic.
14 http://members.lycos.co.uk/alhs79/xmb/

and pre-clone, times. There is also a strong defensive desire to find whatever is new and western prefigured in the Quran.

Hamid al-Awlaqiyy has used folk etymologies, saying that Gog (*jo-jo*) refers to the Turks (*to-ko*) and they live in mountains, while Magog refers to the Mongols, who live on the plains.[15] This is in line with the interpretation of the Quran verse in traditional *tafsir* literature, but seeking a proof based not on the authority of the past but on a form of reason. The technique is called *tawfeeq* or 'matching' interpretation and is used by many of the writers studied. The identification with these past invasions of Islamic lands leaves this author with no eschatological role for Gog and Magog: the events occurred a thousand years ago, and the majority of the Muslims are simply mistaken to place them in the future.

An Egyptian scientist called Layla Abd al-Mon'im claims that she has discovered the equation of the reinforced concrete which Alexander the Great used in building the wall![16]

It is funny for us in the Netherlands to read that Manazir Ahsan al-Kilani (died 1956), a scholar from India who was critical of the eschatological scenarios which he says were adopted by Muslims from Jewish and Christian sources, was nevertheless concerned that Gog and Magog might in fact exist. Gog and Magog were said to be very short, and he had heard that Prince Nawwab Zahir Yarjenk had visited a village in Holand [*sic*], where he saw that all the inhabitants were dwarves![17]

Numerical cookery is a common feature. The first example is from a Sunni Egyptian site.[18] This takes as a starting point that Gog and Magog exist behind a wall built by Alexander the Great, which still stands, and that they are trying to break through. Untroubled by the question of where the wall and the people are, it asks "when"? The relevant texts are in Quran verses 18:99 and 21:96 and 18+99=21+96=117, making the two verses equivalent. 18:98 foretells the collapse of the wall "to dust," and is followed by 18:99, which contains the time indication *yawma-idhin* "that day" which is the 1,547th word in the Surah, contains 5

15 http://www.alsaha.com/sahat/Forum2/html/006054.html on 5/11/2005; in November 2006 this site was open to members only.

16 http://www.yahoooh.com (sic) 19.05.2004. In the early development of the internet in Egypt there was some comment that the name Yahoo resembled Ya huwa, words that a Sufi might use in calling on God. The name of this provider (hosting pious material) is presumably a reference to this discussion. The content has since been moved to http:/hwarat.osrty.com/showthread.php?s=&threadid75777 20.11.2006.

17 http://darululoom-deoband.com

18 http://www.alargam.com/numbers/future/11.htm; the author's book is available at http://www.geocities.com/mando2u2003

letters, and is in the 99th verse. Since 1547-(99-5)=1453, the collapse of the wall is dated at 1453 AH. If we turn to verse 21:99, the time indication is *idha* "when," which is 1097th word in the Surah, and appears in the 17th juz' (reading section) of the Quran, in the 21st Surah. Since 1087 + (17x21) = 1454, the date 1454 AH is indicated. Thus Gog and Magog can be expected in 1453/1454 AH = 2031/2032 AD.

Rashad Khalifa, as the Messenger of the Covenent, is authorized to say that "Gog and Magog, the final sign before the end of the world, will reappear in 2270 AD (1700 AH), just 10 years before the end. Note that Gog and Magog occur in Suras 18 and 21, precisely 17 verses before the end of each sura, representing 17 lunar centuries."[19] In addition to the combination of inspired authority and arithmetic substantiation, this is interesting because it supposes that Gog and Magog are not now present (ruling out identifications with America, where he lived) and because it is far distant. Khalifa's interpretation disarms imminent eschatologies, in favour of a world that will continue its mundane course for almost three centuries: a reassuring thought for traditionalists. An unbeliever might wonder why the arithmetic does not show that Gog and Magog will appear 17 centuries before the end of history, but that would miss the point. It is the inspiration and not the arithmetic which is decisive.

JEWISH SITES: GOG AND MAGOG

It is another sign of the times that Gog and Magog now have their own web sites: Gog.web-site in Hebrew, and the English version of the same site, magog.web-site.[20] Both are devoted to the proposition that the end times are here, and that the Gog-magog war foretold in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39 is to be the last war, followed by a time of peace. These two sites are circumspect about identifying Gog and Magog. The text in Ezekiel 38:2-3 refers to "Gog of the Magog land, president-head (=*Rosh*) of Meshech and Tuval..." which is unclear. Is Gog a personal name, or a title like 'King'? The location of the land of Magog is also uncertain: authorities are cited for Germany and Central Europe, but the 10th century Rav Saadya Gaon identifies Magog with Iran, Iraq, and Asia Minor. The site also reports a contemporary interpretation: Gog was pronounced as Gogh by the Babylonian Jews, which sounds in English like Gorr, but in the Quran (not named as such) it is Joj, and if we

19 http://www.submission.org/quran/magog.html

20http://gog.web-site.co.il; http://magog.web-site.co.il; accessed 21.11.2006. The number of sites in Hebrew referring to Gog and Magog is only a tiny fraction of the number in Arabic.

combine these we get George [Bush]. On another site, Yacov M. Tabak notes that the Yemenite pronunciation of Gog is GeOGe, with soft 'g's, and that George is pronounced in Texas as Geo'ge, which makes the identification easy.[21] To return to Gog and Magog's own site, Magog is in any case allied with the land of Put (Ezekiel 38:5-6) which the Midrash Raba says is the 'treaty land,' *Aretz ha-brith*, while the United States in Hebrew is *Aretzot ha-brith*.

Rav Amnon Yitzchak Shlita expects an American withdrawal from Iraq, a power vacuum and the "end script of Gog uMagog" in which all nations, America included, will fight Israel.[22]

Yeranen Yaakov knows that "the War of Gog Umagog … will be between Christianity and Islam, with the Christians winning. The Christians, becoming overconfident, then attack Israel. President Bush is Gog (for no apparent reason), and the first part of the war will be against Afghanistan, followed by Iraq, and then Iran and/or Syria. The Messiah will come following the defeat of Iran by Christians.[23]

It is striking in the last two sites mentioned, that 'Gog and Magog' has become a catch-all title for all apocalyptic events, whose general scenario is taken as well-known. The scriptural sources for the figures of Gog and Magog are almost lost from sight under a welter of contemporary applications. This is not typical of Jewish sites, where the identification of Gog and Magog, from scripture, Torah, Talmud and Midrash, is often the foundation for eschatological scenarios.

Where some sites had taken source references to Scythians and Germania as Eastern Europeans and Germans, the Hashem site[24] links the Scythians to Iranian nomads, Germania to the Iranian province of Kerman, along with the province of Hormuz to its South, and Kandia or Gytia is linked to present-day Baluchistan, straddling the Iranian, Pakistani and Afghani borders. The ancient port city of Gogana was near the present site of the Bushihr nuclear reactor (which is in fact hundreds of kilometers from Hormuz, but this does not prevent the author finding Bushihr relevant). In addition to Ezekiel, and the Midrash and Talmud sources used by other Jewish sites, this site draws on a 19th century Jewish author who traces the locations of Noah's descendents. If the area of Magog embraces Afghanistan, he concludes that the present war in

21 http://www.chayas.com/Yerush.htm
22 http://dreamingofmoshiach.blogspot.com/2006/11/end-script-of-gog-umagog.html
23 Translated at http://www.jewishblogging.com/blog.php?bid69063
24 http://hashem1.net/?p=361, the author bases his contemporary application on the source research in the Gog and Magog sites already mentioned, and provides links.

Afghanistan must be part of the Gog and Magog war, which is to last for seven years.

On the Sunni alargam site[25] the Saudi Khaalid ‘Abd al-Waahid has a commentary on eschatological Islamic and Christian texts, which he relates to the destruction of the United States and Israel. The Revelation of John, chapter 20, from verse 7 reads (with the author’s explanatory insertions):

> And after the thousand years, Satan will be released from his prison, and he will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for fighting; and their number is as the sand of the sea. They went up over the plains of the earth, and surrounded the camp of the saints (Jesus and the Muslims who are with him), and the beloved city (Jerusalem). But fire falls from heaven, and devours them. Iblis who deceived them will be thrown into a lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast (America) and the dajjal (Israel) are also. They will be tormented day and night, forever and ever.

He explains that Satan or Dajjal (*sic*) originally came before Jesus. Gog and Magog surround Jesus and the saints in Jerusalem, where they have fled, but ‘by the command of God’ they will be destroyed and their bodies disposed of.[26]

Other sources on the same Hashem site[27] say that the war began with the attack on the twin towers of the World trade center (while paradoxically saying that President Bush is Gog) and continues in Iraq.[28] The coming ‘Christian’ war against Iran and/or Syria will be the third stage. The idea that the Gog-Magog war will have three phases is not uncommon. Some sites identify World War II as the beginning and the 1967 war the second, or the two world wars as the first and second phases.[29] But Rabbi Ishmael’s commentary on Isaiah 21:15 is cited as pointing to three “wars of panic” (i.e., terrorism) conducted by the Ishmaelites (Arabs and Islam) in the later days,”[30] which would exclude World War II from the scenario.

25 http://www.alargam.com/numbers/end/48.htm
26 A similar explanation by Rabbi Ben Zion Motzafi can be found at http://hashem1.net
27 Translated at http://yeranenyaakov.blogspot.com/2006/06/end-of-days-where-are-we-part-1-of-3.html
28 The towers are identified with the towers that fall in the ‘day of the great slaughter’ in Isaiah 30:25. See for example http://hashem1.net/?p=185
29 http://tinyurl.com/y9atad; http://gog-site.co.il. 22.12.2005
30 http://magog.web-site.co.il/gog/e_war.shtml

Many sites also divide the war, or the third stage of the war, into two parts: a war of Christians against Muslims and/or Iran, in which Israel takes no part, and a subsequent war of Christians, or a coalition of survivors, against Israel. Rabbi Ben Zion Motzafi says that the war of Gog and Magog will be a war of 70 nations, Christians fighting Moslems, and that it has already started in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. The Moslems will be defeated, and the Christians will then come to Jerusalem (everything according to God's plan), where God will teach them a lesson by fighting with the Jews against them.[31]

The relation between the Gog and Magog war and the coming of the Messiah is much discussed. The orthodox Haemet site cites differing authorities, one that places the war before the arrival of the Messiah, since the Messiah either wins the war or is killed in it,[32] another placing the coming of the Messiah first, and the resolution, that the war comes before the Messiah and continues after him.[33]

Several sites refer to the interpretation of the 18th century Rabbi Hirsch, who "interprets the prophet's vision not as a military battle but as an ideological war between the philosophy of 'gog' – which means roof in Hebrew – and the philosophy of *sukkah* (a booth or tent-like temporary dwelling): those convinced that their fate lies in the power of their own hands and their own resources will attack the values of those who recognize the limits of human endeavor to influence the world."[34]

One site, citing Maimonides, claims that the biblical 'peoples' no longer exist as ethnic identities, and should be understood rather as 'types' of particular attitudes towards Israel. The purpose is not to banish xenophobia, but to bring it closer to home: "If the Ishmaelites [Arabs, Palestinians] are not yet Magog, they may well be on the way to being so."[35]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The computer and the internet have opened up a new world, and it is not open only to the sensible, the civilized and the humane. Those whose

31 (http://hashem1.net 31.08.2006).
32 http://www.aish.com/literacy/concepts/The_Pre-Messianic_Era.asp; http://tinyurl.com/y8culw
33 http://www.haemet.net/amitut/End/A2.htm
34 http://tinyurl.com/vj6a6, 26.11.2006. A writer at the less traditional e-mago site says that the battle is spiritual not physical http://www.e-mago.co.il/Editor/article.php?index=133
35 http://tinyurl.com/y9atad, 26.11.2006

message is hatred of the other and fear of the future also find themselves able to communicate with everyone, everywhere. The clans of chaos are a firewall away.

In the Islamic sites, we can distinguish between writers who are primarily interested in locating or rationalizing the Quranic story set in the far past, and those who are interested in eschatology. Very few sites correlate the historical with the eschatological pictures of Gog and Magog in the Quran, but they do correlate the eschatological picture with everything else. It is primarily the Sunni, and primarily the discussion logs rather than web publications, whose focus is strongly eschatological and political.

As compared to the pamphlet literature which is available on book stalls in the Middle East, heterodox and politically suppressed groups have a greater presence on the internet.

Jewish and Shiah sites, and the more formal publications, deal in more detail with the various source materials, and are more likely to make broad use of sources without insisting on one conclusion. A few writers on Muslim sites reject the eschatological elaborations of the role of Gog and Magog, in traditions, as Christian and Jewish corruptions (*israliyyah*).

The Arabic sites tend to a simpler eschatological scenario, in which there is a battle between Jews and Muslims, in Jerusalem or Megiddo, but in any case in Israel, and in the near future. This does not necessarily usher in the end times. Bassam Jarrar, another of the arithmetic interpreters whose works are also distributed as books and audio cassettes and appear to be influential,[36] expects the decline of Israel and the establishment of a caliphate based in Jerusalem in the year 2022 AD. He specifically says that this does not indicate that the Day of Judgement will follow soon after. Gog and Magog appear on the sidelines of his scenario, which we could class as future-oriented but not eschatological.

Some Jewish sites have a simple scenario, a coalition of all nations, or seventy nations, who attack Israel and are miraculously defeated. The majority, however, have more complex scenarios which may extend back over the 20th century, and may involve one enemy (often America) destroying another.

36 Bassam Jarrar, The Decline of Israel 2022AD, A prophecy or numerical coincidence, Lebanon 1996, available as e-text (2006) from http://www.islamnoon.com. Regarding the audio tapes, see http://www.intelligence.org.il/eng/eng_n/incitement_e1205.htm

The Jewish sites can be divided into those that identify the Gog-Magog war with Israel's near neighbors and those that cast the net wider, including World War II in some cases, America and Iran in others. One suspects that there are deeper issues behind the inclusion or exclusion of the holocaust from the portion of history that is rendered meaningful by the Gog-Magog scenario.

A common feature of contemporary Hebrew sites, missing in the Arabic sites, is that the attack on the World Trade Center in 2001 is taken as the starting shot in the war of Gog and Magog, which is to last seven years.

While there is some effort to justify speculations about eschatological themes on Jewish and Islamic scriptural grounds, there is a free embroidery upon these themes. Few writers seem to have used the scriptural sources directly: rather they cut and paste from other internet sources, producing small inconsistencies such as Nana's list of 27 signs, which has only 25 items. It could well be that the freedom that writers take, to expand and interpret the material, is greater because it comes to them in the form of internet rather than from the printed book. Compared to the pamphlet material that Professor Kruk has examined in this volume, and the studies by Cook and Tottoli which she cites, there is more authorial input in the internet discussion, and fewer compilations of traditions without commentary. It is clear that the ongoing process of internet discussion will produce an increasing distance between the folk religion versions of Gog and Magog and the versions in formal literatures, even the versions in religious pamphlets.

A note on Gog and Magog in Tashelhiyt Berber of South Morocco

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1. INTRODUCTION

In this contribution I present two Tashelhiyt Berber texts on Gog and Magog. This is simply a note with no goal other than to illustrate the existence of textual evidence on this well-known[1] eschatological concept among the berberophone Muslims of South Morocco.[2] Both texts are from the *Fonds Arsène Roux*[3] at Aix-en-Provence.

The first text given below (see sections 2.1 and 2.2) is based on a transcribed text from *Fonds Arsène Roux* / *Boîte* 26.1.5 *Légendes religieuses (extr. des manuscr.).*[4] The original consists of one A-4 page of typewritten text containing the title plus 21 lines of text and eight lexical notes in the hand of Roux. A note at the bottom of the page says that it is written in the *Ashtukn* dialect of Tashelhiyt Berber

1 For excellent introductions to the scholarly literature on Gog and Magog, see van Donzel and Ott 2002 and for ad-Dajjâl, 'the Donkey-rider' who, on the Day of the Final Judgment, precedes the arrival of Gog and Magog, see Abel 1965.

2 There are approximately 25-30 million speakers of Berber in North Africa. In Morocco, Berber is spoken in the Rif (Tarifit), in the Middle Atlas (Tamaziγt) and in the High Atlas, the Sous plains and the Anti-Atlas (Tasusiyt, Tašlḥiyt), by an estimated 45% of the total population of 30 million people. In Algeria, Berber languages are spoken in Kabylia, in the Aurès mountains and in the Mzab areas, by a total of 25% of the population, also of 30 million people. Tuareg Berber is found in the south of Algeria, in Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Smaller groups of berberophones live in Tunisia, Libya and Egypt. Berber immigrant communities of various origins are settled in France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Germany and Israel. Of all the Berber languages, Tashelhiyt Berber is the one with the highest (estimated) number of speakers: some 8 to 9 million.

3 Arsène Roux was a well-known French Berberologist and Arabist. He was born on the 5th of February 1893 at Rochegude, Drôme, France. He received primary and secondary education in Algeria. In 1913 he entered military service and left for Morocco, where he worked as a translator in Central Morocco from 1913 to 1919. From 1919 to 1927, he was a teacher of Arabic at the École Militaire and the Lycée at Meknès and in charge of public courses of Arabic and Berber. In 1927 he founded the Collège berbère d'Azrou, an institution in which he was the Director from 1927 to 1935. During these years he was also responsible for public courses of Berber at Azrou. From 1935 to 1944, he was Director of the Collège Moulay Youssef at Rabat. From 1935 to 1956 he was Professor in Berber dialectology at the Institut des Hautes études marocaines and chief inspector of the courses of Arabic at the Moroccan lycées and collèges. After the independence of Morocco in 1956 he went to Bayonne, France, where he had various responsibilities in relation to the teaching of Arabic in France. He traveled to Morocco several times to check his Middle Atlas Berber texts. Arsène Roux died in Pau on the 19th of July 1971. Today the Fonds Roux, an archive containing mainly documents from the Middle Atlas Berber and the Tashelhiyt Berber regions, is located in the IREMAM, (Institut de recherches sur le monde arabe et musulman, CNRS - Universités d'Aix-Marseille), an institute that recently (2004) moved to the so-called Maison méditerranéenne des sciences de l'homme (MMSH) in Aix-en-Provence.

4 See Stroomer and Peyron, *Catalogue des archives berbères du "fonds Arsène Roux,"* Cologne 2003: 27.

spoken south-east of Agadir in the Biougra region. This text was hitherto unpublished.[5]

We can make the following observations concerning this text: firstly, this text has *Hajuj* instead of the more frequently found *Yajuj*. Note that Tashelhiyt Berber reduces the long vowels of Arabic *Yājūj* and *Mājūj*. Secondly, the motif of the personification of *Insha'allah* as a young man, attested for instance by Mommersteeg for Djenné (Mali),[6] can also be seen in this text. Thirdly, the tale motif of a creature drinking the sea can also be found in a popular, etiological Moroccan folktale that 'explains' how the water of the sea became salty.[7] Perhaps there is a parallel between the sea and Gog and Magog, as both of them threaten to overflow the world and destroy mankind.

