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Sommaire

L'illustration de la vignette, sur la couverture, combine deux silhouettes – navigateurs, voyageurs ? – empruntées à une stèle romaine, actuellement au Landesmuseum de Trèves, et des vagues inspirées d'un relief d'époque romaine se trouvant à la Glyptothèque Ny Carlsberg de Copenhague (dessin de M. Gorea).
Sous les eaux court la citation soluite uela citi *de l'*Énéide *de Virgile – récit non d'un naufrage, mais d'un audacieux périple.*
Les beaux vers qui précèdent éclairent le travail de tout chercheur : Præcipites uigilate, uiri, et considite transtris ; soluite uela citi *: « Vite à vos bancs, amis, debout ! Mettez à la voile ! »* (IV, 573-574).

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Peter Webb

Desert places: toponyms in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry

The myriad places named in pre-Islamic Arabic poetry unfurl a wide set of questions. Perusal of any selection of pre-Islamic poems encounters references to sundry campsites, mountain peaks and wadis, and curious readers will wonder what the poets intended with their versified barrages of place names, and how pre-Islamic Arabians conceptualised space and homeland. Since pre-Islamic poetry was transmitted to us via Muslim-era anthologists, the handling of toponyms in the sources also poses questions about the processes of preserving Arabic poetry, and the relationships between the pre-Islamic Arabian poets and the urban, Muslim, mostly Iraqi source compilers. Debates over pre-Islamic Arabian communal identity and the reliability of Muslim-era reconstructions of pre-Islamic history are well rehearsed, yet toponyms have not received dedicated empirical study; interrogating memories of space can thus fruitfully inform an array of pressing issues in Arabic studies today.

Taking place seriously in pre-Islamic poetry is invited by the poetry itself given the poetry's large number of toponyms, but we confront a pair of issues. First, were the named places real locations, or were they figures of speech in poetic imagination? This paper argues that we can be bullish on many toponyms' reality, but the second issue is knottier: it is difficult to positively identify where the places were, and medieval Muslim poetry commentators seem to have been equally stumped. Our study thus precipitates into an investigation of how real places became unknown, and this exploratory paper will conclude with a number of questions and inferences as to how so much pre-Islamic Arabian space was forgotten in the effluxion of only 100-200 years between the poetry's composition and its recording in the extant collections. The inferences prompt reorientation of traditional ideas about pre-Islamic Arabian society, and thus it is hoped that our critical engagement of toponyms will have taken us to an interesting place that extends beyond mere literary interpretation.

1/ Toponyms and spatiality in pre-Islamic poetry

To set the stage of scholarly thinking to date, four contributions are particularly helpful. Both Suzanne Stetkevych and Pierre Larcher adopted a philological approach to analyse toponyms in single, famous pre-Islamic poems, the *Muʿallaqah* odes of Imruʾ al-Qays and ʿAntarah, respectively.[1] Stetkevych pursues the etymology of al-Daḫūl and Ḥawmal, the famous pair of places which Imruʾ al-Qays mentioned at the outset of his poem, which she reads as connoting "penetration" and "pregnancy," suggesting therefore that the verse be understood not as referencing places, but instead as invoking a metaphor, a binary masculine/feminine pair of fertility images. Larcher's detailed structuralist method also adduces a metaphorical reading, interpreting the places named in the opening lines of ʿAntarah's poem as serving to physically and metaphorically separate the poet from his lover. Larcher reads the place names as words, purposefully inserted in particular parts of the poetry's lines, and deliberately chosen for their roots' meanings, which serve to emphasise the impossibility of the lovers' meeting.

Both contributions studied the poetic *nasīb*, the opening segment of the *qaṣīdah*, a tri-partite early Arabic poetic style. The *nasīb* unfurls a nostalgic mood: the poet lamentingly reminisces over an abandoned campsite, where, in days long past, he had amorous adventures. Numerous toponyms often feature in the *nasīb*, and both Stetkevych's and Larcher's studies read through the cartographical question of those toponyms' location, and into the meaning of their names in order to uncover devices which poets employed to build the sense of nostalgia and/or mythic significance of love and separation. While nostalgia, loss and/or fertility can be read into the root meaning of the place names in these two *nasīb*s, the studies were limited to individual poems, and, in the case of Imruʾ al-Qays, his *nasīb* toponyms do

1. S. Stetkevych 1983, pp. 92, 96; Larcher 1994, pp. 116-121, 122-127.

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not always lend themselves easily to Freudian readings of sexual connotation: e.g. in the first line of another poem he summons Baṭn Qaww and ʿArʿar, also rendered Baṭn Ẓabī and ʿArʿar.[2] Arabic roots can connote a wide array of meanings, so it is always possible to find metaphorical meanings underlying names; it remains to question whether poets intended these pregnant double-entendres.

Jaroslav Stetkevych's *The Zephyrs of Najd* took a much broader sweep of the Arabic poetic corpus to sustain metaphorical interpretation. He also focused on *nasīb* poem-openings, and his wider survey likewise argued that as opposed to being concrete referents to particular places, poetry's toponyms' primary function was to set the *nasīb*'s nostalgic mood.[3] Taking his cue from studies of epic and romance in other literary traditions, Stetkevych maintains that toponyms are "symbolically most powerful when they are divested of concretising circumstance."[4] Using the terminology of spatial studies,[5] we can epitomise Stetkevych's thesis as proposing that the toponyms in Arabic poetry were not intended as markers of real *places* in the sense of lived-geography, but instead operated as abstract references to *space*, evocative of far-flung desertscapes. Stetkevych also chides the Muslim-era poetry specialists who endeavoured to positively identify the locations of the poetic toponyms: for Stetkevych, their empirical endeavour converted the pre-Islamic poets' intended metaphors into "textually validated entries in geographical lexicons and compendia."[6] Accordingly, we are invited to approach toponyms in Arabic poetry not as labels for demarcating quotidian places, but, conversely, as names invoked to defamiliarize and create a romantic landscape of emotions.

The fourth work, Nathaniel Miller's 2016 PhD dissertation, *Tribal poetics in early Arabic culture* which studied the collected poems of the Huḏayl tribe, discusses the tribe's phenomenological sense of geography. Miller proposes that nomads' spatiality was dominated by seasonal considerations of movement, and thus winds, rains and migration emerge as the core of poets' spatial consciousness.[7] He does not bring Stetkevych's *Zephyrs* into the conversation, but one senses that Miller would read the poetry in more, shall we say, "nomadic-realist" terms. Miller considers that poetry's toponyms refer to locations on seasonal migratory paths, and he makes passing note that the poetry's obscure place names "probably allowed poets to specify local toponyms understood by their regional audiences."[8] Miller's observations of the migration-defined spatial thinking reveals a key feature of pre-Islamic poetry and Bedouin spatiality, and shifts emphasis away from pursuing metaphorical meanings of place names to the ends of their etymological spectrum. For Miller, the poets were engaged in memorialising their environments, and hence it would follow that many of the express toponyms in their poems were actual locations.

Developing the interpretation of toponyms from here confronts the second issue, also noted by both J. Stetkevych and Miller, that many of poetry's named places cannot be identified today.[9] At first blush, this supports Larcher's observation that the "reality" of poetry's named places is less important than the deeper metaphorical functions of the array of places which the poet selects—we need not concern ourselves about "finding" the precise locations, since the poets may have played with the names or made them up for the purpose of developing the *nasīb*. On the other hand, the studies of the metaphorical reading of Arabic poetic toponyms to date have focused almost entirely on places mentioned in the *nasīb* sections of the *qaṣīdah*, whereas poets invoked toponyms across their works, and often in shorter poems which do not correspond to the logic and structure of the *qaṣīdah*. These other, less-studied, citations of place names occur in contexts with little or no connection to nostalgia or mythic themes, and these places may indeed have been real and require empirical-minded investigation in order to understand them. There is a risk that scholarly emphasis on the *nasīb* alongside the ease of finding metaphorical double-entendres by virtue of the many connotations of Arabic roots has overshadowed a more quotidian reality of pre-Islamic poetry, in which poets produced poetry that spoke to issues of real importance to actual Arabian societies, and, in the process, cited *real* places to express their actual intentions.