The second text (see sections 2.3 and 2.4) begins with the widely-known story of *ad-Dajjāl* the Donkey-rider, one of the signs of the approaching end of the world. The arrival of *ad-Dajjāl* precedes the arrival of Gog and Magog. This text seems to follow the traditional lines known from other accounts. The only 'Moroccanism' I noticed is the phrase: 'Mountains are (the size of) couscous and bread to him.' This text was provisionally published in a mimeographed schoolbook by Arsène Roux.[8] It is the fourth of five religious legends, *Cinq légendes religieuses*. In the introduction to these legends,[9] Roux gives no clue as to the Berber manuscript from which it was taken:

> Cette légende et les quatre suivantes, sont extraites d'un manuscrit berbère écrit en caractères arabes. Cet ouvrage est une sorte de manuel de morale musulmane à l'usage des berbérophones. L'auteur étant anonyme, l'on ne peut pas préciser dans quel parler il a été rédigé. On remarque que la langue de ces récits contient

5 I thank Madame Claude Brenier-Estrine, former keeper of the Fonds Arsène Roux, for her kind and cordial cooperation during my many visits to the Fonds. I thank the Director of the IREMAM, Prof. Eberhardt Kienle, for allowing me to publish this document. I thank my friend and colleague Mohamed Saadouni for his help and encouragement and Mr. John Cooper (Norwich, United Kingdom) for his kindness in correcting the English text.

6 Mommersteeg 1998: 87-88.

7 For a Tashelhiyt Berber variant of this tale from Tazerwalt, see Stroomer 2002: 226-227: 'Once upon a time, when its water was still sweet, the sea wanted to flood the whole world. God wanted to calm it down. He ordered the mosquito to come and said to it: "Go and drink the sea." The mosquito went and drank the sea, until it was drinking its sand. (Then) God said to it: "Throw it up again!" The mosquito threw it up. The sea had become calm, because the smallest creature in the world drunk it. From that time onwards the sea was salty, as it passed through the stomach of a mosquito.' For a variant from Essaouira, see Contes et légendes du Maroc, 2001: 15-16.

8 Roux 1942: 112-115. This work has been published in a linguistically reanalysed form and with an English translation, see Stroomer 2003.

9 Roux 1942: 109

> une proportion d'emprunts arabes plus importante que la langue courante.

Texts such as the ones given below belong to the Tashelhiyt Berber literary tradition of South Morocco, consisting of manuscripts written in Arabic characters. The earliest known manuscript from this tradition dates from the 14th, the latest from the 20th century. During these seven centuries, local Tashelhiyt Berber scholars created a large number of manuscripts, dealing mainly with religious topics, to instruct the berberophone people. Of this tradition, only the tip of the iceberg is visible today: many works remain to be discovered.[10] The works belonging to this tradition had a distribution that coincided with the distribution of Tashelhiyt Berber as a language. As such they represent a local, pre-modern and pre-globalized Islam that was common in the South of Morocco until the middle of the 20th century.

Arsène Roux was one of the few scholars who has fully understood the importance of this tradition and collected these manuscripts. It is quite probable that the texts given below were transcribed from one of the Berber manuscripts he owned.

These original text transcriptions by Roux show some fairly obvious mistakes and typing errors, which I have corrected to the best of my knowledge. The transcription of the Tashelhiyt Berber texts, given below, follows in all details the one used in my other Tashelhiyt text-editions.[11] The translation follows the Tashelhiyt text as closely as English usage permits.

2. TASHELHIYT BERBER TEXTS AND THEIR TRANSLATIONS

2.1 Hajuj u Majuj

Illa yan udrar x grax d Hajuj u Majuj. Kra igan ass ar ttarsn (qqazn) fad ad d six ffγn. Ar gis skarn išnbi anškk n tiṭṭ n uglzim. Mišš ix lkmnt tiwutštši, nkrn f šš̆γul. Ix ddan ar ttinin: “Azkka rat t nkmml, nffγ (nak^{w}i nn) s mddn.” Ix d uḍan (gllbn) azkka, afin d adrar iga γikli

10 See Nico van den Boogert 1998, and Harry Stroomer 2003. There are over 500 Tashelhiyt Berber manuscripts and manuscript fragments that can be studied: some 200 in Aix-en-Provence (see Van den Boogert 1995) and over 300 in the library of Leiden University (the Netherlands) (see Van den Boogert, forthc.). This field, that combines berberology, historical sciences, islamology and Arabic studies, has been sadly neglected. It can, in my view, only be studied in close interaction with the few traditional scholars from South Morocco still alive.

11 For a full list of Tashelhiyt-English bilingual folktale editions, visit the website Berber Studies of Köppe Verlag in Cologne. For Tashelhiyt-French bilingual editions, see the website of Edisud in Aix-en-Provence.

yadlli iga, ibḍl asn ššγul. Bdun dax ššγul nnsn ar tadgg^{w}at, nkrn fllas. Ar bdda skarn γikann.

Ix εlayn at tqrbl ddunit, ilal darsn yan ufrux, smn as “Inša'aḷḷah”. Yimγur ufrux ad, imun didsn s dar ššγul. Ar dax qqazn x udrar anškk n tiṭṭ n uglzim skix tlkm tdgg^{w}at. Uk^{w}an ar ax d ttannayn x tšnbit ann. Ix ddan, yan gisn inna: “Wa Inša'aḷḷah! Bḥra nqadda a nn fllasn nak^{w}i azkka.” Azkka gllbn d, susεun išnbi yann, ffγn d six (lkmn ax d).

Amzwaru gisn, ix ilkm lbḥr, isu t kullu abla imikk; wiss sin ikmml t; wiss kraḍ illγ t; wiss kkuẓ inna: “Γid a x tt inn ikka lbḥr.”

Uk^{w}an ar qq^{w}ayn mddn kullutn. Kraygat yan gisn yasi sin mddn x ddu taytt tafasit d tẓlmaṭṭ d yan x ufus. Ar izzigiz, ar t ištta. Ix t ikmml, izayd s wiyyaḍ, arkix išbεa.

2.2 Gog and Magog

There is a mountain between us and Gog and Magog. Every day they dig (a hole, a tunnel, through which they want to creep and) come out to us. They make a hole in this mountain as big as the hole of the hoe. But when the (time of the) evening meal has come, they stop their work. When they have gone, they say: “Tomorrow we will finish it and then we will get out to attack the humans.” When they come back the next day, they find the mountain as it was before: their work (of the previous day) has been annihilated. Then they start their work again (and go on) until the afternoon and they quit their work. They always act in this way.

Just before the world turns round (i.e.: on the Day of the Final Judgment), a boy will be born among them, they will call him *Insha'allah*. This boy will grow up and accompany them to (their work). Once again they will dig a hole as big as the eye of a hoe (and go on with that) until the afternoon. Then they can see us through this hole. When they go, one of them will say: “Insha'allah! We have done enough, let us attack them tomorrow.” The next day they come, make the hole wider and come out through it, towards us.

When the first of them reaches the sea, he drinks it all, leaving but a small (quantity of water behind); the second finishes it, the third licks it out and the fourth says: “Once there was a sea here.”

They then catch all the people. Each of the monsters carries two humans, (one) under his right arm, (one) under his left arm, and one in his hand. He walks as he eats him. When he has finished him, he goes on with others, until he has had enough.

2.3 Ddjjal d Yajuj u Majuj

Lbab ad riγ ag gis bdrγ Ddjjal (a t igan d Bu Tγyult) d Yajuj wa Majuj. Illa γ lḥadit is inna Nnbi i imddukkʷal nns: “Ha nn Ddjjal ira ad d iffγ tigira n zzman. Ig argaz γ ṣṣift nns mi tkks titṭ nns, tagl nit zund aqqa n waḍil. Iddɛu is iga Ṛbbi. Ikafriyn a igan ljiš nns, d wudayn, d iṛumiyn. Ar ittḥyu, ar inqqa. Ayyur n waḍan d ttlt is ira ag gis ikk ljmiɛ n ddunit. Ar ittsudu yat ddabt, ar nn tsrus aḍaṛ nns γ γinna nn iḍuf iẓṛi nns. Ar as ttggan idrarn sksu d uγṛum; ayyur n waḍan d ttlt a γ akkʷ ittslak ddunit.” Assf ann gis izwarn ingadda d usggʷas, wiss sin wussfan ingadda d wayyur n waḍan n ddunit, wiss kṛaḍ wussfan ingadda d imal ass n ddunit, lγayr nnsn zund ussfan n ddunit. Wa nna ids imunn s t iga Ṛbbi d ukafriy, ašku Ṛbbi ḥaša ur igi aɛiwar. Ar ittamṛ i ignna, ar ittaγ anẓaṛ, ar ittamṛ i wakal, ar ismγay. Wa nna iss ur yuminn, iga amumn igan amuslm. Walakin lamwal nnsn at t kullu ḍfṛn. Aγ t iḍffṛ lidam ula lḥbub. A izri f ixrban, inna ysn: “Ssufγat d lamwal nnun!” Iffγ d aynna ittimḍaln γ ddunit wurγ d nnqrt, ḍfṛn t. Iskr ljnt, iskr lɛdab. Ar nit ttmnidn imddukkʷal nns. Ittyara kra γ gr walln nns. Wa nna t iẓṛan, iḍfṛ t, ifk as laman. Ur tlli lftnt innran ti n Ddjjal. Iga asḥḥar, a inγ bnadm, iḥyu t id. Kullu s ssiḥr nns a s a iskar dγayann. Ar as ittjib Ṛbbi ddueɑ nns f dγayann mkda a iziyd lɛdab nns. Imil iggz d Nnbi i nna γ nn illa dγil. Ur yadlli immut, is ittyurfaɛ s ignwan. Ar d iffγ Bu Tγyult, iggz d, ar t isiggil aylliγ t yufa, inγ t. Ar inqqa ljiš nns γ wudayn d iṛumiyn d wi nna t ḍfaṛnin γ imuslmn, ašku ikafriyn ad gan aylliγ t ḍfaṛn. Wa nna iss ur yuminn γ imuslmn, imsḥ Saydna ∑isa f wudmawn nnsn, ar tn itḥddat s ddaṛajat lli yasn ifka Ṛbbi γ ljnt.

Ffγn d daγ nttni, Yajuju wa Majuju, kumḍn i ljmiɛ n ddunit. Illa ma innan unšt n tayniwin ad llan γ tγzi, illa ma innan unšt n mddn n ddunit ad llan. Is bahra ggutn, ukan wi nna d ggisn zwarnin swin akkʷ aman n lbḥṛ, wi nna tn id ḍfaṛnin, afin d gis tilkki, nnan: “Laṭṛ is nn kkan waman dγi.” Ḥṣṛn nnbi Saydna ∑isa, ntta d imumnn lli yids munnin. Ilkm tn laẓ, ar kiγ yuf ixf n uzgr, timiḍi imdqaln n wurγ i kraygat yan. Iḍalb Nnbi n Ṛbbi, Saydna ∑isa, ad as ikšf lmḥayn lli γ illa. Ig asn d Ṛbbi i Yajuj wa Majuj lbla: aγ asn ttilint tnqba γ imggṛaḍ nnsn. Iffu tn d lḥal, mmutn akkʷ. Iggz d daγ Nnbi ∑isa s wakal γ dγilli γ tn ttḥṣṛn. Ur d ufin ḥtta unšt n tarrdast γ wakal bla iɛmmṛ issn. Tuẓẓut nnsn, tẓẓa ddunit zund tafkka. Iḍṛṛu d γunšt ann Nnbi ∑isa bn Maryama. Iṣṛf d Ṛbbi subḥanahu aylaln zund imggṛaḍ n iṛɛman, ar tn ttasin, ar nn issn ggarn s γilli s asn yumṛ Ṛbbi. Ig d Ṛbbi subḥanahu anẓaṛ, aylliγ d tqama ddunit zund tazlaft iɛmmṛn s waman. Tɛmmṛ nit s waman. Inna Ṛbbi i wakal: “Smmγi d timar nnm, trart d lbaraka

nnm! Ig d lbaṛaka ar kiγ tuda yat tfunast ayt tmazirt kullu. Yat taγaṭṭ tuda ayt tgmmi kullu. Yat taṛṛmmant ukan tuda ljmaɛt iggutn. Yigut lxir bahra. Ar ittḥkam Saydna ∑isa, Nnabiyyu lḷahi, s šṣ̌ɛ n Nnbi nnγ Muḥmmad, ṣaḷḷa lḷahu ɛalayhi wa-sallama, ašku ur yadlli illi Nnbi bla nttan; nttan a ixtmn lanbiya d lmursalin. Saydna ∑isa illa tt yadlli qbl Nnbi nnγ, is ittyurfaɛ s ignwan ibqu gisn ard d iffγ Ddjjal, Bu Tγyult at t igan. Iggz d s lamṛ n Ṛbbi, inγ t. Ibqu γ ddunit ntta d imumnn lmiqdar n sin ida ɛašrin isgg^{w}asn γ illa lxir d nnɛmat d liman gbala zund zzman n Nnbi Muḥammad ṣaḷḷa lḷahu ɛalayhi wa sallama. Γikann aylliγ asn d iga Ṛbbi subḥanahu kra rriḥ ijjan ar tn ikkat γ ddu tiwa, ar ittamẓ ṛṛuḥ n kraygat amumn d kraygat amuslm. Bqun ikafriyn ar ttɛbadn laṣnam. Ittyisiy lislam d liman γ wakal d lqran. Iffγ d Iblis, iḍḥṛ d s mddn. Nttan a s tra ddunit a fllas tqṛbl. Ur yadlli ma ittinin: “Lḷah!” γ ddunit. Unšt sul iqama γ ddunit ma ittinin “Lḷah!” ur tri at tqṛbl. Tigut lfawaḥiš γ mddn d zzna d ttmnγa d lliwaṭ. Ur aγ ittnhu yan lmunkar ula aγ ittamṛ yan s lmɛṛuf. Iγḍb fllasn Ṛbbi subḥanahu lγaḍab išddan bahra, d γakudann ilmma d ur illi γ ddunit ma yaddran Ṛbbi ula Muḥmmad, yamṛ Ṛbbi subḥanahu at tfnu ddunit.

2.4 Ad-Dajjāl, Gog and Magog

In this chapter I want to discuss the Antichrist, *ad-Dajjāl*, the Donkey-rider, together with Gog and Magog, *Yājūj* and *Mājūj*. In the tradition it is mentioned that the Prophet said to his friends: “*ad-Dajjāl* will appear at the end of time. He is a man from whom one eye has been taken out, which dangles (on his cheek) like a grape. He pretends to be God. His army consists of unbelievers, Jews and Christians. He revives and kills. For one whole month and one third (of a month) he will go through the whole world. He rides a donkey, (whose steps are so large), that it places its feet where its eyes (lit.: eyesight) can only just see (them). Mountains are (the size of) couscous and bread to him. A month and one third (is all the time he needs) to traverse (lit.: deal with) the world.” (His) first day (on earth) equals a year, the second day equals one whole month on earth, the third day equals a week on earth, the rest of them are like (normal) days on earth. The one accompanying him has been made an unbeliever by God, because God is not blind, Oh no! He commands the heavens, He holds the rain (in his power), He commands the earth and causes plants to grow. The one who does not believe (in *ad-Dajjāl*) is a believer and a good Muslim. But all (earthly) goods (of mankind) will follow (*ad-Dajjāl*): oil and grain will follow *ad-Dajjāl*. (*Ad-Dajjāl*) will pass ruins saying to them: “Bring out your possessions!” (Then) gold and silver,

wherever they may be buried in the world, will appear and follow him. He can make paradise, he can make hell. His friends look him in the face. There is something written between his eyes. The one who sees it, follows (*ad-Dajjāl*) and gives him trust. There is no chaos greater than that (created by) *ad-Dajjāl*. He is a sorcerer who can kill a man and bring him back to life. It is with his magic that he is capable of all this. God answers his prayer so that He may increase His punishment. The Prophet will descend from where he was. He is not dead, he was taken up into heaven. When the Donkey-rider appears, (Saydna Isa) descends, seeks him until he finds him and kills him. (Saydna Isa) kills his army (consisting) of Jews, Christians and those Muslims who followed him (i.e. *ad-Dajjāl*), because they are unbelievers when they follow (*ad-Dajjāl*). Those among the Muslims who don't believe in (*ad-Dajjāl*), Saydna Isa will rub over their faces and will elevate them to the ranks God designated them in paradise.

Yājūj and *Mājūj* will come out too, and expand over the whole world. Some people say they are the height of palm trees, others say that they are (like) men. They are very numerous, the first ones who descend will drink the whole ocean. Those who follow them, will only find damp soil (and) say: “This is an indication that there was (once) water here!” They seized the prophet Saydna Isa and his believers with him. They get hungry until he (Saydna Isa) finds the head of a bull weighing one hundred *mithqāl*s of gold, for everyone. The prophet of God, Saydna Isa, will ask (God) to take away the sufferings in which he finds himself. (Then) God strikes *Yājūj* and *Mājūj* with sickness: they get (numerous) holes in their necks. The next day they all die. Then the prophet Isa will descend again to earth, to the place where they seize them. They will not find (a span) of one hand of land which is not filled with the corpses (of *Yājūj* and *Mājūj*). Their odour, like the stench of carrion, pervades the world. The catastrophe pains the prophet Isa ben Maryam. God – praised is He – sends birds like necks of camels, they carry (*Yājūj* and *Mājūj*) away, they deposit them at a place ordered by God. (Then) God – praised is He – causes it to rain until the world is like a plate filled with water. (The world) is filled with water. (Then) God will say to the world: “Make your harvest grow, return to your blessing (*baraka*)!” The blessing will be such that one cow will be sufficient for a whole village. One goat will be sufficient for a whole family. One pomegranate will be sufficient for a whole village. It will grow abundantly. Saydna Isa, the prophet of God, will rule by the law of our Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him), because there has never been a prophet like him. He is the

seal of prophets and messengers. Saydna Isa lived before our Prophet, but he was taken to heaven where he remains until *ad-Dajjāl*, the Donkey-rider, appears. (Saydna Isa) descends by the order of God and kills him (i.e. *ad-Dajjāl*). He and the believers stay in the world for forty years in prosperity, well-being and faith very much like at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad (peace be upon him). (They will remain) like this until God – praised is He – causes an odorous wind to blow touching them under their armpits, (a wind) that takes the souls of every believer and of every Muslim. The unbelievers stay behind, worshipping their idols. Islam and faith are taken away from the earth, together with the Quran. (Then) Satan will come out and appear to people; around him the world will turn. There is no one in the world (left) who says: "O God!" As long as there still is someone who says: "O God!" the world will not turn. (At the end of time) there will be much obscenity among people as well as adultery, killing and pederasty. No one will prohibit forbidden actions, no one will encourage good ones. God – praised is He – will be furious towards them and (as) there is no one (left) in the world to invoke God or Muḥammad, God – praised is He – will give orders to let the world end.

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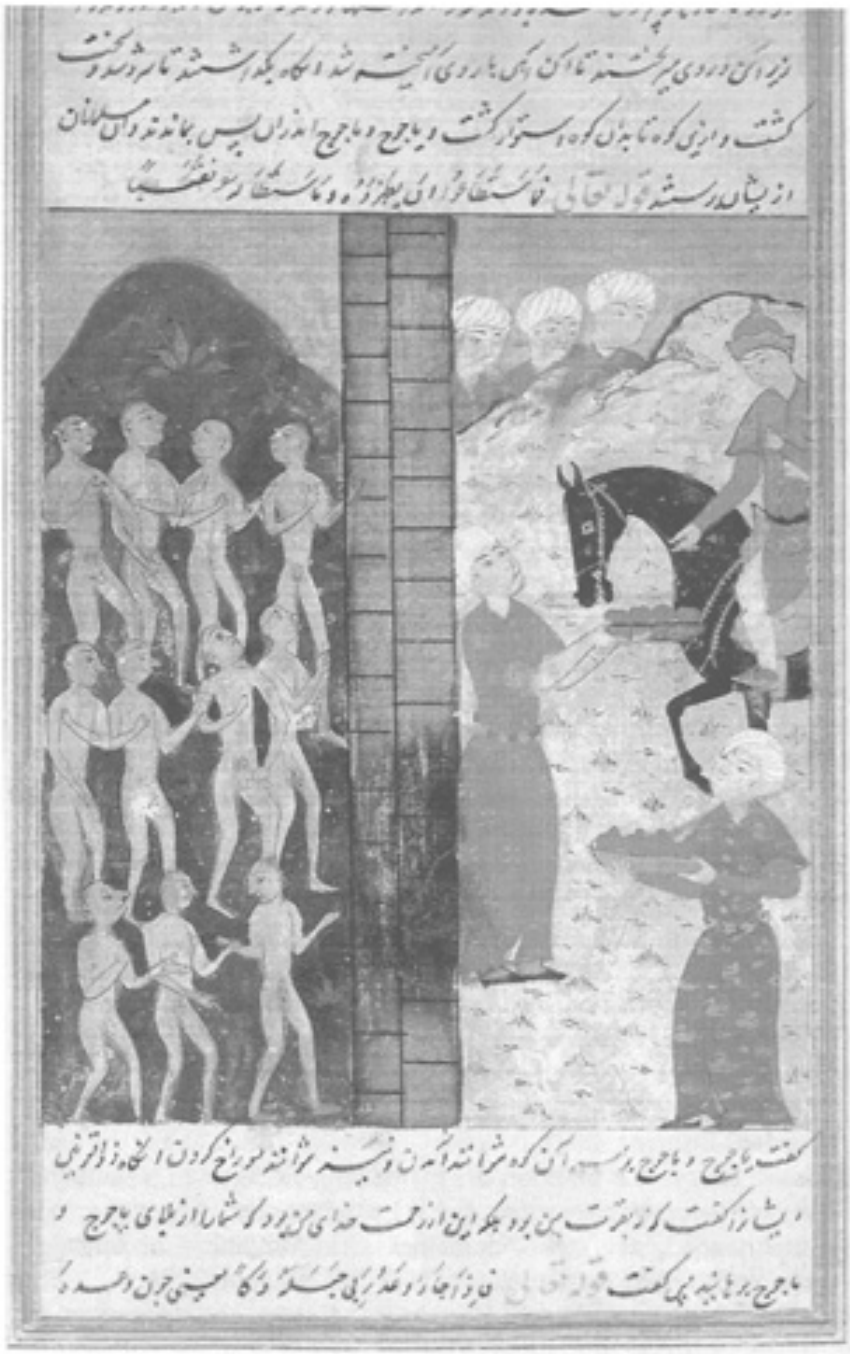

Sixteenth Century Persian Miniatures in Manuscripts preserved in the Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofya. Bulgarski Houdozhnik Publishers, Sofia, 1990. Plate XV, Iskandar – Alexander from *Tales of the Prophets* (date of the manuscript: 1576, provenance probably Qazwin)

Unfathomable Evil:
The Presentation of Gog and Magog in Persian Literature

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Compared to the Arab world, in which the figures of Gog and Magog are increasingly used in public spheres as symbols for an enemy or an unknown danger, there are few such publications in modern Iranian society. Naturally the Shiite religious doctors comment on Gog and Magog as an eschatological sign, but outside the technical religious literature they appear in Iran mainly as types of those who speak an unintelligible language. We can perhaps see the origins of this in Persian literature of the tenth to twelfth centuries. In this essay, I shall concentrate primarily on the genres of the wonders of creation, classical world histories, and Alexander romances, as they appear in classical Persian.

Gog and Magog appear twice in the Quran (18:90-99; 21:96). In Surah 21, the reference is brief and they appear only as an eschatological sign: "till, when Gog and Magog are unloosed, and they slide down out of every slope. Then the true promise is near by" (21:96-97). In Surah 18, the Surah of the Cave, the account is longer, is set in the far past, and features the incomprehensibility of Gog and Magog's language. The story is one incident in a longer account of the doings of the hero Dhu'l-Qarneyn, ('he of the two horns'):

> Then he followed a road. Till, when he came between the two mountains, he found upon their hither side a folk that scarce could understand a saying. They said: O Dhu'l-Qarneyn! Lo! Gog and Magog are spoiling the land. So may we pay thee tribute on condition that thou set a barrier between us and them? He said: That wherein my Lord hath established me is better (than your tribute). Do but help me with strength (of men), I will set between you and them a bank. Give me pieces of iron – till, when he had levelled up (the gap) between the cliffs, he said: Blow! – till, when he had made it a fire, he said: Bring me molten copper to pour thereon. And (Gog and Magog) were not able to surmount, nor could they pierce (it). He said: This is a mercy from my Lord; but when the promise of my Lord cometh to pass, He will lay it low, for the promise of my Lord is true. And on that day we shall

> let some of them surge against others, and the Trumpet will be blown. Then We shall gather them together in one gathering.[1]

Here, the Quran describes Dhu'l-Qarneyn's journey to a mysterious land ravaged by the hordes of Gog and Magog and erects a barrier between them and the civilised world. There has been much debate about the figure of Dhu'l-Qarneyn and whether he can be identified with Alexander.[2] Some scholars believe that Dhu'l-Qarneyn is Cyrus the Great who built a rampart in the far east of his Empire to ward off the roving Turkic tribes.[3] Other scholars are of the opinion that he is the Chinese Emperor Shih hunang-ti and the rampart is the Chinese wall.

It is not clear how we should imagine the setting: a mountain defile, a valley between two mountain ranges, or a gap between two walls. The geographical setting has always been a point of dispute. Each literary tradition has developed its own reading. According to the Persian polymath Abu Reyhan Biruni's *Ketab al-tafhim*, the tribes of Gog and Magog are situated in the same region where Turkic tribes can be find.[4] Although it is not clear where Gog and Magog originally came from, in Persian sources they attack the civilised world from the north of the Caucasus, where the famous Darband pass is located.[5] In Arabic (and several Persian) sources, this pass is translated as *Bab al-abvab* and is mythologized in a number of texts as the locality of the fortification made by Alexander. This attribution cannot be true because as Kettenhofen indicates, "the Darband fortress was certainly the most prominent Sasanian defensive construction in the Caucasus

1 18:92-99, Pickthall's translation.

2 See F. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus. Zeven eeuwen Arabische Alexandertraditie: van Pseudo-Callisthenes tot Sūrī*, PhD dissertation, Leiden University, 2003, chapter 3, pp. 118-173; see also F. de Polignac "Cosmocrator: l'Islam et la légende antique du souverain universel," in *The Problematics of Power: Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1996, pp. 149-64. For a study on Gog and Magog in various literary traditions see A.R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog, and the Inclosed Nations*, Cambridge / Massachusetts: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1932.

3 In his commentary on the Quran, Baha al-Din Khorramshahi emphasizes that Allama Tabatabai in his *al-Mizan* and Khazaeli in his *Elm-e Quran* believe that Zolqarneyn is Cyrus. This view is elaborated by Abu Kalam Azad in his *Korush-e Kabir (Zolqarneyn)*, trans. Ebrahim Bastani Parizi, Tehran: elm, 2001. See The Quran, comm.. by B. Khorramshahi, Tehran: Jami, 1995, p. 304. For this identificaion of Dhu 'l-Qarneyn with Cyrus the Great see Ter Haar's contribution in this volume. For other views on Zolqarneyn's identification see F. Doufikar-Aerts, "Alexander the Great and the Pharos of Alexandria in Arabic Literature," in *The Problematics of Power*, pp. 191-202.

4 Abu Reyhan Biruni, *Ketab al-tafhim*, ed. J.D. Homai, Tehran: Babak, 1983, p. 196; see also Sh. Shahbazi, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Haft keshvar.

5 E. Kettenhofen in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Darband.

and could have been erected only by an extremely powerful central government." Its construction technique as Kettenhofen points out "is similar to other 6th-century fortifications, like those at Takht-e Solayman."[6] In other words, Islamic authors, whether Persians or Arabs, may have identified Alexander's legendary fortification with a real fortification of a more recent period.

In addition to the Quran and traditions, there are several fantastic stories about Gog and Magog in the genre of *Ajayeb al-makhluqat*.[7] This genre draws its information from a variety of sources including the Bible. As we will see, several accounts report that Gog and Magog are descended from Japheth (Genesis x. 2).[8] One of the oldest Persian sources in which Gog and Magog are mentioned is Mohammad ibn Mahmud Hamadani's *Ajayeb al-makhluqat* (completed 12th century), a forerunner of Qazvini's eponymous work of the same genre.[9] Gog and Magog appear at least twice in Hamadani's book. Their first appearance is in the section describing the "Wonders of the Turks." Hamadani classifies the Turks in groups, one being the tribes of Gog and Magog, who "have long claws, teeth like wolves and their mouths resembles those of a camel. Their entire body is covered with hairs. They bark like a dog."[10] Hamadani emphasises that they will destroy the world. Hamadani knows where they come from: "In the Chinese's ocean there are numberless Gog and Magog, and when waves appear, they are thrown on the land where they procreate." He then returns to their appearance and habits: "In appearance they are like man, in behaviour like a gazelle, their nails like a swine and their hair like a sheep. Whatever they see, they devour. They are descended from Japheth." In the same chapter, Hamadani refers to the Sanjali, whom he identifies as a Chinese tribe. This tribe descends from Gog and lives on the coast of the Chinese ocean. He states: "they are extremely short of stature. They dive in the depth of the ocean [during the day] and come to the surface at night. They come in and out of the ships and do not harm anyone. Whenever they appear on the surface of the ocean, it is a sign of the ocean's restlessness and the ships will slacken

6 See E. Kettenhofen *in Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Darband.

7 For more information on this genre see S. von Hees, "The Astonishing: a Critique and Re-Reading of 'Ağa'ib Literature," in *Middle Eastern Literatures*, vol. 8, No. 2, July 2005, pp. 101-120.

8 For an elaborate treatment of Gog and Magog in the Bible see Sverre Bøe, *Gog and Magog: Ezekiel 38-39 as Pre-Text for Revelation 19, 17-21 and 20, 7-10*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

9 For the relation between Qazvini's and Hamadani's books, see the introduction to Hamadani's *Ajayeb-nama*, ed. J. Modarres Sadeqi, Tehran: Markaz, 1996, p. 18.

10 Mohammad ibn Mahmud Hamadani, *Ajayeb-nama*, ed. J. Modarres Sadeqi, Tehran: Markaz, 1996, p. 230.

the sails. When they dive in the water and disappear, the sea calms and the ships hoist the sails."[11] What is interesting in this depiction is that Hamadani distinguishes between Gog and Magog. According to Hamadani, Gog is an amphibious creature whom human beings need not fear. The Gog is beneficial, since he warns man of the rage of the ocean.

In another chapter on the "Wonders of regions and countries," Hamadani refers for the second time to Gog and Magog when he describes the rampart (*sadd*) made by Dhu'l-Qarneyn. When Alexander arrives in this region, the local ruler comes to him and complains: "Behind us, there are tribes who are short of stature, with broad faces, and they want to destroy our land. Alexander said: 'What is the reason?' The ruler answers: 'hostility is in their nature, we have never harmed them.'"[12] After this conversation between Alexander and the local ruler, Hamadani describes how Alexander builds an iron fortification:

> Alexander gathered twenty thousand smiths who placed innumerable layers of iron and bronze upon each other. Afterwards they placed a layer of copper upon them and then a layer of sulphur till these layers reached the top of the mountain. When this job was finished, people brought firewood for several years and placed it over the wall. Then they set fire to them so that the bronze would melt and the layers of iron and bronze would mix with each other.[13]

Hamadani links the wall ingeniously with the end of time motif, adding an apocalyptic character in his description:

> When the rampart became one unified whole, Alexander inscribed on it the following words: "We built this rampart by God's power. When eight hundred and six years passes after the coming of Mohammad the Arab, the wombs will be torn, the heart will be hard, people will shed blood unjustly, fornication (...) will appear, and man will take over the appearance of a woman and woman the appearance of a man, then a breach will appear in this

11 Hamadani, *Ajayeb-nama*, p. 230.
12 Hamadani, *Ajayeb-nama*, p. 449.
13 Hamadani, *Ajayeb-nama*, p. 449.

> rampart. There will appear so many creatures with short legs that they will cover the face of the earth. They will eat everyone and destroy everything. Then they will depart for the kingdom of Persian king Shapur. But it is here that he will kill them all.[14]

Hamadani goes on with another account of Gog and Magog:

> It is said that Caliph Vatheq dreamed one night that a breach had appeared in Dhu'l-Qarneyn's rampart. He was horrified. He dispatched Salam the Interpreter with a large army and a letter to the kings of Sarir and Arran. Salam says: "we travelled till we arrived at a region with black earth. It stank dreadfully. The ruler of Khazar advised us to rub vinegar on our faces so that no harm would come to us. After a long journey we finally arrived at a huge building made of iron, copper and bronze. Neither the height nor the breadth of the building can be described. It had a gate that was seventy cubits long. A lock of seven cubits was on the gate and above the lock a key of fourteen notches hung from the chains of the gate. There was a watcher who, with a group of horsemen with heavy axes, struck the gate every Friday so that on the other side of the gate Gog and Magog would hear and be afraid. When they struck the gate, they would place their ears on the gate. They could hear a huge clamour and would say, 'that it is the sound of Gog.'" Salam asked them: "has any of you ever seen Gog?" They answered: "One night, several Gog and Magog climbed to the top of the gate. A black wind blew and one of them fell in our land." When I counted [back, I realised] it was the same night that Vatheq had his dream. After this event, it took two years and four months for Salam to return to Samarqand.[15]

Another elaborate account of Gog and Magog appears in *Haft Eqlim* by Amin Ahmad Razi, who introduces elements we have not seen in Hamadani's description. For the sake of convenience I translate the text in full:

> According to many historians, Gog and Magog derive from Japheth, son of Noah. As each lineage migrated to one region of the world, they would start to cultivate the land. Gog and Magog

14 Hamadani, *Ajayeb-nama*, p. 449.
15 Hamadani, *Ajayeb-nama*, p. 450.

> chose to go the Eastern borders, to a place where the rampart (*sadd*) of Alexander was built, and a huge number of people were born to their line. According to Abdollah b. Umar, the children of Adam are divided into ten groups. Nine of these belong to Gog and Magog, and one tenth constitutes the rest of the inhabitants of the earth. In some accounts, it is said that Gog and Magog are two different tribes and each tribe is divided into four categories. No individual dies before giving birth to one thousand. As far as their appearance is concerned, they can be grouped into three classes. The first group concerns individuals who are 120 *gaz* tall,[16] but whose breadth does not at all correspond to their stature. The second group consists of people whose height and breadth are each 120 *gaz*. The third group comprises people whose height varies between one hand-span (*shibr*) and 40 cubits (*dhar'*). The latter group is also famous as the 'carpet-ears.' Even the elephant and rhinoceros are no match for Gog and Magog. Whatever wild and injurious animals they may encounter, they will survive. And amongst Gog and Magog, when someone dies, they eat their flesh. They cannot be regarded as a 'people,' they live in the same way as animals.[17]

In Razi's description, Gog and Magog are humans, descending from Noah's son Japheth [as also Hamadani]. He is familiar with various accounts of the builder whose wall kept them from the civilized lands:

> According to *Rowzat as-safa*, historians report that the rampart of Gog and Magog was built by Dhu'l-Qarneyn the Greater and some are of the opinions that it is one of the creations of Dhu'l-Qarneyn the Lesser. This is the same person as Eskandar b. Dara b. Bahman b. Esfaniyar who is also called Eskandar-e Rumi.[18]

By identifying a Greater and a Lesser Dhu'l-Qarneyn, the author leaves possibilities open to the reader but chooses his own interpretation. In his view, Dhu'l-Qarneyn is Alexander the Great, who descends from Persian kings. This descent is a commonplace in

16 F. Steingass writes: "a cubit, a length of 24 finger breadths, or six hands." See *Persian-English Dictionary*, London: Routledge, fifth edition, 1963, under gaz.
17 Amin Ahmad Razi, *Haft Eqlim*, ed., J. Fazel, Tehran: Elmi, n.d., vol. iii, pp. 515-16.
18 Amin Ahmad Razi, *Haft Eqlim*, p. 516.

Persian Alexander romances: Alexander's rule is placed in the Kiyanid dynasty and forms a full chapter in the Persian national epic, the *Shah-nama* (completed 1010), by Ferdowsi. It is here that the confusion about the identity of Dhu'l-Qarneyn starts. As indicated by M. Southgate, several Persian Alexander romances omit the episode in which Alexander is presented as the son of Philip's wife. In Persian romances the story begins with a battle between Alexander and Darab, Darius' father, who defeats the Greeks and marries Philips' daughter. Shortly afterwards, Darius finds that she has foul breath and sends her back to her father, at which time she is already pregnant of Alexander.[19] In the meantime Darius fathers another son who is named Darius, so that Alexander and Darius are half brothers.[20]
In the next excerpt, Razi elaborates on the building of the barrier.