Poets may have therefore been serious about memorialising particular places, and we shall miss the opportunity to engage with the initial contexts of poetic composition if we do not investigate the empirical aspects of toponyms. The study of toponyms therefore needs to move beyond the *nasīb* to explore why so many place names appear so obscure today, what such gaps in knowledge mean, where the lines between symbol/metaphor and positivist geography can be drawn, and what poetry's many place

2. Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān*, p. 56; Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 4, p. 561.
3. J. Stetkevych 1993, pp. 103-108.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
5. Lefebvre 1991, Casey 1993 and Bachelard 1994. The theory relies on a conceptual distinction between *space* and *place*, building upon Kant's observation that space (unlike geographical place) "is not something objective and real, nor a substance, nor an accident, nor a relation; instead, it is subjective and ideal, and originates from the mind's nature" (*Kant's gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 2, p. 403).
6. J. Stetkevych 1993, p. 110.
7. Miller 2016, p. 246.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 328.
9. J. Stetkevych 1993, pp. 107-108; Miller 2016, p. 299.

names reveal about the relationship between tribes, community and space in Arabia before Islam.

For this exploratory foray, I select three poets and a tribal collection. Two of the poets are characters now labelled as "outlaws,"[10] Ta'abbaṭa Šarran and al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulakah: their poetry is replete with tales of desert raiding, and the narratives told about them tend towards the romantic and epic aspects of storytelling—hence their oeuvres are apt to test the extent to which J. Stetkevych's hunches about the "faceless landscape" of "epic characters" can be applied. The third poet, Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah is intended as an experimental control. He was a bellicose pre-Islamic raider, but later Muslim narrators counted him as a tribal leader, not an outlaw, and thus similarities and differences perceptible in his poetry can help elucidate the Muslim-era processes of characterising and categorising pre-Islamic poets. To add statistical weight, I add the vast collection of poetry of the Huḏayl tribe, as gathered by al-Sukkarī (d. 275/888), which contains (by my count) 472 different toponyms across some 4,600 lines of poetry. Because this poetry was composed by people occupying a shared space, and because it is the only tribal anthology to survive, the Huḏalī poems constitute a unique, early, cohesive and textually-secure collection, which is large enough to provide weight of quantitative substantiation.

2/ "How many are the wadis I've crossed!"

In fine literary heroic fashion, the outlaw al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulakah reportedly sang a poem as he faced immanent death in the fray: as if the legacy of his life of raiding was passing before his eyes, he declared:

> How many are the wadis I've crossed!
> […]
> How many are the featureless wastes I've traversed![11]

Pursuant to the rhetoric of epic, specific place names go unmentioned here, but if we count the toponyms marshalled in our four samples of poetry, we can concur with al-Sulayk's boast. Though only 60 lines of al-Sulayk's poetry survive, they contain 10 toponyms, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran furnishes 24 places, Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah, 47, and the Huḏalī poetry, 472. Our four collections alone communicate over 550 toponyms—very many wadis and deserts indeed!

There are intriguing consistencies between the collections, too. Al-Sulayk mentions a named place in 17% of his verses, Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah's frequency is 11%, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, 8%, and the Huḏalī poets, 10%. Al-Sulayk's oeuvre is quite small and could be a statistical outlier; the larger collections taken together demonstrate that a toponym is likely to appear once in every ten verses of pre-Islamic poetry. As a matter of the numbers, therefore, toponyms were clearly an important feature.

The connection between these poets' named toponyms and their poetry's *nasīb* is particularly material for our analysis. Only four of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's 24 named places occur in the nostalgic *nasīb* opening of his poetry (17%),[12] Durayd, notwithstanding his plentiful romantic *nasīb*, likewise names only 10 toponyms in such sections (22%),[13] and this is nearly identical to the entirety of the Huḏayl poems where 111 of their 472 toponyms occur in *nasīb* (23%).[14] Across the board, therefore, both warriors and outlaws are consistent in that they summon more than three-quarters of their toponyms in contexts that have no ostensible connection to nostalgia, which underlines the need to probe toponyms beyond the *nasīb*.

Closer inspection reveals that the majority of toponyms reference places of conflict. This fuels an inference that the poets composed verses to commemorate martial triumphs, and they expressly named the places of their victories in order to make them precise and concrete. As opposed to grandiloquent boasts of prowess in empty space, therefore, the poets specify precise locations in order to identify exactly where they left marks of their bravery. This suggests, *prima facie*, a cartographical, or at least an empirical approach to space: the poets named places in order to pick out real locations,[15] and, consequently, pre-Islamic Arabians must have applied names in order to mark and remember myriad places. Given that toponyms are so common a feature in poetry, one might then read the toponym-heavy poems as intentional records of military encounters, composed as part of a communal process of memorialising individual and tribal exploits for posterity.

10. The Arabic terminology for outlaws is wide and unstable, but texts eventually settled on labelling both al-Sulayk and Ta'abbaṭa Šarran as *luṣūṣ* (thieves). For critical study of the terminology, see Webb 2019, pp. 17-57.
11. The poem exists in several variants, the two verses are selected from al-Maqrīzī, *Luṣūṣ*, § 2.5.16 and al-Sulayk, *Dīwān*, p. 96.
12. For the four places, see Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 76 (Badbad), p. 129 (Ḏaǧnān) and p. 210 (al-Mulaṯṯam and Ǧahram/Ǧurhum).
13. See Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah, *Dīwān*, pp. 58, 115, 89 and 138 for the ten toponyms in the nostalgic *nasīb* context.
14. al-Sulayk's oeuvre is fragmentary and has limited *nasīb*-style verses.
15. The Huḏalī poetry furnishes telling examples where places are sometimes mentioned in *nasīb*, and sometimes in obviously realistic contexts, and hence there is a strong *prima facie* argument that at least many of the *nasīb* toponyms should be assumed as real until proven otherwise. See references to Amlāḥ and al-Raǧī', respectively in al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, pp. 164, 363, vol. 2, pp. 749, 782; vol. 1, pp. 164, 197, 444, vol. 2, pp. 749, 931.

The citation of most toponyms in tandem with recollections of conflict is significant. Across the breadth of human time and space, conflict has constituted the backbone of communal memory and narratives of history, and since the Arabian poets considered herein summoned most of their toponyms within a context of war, they too appear to have been engaged in a form of history recording, and readers of these poems will want to bear that in mind. The poets may have embellished the significance of their victories,[16] but their memorialisation reveals a desire to remember, and this is precisely the vein in which medieval Muslim-era anthologists assumed that pre-Islamic Arabic poetry should be interpreted. They believed that pre-Islamic Arabians were illiterate and had no means to record history other than through poetry, and they accordingly believed that "maps" of pre-Islamic Arabia (or at least a sense of Arabian space) could be reconstructed by identifying the places in pre-Islamic verse.[17] It is thus unfair to blame the medieval commentators for overlooking spatial metaphors: our own training from other literary traditions may have led us to superimpose expectations about spatial metaphors onto Arabic poetry, whereas most poets usually intended more straightforward references to place, and it follows that they would have wanted their audiences to recognise those places as real locations in order to achieve the desired effect of aggrandizing themselves for their real achievements.

All this appears to constitute a rebuttal to metaphorical interpretations that would turn the poets' lived reality into literary devices, but there remains the hurdle of obscurity, alluded to above. Almost every one of the 550 toponyms I encountered in the four poetry collections is a unicum: poets are intriguingly consistent in almost never mentioning toponyms more than once.

Of the 24 place names in Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's *Dīwān*, only al-ʿAyqatān is repeated;[18] al-Sulayk never repeats any of his ten toponyms; Durayd only repeats two of his 47, Ṯahmad and Ḫarbah (twice each),[19] and 382 of the 472 places in the Huḏayl's poetry appear just once (81%), and a further 55 only twice.[20] Thus, over 90% of the places mentioned in the pre-Islamic poetry analysed for this paper are effectively unicums, and the testimony of the Huḏalī poems is particularly significant. The collection reflects the verses of one tribe, and though logic might dictate that a tribe would claim proprietorship over places by repeating references to their lands in their poetry, I find that only nine sites are mentioned more than four times each across the entire collection, and two of those, Mecca and the Hejaz, were certainly not proprietary to the Huḏayl.[21] If the Huḏayl conceptualised a homeland via known places and if they intended to use their poetry as a means to mark communal spatial memory and land rights, the key places within their conceptual "home space" should be mentioned more often. But they are not.

Equally intriguing is the comparison of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's poetry with the Huḏayl. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran claimed victories over the Huḏayl at multiple named places, and because he encroached on Huḏalī territory as part of his quotidian raiding environment, we might expect him to refer to the same toponyms as the Huḏalī warriors, perhaps even with direct intention of doing so as part of articulating struggle (or mastery) over contested territory. There is, however, scant crossover. None of the places which Ta'abbaṭa Šarran claims as victories over the Huḏayl are mentioned as Huḏalī toponyms by the tribe's own poets, and of the 24 toponyms named by Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, only three appear in Huḏalī verse.[22] Likewise, none of the most prominent toponyms of the Huḏalī poets[23] are mentioned by Ta'abbaṭa Šarran. Considering their geographical proximity, the poetry presents us with puzzlingly separate spatial vocabularies.