> Alexander ordered them to make bricks of iron. They built the wall with those bricks upon which they poured melted copper. It is reported that the length of the wall is 100 *parasang* and its width is 50 *parasang* and its foundation has been constructed in such a way that it reaches the water. Its height is as high as a mountain. They have made a gate with two doors. The width of each door amounts to 60 cubits and its height is 70 cubits. The length of each gate is 5 cubits, which is made of zinc. They have put a lock on the gate whose length is seven cubits and it has a key measuring 7 cubits with 24 notches, and each notch is as big as a mortar. The king who is in those outer regions has arranged to go there every Friday with a group of strong-bodied men taking heavy axes with them. In one blow they hit those axes against the door and they make the locks shudder, to prove that this door is guarded. And also this is very well-known, that Gog and Magog go every day in front of the wall and attack the wall with teeth, tongue and claw until there is just a little bit left. Then, because they are getting tired, they leave it, saying, "when the morning comes we will make a breach." When they return next day, they

19 On the legend of Alexander's foul breath see D. Davis, "Sekandar, Skordion, and Darab's Queen's Bad Breath," in *Studies on Persianate Societies*, vol. 1, 2003, pp. 92f.

20 Minoo S. Southgate, "Portrait of Alexander in Persian Alexander-Romances of the Islamic Era," in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 97, No. 3, 1977, pp. 278-84, see especially pp. 279-80. Also see W. Hanaway in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Eskandar-nama. For a concise historical account of Alexander the Great in Persian see P. Briant in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Alexander; Claude-Claire Kappler, "Alexander dans le Shāh Nāma de Firdousi: de la conquête du monde à la découverte de soi," in *The Problematics of Power*, pp. 165-90; F. Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, chapter 4.4.1., pp. 184-85; D. Davis, "Sekandar, Skordion, and Darab's Queen's Bad Breath," in *Studies*, pp. 89-95.

> see the wall as it was before, by the power of Almighty God. Until Resurrection Day, this is what happens to them.
>
> And when it is time for their escape they will make a hole in the rampart and come out and spread themselves over the earth and eat any animal they find, and if one of them dies they will eat him too. They will become superior to all that lives at that time, and those who do not die at their hands will lock themselves up in fortifications. After that they will wage a war against almighty God and will launch their arrows to the heavens and by the power of almighty God the arrows, now blood-stained, will return. And they will be overjoyed at this, and will say: we have conquered the inhabitants of the earth and now we will also conquer the inhabitants of heaven. After that the praised and almighty Truth will send a worm to them, a worm called Fa^{c}f. These worms will creep into their ears and ruin them. And the people who had fled them and had gone into hiding in the mountains and in strong fortifications will return to their dwellings in joy. And after that the Almighty God will cause rain to fall upon them so that the surface of the earth is made clean of their filthy corpses, which are thrown into the sea.[21]

Razi's description of Salam's journey to the rampart follows the text of Hamdani quite closely but adds other material.

> And on the paths and in the kingdoms it is written that Caliph Vatheq dreamt that the rampart of Gog and Magog was opened. He sent Salam the Interpretor with fifty persons to examine the wall and Salam went from Samara to Armenia and from there to the lands of Arran and from that district to Bab al Abwab and from Bab al Abwab to the region of Khazar. The king of Khazar was called Tarkhan. He went to the persons who accompanied Salam. The group from Khazar went for 26 days until they reached a land where a bad smell was always penetrating the nose. For ten more days they travelled in that land until they reached a place where they could see a mountain, and a fortification on that mountain, but they did not find traces of habitation in that area. The Caliph's people passed that place and

21 Amin Ahmad Razi, *Haft Eqlim*, 516-17.

> travelled seven more stages until they reached two fortifications close to a mountain. The wall of Gog and Magog was situated in the ravine in that mountain. Although it was a narrow passage, it led to many open spaces and places. The whole of that land was encompassed by a strongly fortified fortress where the guardians of the wall of Gog and Magog lived. They were Muslims and they knew Arabic and Persian, but they were ignorant of the ruling Abbasid caliphs. However it may be, they entertained Salam for the day and on the next day they took him with them, for they had agreed to bring him to the wall. Salam saw a mountain and a river; on the mountain there was nothing growing and the near side of the river had been covered with stones. The fortress was built so high that it could not be any higher. After that, Salam was able to relax, he put the thought of the wall of Gog and Magog being broken from his mind. He hastened back to the caliph, and it is said that Salam's journey lasted two years and four months. [22]

In *Tarikh-e habib al-seyr* by Ghiyath al-Din b. Humam al-Din al-Huseyni, better known as Khwand Amir, one chapter is devoted to the character-traits of Gog and Magog, which diverges in minor ways from Hamadani's account. The points of difference are underlined:[23]

> It is reported in *Rowzat al-safa* that Gog and Magog were the sons of Motushalkh ibn Yafith b. Nūḥ. And as each lineage migrated to one region of the world, they would start to cultivate the land. Gog and Magog went to the farthest Eastern borders, near a place where the rampart (*sadd*) of Dhu'l-Qarneyn was built. They stayed there, and a huge number of people were born to their line. According to Abdullah b. Umar, the children of Adam are divided into ten groups, nine of them belong to Gog and Magog, and one tenth constitutes the rest of the inhabitants of the earth. In some accounts, it is said that Gog and Magog are two tribes, which are further divided into four hundred tribes. No individual dies before giving birth to one thousand offspring. As far as their appearance is concerned they can be grouped into three classes. The first group concerns people 120 *gaz* tall but whose breadth does not at all correspond to their stature. The second group consists of

22 Amin Ahmad Razi, *Haft Eqlim*, pp. 517-18.

23 From: Ghiyath ad-Din b. Homam ad-Din al-Hosayni (Khwand Amir), *Tarikh-e habib as-seyr fi akhbar-e afrad-e bashar*, Tehran: Khayyæm, n.d., p. 679.

> people whose height and breadth are each 120 *gaz*. The third group comprises people whose height varies between one hand-span and 40 cubits. The latter group is also famous as the 'carpet-ears.' Even the elephant and rhinoceros are no match for Gog and Magog. If any wild and carnivorous animals encounter Gog and Magog, they will not remain alive. One of their condemnable habits is that when someone dies, they eat their flesh. They have no religion (*millat*), knowing neither God nor His creation, living in the same way as animals.

PERSIAN ALEXANDER ROMANCES

In Persian Alexander romances, the figures of Gog and Magog play a significant role, mainly in the sections in which Alexander builds an iron gate to prevent them entering the civilised world. One of the oldest extant epic texts in New Persian that depicts the story of Gog and Magog extensively is Ferdowsi's *Shah-nama*.[24] In the section on the Kingship of Alexander, Ferdowsi tells how the inhabitants of Bakhtar complain about Gog and Magog. Here, Ferdowsi recounts how people inform Alexander about their fears: Gog and Magog have stolen repose, peace and sleep from them. Ferdowsi gives us a vivid picture of their appearance, their eating habits, their voices and their remarkable fecundity,

> All their faces are like the face of a dromedary
> their tongues are black, their eyes are full of blood.
> The colour of their faces is black, their teeth like those of swine.
> How could anyone dare to approach them?
> Their entire body is covered by hairs, such hairs as dark as indigo.
> Their body, chest and ears are like those of an elephant
> When they sleep, they make one ear a mattress
> while the other forms a blanket over their bodies.
> One thousand children will be born from each female,
> how can one count how numerous they are!
> When they come together, they are like quadrupeds
> When they gallop, they resemble wild asses.

24 See R. Hillenbrand, "The Iskandar Cycle in the Great Mongol Šāhnāma," in *The Problematics of Power*, 203-229.

In spring when clouds roar
and the green of the seas begins to bubble,
when serpents (*tinnin*) fall down from the sky
the air then shouts like a lion.
The clouds rain heaps of serpents
and many groups of Gog and Magog come to eat.
This is their food for each year
through which their chests and manes grow.
From spring onwards they eat plants,
they spread out in every direction.
When winter falls, they become emaciated
and they sound like the cooing of a pigeon.
In spring, see how they are roaring
like a wolf, or like colossal elephants.[25]

The picture is typical of the description of demons, enemies, and other wicked characters we encounter in Persian literature. They eat meat once a year in spring, which is enough to make them grow manly. During this season they behave like wolves and produce a roaring sound like a wrathful elephant. Ferdowsi's compatriot, Tabari, also mentions that Gog and Magog feed only on a kind of serpent (*tinnin*) which falls in spring from heaven.[26]

Ferdowsi's description is an effective summary of what we see in other literature on Gog and Magog. The authors were fascinated by the origin and procreation of Gog and Magog. While some believed that they originated from "Adam's nocturnal emission of semen mixed with earth," others were of the opinion that they were descended from "Eve's menstrual blood."[27] Another aspect of Gog and Magog was their overwhelming number, which caused horror in the civilised world: they were thought to outnumber humans nine to one.[28] Eating habits, appearance, and size complete the picture of horror.

The second part of Ferdowsi's accounts describes Alexander building the rampart, with considerable detail about the means of construction:

25 Ferdowsi, *Shah-nama*, critical edition based on M.N. Osmanov, ed. S. Hamidian, vols. 6-7, Tehran: Qatre, 1994, pp. 84-5, ll. 1430-1443.
26 E. van Donzel & C. Ott in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under Yadjudj wa-Madjudj.
27 See E. van Donzel & C. Ott in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under Yadjudj wa-Madjudj. In dictionaries, the word tinnin is explained to be a kind of serpent, a dragon or even a sea-dragon.
28 E. van Donzel & C. Ott in *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, under Yadjudj wa-Madjudj.

Alexander came to the mountain and looked at it;
then he brought a group of philosophers together.
He ordered that several smiths should be summoned
with huge hammers, copper, bronze
immeasurable quantities of limestone, stone, and wood
to be used in what they were going to build.
People brought everything that Alexander needed
so all was ready and his thought was at peace.
All the master builders and smiths of the world
then gathered around Alexander
to help him to build the rampart.
From each region a group of wise men gathered
building two walls from two sides of the mountain.
From the foot to the summit of the mountain
they built a wall whose breadth was 180 metres.
Two metres of this was built of charcoal
and two metres of iron with some copper laid on it.
Over all of the wall, they scattered sulphur.
This is the magic of a wise king!
They mixed a great volume of naphtha and oil
and poured it over the structure.
Then Alexander ordered them to place
a great mass of charcoal over the wall, and to set it on fire.
At the request of the conquering king
hundreds of thousands of smiths brought many pairs of bellows
The sound of the bellows reached the top of the mountains,
and the stars were frightened of the heat of the fire.
Thus some time passed after this event
of the burning of fire and the smiths' exertions
'till the substances melted together entire
by the heat of the fire that they had set.
The world was released from Gog and Magog
the earth became a flourishing and peaceful place.
The height of the wall was five hundred cubits
and its breadth three hundred.
Through Alexander's famous rampart
a world was relieved of evil.
The nobles praised him saying:
"May the world be not without you!"
They brought to the king great quantities

of all that they had in that region.
He did not accept any of it, for he was content with himself;
the world was astounded by his manner.[29]

In his Alexander romance, Nezami describes Gog and Magog, but without any elaboration on the rampart.[30] Alexander is journeying from China to the north when he comes across a community who ask him to free them from the assaults of Gog and Magog. When Alexander asks them who these creatures are, the people describe them as follows:

A group of people are in the steppes, their name is Gog.
They are like us human beings but have the nature of demons.
Like demons with iron hearts, and claws [as sharp as] diamonds,
they are like wolves: evil of nature, mixed in colour.
Their hair grows down from their heads to their feet
to conceal any sign of their faces.
Their claws and teeth are like those of a wild beast
ready to shed blood with tooth and claw.
When they gallop they can outstrip the wind;
they can bore through steel with their nails.
They walk and eat but do not thank [God]
there is not one among them who knows God. (…)
They have no occupation but eating and sleeping.
None of them dies without giving birth to a thousand.
A plant grows in their land
which is like pepper with hot seeds.
They feed on this plant day and night
and will not go anywhere; they sleep on the spot.
When the full moon appears, they grow excited
and come into motion like worms.
Then they eat whatever they find without fear;
this is their habit until the moon wanes.
When the waning moon passes from sight,
they all lose their greed entirely.
Each year a black cloud drops

29 Ferdowsi, *Shah-nama*, pp. 86-7, ll. 1453-75.
30 For general aspects of Nezami's Alexander romance see F. de Blois in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Eskandar-nama of Nezami; also see J.Ch. Bürgel, *Nizami. Das Alexanderbuch Iskandarname*, Persian Heritage Foundation series, 37, Zürich: 1991; idem, "Krieg und Frienden im Alexanderepos Nizamis," in *The Problematics of Power*, pp. 91-107.

oppressive serpents (*tinnin*) on their lands,
which are so big that they satisfy the hunger
of Gog and Magog in the steppe and mountains. (…)
They do not eat anything but leaves and the roots of plants;
They never fall ill 'till the day of their deaths.
When one of them dies,
the others all eat him.
In their desert there is neither a corpse
nor a grave to be seen.
The only virtue of their land is that it's free
from any cadaver or carrion.
Each time that they attack us,
they destroy our homes,
and plunder our sheep,
and eat all our edible things (…)
We flee from them to these high mountains,
like birds flying to a tree.
They do not have such legs
to bring us down from the top of the mountain.
If you could ward off these monstrous beasts,
you will be rewarded [by the Almighty]. (…)
Thus Alexander erected a rampart of steel,
which could not be broken till Judgement Day.[31]

Although Nezami follows Ferdowsi and other accounts by Persian authors, his treatment of Gog and Magog is less callous, allowing Gog and Magog to some human character traits. His description has many similarities with Mir Khund's depiction. Nezami opens his description by stating that Gog and Magog are like human beings but they have the disposition of a demon or a wolf, heartless and aggressive. Nezami refers to their long hairs but in a different way. In previous accounts, we read that the bodies of Gog and Magog were covered by hairs but in Nezami's depiction the hair on their head is so long that it reaches their feet and covers their faces. This means that Nezami does not need to describe their faces, which in other sources are compared to a camel. They have short legs. Nezami compares their nails and teeth and their bloodthirstiness to wild beasts. Another motif, which occurs

31 Nezami Ganjavi, *Iqbal-nama*, ed. V. Dastgirdi, Tehran: Armaghan, 1938, second edition, Ilmi, 1984, pp. 224-26.

in other literary accounts, is their ability to breach the rampart. Nezami mentions that they can make a hole in the steel.

There is an element of moral education here: they are uncivilised humans who do not care for their appearance and do not believe in any god or religion. They do not occupy themselves with any work which would make their land prosper or develop their intellect, they only eat and sleep, and have terrible table manners. Thus those who do not make efforts in these matters, are behaving like Gog and Magog. But there is also a critique of civilized excess: Gog and Magog eat meat once a year, and otherwise plants, and they never grow ill.

Nezami had more than hundred imitators, several of whom also composed an Alexander romance with the obligatory theme of Gog and Magog.[32]

GOG AND MAGOG IN PERSIAN DIVANS AND LITERARY PROSE

Gog and Magog also appear in other literary contexts. In the collected poetic works (Divans) of Persian poets, several references are made to Gog and Magog. Compared to other names that form an onomastic rhymed pair such as Harut and Marut, the references to Gog and Magog are very limited: they can usually be counted on the fingers of one hand in each divan. A number of poets such as Hafez never mention Gog and Magog. They usually appear as part of the 'harmonious imagery' that accompanies Alexander, Dhu'l-Qarneyn and the rampart. In addition to allusions to the 'historical' Alexander and his encounter with Gog and Magog and erecting a rampart, many references have a metaphoric character. In the following couplet from his ghazal number 314, Sana'i of Ghazna refers to the rampart and Gog to indicate that one should be like a barrier against carnal desire:

> Be a barrier (*sadd*) made by Alexander before the Gog of carnal desire and if you are searching for Paradise, do not exaggerate about your worldly power.[33]

32 See G.R. van den Berg, "Descriptions and images: Remarks on Gog and Magog in Nizami's Iskandarnama, Firdausi's Shahnama and Amir Khusrau's A'ina-yi Iskandari," in a forthcoming publication: *Nizami Ganjavi – Artistic and Humanistic Aspects of the Khamsa*, eds. Ch. van Ruymbeke &. Ch. Bürgel, Cambridge, forthcoming, 2007.

33 Hakim Majdud-e Adam Sana'i, *Divan*, ed. M.T. Modarres Razavi, Tehran: Sana'i, 1983, p. 986, l. 1.

Most of Anvari's references are to a hole made in the barrier. In these references, Anvari wonders how it could be possible for a person to make an opening in a barrier built by Alexander. In another poem, Anvari states how the rampart of Gog and Magog forms a prison for human beings at the end of time.[34] The poet Farid ad-Din Attar compares the power of imagination to Alexander's strong fortification.[35]

The same types of references that we encounter in Divans also occur in Persian literary prose. To give only one example, in a literary debate (*monazara*) between the eye and the heart, by Mohammad Zangi Bokhari, the heart accuses the eye of resembling Magog:[36] "Although you are the watch of the castle of the body, you are very drowsy; although you are the Alexander of the six dimensions, you are in reality the Magog of the wall of rebellion." Here, the heart compares the ability of the eye to see in all directions to the way that Alexander visited all corners of the world, but then refers to the eye as a rebel who wants to make openings in the wall. This is a reference to the eye's curiosity to see the unseen. In this treatise, the heart tries to establish its superiority to the eye, but each time the eye produces well-founded answers, often based on the Quran and traditions. In the entire debate, the heart protests against the eye and accuses it of being the cause of its pain. In such debates, the heart assumes the role of a suffering and captivated persona who is trapped in the arena of affliction while the eye shoots arrows without compassion. It is in this context of animosity and cruelty that the heart compares the eye to Magog.

From this brief survey, we can conclude that in Persian texts written between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, the authors rely more or less on the same material, but in each text they introduce some new elements. The image of Gog and Magog presented in Persian literature endorses the general idea of the enemy and of the barbarian in medieval Iranian world, and seldom mentions their eschatological role.[37] Gog and Magog are represented as ferocious hordes of terror threatening the civilised sedentary people. Although

34 Anvari, *Divan*, ed. M.T. Modarres Razavi, Tehran: Elmi, 1993, vol. II, p. 1043, qet'a 493, l. 13.
35 See Farid ad-Din Attar, *Divan*, ed. T. Tafazzuli, Tehran: Elmi va Farhangi, 2005, p. 18.
36 *Zanqi-nama*, ed. I. Afshar, Tehran: Khaja, 1993, p. 105.
37 Several character-traits of Gog and Magog are identical with descriptions of demons in Persian literature. See M. Omidsalar in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, under Div. Also compare W.R. Jones, "The Image of the Barbarian in Medieval Europe," in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 13, No. 4, 1971, pp. 376-407.

several accounts say that Gog and Magog are vegetarians and even harmless to human beings, their wild nature, cannibalism, feeding on serpents and carrion are generally foregrounded.

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Gog and Magog in Contemporary Shiite Quran-commentaries

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According to a well-known traditional view, to be found in both Sunni and Shiite Quran commentaries, the figure of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, who among other things built a wall to keep out Gog (Ya'jūj) and Magog (Ma'jūj), is no less than the famous Greek king Alexander the Great. In the twentieth century, however, this view was challenged rather strongly by Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī (1903-1981),[1] the most influential Quran commentator in modern Shiite Islam. In his monumental work, *al-Mīzān*, he deals extensively with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn and his exploits in his commentary on *Sūra* 18: 83-103.[2]

From the information provided by these Quranic verses, Ṭabāṭabā'ī deduces, first of all, that the person whose story is told, was known as "Dhū 'l-Qarnayn" before the revelation of the Quran. Secondly, he is obviously a man who believes in God and in the resurrection, as is obvious from the words "This is a mercy from my Lord" (18:99). Moreover, God made him a mighty king and gave him the power to make long journeys. He traveled to both the East and the West. During a third journey, to a place "between two mountains" (*bayn al-saddayn*), he met "a people who scarcely understood a word" (18:93); at their request he erected a "barrier" (*sadd*) to protect them against "the great mischief" of a cruel people or peoples, called "Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj." This impenetrable barrier, made of iron and copper, is situated neither in the East nor in the West. It closes off the mountain pass or defile, where the people who called for Dhū 'l-Qarnayn's help lived.

Classical historiographical literature, Ṭabāṭabā'ī continues, does not mention Dhū 'l-Qarnayn or Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. The latter, however, are mentioned in the Bible. From what we are told in Genesis (chapter 10), in Ezekiel (chapters 38 and 39), and in the Revelation of St. John (chapter 20), we may deduce that Ya'jūj and

1 For a short biography of this author cf. the Preface of *Shiite Islam* by ʿAllamah Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabā'ī. Translated from the Persian and Edited with an Introduction and Notes by Seyyed Hossein Nasr. London & New York 1975, 22-26.

2 *Al-Mīzān*, Vol. 13, 497-544. I have used the Persian edition, included in the CD-Rom Nūr al-anwār, version 2 (Qumm: Computer Research Center of Islamic Sciences)

Ma'jūj were a rapacious and murderous people (or peoples) who lived north of Asia. It is plausible that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn was a mighty king who blocked their path by building a barrier comparable to the Great Wall of China. Historians agree that North-Eastern Asia was inhabited by a fast growing ferocious people who were a constant threat to their neighbours, the Chinese being one of them. Sometimes they managed to penetrate as far as the Middle-East and Northern Europe, where some of them settled and led a civilized life. Others, however, returned and continued plundering and looting. Some historians therefore, basing themselves on Ibn Miskawayh's *Taḥdhīb ul-akhlāq* and on the treatises of the Ikhwān al-safā', are of the opinion that Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj were people who lived North of Asia.

Next, Ṭabāṭabā'ī deals with the question of who Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is and where the wall or barrier he built is to be found. He starts by reviewing several answers to this question. Some have suggested that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is the Chinese emperor Shih hunang-ti, who built the great wall, completed in 264 BC, in order to protect his people from the Mongols.[3] According to others, the wall was built by one of the kings of Assyria, which in the 7th century BC was invaded by the Scythians entering through a mountain pass in the Caucasus. They regularly plundered the capital Nineveh. In order to ward off these attacks, the king built a wall, possibly even the wall known in the Islamic tradition as the *Bāb al-abwāb*.[4] Both these opinions are unacceptable in the eyes of Ṭabāṭabā'ī, because they are at variance with what the Quran tells us. The latter also holds true for the prevailing view that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is Alexander the Great. Scholars such as Ibn Sīna (980-1037) and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (1149-1209)[5] hold this view, which is even supported by reliable traditions. Admittedly, Alexander made long journeys, and he ruled over large parts of the world. However, he was not the only king with such a vast empire. Moreover, in contrast to Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, he was not a believer in God and the resurrection, nor was he just and righteous. Finally, no history book tells us that he built a wall.

The identification of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn with Alexander the Great, according to Ṭabāṭabā'ī, is the result of mixing up two Alexanders.

3 As a matter of fact, in the 3rd century BC Shih huang-ti connected a number of existing defensive walls into a single system.

4 "'Gate of the Gates', the Arabic designation of a pass and fortress at the E. end of the Caucasus." (*Encyclopaedia of Islam* , n.e., s.v. Bāb al-abwāb)

5 Ṭabāṭabā'ī refers to Rāzī's "great commentary", i.e. his *Mafātīḥ al-ghayb or Kitāb al-tafsīr al-kabīr*. Cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, n.e., s.v. Fakhr-al-Dīn al-Rāzī

According to Ibn Kathīr's *al-Bidāyah wa'l-Nihāyah* there was a Dhū 'l-Qarnayn Alexander, whose father was the first emperor of Rūm and who was a descendant of Sām b. Nūḥ. He was a God-fearing and righteous king, whose minister (*wazīr*) was the prophet Khiḍr, and who went to look for the water of life. This Alexander was mistaken for Alexander of Macedon, son of Philip, who was a polytheist, with a philosopher as minister, and who lived almost 2000 years after the first one. However, Ṭabāṭabā'ī adds, in history there is no trace of an Alexander, who is supposed to have lived some 2000 years BC, to have been a God-fearing king and to have had Khiḍr as his minister.

Next Ṭabāṭabā'ī deals at some length with the view that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is to be identified with one of the Himyarite kings of Yemen. This view is held – albeit with different details – by, among others, Ibn Hišām in his *Sīra* and his *Tījān*,[6] al-Maqrīzī in his *al-Khiṭaṭ*,[7] and Abū Reyḥān Bīrūnī in his *Āthār al-bāqiyya*.[8] All agree that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn was a title borne by several Himyarite kings, but they differ as far as their exact identities are concerned. Al-Maqrīzī e.g. writes that his real name was Ṣaʿb b. Dhī Marāthid, a descendant of the prophet Nūḥ. He started off as a very cruel ruler, but later on in his reign submitted to God; in Jerusalem he met with Khiḍr and together they made long journeys to the East and the West. During one of the journeys Khiḍr discovered the fountain of (eternal) life and drank thereof, without saying anything to Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. The latter, during another journey, built the wall of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. According to Ṭabāṭabā'ī, al-Maqrīzī's story does not answer the question where this wall is to be found. It cannot have been one of the walls of Yemen or the neighbouring countries, because these walls, e.g. the famous wall or dam of Mārib,[9] were built for irrigational purposes or to collect drinking water, and not to prevent the intrusion of an uncivilized people. Moreover, in constructing these walls neither iron nor molten lead was used as in the case of the wall of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. Finally, there were no uncivilized people living in the neighbourhood of Yemen. In another version we are told that the Dhū 'l-Qarnayn of the Quran was a powerful, monotheistic, righteous Yemenite king, whose

6 Ibn Hišām is famous for his edition of the *Sīra* (Life of Muhammad) of Ibn Ishāq. His *Kitāb al-Tījān* is on South Arabian Antiquities (Encyclopaedia of Islam, n.e., s.v. Ibn Hishām).

7 Taqī al-Dīn Abū 'l-ʿAbbās Ahmad b. ʿAlī b. ʿAbd al-Kādir (1364-1442), an Egyptian historian, well-known for his *al-Mawāʿiḍ wa'l-iʿtibār fī dhikr al-Khiṭaṭ wa'l-āthār*, commonly known as Khiṭaṭ. This work deals with the topography of al-Fusṭāṭ and Cairo as well as with Alexandria and Egyptian history in general (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, n.e., s.v. al-Maqrīzī).

8 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, n.e., s.v. Bīrūnī.

9 *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, n.e., s.v. Mārib.

original name was Šamaryarʿaš. At the head of a large army he travelled first to the West, to Egypt and beyond, and then turned to the East, to Turkestan and China. It was probably during the latter journey that he met a people who requested him – since Yemenite kings are well-known for their skill in constructing walls – to build them a wall to prevent Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj descending upon their country. So this wall is to be identified, at least partly, as the Chinese wall. This Dhū 'l-Qarnayn was also the one who, during his journey to the East, built Samarqand, which was originally called Šamarqand. That Dhū 'l-Qarnayn was an Arab king is corroborated by the fact that in the Quran, Arabs inquired after Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, whereupon his story is told as a lesson and an example for the Arabs. Since Arabs are usually not very much interested in the history of other peoples, Dhū 'l-Qarnayn would not have been mentioned in the Quran – as the kings of Rūm, Iran or China are not mentioned in the Quran – had he not been an Arab.

The problem with this view, Ṭabāṭabā'ī writes, is that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn cannot have built the Chinese wall, since he lived many centuries before Alexander the Great, while the Chinese wall was built after Alexander. This problem cannot be solved by assuming, as the author of the *Tafsīr-i Jawāhir* did, that the Quranic Dhū 'l-Qarnayn must be identified with a Yemenite king who lived much later. In the eyes of Ṭabāṭabā'ī the identification of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn with a Yemenite king is not convincing, since the stories about the kings of Yemen belong to the genre of stories told in coffeehouses, which are not based on sound historical evidence.

The view that appeals most to Ṭabāṭabā'ī is that the Quranic Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is no less than Cyrus, the founder of the Achaemenid empire. He conquered first Babylon and then Egypt and afterwards he marched to the East. According to Ṭabāṭabā'ī, this idea was first put forward by a near-contemporary scholar, whose name is not mentioned, and was later developed by the Indian scholar Maulānā Abū Kalām Āzād (1888-1958).[10] In his Quran commentary, Ṭabāṭabā'ī borrows Āzād's view and elaborates upon it.

The reason for Ṭabāṭabā'ī's preference for the identification of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn and Cyrus is that the historical data about Cyrus

10 On this influential Muslim scholar and politician cf. *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, n.e. (Supplement), s.v. Āzād, Abū 'l-Kalām. He is the author of a celebrated Quran commentary, entitled *Tarjumān al-Quran*. The latter work was unfortunately not available to the present writer. The available English translation does not cover the Quranic passages dealing with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn.

match the Quranic description of Dhū ’l-Qarnayn very well. Like his Quranic counterpart, Cyrus was a pious man, a monotheist, who believed in the hereafter, as is clear from the Old Testament. In Isaiah e.g. it is said:

> Thus saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden, to subdue nations before him; and I will loose the loins of kings, to open before him the two leaved gates; and the gates shall not be shut; I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron: And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I, the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.[11]

Cyrus’s piety is also borne out by inscriptions dating from the time of Darius. He was a magnanimous and noble ruler, as can be seen from the way he behaved after conquering a country: he granted the defeated people forgiveness, treated their leaders with respect, protected the weak and punished criminals. Jewish literature praises Cyrus highly because he ended the Babylonian captivity and even provided the means for rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem. In Ezra we read:

> Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD God of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Who is there among you of all his people? His God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem, which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel, (he is the God,) which is in Jerusalem. Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.”[12]

Verse 7 adds:

11 Isaiah 45:1-4 of the King James version.
12 Verses 1:2-4 of the King James version.

> Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods.

Greek historians such as Herodotus speak highly of Cyrus and mention his chivalry, compassion, unselfishness and generosity.

As to why Cyrus should be called Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, Ṭabāṭabā'ī finds a clear answer in the archeological evidence. He points out that a statue was recently discovered in the South of Iran, representing a figure with two horns on his head. According to classical historiography, Cyrus wore a crown or headdress with two horns. This is also confirmed, Ṭabāṭabā'ī adds, by the Old Testament, where Daniel describes a vision in which he saw Cyrus in the form of a ram with two horns.

> In the third year of the reign of King Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first. And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river of Ulai. Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and, behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns: and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last. I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.[13]

In an explanation of this vision Daniel is told "The ram which thou sawest having two horns are the kings of Media and Persia."[14]

The statue Ṭabāṭabā'ī refers to is almost certainly a carving at Pasargadae that has been analysed by David Stronach. In Stronach's words, the carving "shows a four-winged, closely bearded male figure facing left, i.e. inwards towards the centre of the building. The figure bears a crown on its head, attached to a close-fitting ribbed cap." On this crown two "long twisted horns of an Abyssinian ram" are to be seen. What Stronach considered to be "the four-winged guardian

13 Daniel 8:1-5.
14 Daniel 8:20.

figure"[15] is in the eyes of Ṭabāṭabā'ī the Achaemenid king himself, who is then identified with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn because of the two horns of his crown.

Concerning the journeys of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, he is said to journey to the West, "Until, when he reached the setting of the sun, he found it set in a spring of murky water" (Quran 18:86). Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains that this corresponds with Cyrus' campaign against Lydia in Asia Minor: the Quranic phrase "near it he found a people: We Said 'O Zulqarnayn (thou hast authority,) either to punish them or to treat them with kindness'" (18:87) shows that Cyrus' campaign was motivated by his wish to end an uprising and to do justice. Dhū 'l-Qarnayn's journey to the East, "Until, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people for whom We had provided no covering protection against the heat" (18:90) is Cyrus' journey to Bactria, undertaken to subdue wild peoples, who were terrorizing the whole region.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī then explains that in the mountains of the Caucasus there is a dam or wall built in a mountain pass. This pass, called Dāryāl, connects North and South, and via this pass malicious people from the North used to invade the South and plunder countries such as Armenia, Iran and Assyria. Historians mention that Cyrus undertook an expedition to the North of Iran to suppress a revolt. During this expedition Cyrus, at the request of local people, built a wall or dam, which is the only dam in the world in which iron is used. This wall is not to be confused, Ṭabāṭabā'ī adds, with the so-called *Bāb al-abwāb,* which is situated in the neighbourhood of the Caspian Sea.[16]

The words Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj are of Chinese origin, Ṭabāṭabā'ī explains, and designate the Mongols in a generic sense of the word, i.e. including different historical manifestations of this ferocious people (Scythians, Huns, Mongols), who from their original homeland in North-East Asia repeatedly attacked the civilized world through the Dāryāl pass, until they were stopped by a dam, built by Cyrus.

Ṭabāṭabā'ī admits that the view put forward by Abū Kalām Āzād, although it is more consistent with the Quran than other

15 *Pasargadae. A Report on the Excavations Conducted by the British Institute of Persian Studies from 1961-1963*, Oxford, 1978, 47-50.

16 According to *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (n.e., s.v. Bāb al-abwāb), 'the Gate of the Gates', the Arabic designation of a pass and fortress at the East end of the Caucasus, in Persian Darband, later under Turkish influence 'Iron Gate', mod. Derbent. The 'Gates' are the mouths of the E. Caucasus valleys, al-Bāb itself ('the Gate') in the main pass being the most important. It was originally fortified against invaders from the North at some date not determined, traditionally by Anūshīrwān (6th century A.D.), who is said to have built a wall seven farsakhs in length from the mountains to the sea.

interpretations, is not undisputed. He addresses the question of how the ferocious appearance of the Mongols in the 7th/13th century can be harmonized with the Quranic verses "… when the promise of my Lord comes to pass, He will make it into dust, and the promise of my Lord is true. On that day We shall leave them to surge like waves on one another" (18:98-99). If Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj cannot cause havoc as long as the wall exists, where was the wall when the Mongols overran the civilized world in the 13th century? Moreover, what is the meaning of a dam or wall in our day and age, when barriers, whether natural or manmade, no longer seem to play an important role? The answer lies in the correct interpretation of the words "He will make it into dust" (*da kā'a*). This should be interpreted as "losing its meaning", "becoming irrelevant." Therefore, the promise of the Lord is essentially the promise that the human race will make progress, implying that the different peoples and races will draw closer to one another and will no longer be separated by walls and dams. This is confirmed by the verse "Until the Gog and Magog (people) are let through (their barrier), and they swiftly swarm from every hill" (Quran 21:96). Another possible interpretation is that the wall or dam disappeared underground or was inundated, since the Arabic verb *dakāa* can also mean "to bury." Ṭabāṭabā'ī, however, prefers the first interpretation.

Two examples will suffice to show that although his Quran commentary, *al-Mīzān*, exerts a dominating influence in contemporary Shiite exegesis, Ṭabāṭabā'ī's equation of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn with the Achaemenid king Cyrus has not entirely supplanted the classical view that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn is Alexander the Great, among modern Shiite Quran exegetes.

This classical view is to be found a Quran commentary written by the female theologian (unfortunately hardly known in Western scholarship) Banū Amīn Eṣfahānī (1895-1983),[17] under the title *Makhzan al-ʿirfān*.[18] According to her, Alexander of Macedonia was known for his bravery and courage and the Arabs therefore compared him to a ram and its horns, hence the name Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. Other explanations of this name, given by people not versed in science and history, are nonsensical and not worth mentioning. Bānū Amīn

17 For biographical and bibliographical information on her see Nahīd Ṭayyebī, *Zindigānī-yi bānū-yi īrānī. Bānū-ye mojtahede Nosrat al-sādāt Amīn*, Tehran 1380/2001.

18 This work was published in 1404AH/1349Sh in 10 vols. (Tehrān: Ḥarakat al-nisā' aL-moslimāt). I have used the edition to be found on the CD Jāmeʿ, Tehrān: Khāne-ye ketāb, n.d.).

Eṣfahānī acknowledges that the title Dhū 'l-Qarnayn was also given to other people, e.g. to Wajīh al-Dowle Hamadānī, whom the Fatimid ruler al-Ẓāher bi-amr Allāh appointed as governor of Iskandariyya in 414 AH, and who died in 428 AH. But the Dhū 'l-Qarnayn mentioned in the Quran is Alexander the Great. He was a just and god-fearing king and, according to some, even a prophet. When, during one of his travels, "he found a people who scarcely understood a word" (18:93), he was able to communicate with them because God had given him the capacity to understand their language, as Solomon had been given the capacity to understand the language of the birds. According to another interpretation, Bānū Amīn adds, these people had in their midst an interpreter to communicate with Dhū 'l-Qarnayn. So they were able to ask him to free them from the evil of Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. Although Bānū Amīn states that their identity is known only to God, that does not prevent her providing some details about their physical appearance and other qualities. They are either extremely tall or extremely short. A tradition going back to the prophet Mohammad tells us that no one of these people dies without leaving behind a thousand heavily armed sons.[19]

Bānū Amīn also mentions that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, after building the wall, went on till he reached a very pious and righteous people. Their front door was always open, because, so they explained, there no thieves among them. No one was poor and they had no leaders, because their behaviour made every form of leadership superfluous. They buried the dead at the entrances of their houses, so as to be constantly reminded of the finiteness of life. Out of fear of committing a sin, they never laughed, and they were always asking God's forgiveness. Neither were they ever sad because they had surrendered completely to what God had preordained for them.

In another Quran commentary, written by the influential cleric Makārim Shīrāzī (born in 1345/1927),[20] Ṭabāṭabā'ī's influence is paramount. In his *Tafsīr-e namūne*,[21] he deals with the same questions Ṭabāṭabā'ī raises (Who was Dhū 'l-Qarnayn? Where is his wall to be found? Who are Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj?), and gives more or less the same answers. Only occasionally does he comment on Ṭabāṭabā'ī's view or

19 Similar details are given by Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī (1627-1698) in his *Ḥaqq al-yaqīn* (Teheran, 1332, 475-476), where we are told that some have such big ears that they used one ear as a mattress and the other as a blanket.

20 Biographical and bibliographical information on this well-known grand ayatollah is to be found on his website (www.amiralmomenin.net).