The contrast between the myriad toponyms and their lack of repetition is a paradox. If the poets and kin-communities summoned the toponyms as a means to assert control over space, why are so few place names ever repeated? And if the poets and their kin did not assert proprietary senses of space across their migration paths, why mention so many discrete rises, valleys and wells by name? The fact that place names are so rarely repeated causes us to wonder whether toponyms named in poetry were actually "known," but given that the majority of toponyms are not cited in nostalgic *nasīb* contexts, I consider it unlikely that the poets were intending to creates epics of featureless desert space via myriad references to unknowable places. The ways the poets mention toponyms suggests they operated in a world in which places were named and known, and we are thus

16. The magnified poetic elaborations of what were likely minor skirmishes are considered in Agha 2011, pp. 12-14.
17. The sense of poetry being the "Archive of the Arabs" *(dīwān al-ʿarab)* and explicit comments about the poets' functions as recorders and carriers of tribal memory feature in the major third/ninth century discourses about Arabic poetry: see Ibn Qutaybah, *Faḍl*, § 2.8.16, see also § 2.8.1 and § 2.8.8; al-Yaʿqūbī, *Tārīkh*, vol. 1 p. 265.
18. He refers to it in two poems, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, pp. 79, 132.
19. Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah, *Dīwān*, pp. 40, 61, 73, 85.
20. Of the 55 twice-mentioned places, at least six only appear in the collections of single poets: Ḏū al-Dawrān, al-Aḥaṯṯ, al-ʿĀd, ʿAjlān, Ġazāl, and Masjid al-Aḥzāb.
21. The locations mentioned with repetition are Ḥalyah, al-Ḥiğāz, al-Raǧīʿ, Ḍīm, ʿArʿar, Marr, Makkah, Naḫlah and Naʿmān.
22. They are the pair of ʿArʿar and Ẓarr (al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 2, p. 667), and Albān (al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 2, p. 710).
23. I deem these Marr, Naʿmān, al-Naḫlah, Ḍīm and al-Raǧīʿ: each is mentioned at least six times in the collection.

challenged to explain why real locations only infrequently caught the attention of more than one poet, even though multiple poets shared that same ground.

To a degree, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's repetition of the toponym al-ʿAyqatān in two poems is helpful, since it refers to the location of a skirmish that inspired his most famous and most repeated poem in the sources, the *Qāfiyyah*. The *Qāfiyyah* is very consistently narrated and unanimously attributed to Ta'abbaṭa Šarran,[24] hence if there was a "real" Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, the engagement at al-ʿAyqatān is the most likely to have actually taken place. It accordingly makes sense that the poet would repeat mention of it, and its appearance in a poem (also widely reported) in which Ta'abbaṭa Šarran laments the death of a comrade-in-arms suggests that al-ʿAyqatān indeed had personal importance as the site of his signature victory. No one else, as far as my searches can tell, refers to the toponym,[25] so the location was evidently not noteworthy for anyone else whose memories survived in poetry, but for Ta'abbaṭa Šarran it was significant. The Huḏalī *Dīwān* has similar cases where some individual poets repeat mentions of their battle places in more than one line, and hence we can discern relationships with minor places enacted on a personal level. However, even this micro-reality of toponyms is not a pervasive feature: Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah's *Dīwān*, though it memorialises many battles, does not mention any one battlefield more than once.

With the evidence pulling in equivocal directions, what does emerge is that pre-Islamic poets had many places on their minds, but the lack of repetition suggests the absence of intentions to construct cohesive spatial narratives. Herein the evidence from the Huḏayl collection is instructive, since the lack of toponymic repetition amongst the collected verses of Huḏalī poets specifically counters the seemingly logical *prima facie* assumption that tribes articulated, or perhaps even possessed consistent senses of space grounded in specific locations: the repetition of toponyms by Huḏalī poets is simply too scant to sustain an inference that Huḏalī territory was conceptualised around a set of core locations. While we are accustomed to think of the Huḏayl as a cohesive tribe via presumed genealogical connection, their poets represent to us that they did not all speak the same language of space, and perhaps the migratory Huḏayl settled where they could, and we cannot be so prescriptive about assuming that all tribes controlled defined territories. Perhaps also place names changed as new groups of people occupied territory, and/or places had different names according to different people, and thus some of the different toponyms may actually intend the same location. This hypothesis paints the picture of an ephemeral relationship between peoples and places—a highly ephemeral and unsystematised situation indeed, since so few places garnered repeat attention from any poets.[26] Any given place name might only have been remembered for a short period of time, and/or amongst a limited audience.[27] Challenged with the scatter-shot of toponyms, we now wonder how positive geography (and thence history) can be salvaged from the masses of pre-Islamic poetry's elusive place names.

3/ Obscure places, fragmented spaces

Developing our grasp of poetry's places can benefit from probing toponymic crossover, i.e. instances where more than one poet summons the same place-name. As an example, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran marshals the pair of places, ʿArʿar and Ẓarr to articulate the location of a featureless desert he crossed in the land of the Huḏayl, and this same pair does appear once in Huḏalī verse, showing that at least one spatial reference was shared between the two.[28] This is an exception to what are otherwise distinct spatial vocabularies, but the sites of ʿArʿar and Ẓarr are also cited individually in Huḏalī poetry.[29] Adding to the mix, the Huḏalī poet Ḥuḏayfah ibn Anas pairs ʿArʿar and al-Daḫūl, while the earlier and celebrated poet Imruʾ al-Qays (who was not from the Huḏayl but lived near their region) pairs al-Daḫūl with Ḥawmal, and ʿArʿar with Baṭn Qaww (or Baṭn Ẓabī).[30] There are accordingly lines of crossover involving an ʿArʿar-al-Daḫūl-Ẓarr triad. Whether they were real locations connected via desert routes, or if they instead constituted toponymic metaphorical repertoire for

24. For a comprehensive list of sources for the poem, see Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, pp. 125-126 (n.).
25. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, pp. 985-986; Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 4, p. 173; al-Anbārī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, p. 30.
26. The Huḏalī *Dīwān* does have several references to the familiar regions of Tihāmah, al-Ḥijāz and al-Shām (here meaning "Northland," not Syria specifically), but even these only appear in six, five, and nine lines of poetry, respectively, and otherwise the collection's poets articulate almost no common landmarks.
27. Local Arabian traditions claim to preserve names of some places memorialised in pre-Islamic poetry. These are difficult to sustain given that even medieval compendia are unable to identify most places with certainty, however the compendia were not written by Arabians, and local traditions may have persisted longer, though it seems remote that place names could have persisted for so long as to continue into the present. For a more sanguine view describing a twentieth-century visit to Imruʾ al-Qays' Daḫūl and Ḥawmal, see Kurpershoek 2001, pp. 98-101.
28. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 101; al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 2, p. 844, see also vol. 2, p. 667 where ʿArʿar and Ẓarr occur in consecutive lines.
29. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, pp. 226, 439, vol. 2, p. 557 (ʿArʿar), vol. 2, p. 729 (Ẓarr).
30. Imruʾ al-Qays, *Dīwān*, p. 56.

remoteness, suitable to be summoned in poetic *nasīb*, or, in the case of the raider Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, to add a touch of epic colour to embellish his bold claims to effortlessly and regularly cross "remote space," needs further study; but from our sample study at least, ʿArʿar's five citations in the Huḏalī verse, occurring in both *nasīb* contexts and in commemorations of war, does rather suggest that ʿArʿar was, in origin, a real place known to local poets.