21 I have used the version on the CD-Rom mentioned in note 2. The CD-Rom Jāme' contains the edition that was published in Tehrān: Dār al-eslāmiyye, 27 vols., 1352/1973-1366/1987.

add details. For example, the latter's view that God's promise, mentioned in 18:98 ("He will make it into dust, and the promise of my Lord is true.") refers to the progress of mankind, is in the eyes of Makārem Shīrāzī a little far-fetched. And in his commentary on 18:93 ("he found a people who scarcely understood a word"), he remarks – as does Bānū Amīn Eṣfahānī – that Dhū 'l-Qarnayn may have been able to communicate with these people either through an interpreter or because he was given the capacity to understand their language, as Solomon was given the capacity to understand the language of the birds.

The main difference between Ṭabāṭabā'ī and Makārem Shīrāzī is that the latter explicitly examines the didactical points of the story of Dhū 'l-Qarnayn and Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj. The first lesson is that nothing on earth happens unless we use the possibilities given by God. Moreover, the story can serve as a lesson for governments in several respects. Like Dhū 'l-Qarnayn, a government must both reward and punish; it must take into consideration the different conditions of life of its subjects. Security is one of the most important conditions for a healthy social life. As Dhū 'l-Qarnayn did not accept the money offered to him by the people who had asked him to build a dam, political leaders must not concern themselves with material profit, but be content with what God puts at their disposal. On the other hand the sequel of this verse ("Help me therefore with strength [and labour]") makes it clear that people in distress must actively participate when being rescued. From the solid way in which Dhū 'l-Qarnayn built the wall, using iron and copper, we can learn that in everything we do, we must proceed in the most thorough manner. Like Dhū 'l-Qarnayn who, having built the wall, acknowledging that it was a mercy from God, we must not be proud and haughty, we must always appreciate God's might. Finally, we must acknowledge that everything on earth is transitory and finite, even if it is built from iron and copper.

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Juja-Makjuja as the Antichrist in a Javanese End-of-Time Narrative

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IT'S GOG AND MAGOG, BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT

My intention in this chapter is to discuss an intriguing Javanese narrative poem from the pre-modern colonial period, composed at the Central Javanese court of Surakarta, in which a terrifying figure called Juja-Makjuja plays a dominant role in an eschatological war at some unspecified time in the future. Students of Islamic literature will have no difficulty in recognizing the Arabic names Ya'jūj and Ma'jūj (also known as Yājūj (wa-)Mājūj) or 'Gog and Magog', but this Javanese depiction of Juja-Makjuja does not conform to the conventions of apocalyptic imagery in other parts of the Islamic world. For one, in contrast to received lore which distinguishes two forces of chaos, this Javanese story dwells on the theme of Juja-Makjuja as a single demonic 'Other,' being the Embodiment of Evil so to speak. Furthermore, Juja-Makjuja's portrayal as Jesus's grandson and a mix of other idiosyncratic narrative elements give this opaque Javanese writing an unmistakeably exotic feel, so that Islamologists of the prescriptive persuasion may call its 'Islamness' into question – mistakenly so, as I hope to show.

Sharing the sorry fate of the vast majority of pre-20th-century Javanese literature, this story too is still buried in manuscript collections, and has only been perfunctorily described for cataloguing purposes. In 1881, Johannes Gunning was the first academic to briefly touch on it in his Leiden doctoral thesis, stating that it entailed a 'curious story about the Prophet Ngisa' (Gunning 1881: XIII). After having provided some idea of its contents on the basis of his reading of the MS Cod. Or. 1795 kept in the Leiden University Library, he concluded that the narrative was 'far from preaching the orthodox creed.'[1] Apparently, 'orthodox' Islam (whatever that may be) counted as the real thing for Gunning. He had a low opinion of Javanese mystical texts: confessing that he often groped in the dark when

1 In fact, his judgement extended to all the poems contained in the Leiden MSS Cod. Or. 1795 and 1796, see Gunning (1881: XIV).

puzzled by unintelligible lines, he nonetheless opined that much of Javanese 'priestly' literature merely contained *onzinnig gebeuzel*, or 'senseless twaddle' (Gunning 1881: XV).

A decade later, when the first ever comprehensive catalogue of Javanese manuscripts appeared, its compiler Vreede (1892: 314-315) simply referred to Gunning. Somewhere in that same decade, however, the Javanologist Jan Brandes (1857-1905) in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) commissioned a (handwritten) copy of the Leiden MS Cod. Or. 1795, which after his death entered the collection of the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences as part of the Brandes bequest, now housed in the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta (Behrend 1998: 103). This four-volume copy, registered as Br 399a-d, was described by the Leiden-trained Javanese philologist Poerbatjaraka in one of his catalogues (Poerbatjaraka 1950: 139-151). The Leiden MS Cod. Or. 1795 was again described in Pigeaud's monumental *catalogue raisonné* of Javanese MSS in Dutch public collections, but Pigeaud devoted relatively few words to it, since Poerbatjaraka had already made an extensive summary of its contents (Pigeaud 1968: 27-28).

A preliminary question to ask is whether examining the poem on Juja-Makjuja is worth the effort. Not if we rely upon the judgement of Poerbatjaraka (1884-1964), arguably one of the most erudite and best informed experts on Javanese literature. In his rather lengthy synopsis, Poerbatjaraka did not conceal his deep annoyance with the tale. He lamented the 'monotony' of some of the poem's descriptions, and pointed to several 'mistakes' in an altogether 'confused' story. His final verdict was that "reading such allegorical fantasies or fantastic allegories is for me like observing an unpredictable lunatic."[2]

In this, Poerbatjaraka can be said to stand in a long academic tradition initiated by the 18th-century Enlightenment thinker Immanuel Kant of a 'rational crusade for truth' against 'mystagogues' (cf. Benjamin 1998: 15). Predictably perhaps, prophetic visions of Judgment Day and eschatological scenarios relating to the expectation of an impending end of the present order tend to provoke grumbling from sceptic rationalists. As Marina Benjamin (1998: 83) put it in her book on apocalyptic mythology, for some people, and not only those outside of learned circles, the fundamental question surrounding this kind of literature is "not about what sort of sense it makes, but about

2 "Lectuur van dergelijke allegorische fantasieën of fantastische allegorieën is voor mij als het observeren van een onberekenbare geesteszieke" (Poerbatjaraka 1950: 145).

whether it makes sense at all." Benjamin (1998: 39) speaks in this respect of a "tug of war between reason and mystagoguery." Poerbatjaraka's reduction of the story to the symptoms of a madman's biography is reminiscent of Kant's practice of pathologizing prognosticators. In the latter's 1766 *Träume eines Geistersehers* ('Dreams of a Spirit-Seer') he wrote: "Therefore, I do not at all blame the reader, if, instead of regarding the spirit-seers as half-dwellers in another world, he, without further ceremony, despatches them as candidates for the hospital, and thereby spares himself further investigation" (quoted in Kuehn 2002: 172).

In my opinion, however, Poerbatjaraka's problem of non-understanding has much to do with his personal mindset and the state of philology at that time. Not only did Poerbatjaraka have a rather low opinion of religion *per se*, his Orientalist 'golden-age-and-decline' perception of literary history deeply coloured his criticisms.[3] For example, it was his firm conviction that older texts that had been copied by scribes at the court of Surakarta – the very place where he himself was born and bred – were as a rule 'completely corrupted' (*geheel bedorven*).[4] Haunted by a quest for 'origins' and 'purity', a latter-day text such as the poem on Juja-Makjuja could not but disappoint an Orientalist connoisseur like Poerbatjaraka, who looked disdainfully at any 'post-Golden Age' creative reworking of pre-existing material through a poet's own imagination. Literary invention, in which elements from different sources were adapted, altered and arranged in a new order, was not seen as a demonstration of literary and rhetorical skill, but simply condemned as 'wrong'.

However, as I shall argue in this chapter, although the Javanese narrative poem on Juja-Makjuja may strike us as a tale full of sound and fury, it was certainly not told by an idiot, signifying nothing. To begin with, I offer an outline of the story, basing my reading on the Leiden MS Cod. Or. 1795. Next, I address the question of its textual location in this convolute manuscript, which is closely related to the problem of dating the narrative. Finally, I propose to read the text against the background of the traumatic experiences of Surakarta court circles with their Dutch overlords at the beginning of the 19th century.

3 Cf. the 'psychogram' by De Graaf (1981: 9-12), esp. the concluding paragraphs.

4 Poerbatjaraka (1938:146) made this remark in connection with Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1795 and 1796. I mention this because the poem on Juja-Makjuja is contained in Leiden Cod. Or. 1795.

I will suggest that Gunning's assertion about the low degree of 'Islamness' has no foundation.

THE PATH TO GOD

The poem is untitled in the MS, and my designation for it, 'poem on Juja-Makjuja,' is no more than shorthand to embrace a much larger narrative. In total, the story comprises twelve cantos (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Canto structure of the poem on Juja-Makjuja (Leiden Cod. Or. 1795)

Canto	Page	Verse Form	Stanzas	Initial Line
1	369	asmaradana	86	Brangtanira angawruhi
2	391	sinom	36	Kocapa kori punika
3	403	durma	26	Ki Luamah tangginas anulya ngerbat
4	409	dhandhanggula	14	Angsung pémut nenggih kang anulis
5	415	mijil	109	Dèwi Aruman tumurun aglis
6	439	pangkur	61	Asadat sarwi sulukan
7	456	maskumambang	61	Kawarnaa ingkang atengga ing kori
8	467	pocung	61	Tetaliné sarwa mas pinuncung luru
9	478	kinanthi	76	Kang angiring sang retnayu
10	498	durma	58	Yata Ngisa lèngsèr saking ngarsaning-wang
11	510	dhandhanggula	35	Yen angidhep marang jeneng mami
12	524	pangkur	50	Lintang tiba kadya udan

The narrative can be seen to be divided into three parts, viz. (1) an allegory concerning the four grades of the mystic path (cantos 1-4), (2) a story about the sickness of the Tree of Life (cantos 4-9), and (3) God's revelation to Muḥammad regarding the near future (cantos 9-12). It is only in the third and final part that Juja-Makjuja makes his appearance.

The first part, dealing with personifications of the fourfold path to God (*Sharīʿa, Ṭarīqa, Ḥaqīqa* and *Maʿrifa*), is preceded by a prologue, in which it is clearly stated that the formal, ritual aspects of Islam should not be neglected along the journey. All Muslims are bound by obligations under *sarak* (from Arabic *sharʿ*) or 'the sacred law:'[5]

Sapa nora anglakoni	Who does not perform
iya paréntaking sarak	the obligations of religious law
nora jumeneng Islam	cannot be called Islamic.

At one point, viz. in canto 4:1, the poet even interrupts the story to make contact with the public, emphasizing once more the necessity of observing the five prescribed prayers:[6]

Asung pémut nenggih kang anulis	Verily, this writer gives a warning
marang sagung kang samya mamaca	to all those who are reciting
miwah kang miyarsa kabèh	and all those who are listening:
ing siyang lawan dalu	Neither by day nor by night
ing pangèstu aja gumingsir	should you refrain from the prayers.

These authorial admonitions are of great consequence for our interpretation of the story as a whole, in that they show that whatever differences from Middle Eastern Islam we may discern in this poem, there is no ground for *a priori* concluding, as is so often done, that Islam in Java, especially at its courts, was never more than a thin veneer.

The narrative begins as an allegory of ideas centring on what may be called a conflict about the division of labour. At first, the five *ṣalāt* or prescribed prayers are discontent with their position vis-à-vis two voluntary prayers (*witr*), and complain about the unclear division of

5 Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1795, p. 369, canto 1:3. A similar exhortation to strictly follow the sharia can be found in the prologue of another poem in this ms on pp. 223-225, which is duly described by Poerbatjaraka (1950: 141) as 'Aansporing van de schrijver tot het stipt volgen van de Sarak'.

6 Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1795, pp. 409-410.

roles. Ngisa or 'Night Prayer' (from Arabic *ṣalāt al-Ishā'*) even becomes enraged:[7]

kaé Ngisa saha sru mojar	Then Ngisa spoke loudly,
nedha tinata gawéné	and asked that their tasks be properly arranged,
andum karya wong lilima	distributing the work between the five persons.

Ki Sarèngat or 'The Honourable Sharīʿa,' who is the leader of the five prayers, will bring the dispute before God.[8] Other groups, too, are unsatisfied with their work situation. In accordance with the usual Javanese quadripartite division of the mystical path, the other leaders who have to act as advocates are Ki Tarékat ('The Honourable Ṭarīqa'), Ki Kakékat ('The Honourable Ḥaqīqa') and Ki Makripat ('The Honourable Maʿrifa'), respectively (see Figure 2 for an overview of the 'persons' involved in the legal argument).

Figure 2: Cast of Characters

Leader/Advocate	Complainants	Accused
Religious Law: Sarèngat (Sharīʿa)	Five daily prescribed prayers: Luhur, Ngasar, Mahrib, Ngisa, Subuh	Two voluntary prayers: Minalwitri and Kawalwitri
Path: Tarékat (Ṭarīqa)	Ki Badan (Body), Ki Osik (Intuition), Ki Nyawa (Spirit), Ki Kalbu (Heart), Ki Budi (Mind), Ki Tepsila (Good Manners)	Consciousness and Resignation: Ki Èling and Ki Panarima
Reality: Kakékat (Ḥaqīqa)	The senses: Ki Paningal (Sight), Ki Pangucap (Speech), Ki Pengambu (Sense of Smell), Ki Pamirsa (Hearing)	Belief and Thoughts: Adhep and Idhep
Gnosis: Makripat (Maʿrifa)	Five souls: Ki Nyawa, Ki Atma, Ki Nukma, Ki Murcaya, Ki Cahya	Eternity and Declaration of the Oneness of God: Ki Langgeng and Ki Tokid (Ar. tawḥīd)

7 Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1795, p. 372, canto 1:13.
8 The Javanese word *ki*, which I have rendered as 'the honourable', is a male title of respect.

This cast of characters raises many questions to which I have no ready answers. For example, why is Ki Nyawa ('soul, spirit, life') represented in both groups two and four? Or, why does group two consist of six 'persons' whereas group three, with the senses, only has four? Shouldn't all groups of complainants ideally have five members? What is Ki Pangucap or 'The Honourable Speech' doing in a section which is made up of the senses, commonly categorized as sight, smell, hearing, touch (missing here), and taste (also absent)?

However that may be, the advocates go to heaven in order to plead their cases before the throne of God. The four brothers Sarèngat, Tarékat, Kakékat and Makripat enter the celestial abode through different gateways that are guarded by personifications of the *napsu* (from Arabic *an-nafs*) or 'passions' (see Figure 3).

Figure 3: The grades in the mystic path and the corresponding passions

Sarèngat	Aluamah
Tarékat	Amarah
Kakékat	Suwiyah
Makripat	Mutmanah

This episode, of course, allegorises the mystic's movement on the path to God which, to use the words of Annemarie Schimmel (1975: 112), "consists of a constant struggle against the *nafs*, the 'soul' – the lower self, the base instincts, what we might render in the biblical sense as 'the flesh.'" Following Javanese usage, however, I prefer to use the term 'passion' for *napsu*. In Javanese philosophy the division in four different levels is well-known. *Napsu Aluamah* (from Ar. *nafs al-lawwāma*, 'the blaming soul; conscience') has the meaning of 'greedy desire' and is associated with selfishness. *Amarah* is the second *nafsu*, which means 'the desire that incites anger' (originating from Ar. *nafs al-ammāra*, 'the soul that incites to evil'). The etymology of the third passion, *Suwiyah*, which in other texts is also spelled *Supiyah*, is unclear, but it is generally understood as the lust that gives rise to amorousness, erotic desire and attraction to beauty.[9] Finally, the fourth passion, *Mutmanah*, coming from Arabic *nafs al-muṭma'inna*, 'the peaceful soul', is the desire to do good deeds and seek God.[10]

9 Soebardi (1975: 195) suggests two potential etymologies, viz. Ar. *sawiyya*, 'right, correct, even, harmonious, etc.' and Ar. *ṣafiyya*, 'clear, pure, serene', favouring the latter possibility.

10 For an extensive discussion of the *napsu* in Javanese mysticism, see Hadiwijono (1967), passim.

Sarèngat is the first to tread the path to God, but moving very slowly he only arrives in heaven after his brothers have arrived. Angered that his brothers were quicker and that they have received better gifts, Sarèngat gives Aluamah a secret sign to get hold of their portion. Aluamah attacks the three brothers of Sarèngat, trying to get their presents. Great upheaval ensues before God's throne, and the three other gatekeepers rush inside to overpower Aluamah. Outside the throne hall, the followers of the four brothers attack Aluamah, and finally the latter can be arrested. After he has shown remorse, he is kept under surveillance by the five *ṣalāt*.

Up to this point, the narrative is not very different from other Sufi explications of spiritual progression. It will come as no surprise to readers conversant with Sufi tropes to read, for instance, that Makripat was the first to reach God's throne, whereas slow-paced Sarèngat was the last. Makripat is the most humbly dressed of the four brothers, and is after all the highest and noblest of the four relatives/stages. This expression of the idea of onward movement towards God is part of the stock repertoire of Javanese poets and mystics. Perhaps the notion of growing affinity is nowhere more poignantly put into words than in a risqué comparison to the love of a man for a beautiful woman, which the 19th-century messianic preacher Malang Yuda once jotted in his personal notebook:[11]

Sarèngat is the initial stage when a man falls in love on account of hear-say.[12]
Tarékat is the next stage when he gets to know her personally. The rumours appear to be true, and his amorousness increases.
Kakékat is the third stage when he is enthralled by her beauty, and her every wish is his command.
Makripat is the last stage when the moment has finally come of 'making love' (*apulang-yun*), which is described in the orgasmic terms 'beyond feelings, when nothing is to be seen' (*tan ana rasa rumasa, tan ana ingkang kadulu*).
Imaginative descriptions of the four stages of the path can also be found in other parts of the Islamic world, and need not concern us here. Structurally, the depiction of the upward motion is a typical tale

11 I found this comparison in Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 11.663, p. 7, which contains Hendrik Kraemer's notes on MS Malang Yuda A3. On Malang Yuda and his teachings, see Drewes (1925), passim.
12 The text has *pawarta*, that is, 'news, message; rumour.'

of heavenly ascension (equally a staple in Islamic literatures, based on the archetypical *mi'rāj* or heavenly journey of the Prophet Muḥammad), "with all the classic elements of passing through the heavens, seeing the angels, and reaching the throne of God" (Ernst 1998: 133). The poet continues the trope of the ascent to heaven in the second part of the narrative.