Another profitable place for comparison is al-ʿAqīq, a location mentioned in a *nasīb* by Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah,[31] where he weeps upon the weathered vestiges of a dwelling in terms similar to the same toponym's citation in *nasīb*s by Imruʾ al-Qays and al-Ḥāriṯ ibn Ḥillizah.[32] While it is possible that all three poets had romantic encounters at the location of al-ʿAqīq, that seems unlikely, and leads us back to J. Stetkevych's suggestion that al-ʿAqīq acquired a metaphorical value for distance and absence of the beloved.[33] When we bring Huḏalī poems into the equation, however, further contours emerge. In a poem by Abū Ṣaḫr, al-ʿAqīq is similarly invoked to articulate the distance between the poet and his absent beloved, but two other poems report a battle at al-ʿAqīq, and ʿUrwah ibn Murrah celebrates his *presence* at the site.[34] Whilst Stetkevych placed particular focus on the uncertainty of the precise location of al-ʿAqīq in order to ground his theory about the symbolic connotations of toponyms in poetry, he did overlook the Huḏalī battle poems, where the reference plainly intends to identify a recognisable place. We might also add that al-ʿAqīq has a very prosaic meaning: it means "the gap," so it could spontaneously have arisen as the name for multiple places of natural cuts between hills or mountains; this matches the terrain of the Huḏalī poets and the Hejaz generally, and hence the confusion over the precise coordinates of al-ʿAqīq could quite tenably be explained as a result of the fact that there were multiple places with that name. After all, there is a Leeds Castle in Kent, a St. Ives in Cambridgeshire, and multiple Black Hills, Newtons and Mount Pleasants across the UK—the Ordinance Survey is not attempting to be metaphorical when plotting these in various places on the map.[35]

The repetition of ʿArʿar-Daḫūl-Ẓarr and al-ʿAqīq in both nostalgic and martial contexts indicates that while some toponyms did become metaphors, there seems to have been a reality underlying the places too. Hence J. Stetkevych is right to argue that some place names were marshalled by poets to invoke a feeling of nostalgic loss, but it is equally important to observe that such toponymic metaphors are statistical outliers: the scope for stock-metaphors was small and not widely-shared. For example, only seven of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's 24 toponyms are repeated in poems ascribed to other pre-Islamic poets, and/or geographical references about Arabia,[36] and of these, four are manifestly not intended as metaphors for symbolic space (they delineate points of specific skirmishes). The ratio of ca. 30% "corroborated places" in total is low, and while it is improved in the case of al-Sulayk, where five of his ten toponyms appear in the oeuvres of other poets,[37] they are likewise not metaphorical toponyms for *nasīb*.[38]

The toponyms in pre-Islamic poetry thus appear, in the main, to have identified real locations of poets' personal experiences, as the sheer number of different toponyms makes it hard to believe that poets concocted so many *different* place names purely to fuel metaphors.[39] But senses of place were evidently not widely shared: the abiding lack of toponymic crossover implies that individual poets' spatiality reflected particular, localised lived experiences of distinct spatial worlds. The poet's memorialisation of spaces might thus better be interpreted as expressions of micro-spatiality of individual poets' own small-scale communal milieus.

31. Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah, *Dīwān*, p. 115.
32. Ibn al-Anbārī, *Šarḥ*, p. 437.
33. J. Stetkevych 1993, pp. 111-112.
34. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 2, pp. 664, 850, 937.
35. J. Stetkevych's research focused on Islamic-era verse, and his main point that Arabian toponyms were metaphorically re-used in Muslim-era nostalgic poetry is sound: when Muslim-era poets in Spain summoned Arabian place names and developed the *nasīb* for their own verses, they were engaging with nostalgic markers of an Arab past. Our argument is that the evidence does not suggest that pre-Islamic poets intended to be so metaphoric; this might be expected from the less mature tradition of Arabic poetry composition before Islam.
36. Albān (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 211 and al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 2, p. 709), al-Raḥṭ (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 129 and al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 4, p. 1384), Ḍaǧnān (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 129 and al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, pp. 856-857), ʿArʿar (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 101 and al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, pp. 932-933), Ẓarr (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 101 and al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 654), al-Jaba' (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 79 and Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 97), al-Kurāb (Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 79 and Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 4, p. 443).
37. Taḥtam, Nuyāl, Naqb, Ja'š, Qarmā'.
38. We shall return to the question of metaphors in Section 5.
39. Larcher's observation about the array of place names across several lines of ʿAntarah's *Muʿallaqah* and the harmony of their root meanings invites close reading of the thickets of toponyms in the *nasīb* (Larcher 1994, pp. 141-142), but as stressed here, some 75% of the toponyms occur outside of the *nasīb* and efforts to read these metaphorically too appear tendentious given the matter-of-fact ways in which the poetry uses the names to locate rather matter-of-fact actions such as combats and duels.

4/ Poetry and Muslim-era geographical compendia

The argument that poetry's toponyms do map on to real places finds support in al-Hamdānī's (d. 334/945) *Ṣifat Ǧazīrat al-ʿArab*, which mentions several locations which also appear in Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's and al-Sulayk's poetry.[40] Al-Hamdānī's *Ṣifah* is not a poetry commentary, as it more reflects his personal knowledge of his South Arabian homeland and neighbouring regions, so the correspondences between his material and some pre-Islamic poems indicates a degree of toponymic continuity across several centuries.

But on the other hand, another geographical treatise also compiled by an Arabian, ʿArrām ibn al-Aṣbaġ al-Sulamī's (fl. early-mid third/ninth century)[41] *Asmāʾ ǧibāl Tihāmah wa-sukkānihā*, gives more equivocal answers to our questions. Al-Sulamī's lists of mountains and their surrounding settlements, campsites and watering holes in the Hejaz and Tihāmah detail the territory of both Taʾabbaṭa Šarran and the Huḏayl, yet, intriguingly, he does not corroborate any places named by Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, and he is only marginally more helpful for interpreting the Huḏalī toponyms: al-Sulamī expressly associates four locations with the Huḏayl, and two of those appear in Huḏalī poetry (al-Ḫīf, Marr), however, the other two (Raḫīm and Ḍarʿāʾ) do not.[42] Marr is one of the most prominent places in Huḏalī poetry, so al-Sulamī evidences one continuity into the third/ninth century, but the other common toponyms from Huḏalī verse, such as Naʿmān, Ḍīm and al-Raǧīʿ, which the poetry cites often enough to suggest their prominence in Huḏalī spatial identity, are absent in al-Sulamī. Al-Sulamī also presents other inconsistencies when compared with the Huḏayl's poetry: Mount al-Sitār is named in both al-Sulamī and a poem by Abū Ḫirāš, but the poet associates it with two nearby toponyms, Aẓlam and al-Ḥazm, neither of which feature in al-Sulamī.[43] Overall, 17 locations named by al-Sulamī are corroborated in the Huḏalī poetry, whereas 74 are not: i.e. only 19% of al-Sulamī's material crosses over with the poetry.

The fact that books written by Muslim-era Arabians on Arabian geography identify some, but not most pre-Islamic poetic toponyms reveals the difficulty of our questions. There are good arguments from the poetry itself that toponyms were intended to situate real places, yet few were ascertainable with certainty by the early Muslim-era. A minority of place names persist and repeat, but the lack of corroboration is the more salient. Clearly, Muslim-era Arabians did not record an encyclopaedic understanding of Arabian topography, place names must also have changed, and numerous places relevant for pre-Islamic poets were evidently different from those known to Muslim-era Arabians.

Probing the poets' geographical imagination is aided by two expansive Muslim-era geographical compendia that catalogue several thousand toponyms relating to Arabia and the wider Muslim world. Yāqūt's (d. 626/1229) *Muʿǧam al-buldān* is the more famous today, and while it contains much germane information, al-Bakrī's (d. 487/1094) *Muʿǧam mā istaʿǧam* is equally helpful, as he was a poetry specialist, his compendium deals squarely with poetic material, and his knowledge enabled him to make connections and signal issues which illuminate problems confronting the study of space and pre-Islamic poetry. These are the compendia which Stetkevych had in mind when he critiqued medieval Arabic scholars for missing the metaphorical reading of poetry, but since the weight of evidence we have considered so far suggests that pre-Islamic poets actually did intend to describe real places, the geographical compendia ought not be discounted outright, and two salient points emerge when we check each toponym from Taʾabbaṭa Šarran and al-Sulayk's poetry against their entries in the compendia.

First, although most of the toponyms mentioned by our poets have an entry in al-Bakrī and Yāqūt, a healthy proportion of these are only known via the single line in which our poets invoke the place's name. Al-Bakrī and Yāqūt reveal that seven toponyms named by Taʾabbaṭa Šarran are only known from his own poetry (30% of all his named places), and al-Sulayk has the same ratio: three of ten named places are known only from his verses. We thus cannot claim to "know" such locations, as the entries in the geographical compendia only lead us back to our starting point, and given the circularity, it is apparent that al-Bakrī and Yāqūt knew no more about those toponyms than we do today.

Second, a roughly equal number of places mentioned by our poets are utterly obscure. Neither al-Bakrī nor Yāqūt note the Taṣdaf nor Ǧābān[44] mentioned by al-Sulayk, nor Fayfān, Bawā or ʿAwāʾin[45] cited by Taʾabbaṭa Šarran. Al-

40. See, for example, Taḥtam (al-Sulayk, *Dīwān*, p. 99; al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, p. 203), Ḫaṭmah (al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 504, citing al-Sulayk; al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, p. 228) and Jahram (Taʾabbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 210; al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, p. 241).
41. al-Sulamī appears to have been an Arabian Bedouin who travelled to Iraq and provided litterateurs with Arabian information; he is unknown outside being mentioned as a source known to al-Sukkarī in Ibn al-Nadīm, *al-Fihrist*, vol. 1, p. 129.
42. al-Sulamī, *Asmāʾ*, pp. 408-409, 414-415.
43. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 3, p. 1226, al-Sulamī, *Asmāʾ*, p. 436.
44. Yāqūt's *Muʿǧam* (vol. 2, p. 90) contains an entry for Jābān, but it concerns a Muslim-era town, and its location does not match al-Sulayk's pre-Islamic toponym.
45. A place called ʿAwāʾin is cited in al-Sukkarī's collection of Huḏalī poetry (*Šarḥ*, vol. 1, p. 444): he gives no gloss as to

Bakrī cites a number of place names formed on the root FYF, such as Fayf and Fayfā, but it does not appear that any of these are the Fayfān connected to Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's raids. Al-Bakrī explains that *fayf* connotes any "wide open land," and hence there must have been many toponyms formed on the root, and it appears only a few (and not Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's) were remembered in Muslim times.[46]

In comparison to the ca. 30% corroborated places, therefore, more than 50% of the pre-Islamic poetic toponyms we have analysed were unknown by the medieval period, and even toponyms which have more elaborate entries in al-Bakrī and Yāqūt's *Muʿǧam*s, exhibit difficulties of identification. For examples, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran speaks of a location named Ǧurhum, but al-Bakrī wonders if it has been mis-remembered and was actually Ǧahram;[47] al-Sulayk's Qaḍīb seems to be in a different place from the Yemeni Qaḍīb mentioned by other poets which causes al-Bakrī to doubt, and he relates conflicting reports from earlier authorities,[48] Yāqūt similarly does not vouch for the accuracy of his placement of Ṣadā, explaining: "it is the name of a watering place mentioned in the poetry of Waraqah ibn Nawfal, but God knows best."[49]

Al-Sukkarī's commentary on the Huḏalī toponyms exhibits similar issues. On the basis of al-Sukkarī's commentary alone, there are at least 60 places of problematic identification: most issues concern multiple possible renderings or pronunciations (discussed in this paper's last section), or deeper obscurities such as the cases of Rayʿān or al-Ḫaṭm which are identified as "either locations or mountains,"[50] Zīzā': "either a patch of rough ground or a campsite,"[51] or al-Ṣaʿdah: "a location or a village *[qaryah]*."[52] As for the bulk of the other place names in the Huḏalī poetry, al-Sukkarī usually gives no specifics beyond identifying the names as toponyms, and he rarely is able to be precise about locations or relations between places.

Al-Sukkarī's commentary will need further comparison with al-Bakrī and Yāqūt's compendia, but at this juncture, it is clear that of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran and al-Sulayk ibn al-Sulakah's 34 toponyms, twelve are either unknown or were very obscure and their location was debated and doubted by the Muslim-era anthologists,[53] and a further ten were only known from the poetry of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran and al-Sulayk in any event. The Huḏalī toponyms appear to have a similar ratio of unidentified or unidentifiable locations, entailing that approximately two-thirds of all the toponyms we encounter are simply names: their locations were already unknown when they entered recorded Arabic literature over 1,000 years ago.

I suggest, therefore, that the primary difficulty in interpreting pre-Islamic poetic toponyms is not the Muslim-era misreading of poetic metaphors, but rather the problem faced by the codifiers of the material was their limited knowledge about the geography of pre-Islamic Arabia. A loss of memory about pre-Islamic places clearly occurred before Arabic literature began maturing in the third/ninth century.

Taking stock, the gaps in early medieval Muslim-era knowledge about pre-Islamic Arabian toponyms tallies rather well with al-Ǧāḥiẓ's lament in his *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* that he and his contemporary scholars of the third/ninth century were only in possession of but a fraction of what their predecessors had known about Arabian history and society.[54] It indeed seems to have been the case that an unmanageably-large body of material about pre-Islamic Arabia confronted the urban scholars of early Islam, and toponyms present a germane case study. Probing quite how such a vast body of geography could have come into existence in pre-Islamic Arabia, our findings indicate that each poet possessed a copious spatial vocabulary, but, equally, each poet's spatiality had little in common with that of others. The poets' divergent vocabularies of place thus point into narrow corners of more atomised communities, and there are remarkably few exceptions. A handful of references to farther-flung locations such as Aden and Buṣrā in the Huḏalī poetry do indicate awareness of wider geography, but almost none of these appear in pre-Islamic poetry.[55] Likewise, the lone Huḏalī poet who

its location, but it is not unlikely that this could be the same toponym cited by Ta'abbaṭa Šarran given his raiding against the Huḏayl, but neither al-Bakrī nor Yāqūt note the toponym.

46. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, pp. 1036-1037.
47. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 400.
48. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, pp. 1080-1081.
49. Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, p. 398. Ṣadā is mentioned by al-Sulayk, but Yāqūt does not appear to know this, as there is no mention of al-Sulayk in the entry. Given that Waraqah ibn Nawfal was Meccan, the description renders his Qaḍīb geographically remote from al-Hamdānī's identification of a Qaḍīb in the lands of the Balḥāriṯ (al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, p. 228).
50. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 2, p. 655, vol. 3, p. 1208.
51. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 3, p. 1042.
52. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, p. 24.
53. In addition to the above notes, see al-Bakrī's entry for Ǧufār, Khaṭmah and Murāmir (*Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 313; vol. 2, pp. 411, 504, vol. 1, p. 378 and vol. 4, pp. 1207-1208). For the Badbad mentioned by Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, al-Bakrī describes it as "a well-known place in the desert" *(mawḍiʿ maʿrūf fī al-bādiyah)*, but gives no further information and outside of one citation by Kuṯayyir ʿAzzah, I have not found further mention about it (*Muʿǧam*, vol. 1, p. 230).
54. al-Ǧāḥiẓ, *al-Bayān* vol. 3, pp. 366-367.
55. Aden is only mentioned in the poetry of Mulayḥ ibn al-Ḥakam, who was an Islamic-era poet (al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 3, p. 1055), Ma'rib and other Yemeni toponyms are very infrequent in Huḏalī poetry; their poets mention Buṣrā on three occasions: Abū Ḏu'ayb (vol. 1, p. 94 where he pairs it with Gaza) and Ṣaḫr al-Ġayy (vol. 2, p. 964), and Sāʿidah ibn Ǧu'ayyah (vol. 3, p. 1134)—these three poets all lived in the early Islamic period: new spatial horizons provided by

constructs a topographic metaphor articulating "far and wide" by citing toponyms from Yemen and northern Syria as the edges of his "known world" is also a Muslim-era poet.[56] As for the pre-Islamic Huḏalī poets, they do not reveal awareness of places so far beyond their quotidian environment. The pre-Islamic bandit and warrior poets, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, al-Sulayk and Durayd similarly all share a salient commonality of not articulating way-markers that demarcate a wide geographic imagination. Their toponyms, when they can be identified, cluster on a local level, and I suspect that the many unknown places they cite were localised and soon forgotten locations.

The poetry is also remarkable for lacking possessive constructions insinuating "our land." As noted above, this abets a hunch that nomadic groups may not all have articulated clear proprietary senses of ownership over particular locations, nor articulated long-standing traditions of land control.[57] While in counterpoint, al-Sulamī's *Asmā'* does identify the tribal ownership of various locations in his Muslim-era Tihāmah and Hejaz, it is interesting that the pre-Islamic poets do not make obvious assertions about controlling land. The closest I could find was a twice-repeated phrase where Huḏalī poets boast to have "mobilised the people *[ahl]* of Ṯā'ah and Ḥaǧr," as an indication of their ability to command authority.[58] Here, interestingly, power is expressed as controlling *people* and not places, which would be fruitful to examine further. Returning to senses of larger regions, "upland" *(naǧd*, *ṭawd*, *ǧals)* and "lowland" *(ġawr*, *tihāmah)* are present in the poetry, indicating the east-west migration of nomadic groups was an attested phenomenon,[59] but specific places seem rather woolly and obscure, and even the basic east-west spatiality is not evidenced in Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah's poetry. Moreover, Tihāmah and Naǧd do not appear as cohesive geographical units which could be controlled as the property of one community.

The opacity and obscurity of pre-Islamic poetry's toponyms evidence several ramifications of Michael Macdonald's observation, based on epigraphy, that there was no internal Arabian conception of "Arabia" as a cohesive geographical unit in pre-Islam.[60] Poets likewise never mention "Arabia," and, crucially, neither do they utter alternative terms connoting "home space" on a broad scale, and this entails that analysis of pre-Islamic society and poetry needs to engage with much smaller horizons. The ephemeral nature and fragmented memories of space thereby become logically-explainable: pre-Islamic Arabian society was itself fragmented, and the producers of poetry did not share wide-spread, common geographical imaginations. The fact that even established urban centres such as Naǧrān, al-Ṭā'if and (to a limited extent) Mecca and Sana'a are only infrequently referenced at all in pre-Islamic poetry underlines what appears the very local nature of poetic composition. Our poets mainly summoned names of localised significance that indicate that different groups occupied different places and possessed very different senses of space. The geographical imagination of any given community neither encompassed a large area nor spread to other communities, and scant shared sense of common geography links them together.