Angelic Experiences

After the episode in which Aluamah runs amok, attention is suddenly drawn to a miraculous tree called Sanggabuwana which is guarded by Princess Dèwi Aruman. This second part of the narrative, too, is rather difficult to comprehend in all its details, but if we concentrate on the main issues the basic idea will become clear. The term *sanggabuwana*, meaning 'Buttress of the Cosmos,' has various connotations in Java, but in Surakarta it happens to be the name of the royal meditation tower, in which the king had his encounters with his spirit-consort Nyai Lara Kidul, the Queen of the Southern Ocean.[13] The tower as well as the tree of the same name can be regarded as a connector to the Other World. The tree Sanggabuwana is the Tree of Life, uniting the Upperworld with the Underworld, having its roots deep in the Underworld and reaching with its tip into heaven. This Tree of Life, however, is very ill, and Princess Dèwi Aruman does not know what to do about it. God has promised her that if she looks after Sanggabuwana well, she will become the 'Queen of Heaven' (*dadi ratuning swarga wanudya punika*), but now the tree is starting to die.[14]

The princess's role as keeper of the Tree of Life may be better understood if we note that Aruman is also the name of the angel of death in some Javanese stories. Reading the Islamic imagery in this second part in conjunction with other Javano-Islamic writings has the advantage that this literature can be perceived through the imaginative eyes of a contemporary reader. The angel Aruman, commonly described as 'fine' or 'with a beautiful fair skin', has the task of ordering the dead bodies in the grave to write down all their deeds. To the predictable remark of every corpse that he or she does not have any writing utensils, Aruman's standard reply is that he or she can use

13 Sanggabuwana is *inter alia* also the name given to the standard of the *wayang* (shadow play) screen, see Rassers (1982: 48). For other meanings, see the dictionary of Gericke and Roorda (1901, vol. I: 900 under *sangga)*.

14 Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1795, p. 413.

the shroud as paper, saliva as ink, and a finger as the reed pen.[15] According to Muslim tradition literature, the angel of death, generally identified with ʿIzrā'īl (called Azrael in Western literature), keeps a roll on mankind, but does not know when each person will die. An individual's death is signalled by a leaf on which the person's name is written falling from the tree beneath God's throne. The angel of death then reads the name and has the task of separating that person's soul from his or her body.[16]

The central notion toward which the poem is working seems to be the idea that the end of time is near. Is the imminent death of the Tree of Life not a gloomy foreboding of the extinction of all life on earth?[17] Ki Sarèngat talks with his sister Sarpiningrat (perhaps from Arabic *Sārafīn*, 'Seraphim,' while the Javanese ending means 'of the world') about how to treat the tree, but he does not have a solution, and refers to Ki Tarékat, who appears to be no wiser. Finally, due to the intervention of Ki Makripat (in canto 6) the tree can indeed be cured.

The rest of canto 6 is taken up by conversations between Ki Makripat and the 'angelic' ladies Sarpiningrat and Aruman (beginning on p. 452). I agree with Poerbatjaraka (1950: 144) that the contents of the deliberations are very obscure, but as far as I can understand it, the main point is that Ni Aruman wishes to be informed of the will of God, upon which Ki Makripat advises her to go through the 'nine-tiered heaven' (*swarga kang tundha sanga*) in order to enter God's presence.[18] Put differently, she longs for divine knowledge or *maʿrifa*. The scenery (which Poerbatjaraka's résumé entirely ignores) is pregnant with symbolism: the cryptic dialogues take place on Mt ʿArafāt (*gunung Ngarpat*), that is, the hill east of Mecca, also known to pilgrims as *Jabal ar-Raḥmāt* or 'Mountain of Mercy.'[19] In Sufi discourse the name ʿArafāt is considered as a derivation of the root ʿ-

15 Van der Tuuk (1897:124 under Aruman) gives rather long citations from mss. In other stories this role is fulfilled by Kariman, see Van der Tuuk (1899:109) with excerpts from Malay texts. Ultimately, these names of course go back to Ar. Kirām al-Kātibīn (lit. 'the Noble Writers'), that is, the two angels who have to record every person's good and evil acts.

16 For a succinct description of the angel of death within the Sunni tradition, see Smith and Haddad (1981: 34-37).

17 For a brief discussion of the tree motif in apocalyptic literature in general, denoting movements in time (in either forwards or backwards directions), see e.g. Amanat (2002: 6-7).

18 *Ni* is a female honorific corresponding to the male title ki. The expression 'nine-tiered heaven' is used in Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1795, p. 455.

19 Mountain symbolism in any case plays a large role here, but a discussion of this aspect is beyond the scope of this essay. For example, Poerbatjaraka (1950: 144) also omits the detail that when Sarpiningrat and Aruman implore the help of Ki Tarékat, the latter is located on Jabal Kat or 'Mt Kat' (perhaps an abbreviation of *tékad*, 'determination, resolve,' see Gericke and Roorda 1901, vol. I: 458 under *kat*).

r-f-, that is, 'to know' in an intuitive or gnostic sense, and hence equated with *maʿrifa*. A major focal point for the *ḥajj*, ʿArafāt is also the place where both God's distance and nearness are believed to be most acutely felt.[20]

Here Mt ʿArafāt serves as the best available metaphor for the pilgrimage. It is from this location where Sarpiningrat and Aruman undertake their vertical pilgrimage, ascending to the divine presence. The tale of their passing through the different heavens is rather long and rich in details – 'very monotonous,' according to Poerbatjaraka (1950: 144). The poet clearly revels in name-dropping, using such outlandish terms as *Wahadiyat* to denote a certain heaven, *Salukat* for a celestial gate or *Jurumiyat* for one of the angels.[21] The changeover between the second and third part occurs suddenly in canto 9:3, in which the narrator, after giving a panoramic overview of heavenly luminosity, shifts the focus to God and Muḥammad:

3. *Sarwa éndah warnanipun*	Everything looked beautiful,
sakèhé isining swargi	the complete contents of heaven.
samya winangun sadaya	Everything there
padhang sumirat lir thathit	was dazzlingly bright, flashing like lightning.
wau kang lenggah winarna	Let us tell about those who are sitting,
kang wonten ing makmur kadim	those who are located in the eternal abode.[22]

God's Revelation to Muḥammad

In the next stanza the dialogue between God and Muḥammad begins, which fills the rest of the story:

4. *Allah timbalanipun*	God spoke

20 For a fuller discussion of these connotations of ʿArafât in the context of a Malay mystical poem, see Wieringa (2005:394-396).

21 *Wahadiyat* could perhaps stand for Ar. *wahidiyya*, which is a technical term in the emanation doctrine of seven stages of being, see Zoetmulder (1994: 106-108), but this grade is normally rendered *wakidiyat* in Javanese. *Salukat* has a number of meanings: it may denote different musical instruments, but is also a certain pin in the edge of a roof, see Gericke and Roorda (1901, vol. I: 828-829). *Jurumiyat* could perhaps be interpreted as 'the Observer' (from *juru*, 'person who performs a certain job' and *miyat*, 'to see, look at'). Other Arabic-sounding names are e.g. the heavens Murdawiyat and Rumawiyat, the gates Jaléka and Handariyah, the angels Rèhwan, Jabariyah, and Jahnam.

22 The word *makmur*, which does not occur in Javanese dictionaries, is borrowed from Arabic (*al-maʿmūr*).

dhateng ing nabi kekasih	to His beloved Prophet:
(…)	(…)

The poet devotes no more words on Sarpiningrat and Aruman, he concentrates on the divine description of future events, which is in fact a revelation of God, who wants to prepare Muḥammad for his task of taking over the Prophet Ngisa's rule in Asia (*jagat Ngasiya* or 'the Asian world,' as it is called in canto 9:5). Upon Muḥammad's question about what the Prophet Ngisa (from Arabic ʿĪsā or Jesus Christ) looks like, God gives the following answer (canto 9:16-17):

16. (…)	(…)
mangka Allah ngandika rum	Then God spoke sweetly:
Muhkamad tanya ing mami	"Muḥammad, you asked me
ing warnané Nabi Ngisa	about the appearance of the Prophet Ngisa:
datan ana madhani	he is incomparable.
yèn ngadeg mèh sundhul ngakasa	When he stands, he almost reaches the sky.
yèn petak lir gelap muni	When he screams, his voice is like a thunderclap."
17. (…)	(…)
yèn dhèhèm obah kang bumi	"When he coughs, the earth is in turmoil.
yèn waing lir gelap sasra	When he sneezes, it is like a t housand thunderclaps.
yèn segu genjot kang bumi	When he hiccups, the world shakes."

God explains to Muḥammad that Ngisa had indulged in earthly pleasures and completely forgotten about God, even imagining that he was God himself (canto 9:25):

25. *Banget laliné maringsun*	He no longer thought about me at all.
malah ngaku jeneng mami	He even claimed that he was me,
angaku purba-wisésa	claiming omnipotence,
mangka susumbaré iki	and he even boasted
tan ana amadhanana	that he was incomparable
ing jagad Ngasiya iki	in the Asian world.

God points out to Muḥammad that only He is the Almighty. He is the Pancreator, creating everyone and everything, including Ngisa. God wanted Ngisa to repent his boasting and therefore He sent a flood to devastate Asia. Everyone was drowned, but Ngisa could save himself in a ship. His son Panahan tried to get away by climbing to the top of Mt Qāf (called *jabal kap ardi*, canto 9:45). He refuses, however, to board Ngisa's ship, who thereupon does not want to acknowledge him as his son anymore. The deluge covers the mountain, and Panahan is swept away in the floodwaters. Ngisa asks God for forgiveness for the sin of having passed himself off as God. After confessing the Oneness of God (*tokid*, from Arabic *tawḥīd*), God forgives him and immediately restores Asia to its former state, allowing Ngisa to return there.

In this episode we easily recognise a creative retelling of the Quranic story of Nūḥ or Noah and the Flood.[23] Panahan can be identified as Kanʿān, who according to Quran commentators was a son of Nūh. In spite of the latter's pressing appeal, this son refused to take refuge in the Ark and thus lost his life in the Flood with the unbelievers. In all probability the poet must have thought of Mt Qāf, the world-encircling mountain in Islamic cosmology, as the site of this father-son drama, but the Javanese public may have understood the expression *jabal kap ardi* in a more local meaning. In Javanese storytelling 'Jabal Kap' is also the name of a legendary country of spirits. Also known as *wukir* ('mountain') Kap or Kab, and *ardi* ('mountain') Ekap, it is the realm of a white figure categorized as *danawa* or *buta*, that is, 'demon, giant.'[24] Etymologically, the word 'Kap' goes back to Dutch *Kaap*, that is to say, the Cape of Good Hope, a former Dutch colony in South Africa, which was used by the 'white ogres' as a place of banishment until it came under the control of the British in the early 19th century.

In canto 10, God tells Muḥammad that Panahan had a son in the east, called Juja-Makjuja, who not only had the same demonic appearance as his grandfather Ngisa, but also repeated the latter's sin by posing as God. On God's orders the angel (!) Dulkarnèn tied him up with a hundred ropes, but Juja-Makjuja liberated himself using his

23 Poerbatjaraka (1950: 145), apparently not too well-versed in the Quran, writes that the poet has confused Christ with Moses here.

24 This legendary kingdom occurs in the Javanese story *Asmarasupi*. A summary of its plot (based on Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 1798) can be found in Vreede (1892: 189-194). My reading of this text is based on another MS, viz. PB B. 42 of the Museum Sonobudoyo in Yogyakarta (described under project number L 49 in Behrend 1990: 243), where the expressions *sang danawa putih* (canto 2: 26) and *si buta putih* (canto 2: 30) are used.

tongue. Eventually, he was put in chains that he could not lick away completely, due to the prayers of the faithful. Here echoes from the Dhū'l-Qarnayn tradition, that is, a series of motifs belonging to the *Sīrat al-Iskandar* or 'Biography of Alexander,' are clearly discernible.[25] Javanese versions of the story of Alexander from the court of Surakarta end with the episode of Sultan Iskandar's building an iron wall to keep out Gog and Magog, but, as he warns his followers, this barricade will fall when the Day of Judgement is near, because it will be licked by the sharp tongue of Makjuja (Ricklefs 1998: 51-52; 97).

The motif of the 'Wall against Gog and Magog', which has given rise to a wide range of interpretations in literature from all over the world, has found a remarkable expression in Javanese belles-lettres in that the two malevolent peoples have been merged into a single demonic 'Other.' Juja-Makjuja is an avatar of al-Dajjāl or the Antichrist. In the Javanese system of classification, both apocalyptic figures, whose coming is one of the Signs of the Hour, belong to the same category: marked by physical deformity, they are monsters located at the extreme margins of the known world, conceptualising the boundaries of human norms. It is not known when and where this transformation first emerged, but in the 19th century the term Juja-Makjuja or Jujamajuja was already an established name for a devil who would be killed by the Prophet Ngisa at the end of times (Gericke and Roorda 1901, vol. II: 416).

Juja-Makjuja appears, for example, as 'king of the devils' (*ratuné iblis*) in a story about Aji Saka, which circulated during the 19th century on Java's North Coast. Aji Saka is the legendary culture hero from whom the Javanese are said to have received their first civilization, including writing and the calendar. The name Aji Saka means 'King Saka', from Sanskrit *śaka*, that is, the Śaka era. He travels to Arabia, meeting the 'king of devils' on the way.[26] Juja-Makjuja's demonic appearance is described in the following terms:[27]

25 The term 'Dhū'l-Qarnayn tradition' was coined and discussed by Doufikar-Aerts (2003: 3.1, 118 et sq.). For Javanese versions (dating from the 18th century) of the so-called *Carita Iskandar* or 'Story of Iskandar', see Ricklefs (1998: 51-52; 97). The specific historical background of the 1729 version is discussed in Wieringa (2000: 177-206). Another important source for the 'Dhū'l-Qarnayn tradition' is the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbīyâ'*, known in Javanese under such titles as *Serat Anbiya*, 'Book of the Prophets,' *Tapel Adam*, 'Formation of Adam,' and *Carita Satus*, 'Hundred Tales [about the Prophets].'

26 For a brief discussion of the Aji Saka legend, see Gonda (1998: 78). References to his appearance in Javanese manuscript literature can be found in the index of Pigeaud's catalogue under 'Aji Saka' (Pigeaud 1970: 165-166).

27 Leiden University Library Cod. Or. 5789a, p. 17; canto 5:4-5 in the verse form *Sinom*. Poensen (1869: 196) gives a slightly different translation of this fragment. Contrary to what one might expect,

(…)	(…)
dedegé ageng aluhur	He was of broad and tall stature.
aran Juja-Makjuja	His name was Juja-Makjuja.
siyung ngisor garit langit	His lower fangs scratched the sky,
siyungipun kang luhur anggarit lemah	while his upper fangs scratched the earth.
Nétrané lir surya kembar	His eyes were like twin suns.
rémanya *agi<m>bal bu<n>tit*	His frizzy hair was in wild tangles.
swarané lir galap ngampar	His voice was like rattling thunderclap.
angagem gada medèni`	He was armed with a terrifying club,
anganggo kreré wesi	wearing steel chain mail.
(…)	(…)

This portrayal is remarkably close to that of Ngisa and his grandson in the poem on Juja-Makjuja under discussion (cited above).

God further informs Muḥammad that, at the birth of his grandson, Ngisa had vowed that Juja-Makjuja would one day succeed him in Asia, but God orders Muḥammad to rule there instead. God reassures Muḥammad by saying that He has repeatedly made it clear to Ngisa that Muḥammad would be his successor. Juja-Makjuja, however, has the ability to change his form (young and old, little and large, etc.), so that many people are misled by his appearance. But, as God reveals to Muḥammad in canto 11, Juja-Makjuja and his cohorts will surely end in hell. God instructs Muḥammad in all kinds of esoteric knowledge, so that the Prophet feels well-prepared to take up his task. He receives weapons such as a forked pike (*canggah*) and a trident with the awe-inspiring name of 'The Face Hitter' (*Si Pamener Muka*), in addition to a sceptre and throne as royal regalia. All inhabitants of Asia, however, still follow Juja-Makjuja. As Juja-Makjuja is close to breaking his chains, an iron fort is made in the country Jaminambar to keep him

Juja-Makjuja is cast in this North Coast story as a benevolent mentor, conferring supernatural powers on Aji Saka and imparting esoteric knowledge to him. Juja-Makjuja only plays a supporting role, quickly disappearing from the scene as suddenly as he had appeared. See Pigeaud (1968: 343) for a synopsis of the story.

imprisoned.[28] Asia is in ruins: mountains have collapsed and seas have dried up.

In the final canto, which begins with the line 'stars are falling like the rain' (*lintang tiba kadya udan*), God continues his depiction of the cosmic upheaval. Asia is now waste and void, and only Mecca and Medina have been spared. Then God decides to send four 'messengers' to earth to fight Juja-Makjuja, viz. Ngali Salipin, Sadarkawat Ibrahim, Umar Kilir, and Dulkarnèn.[29] Juja-Makjuja flees to the East, and perforce withdraws to a fort which is floating in the sky, called Ima-ima(n)taka.[30] The revelation concludes with God's warning to Muḥammad that when the latter arrives in Asia, Juja-Makjuja will disguise himself as Abu Sokyan.[31] In the form of a religious student (*santri*) Abu Sokyan will pretend to attend Islamic education in Mecca, but in reality he will attempt to bring down Muḥammad by committing treason.

THE LITERARY CONTEXT AND THE PROBLEM OF DATING

This third part of the narrative is by far the most complicated. Who, for example, was intended by the treacherous Abu Sokyan? Does he represent someone from the time of the author? If, however, Abu Sokyan is to be identified with Abū Sufyān (b. Ḥarb) – perhaps only appearing here under another name due to a simple scribal error – the narrator would appear to have been turning the clock back at the end of his futuristic tale: the villain Abū Sufyān, the real leader of the aristocratic party in Mecca hostile to Muḥammad, is known as one of the Prophet's toughest enemies, but he died in the seventh century

28 The Javanized toponym Jaminambar is composed of two elements, viz. the Persian word zamīn ('region, country') and the name (al-)ʿAnbar, hence simply denoting the al-ʿAnbar province, but in 19th-century Javanese literature it was not recognized as such anymore, and merely designated a far-away infidel place, see Van der Tuuk (1912: 412 under *jamin*; 413 under *jaminambar*, and 618 under *mungkarun*). Incidentally, Van der Tuuk (1901: 13) mentions an episode in another narrative which shows remarkable parallels with the story on Juja-Makjuja. According to Van der Tuuk, in a story belonging to the immense body of works surrounding Amir Hamza, there is a king of Jaminambar called Saésalam who poses as God. This figure even has a hell and a heaven complete with angels.