Our findings open important perspectives onto community in pre-Islamic Arabia. Traditional impressions of the effective Arab ethnic uniformity across central Arabia, and the Arab *Kulturnation* that posits a common Arab culture, language, customs and space served as the basis for an ethnic solidarity,[61] are deeply challenged by the voices of pre-Islamic poets. Their use of toponyms reveals that they were not all speaking one common geographical language, nor are there patterns indicative of shared geographical experience. Read in the light of theory about ethnos and identity, which stresses the role of joint-recognition of shared space as an underpinning of communal solidarity,[62] the poets give us no sense of a pan-Arabian (or even a large regional) arena which they shared with other poets. Contrary to a discernible ethnic community where peoples interact within a common framework of places, pre-Islamic poets' toponyms reveal divisions of pre-Islamic central Arabia into micro-spatialities that are indicative of manifold zones of communal fragmentation.[63]

the rise of Islam and spread of the Caliphate likely constitute material changes in the geographical imagination of Arabian groups. In pre-Islamic verses, the only distant place I found referenced was Aylah (vol. 2, p. 870).

56. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 3, p. 1055.
57. I suspect that the *ḥimā* (pasture reservations and perhaps also sacred spaces) were afforded more attention by groups claiming ownership over them: this requires further analysis of the *ḥimā* in poetry; they do not figure in the worlds of the poets studied in this paper.
58. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, pp. 361, 462.
59. Miller 2016, p. 48 provides references to Tihāmah and Naǧd in the Huḏalī poetry, for our individual poets, see Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 71. A reference to *anǧad* meaning "lofty" is used by Durayd, but it is in praise of an individual and is detached from toponymic context (*Dīwān*, p. 66).
60. Macdonald 2009 ascribes the idea of "Arabia" to Greek writers.
61. The thesis of the pre-Islamic "Arab Kulturnation" was coined by Grunebaum 1963 and has been approvingly cited in subsequent decades.
62. Hutchison & Smith 1996, pp. 6-7, provide a concise overview of the interaction between space and ethnic identity.
63. I discuss the "zones of fragmentation" in Webb 2016, pp. 77-85. Building from here, the limited references to space in the Qur'an differ from pre-Islamic poetry, and further comparison could be insightful to evaluate whether spatial organisation can point to a difference in the identities of the Qur'an's original audience and those of the pre-Islamic poets.

Medieval-era Muslim writers such as al-Sukkarī, al-Bakrī and Yāqūt operated under the impression that all pre-Islamic poets were members of one cohesive Arab community, and that their toponyms could therefore be amalgamated into a cohesive map of pre-Islamic Arabia, but this appears an ill-conceived assumption. The gaps in knowledge and the compendia's confusion concerning the majority of toponyms underlines the shortcomings of their approach, as the geography of pre-Islamic Arabia was not organised with sufficient communal cohesion to generate contours of unified spatiality. Thus, the geographers' efforts to retrospectively rationalise Arabian geography were confounded by the impossibility of homogenising poetry produced by what were originally very disparate people with independent notions of space. As a result, their insistence on delineating a unified "Arab" geographical system mixed apples, oranges and manifold other fruits, leaving compendia that do not cogently plot the toponyms onto a map. We can further develop this impression by directing focus to poetry's spatial metaphors.

5/ The unproductive pre-Islamic spatial metaphor

Theoretical research has explored how people bestow special meaning on specific places via developing spatial narratives that manifest in popular expressions that reflect communally-shared conceptions of space.[64] For examples, modern readers will recognise "Paris" as conjuring senses of civilised luxury, "Wall Street" means wealth and business, "Washington," political power, "Timbuktu," remoteness. The actual places need not correspond to their spatial metaphor, instead the spatial narrative is maintained in culture irrespective of physical reality. Likewise when English people "send someone to Coventry" or "bring coals to Newcastle" they intend no travel, rather the spatial metaphors have socially constructed and socially reproduced meaning. In order for such conventions to develop and be grasped as figures of speech, channels of communication need to spread the narrative, and the extent of such catchwords and metaphors' spread constitutes a way to conceptualise the boundaries of communities themselves.

In pre-Islamic poetry, we have seen that poets rarely mention the same place more than once, but they sometimes do marshal places in metaphors. While this constitutes the smallest group of toponyms in our cross-section of pre-Islamic poetry,[65] their presence intones the production of toponymic-based expressions, and the extent of their circulation can inform us about the boundaries of pre-Islamic Arabian communal interaction.

Previous studies on metaphorical meanings of poetic toponyms are noted above; the salient issue that will be addressed here is the prevailing unproductivity of spatial metaphors in pre-Islamic poetry. In the same vein that toponyms almost never repeat in the poetic corpus, almost all place names which poets invoke in metaphorical ways are unicums too. For example, Ta'abbaṭa Šarran describes a fickle lover:

> She promises you faith, then she turns faithless
> Like the cloud over Mount Ḍağnān: all lightning, no rain.[66]

Ta'abbaṭa Šarran alludes to an impression about, or a memory of an instance when clouds brooded over Mount Ḍağnān without giving rain. The metaphor is apt, given the symbolic connection between rain and generosity, but according to my searches, Mount Ḍağnān is nowhere else marshalled in such metaphorical terms. We know the mountain Ta'abbaṭa Šarran intended: Ḍağnān lies 25 miles from Mecca and it appears in *hadith* ascribed to the Prophet's community,[67] but none cite the mountain metaphorically, let alone in the context of stingy clouds or fickle lovers. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran thus converted a physical place into a metaphorical spatial narrative, and presumably his audience would have understood, perhaps as it hearkened recent memory of hoped-for rain that never materialised. What is material for our purposes is that Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's audience did not pass the metaphor to others: the absence of the metaphor's repetition in other extant poems entails that the non-rain at Ḍağnān remained but a local memory; Ta'abbaṭa Šarran is both the beginning and end of Ḍağnān's metaphorical career, and the metaphor has no specific afterlife: it did not evolve into a figure of speech circulating amongst a wider community.

Abū Ḏu'ayb al-Huḏalī's reference to the "*maẓẓ* [pomegranates] of Ma'bid"[68] in imagery about bees is likewise an unproductive metaphor: no one else considered Ma'bid famous for its *maẓẓ* fruit, and, in fact, I can find no other references to the toponym at all. Howsoever elegantly Ma'bid unfurled an image for Abū Ḏu'ayb—and it must have, why else would he be so specific about the location?—its geographical significance was soon obscure.

64. See note 5.
65. References to battle places, followed by nostalgic campsite *nasīb* toponyms are numerically the majority.
66. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 129.
67. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, pp. 856-857; Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, p. 453. Ḍağnān appears also in the "canonical" *hadith* collections (Wensinck *et al.* 1936-1988, vol. 8, p. 322), primarily in *hadith* about prayer in the saddle: Muhammad was once observed praying on his mount as he passed Mount Ḍağnān at the time of the evening prayer (Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, vol. 8, p. 54, vol. 9, p. 148).
68. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, p. 96. *Maẓẓ* are not the same as pomegranates cultivated for human consumption.

Another variation on this pattern of unproductive spatial metaphors unfolds in Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah's poetry where he marshals Mount Ḥaḍan to philosophise upon his greying hair:

> It's as if I'm the summit of Ḥaḍan,
> On a gloomy, cloudy day.[69]

Mount Ḥaḍan is cited by other poets, but never again, as far as my searches can tell, as a productive metaphor for greying hair. Al-Bakrī ascribes it a different spatial signification as the mountain marking the boundary of Naǧd and Tihāmah,[70] but this is also unproductive—I have not found references to the mountain in poetry to demarcate boundaries. In Arabian geographical lexicons, al-Hamdānī's *Ṣifah* does note that Ḥaḍan is "famous" *(mašhūr)* in poetry, i.e. mentioned often, but he does not elaborate how,[71] and al-Sulamī's *Asmāʾ* does not mention it, even though his book expressly details mountains and the boundaries of Tihāmah and Naǧd. The source for al-Bakrī's interpretation of the mountain's significance is thus unknown and unattested, and Durayd's poetic metaphor for greying-hair is a unicum. From the extant evidence, Ḥaḍan does not appear to have stood as a metaphor on the lips of many, and whatever metaphorical meanings it might have possessed before Islam did not transmit into Muslim-era texts.

Taʾabbaṭa Šarran's Ḍaǧnān, al-Huḏalī's Maʾbid, and Durayd's Ḥaḍan are consequently not poetic figures of speech akin to the English-language spatial metaphors cited at the outset of this section. Conceptually, we can understand what they intend, but the toponyms did not travel: no other pre-Islamic Arabian poets furnish indication that they would have understood why specifically clouds at Mount Ḍaǧnān, or Ḥaḍan or fruits of Maʾbid were suitable signifiers. Only a very few metaphors (such as al-ʿAqīq noted above, and Tarǧ, discussed presently) spread beyond their initial local context, and thus we again confront figures of speech relevant to ephemeral experiences of particular communities, not communicated to neighbouring peoples. Taken together with the abiding lack of reference to further-flung toponyms, we have good indications that the spatial ambit of pre-Islamic poets was quite restricted.

Later Muslim collectors gathered verses such as the above into collections of "Arabic metaphors," and thereby enabled them to enter the circulation of learned audiences with frequencies much greater than they could have enjoyed prior to codification. Accordingly, a Muslim-era Andalusian or Iraqi poet could resurrect pre-Islamic place names in his own poetry as an exercise in erudite intertextuality,[72] but in the intervening two-three centuries between the metaphor's original pre-Islamic coining and its Muslim-era recording, it likely had little if any currency, as attested by 1/ the paucity of metaphoric repetitions until the rise of the more erudite recherche poetry of medieval Islam, and 2/ the fact that Muslim-era scholars usually did not know where the places were or why the metaphors were coined. Iraqi scholars cobbled an array of toponymic figures of speech into one cultural "whole," but given the one-off nature of so many of the expressions, their lists do not represent one initial, common poetic idiom shared across a large community. The restricted nature of metaphors in the pre-Islamic corpus itself speaks to disparate memories of fragmented communities of pre-Islamic peoples.

An example of Muslim-era re-interpretation of pre-Islamic places is Durayd's oath sworn "By the Lord of the dashing camels *(rāqiṣāt)* at Ḥurāḍ."[73] The *rāqiṣāṭ*/ dashing camels are a common poetic device to refer to the mounts of pilgrims arriving at a ritual shrine,[74] but Ḥurāḍ is unknown as an Arabian shrine site. The fifth/eleventh century commentator al-Bakrī had heard of Ḥurād as a wadi in the land of the Yarbūʿ ibn Ġayẓ ibn Murrah, but given the pilgrimage language, he assumed that Durayd's Ḥurāḍ must be near Mecca.[75] This is a geographical stretch and the voluminous writings about Mecca and its environs make no mention of a place named Ḥurāḍ in any connection with pilgrimage. Al-Bakrī's opinion is thus in reality a guess grounded in the assumption that when pre-Islamic Arabians mention pilgrimage, they *must* have intended the Meccan Hajj, but the toponyms themselves suggest that Durayd intended a different site, a localised one, too minor to garner other surviving mentions. From the lens of Durayd's own life, however, it evidently had sufficient ritual relevance to merit its use in an oath. Syntactically, Durayd's oath is worded similarly to oaths sworn by the Meccan shrine, and thus indicates that his lexicon contacted wider communities, but his toponyms point once again to micro-spatiality.

69. Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah, *Dīwān*, p. 166.
70. al-Bakrī states this meaning in *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 455. He also cites two other poems which mention the mountain, but they do not intend that specific spatial metaphor of travel.
71. al-Hamdānī, *Ṣifah*, p. 239. Al-Hamdānī provides examples of poetry naming other mountains, but not for Ḥaḍan; perhaps he had the same verses in mind as those cited in al-Bakrī's *Muʿǧam* in the note above.
72. J. Stetkevych's *Zephyrs* details such nostalgic hearkening to pre-Islamic toponyms in Muslim-era poetry.
73. Durayd ibn al-Ṣimmah, *Dīwān*, p. 127.
74. It is common to find poetic reference to the Meccan Hajj via oaths such as "By the Lord of the dashing camels *[rāqiṣāt]* at Minā" (Minā referring to the campsite pilgrim use during the Hajj).
75. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 433.

In distinction from the foregoing, some spatial metaphors do appear in multiple poems, yet close analysis reveals complex pathways here too. For example, Abū Ḏu'ayb al-Huḏalī, a contemporary of Muhammad, twice summons the toponym Tarǧ in a construct *usd Tarǧ* "the lions of Tarǧ," a metaphorical usage of place to evoke an image of fearsome predators.[76] Another contemporary Huḏalī poet, al-Burayq ibn ʿIyāḍ, uses the same expression, evidencing an early seventh-century association of Tarǧ with lions in a Huḏalī context, and there is precedent, as the pre-Islamic poet, Aws ibn Ḥaǧar (who lived slightly before Abū Ḏu'ayb and al-Burayq) used the same phrase.[77] Accordingly, we can posit the genesis of a metaphor around 600 CE, yet this is as far as I can trace its spread.

Lexicons report a prose aphorism, "Braver than a hiker at Tarǧ"—an allusion to Tarǧ's apparently ubiquitous lions,[78] and while this implies *prima facie* that the poets drew upon a pre-Islamic saying, such an impression has difficulties. There are several collections of Arabian aphorisms, but the Tarǧ saying only appears in late anthologies: al-ʿAskarī's (d. 395/1005) *Ǧamharat al-amṯāl* and al-Maydānī's (d. 518/1124) *Maǧmaʿ al-amṯāl*.[79] Absent in the five anthologies of the earlier part of the fourth/tenth century and before (including al-Bakrī's *Faṣl al-Maqāl*), the expression is likewise absent in the early dictionaries (such as al-Ḫalīl's *al-ʿAyn*) and Ibn Durayd's *(Ǧamharat al-luġah)*.[80] Closer consideration reveals that medieval readers only knew of Tarǧ via Abū Ḏu'ayb's verse, and since it obviously intends that Tarǧ was full of lions, educated Muslims accordingly had nothing else to go by, and their association of Tarǧ became dominated by thoughts of lions. I suggest that the many repetitions of the poem in Muslim-era lexicons then spawned the prose aphorism amongst savants of *Arabica* as an erudite figure of speech to display their fluency with the poetic material. This hypothesis would explain why Tarǧ-lions are absent in the early lexicons: it was not a pre-Islamic saying in origin, but rather a Muslim-era figure of speech generated on the basis of their understanding of a preserved line of pre-Islamic poetry.

The hypothesis finds support in further analysis of poetry. Like so many other toponyms, Tarǧ is elusive and rarely cited, and my searches uncovered only three further citations. None mention lions. Ḥumayd ibn Ṯawr al-Hilālī (a contemporary of Abū Ḏu'ayb) describes an ostrich "passing by Tarǧ,"[81] Tarǧ is named as a place where the pre-Islamic Azdī warrior/outlaw al-Ḥāǧiz ibn ʿAwf possibly watered on his last adventure before disappearing,[82] and the Muslim-era Muzāḥim al-ʿUqaylī cites Tarǧ in a romantic *nasīb*.[83] I found no reference to Tarǧ in the other major extant collections of pre-Islamic poetry (e.g. Abū Tammām, al-Buḥturī and al-Baṣrī's *Ḥamāsah* collections, al-Ḍabbī's *al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt* or Abū Tammām's *al-Waḥšiyyāt*). Yāqūt's *Muʿǧam* adds more complication, as he identifies Tarǧ as either 1/ a mountain in the Hejaz, 2/ a wadi on a road to Yemen, or 3/ a village near Bīšah on the road between Mecca and Yemen.[84] And whilst it seems to be a Hejazi location, al-Sulamī's *Asmā'* is silent.

In sum, the references to Tarǧ in the contexts of al-Ḥāǧiz and Ḥumayd suggest it was a real place; for Abū Huḏayl and the other two poets of the early seventh century CE, Tarǧ had a conceptual association with lions, but this spread no further in Arabian poetry, and by the Muslim period, the local geographer al-Sulamī omits it, and Yāqūt was left essentially guessing. This sequence suggests that real places were springboards for poetic metaphors, but pre-Islamic poets were not engaged in a process of sharing and copying motifs beyond a limited, local scope. Wider recognition only became possible after the Muslim-era codification, by which time, memory of the actual location had been lost.