29 According to canto 12:4, four persons were sent: 'as for My messengers who are descended, there are four of them' *(déné utusaningwang kang tumurun sakawan kongkonaningsun).*

30 Canto 12:36. Poerbatjaraka (1950: 145) has tacitly corrected the spelling into Ima-imantaka. In classical Javanese poetic language the words *ima* and *imantaka* are synonyms for 'cloud, mist, fog', but Ima-imantaka is the name of a fabulous country in Javanese literature, being the residence or mountain of the giant king Niwata Kawaca (Gericke and Roorda 1901, vol. I: 160 under *ima).*

31 Poerbatjaraka (1950: 145) erroneously has Abu Sokya (in his older spelling 'Aboe Sokja').

CE.[32] But then, assuming that somehow Abū Sufyān is intended here, it is probably more likely that we are dealing in this case with 'the Sufyānī', that is, a descendant of Abū Sufyān who figures in both Sunni and Shiite apocalyptic prophecies as the rival and opponent of the Mahdī, but who is ultimately (of course) defeated by him. According to some traditionists, the name of the Sufyānī is 'Urwa b. Muḥammad and his *kunya* Abū 'Utba. However, the material on the apocalyptic Sufyānī figure is particularly rich and by no means clear-cut.[33]

Theoretically, a possible approach at decoding the text would be to attempt to read history through the apocalyptic material. However, Poerbatjaraka's verdict on its incomprehensibility (cited above in the introduction), flowing from the pen of an eminent scholar with rare intimate knowledge of the Surakarta court, may serve as a reminder that allusions to contemporaneous events or persons are practically untraceable. What can we say about the time of the text's composition?

In any case the latest possible date for the poem is the year 1836. The text was copied in that year, together with many other poems, in a work of two bulky volumes totalling 967 pages (vol. 1: pp. 1-477; vol. 2: pp. 478-967). The manuscript, now registered as Cod. Or. 1795 in the Leiden University Library, was originally part of the 'Delft Collection' consisting of codices which were copied in the 1830s and 1840s at the court of Surakarta under the supervision of the government translator, Carel Frederik Winter (1799-1859), to serve as teaching and reading material for aspiring colonial civil servants at the Royal Academy in Delft. A considerable number of MSS were copied in neat Surakarta palace script, which came to fill the shelves in Delft in an impressive series of stout leather-bound volumes. When the Delft institute closed in 1864, and the education of East Indian officials was transferred to Leiden, the so-called Delft collection was incorporated in its entirety in the Leiden University Library.[34]

The opening stanza of the first text provides important information about the genesis of the manuscript:[35]

32 Renard (1999: 47, 128-129) briefly discusses Abū Sufyān on the basis of a famous Swahili poem, the 'Epic of Abd ar-Rahman and Sufyan.'

33 For a general discussion of al-Sufyānī, see Madelung (2004: 754-756). On the internet many fanciful accounts can be found, see e.g. http://www.inter-islam.org/faith/mahdi1.htm

34 In total, the Delft collection comprises the MSS Cod. Or. 1786-1838, 1841, 1843-1874, and 1875-1882 (Vreede 1892: v).

35 University Library Leiden Cod. Or. 1795, volume I, p. 1.

Ri sedhengnya wasita ginupit	When this instruction was composed, when
wasita duk sinawung serkara	it was expressed in the verse form 'Sugar Crow',
Buda Cemengan parengé	it was at Wednesday, the market-day Legi,
wulan ping sangalikur	the twenty-ninth of the month,
sasi Sawal ing taun Alip	the month was Sawal in the year Alip,
narengi wuku Sungsang	coinciding with the *wuku* Sungsang,
sengkalanya ngétung	the year calculated in the chronogram was
bahning rasa giri tunggal	'the fire of the sensation is like a mountain, like a single one.'
kang pinangka bubukanireng palupi	As opening of the underlying text [36] functioned
Suluk Purwaduksina	the Suluk Purwaduksina.

As is not uncommon in Javanese manuscript literature, the calendrical details involved in dating the manuscript are rather extensive, but there is no need to discuss all of its arithmetic intricacies here. Suffice it to say that the four chronogram words are unproblematic, viz. *bahni* or 'fire' (3), *rasa* or 'sensation; feeling' (6), *giri* or 'mountain' (7), and *tunggal* 'one and the same' (1), which yield the year 1763 *Anno Javanico*. The Javanese date can be converted to 17 February 1836 CE.

Not only the first text, but the major part of the codex consists of so-called *suluk*s, that is, poems on mystical Islamic themes. The compiler of the bundle does not explain the selection or arrangement of the texts.[37] There is rarely an attempt to link the different texts together, as is done for example in the final stanza of the *Suluk Purwaduksina* where we find the following announcement of the second *suluk* in this 'reader':[38]

36 For the meaning of the term *palupi* as 'original' or 'older, underlying text' (in the sense of *Vorlage*), see Wieringa (1999: 252).
37 For the seemingly 'haphazard' nature of *suluk* anthologies, see Wieringa (1993: 362-373).
38 University Library Leiden Cod. Or. 1795, volume I, p. 27.

Titi tamat kandhané kang tulis	The writing of this story is finished,
caritanèki Purwaduksina	that is, the story of Purwaduksina.
amung iku wekasané	This is its end,
wonten malih sumambung	but it will be continued
suluk kang layan rinipta malih	in the form of another suluk.
nanging dèn-raosena	You should, however, reflect upon
caritaning suluk	the story of the *suluk*.
sampun pijer amemaca	Don't just thoughtlessly recite it,
rasakena rasané kang dèn-rasani	but reflect upon the deeper meaning that is discussed.
yèn tan wruh pagurokna	If you don't understand it, consult a guru.

After this intermezzo, the text continues with the *Suluk Suryalaga*, which is cast in the same verse form 'Sugar Crow' (*Dhandhanggula*).

The Jesuit priest Petrus Zoetmulder (1906-1995) is hitherto the only scholar to have made extensive use of the Leiden MS Cod. Or. 1795. In his 1935 Leiden doctoral thesis this MS, together with the undated Cod. Or. 1796, which is clearly a companion volume, provided the main sources for his analysis of what he called 'pantheism and monism in Javanese *suluk* literature' (Zoetmulder 1935). Considered to be still the most important book-length analysis of this literary genre, it has been translated into Indonesian (Zoetmulder 1990) and English (Zoetmulder 1995). One of its major flaws, however, is the learned theologian's ahistorical and essentializing approach to *suluks*, ignoring historical development and specific contexts in favour of emphasizing 'timeless' mystical ideas which are evaluated against non-Javanese standards.

The texts in the Leiden MS Cod. Or. 1795 (continued in its 'supplement' Cod. Or. 1796) display a bewildering array of religious ideas and perspectives – a point to which Zoetmulder (1995: xiv-xvii) in the introduction of his study immediately draws attention. In one passage, Zoetmulder (1995: xv) duly remarks, we are reminded of the mystic ecstasy of al-Hallāj, in another passage the doctrine of emanation is stressed. Plowing through the 967 pages, we find *inter alia* the relatively old *Suluk Wujil*, that is, a poem of Ceribon origin (on Java's North Coast), in which Sunan Bonang (one of the nine apostles of Islam in Java) has a number of colloquies on various

esoteric subjects, including the eponymous Wujil, a dwarf. The high-quality discussions in the *Suluk Wujil* involve such complicated issues as 'being and non-being,' which are dealt with in a technical language derived from Arabic.[39] On the other hand, there are also such outrageous texts as the *Suluk Lebé Lonthang*, in which the eponymous *lebé* ('village mosque official') Lonthang behaves like a madman, mocking the sharia and all moral norms.[40]

It may well be, then, as Zoetmulder (1995: 309) has claimed, that the Surakarta compiler wanted to cover the whole gamut of *suluk* literature, though I think that Zoetmulder's pronouncement that we find here 'what is most representative of the best of Javanese mysticism' is exaggerated. In my opinion, the anthologist merely selected those mystical texts that happened to be available in the court collections. All texts in Leiden Cod. Or. 1795 are anonymous (as is usual in Javanese manuscript literature), with the exception of two relatively short poems by a local composer. In both poems, in a nearly identical prologue of five stanzas, its author introduces himself as Ki Mas Suryarini alias Mas Sumawardaya from the Mangkubumèn quarter in Surakarta.[41] His first poem, beginning with the line "In the verse form 'Sugar Crow' the poem is composed" (*Peksi serkara riniptèng kawi*), is about the last days of the ill-stricken Prophet Muḥammad before his death. This subject gives rise to a discussion of the indications of death, but also of the soul's journey through the different spheres. The second poem, beginning with the line "The signal to this writing is like honey" (*Kadya madu sasmitaning tulis*), alluding to the verse form 'Sugar Crow,' is a melange of concepts that are employed in mystical discourse, such as speculations about letter mysticism and the ubiquitous dyad of 'being and non-being' (*nafi-isbat*).

39 The *Suluk Wujil* has attracted the attention of a number of scholars, see e.g. Poerbatjaraka (1938), Zoetmulder (1935) and Drewes (1968: 212-220). A few years ago, a scholarly edition appeared in Indonesia, viz. Widyastuti (2001).

40 This poem is discussed in Zoetmulder (1935: 264-272; 1995: 230- 238), but, typically for his time and profession, leaving out its 'obscene' lines, without which in my opinion the interpretation is severely hampered. See Wieringa (2001: 129-146) for a complete translation and accompanying analysis.

41 In the fourth stanza of his first poem he mentions his place of residence: 'At the time when the composition of this song was begun / it was in Mangkubumèn in the city of Surakarta' (*Duk pinurwa gitaning kintaki / Mangkubumèn nagri Surakarta*), Leiden Cod. Or. 1795, p. 734. The same information is repeated literally in the fourth stanza of the second poem, but in the sixth stanza of the latter poem he mentions his name: 'The author is Ki Mas Suryarini / alias Mas Sumawardaya / who lives in Mangkubumèn (*Kang amurwa Ki Mas Suryarini / gih punika Mas Sumawardaya / dumunung ing Mangkubumèn*), Leiden Cod. Or. 1795, p. 808.

According to Poerbatjaraka (1950: 149), the first poem can be dated around 1800. He may have based this conclusion on its prologue, in which the poet mentions the poems *Asthabrata* ('The Eight Ways of Life') and the *Wulang Rèh* ('Teachings on Right Conduct') as his sources of inspiration. Both didactic works are classics in Javanese literature, but whereas there are too many versions of the *Asthabrata* to allow for the fixing of a certain date (cf. Weatherbee 1994:414-415), the *Wulang Rèh* is ascribed to the Surakarta king Pakubuwana IV (reg. 1788-1820), and can be exactly dated, viz. 4 February 1809 (Florida 1993: 185).

It is tempting to see in Ki Mas Suryarini alias Mas Sumawardaya the author of the poem on Juja-Makjuja. The themes of his poems, dealing with ascension and mystical terminology, show some similarity with the poem on Juja-Makjuja (at least with its first and second parts). Concrete proof of his authorship is, however, lacking: the poem on Juja-Makjuja does not mention the name of its writer and, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the technique of *sandi asma* or 'hidden name, cryptogram' is not used.[42] The year 1809, however, is in my opinion the earliest possible date of the underlying manuscript (*Vorlage*) of Leiden Cod. Or. 1795.

THE BARBARIC DUTCH

Although there are no obvious references to historically datable events, the third, eschatological part of the poem on Juja-Makjuja can be regarded, I think, as a veritable mirror of the historical situation at the beginning of the 19th century as seen from the perspective of a Surakarta courtier. In the period between the years 1809 and 1836, when this story was probably first put on paper, the Surakarta court was suffering a considerable loss of power due to the Dutch imperialist encroachment on Javanese state and society. Leaving aside the *histoire événementielle* of those years, which anyway is too full of events to be recounted in a few words, a brief look at the overall picture may help us to understand what was happening at that time.

After the VOC or 'Dutch East India Company' was formally dissolved on 1 January 1800, the early 19th century witnessed a new phase of Dutch overseas ambitions. A new process set in, which the historian Peter Carey (1976: 52) has summed up in the following

42 For more information on *sandi asma*, see the very informative article of Slamet Riyadi (1989: 27-43).

terms: "the change from the 'trading' era of the Dutch East India Company, when contacts with the central Javanese kingdoms had had the nature of ambassadorial links, to the 'colonial' period when the kingdoms occupied a subordinate position to the Dutch." In retrospect, the so-called Java War, which gripped the island between 1825-1830, proved to be the last stand of the Javanese aristocracy. After 1830, the Dutch were securely in control of Java, pulling the strings of power well into the mid-20th century.

Unsurprisingly, the Surakarta courtier who penned the poem of Juja-Makjuja viewed the Dutch usurpers as a completely alien, intrusive element, whose presence was throwing the existing order into disarray. As John Renard (1999: 129) has written in his thematic survey of pan-Islamic literature, "[p]erhaps no story symbolizes the fear of the outsider better than that of Iskandar's building the wall to contain Gog and Magog. In this instance, the villain is a hybrid of the fearsome unknown and the malevolent foreigner whose expansionist proclivities must be checked. Gog and Magog bear the additional heavy burden of eschatological doom-terror, for their appearance on the scene signals the victory of chaos over cosmic order."

There can be no doubt that Juja-Makjuja represents the barbarian Dutch colonial administration here. The classification of European officials as 'demonic ogres' (known in Javanese as *buta*, *reksasa* and *denawa*) can also be found in other contemporaneous Javanese accounts.[43] In *wayang* (shadow play) stories, such despicable creatures are the stock adversaries of the noble protagonist, but as any Javanese person knows, although these brutes may possess supernatural powers, they are in the end always defeated by the refined hero. This structural pattern forms the template for much of traditional Javanese story-telling, and is quite naturally used in the poem on Juja-Makjuja.

The 'othering' or 'occidentalising' device, by which the Dutch are defined as distinct from the Javanese, consists of caricaturing the 'Other' on the basis of a different religious affiliation. The poem sketches a war for civilization within a religious framework. Perhaps the enigmatic episode about the Prophet Ngisa and the Flood allegorizes the successive phases of European interference in Javanese

43 For some examples, see Carey (1981: XX, LVI n. 43, 98-99, and 255 n. 86); Carey (1992: 429 n. 144). See also Ras (1992: 298-300) for a description of Javanese views on the boorish Dutch. I have already drawn attention, above, to the *Asmarasupi* story with its veiled references to the Dutch Cape colony.

affairs. A possible hypothesis would be that the Prophet Ngisa stands for the pre-19th-century era when the Dutch East India Company ruled the waves in Asia, and increasingly extended its grip on Javanese state and society. The arrogant, God-like behaviour of Ngisa (= VOC) was divinely punished by way of a deluge, which in this reading could be regarded as representing the spectacular downfall of the VOC, and perhaps the temporary ousting of the Dutch regime during the so-called British Interregnum (1811-1816) as well. As the latter term already indicates, the Dutch were to come back with a vengeance – the time when Juja-Makjuja was to take over. But the poem also clarifies that pious Muslims may be assured that this terrifying figure will eventually be overcome by the Prophet Muḥammad, and thrust down into hell, as God has promised.

The so-called relative deprivation theory seems to be helpful in understanding the prime motive for producing this text. The trauma of sudden transition caused by the aggressive intrusion of an alien culture, which rendered the Javanese elite increasingly powerless, created severe feelings of deprivation and discontent among the royal entourage.[44] One can argue, however, about the depth of the poet's *Naherwartung*. Was this writer an apocalyptic, who expected that the time of the Last Judgement was imminent? Despite the political and anti-colonial grievances, and the economic disadvantages which probably lie at the root of the poem on Juja-Makjuja, it is difficult to imagine its writer as a revolutionary, millenarian preacher. Included in an anthology of mystical texts, I am inclined to think that the author adhered to the 'quietist' tradition, and that the authorial intention was primarily didactic-moralistic, wishing to admonish coreligionists to better their ways during the short time-span still allotted to them. The importance which the poet attaches to following sharia principles also seems to point in this direction.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The poem on Juja-Makjuja challenges the prevailing essentializing views of the lack of 'Islamness' of the Javanese courts. It is a truism to state that Javanese Islam differs from the Muslim cultures of the Middle East, Africa, and India. Paucity of reliable data makes it difficult, if not impossible, to reconstruct the history of the

44 On the application of the theory of relative deprivation to apocalyptic texts and its problems, see e.g. Wilson (2002: 58-60).

Islamization process in Java. The oldest known Muslim tombstone was found in Leran (west of Surabaya, East Java) and is dated 475 AH/1082 CE, but it is unclear whether the deceased was Javanese. The scanty evidence which we have points to a relatively late start of significant Javanese conversions, possibly beginning somewhere between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Over the following centuries, Islam would become the island's dominant religion, and in terms of population numbers the Javanese are nowadays the second largest ethnic group after the Arabs in the Islamic world.[45]

As Islam was a late entrant on Java, the issue of persisting influences by the preceding Indian religions (Hinduism and Buddhism) and the even older indigenous cults has often been debated, but never resolved. Western social scientists, plagued by problems of how to define Islam, generally tend to diminish the significance of Javanese self-identification as Muslims.[46] Anthropologists have even audaciously labelled Islam in Java as 'Javanese religion,' thereby emphasizing the local character of Javanese beliefs and practices, which are thought to be very different from 'pure' Islam in the so-called heartlands. For example, Clifford Geertz's classic study of 1960 is called *The Religion of Java*, while Andrew Beatty's 1999 account speaks of *Variants of Javanese Religion*. Conversely, Mark Woodward (1989) has forcefully argued that the so-called Javanese religion, in both its popular and mystical variants, is basically Muslim and not Hindu or Hindu-Buddhist, but in his fervour he has pushed this view to the extreme.[47]

However, when we try to figure out the meaning of a 'literary' text such as the narrative poem about Juja-Makjuja, the concepts and methods of these social theorists do not provide us with interpretative tools for a better understanding. The debate on whether the unifying factor in 'Javanese religion' is Islam (Woodward's hypothesis) or Java (as Geertz claimed) is irrelevant for an understanding of the text under consideration. The main thrust of the poem could be summed up by the credo 'to be a Javanese is to be a Muslim'.

My hypothesis is that we should view the role of religion in this poem under the heading of cultural defence. Islam acted as a guarantor of ethnic identity vis-à-vis Dutch colonialism. Put simply, in the

45 For a good introduction to the history of Islam in Java as an on-going process, see Ricklefs (1979: 100-128).

46 For critical overviews, see e.g. Roff (1985: 7-34) and Lukens-Bull (1999: 1-21).

47 For a critical review, see Van Bruinessen (1991: 347-349). See further Van Bruinessen (1999: 46-63) for a general discussion of the global and local in Indonesian Islam.

colonial situation at the beginning of the 19th century, in which the Javanese found themselves under the rule of an external force, their religious identity as Muslims was a way of asserting ethnic pride. Islam was synonymous with Javanese culture and identity as against the Christian Others whom Muslims like to call 'polytheists,' because they associate Jesus with God. Juja-Makjuja's remarkable identification with Christianity should in my opinion be seen against this specific background. His portrayal as the grandson of Jesus, who repeats the latter's heinous sin of imagining that he was God himself, clearly serves a polemical purpose. The poem, then, laid claim to what the sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) once called 'ethnic honour,' that is, the sense of 'the excellence of one's own customs and the inferiority of alien ones' (quoted in Bruce 1997: 96).

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