Similar to the unproductive toponymical metaphors, the locations associated with the adventures of our poets were also unproductive spaces of mythopoesis. By this I intend that toponyms associated with Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, al-Sulayk and Durayd do not act as the trigger for epic elaborations and/or new stories in ways that toponyms can perform in other literatures. For example, Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest and the broader Greenwood motif of English outlaw tales evolved into stock settings from which new narratives were spun,[85] however, in the case of our Arabian outlaws, the locations are almost always one-offs, like the spatial metaphors and other toponyms considered so far. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, for example, has no "typical" stomping grounds to which he returns, or which act as stock settings for adventures: the cave where he was buried, al-Raḥmān, is unknown to Muslim writers other than as Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's final resting place.[86] Although hints of the supernatural entered Muslim-era

76. al-Sukkarī, *Šarḥ*, vol. 1, pp. 110, 232.
77. See al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 1, p. 309.
78. Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān*, vol. 2, p. 218 *(aǧraʾ min al-māšī bi-Tarǧ)*.
79. al-Maydānī, *Maǧmaʿ*, vol. 1, p. 26, al-ʿAskarī, *Ǧamharat*, vol. 1, p. 329.
80. The earliest dictionary in which it features is al-Ǧawharī's (d. ca. 400/1010), *al-Ṣiḥāḥ*, vol. 1, p. 301.
81. Anon., *al-Muntaḫab*, vol. 1, p. 350.
82. al-Aṣbahānī, *al-Aġānī*, vol. 13, p. 240.
83. al-ʿUqaylī, *Dīwān*, p. 116.
84. Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, pp. 21-22.
85. For an insightful study into narrative, stock-geography and English outlaw mythopoesis, see Harlan-Haughey 2016.
86. al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, p. 578.

tales of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's death and burial,[87] no stories about other adventurers encountering the supernatural at Raḫmān are recorded, and the place has no discernible mythic afterlife. Its space is represented empirically and matter-of-fact: only one event is associated with Raḫmān, narrators soon forgot where precisely it was located, and they articulated no further stories about it.

The absence of perceptible repetition of toponyms in ways that indicate evolution of epic narratives occurs in the works of other poets too. A verse of the "desperado" *(ṣuʿlūk)* poet ʿUrwah ibn al-Ward refers to peoples being scattered "into the land of al-Yastaʿūr *(bilād al-Yastaʿūr)*."[88] Muslim anthologists explained his metaphor by describing Yastaʿūr as a place in the *ḥarrah* near Medina, a thick shrubby area, full of wild animals which "people seldom enter out of fear."[89] So far so good: a raider poet is naturally well-associated with such a place, but, as is the pattern noted throughout, my searches find that ʿUrwah is the lone poet to summon the metaphor and no other stories are reported to have taken place in the terrifying al-Yastaʿūr.

On a limited scale, therefore, some places and some metaphors were reiterated, but the vast majority were not, and Muslim scholars were usually left with single verses of poetry to make meaning of pre-Islamic poetic space. On the one hand, the fact that Muslim-era commentators knew so little about the toponyms does stand as cogent attestation of the poetry's authenticity. If Muslims had fabricated the corpus, as is occasionally proposed, we would expect them to draw more frequently on a regular repertoire of places, and to know more about the poetic toponyms. Since the place names were nearly as bewildering to fifth/eleventh century anthologists as they are for us, the corpus does appear a truly archaic body of material. But from the perspective of pre-Islam, the stark absence of repetition of toponyms amongst pre-Islamic poets makes it very difficult to justify that their poetry emanates from one cohesive community possessing shared senses of space. Poets from different places and groups shared neither metaphors nor toponyms. They shared a desire to describe their environment, but it was not an environment which they themselves shared together. We behold thoroughly fragmented communities with their own individual senses of space.

6/ Muslim-era transmission

Our study also uncovered an important finding regarding the process by which pre-Islamic poetry was recorded in the earliest extant layers of the Muslim-era collections. Traditionally, it has been assumed that poetry circulated orally in pre-Islamic Arabia, and was transmitted orally into the urban centres in Iraq and Syria before it was gradually committed to writing between the late second/eighth and fourth/tenth centuries. There are scattered anecdotes of poetry being written in pre- or early Islam,[90] but these are minority reports against a broader backdrop of orality and poetic transmission between Bedouin narrators and urbanite Iraqi anthologists. Our study of toponyms introduces an intriguing wrinkle to the received narrative. We find that Muslim-era scholars debated the spellings of various toponyms, and the nature of the discrepancies points to a more prominent role of writing in earlier periods of transmission.

Of the 34 place names in the poetry of Ta'abbaṭa Šarran and al-Sulayk, fourteen have debated forms. For examples, the location al-Raḥṭ is spelled in some sources as al-Waḥṭ,[91] Ta'abbaṭa Šarran's al-Albān may in fact have been al-Alyān,[92] his al-ʿAyqatān is also said to have been known as al-ʿAyṭatān,[93] al-Ǧaba' as al-Ḥayā, and al-Karāb may have been al-Kurāṭ.[94] Likewise, al-Sulayk's Ǧabār may have been Ǧifār, his Nayāl, Nubāk, and Marǧah, Maraḫah.[95] The Huḏalī poetry is the same: I have found some 50 toponyms written variously, such as al-ʿAmīm/al-Ghumaym; al-Manʿūq/al-Mabʿūq; al-Ruṣafah/al-Ḍarāfah. The differences do not derive from confusion over similar/interchangeable sounds, rather, these kinds of variations graphically resemble each other when rendered on the Arabic script's consonantal skeleton.

In early Islam, texts were written without most diacritical marks, and the discrepancies which the early narrators preserve for us logically derive from scribes misreading un-pointed manuscript verses of poetry. If they had heard the verses, they would not have confused a *ġayn* for an *ʿayn* or a *bā'* for a *tha'*, but if they had only encountered the toponyms by reading un-pointed script, then such variations could present themselves as possibilities. Because the narrators knew so little about Arabian geography to provide background corrections, and since most toponyms are unicums in any event, the correct pronunciation became utterly unresolvable. Given that the confusion is already evidenced in al-Sukkarī's mid-third/ninth century, we can propose that much poetry

87. See al-Maqrīzī, *Luṣūṣ*, § 2.3.21.
88. ʿUrwah, *Dīwān*, p. 87.
89. See al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 4, pp. 1394-1395, Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 5, p. 436.
90. Drory 1996; Maraqten 1998; Abbott 1972, pp. 171-174.
91. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 210; al-Maqrīzī, *Luṣūṣ*, § 2.3.9; al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 4, p. 1384; Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 5, p. 386.
92. See Yāqūt, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 1, p. 244.
93. al-Zabīdī, *Tāǧ*, vol. 13, p. 621; al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 3, p. 985.
94. Ta'abbaṭa Šarran, *Dīwān*, p. 79; Abū Tammām, *al-Waḥšiyyāt* p. 130.
95. See al-Bakrī, *Muʿǧam*, vol. 2, pp. 827-828, vol. 4, pp. 1176, 1210, 1339-1340.

was already committed in writing by the second/eighth century, and that oral transmission ceased being the primary pathway for some poetry somewhat earlier than has been thought.

We thus come face-to-face with the material mnemonic gap between the composition of pre-Islamic poetry and its Muslim recording. In the intervening 150-200 years, a majority of place names were forgotten and/or their names corrupted. Such clouded perception of toponyms confounds arguments that Bedouin narrators handed Iraqi anthologists a "history" of pre-Islamic Arabia intact: some details appear to have been written down, but others circulated haphazardly, and the process of recording negotiated substantial gaps as a consequence. The distortion can also be ascribed to the socio-geographical upheavals of early Islam whereby different Arabian peoples reorganised their domiciles and identities in the new socio-political organisation of the Caliphate which redrew Middle Eastern social spaces and generated a new community in the Fertile Crescent whose roots traced to varied memories of former (pre-Islamic) territories in Arabia. The disparate nature of different communal memories fusing into one pan-Arab story in early Islam further challenged the subsequent anthologists, and we have seen that their efforts ultimately yielded the unwieldy geographical compendia of names which we have found, in many cases, to be devoid of material meaning.

In this paper, we have looked for places and found ourselves comprehensively out of touch with Arabian geography, but we are at least no more out of place than were the Iraqi specialists who grappled with the material a millennium ago. Indeed, it seems that most toponyms would even have been obscure to all but the immediate micro-communal audiences of the individual poets. The evidence that poets inhabited unconnected space urges against gathering them now into one cohesive poetic tradition. Whilst Muslim-era anthologists treat them all as "Arab poets" of one tradition, those same anthologists were patently unable to demonstrate a grasp of Arabian space. Many pre-Islamic Arabian kin-groups did not produce *qaṣīdah*-style poetry, and even those who did clearly did not share a sufficient cohesion that could enable them to borrow toponyms and spatial metaphors as an identifiable poetic tradition. The process of anthologising did create an environment of learned copying of toponyms and their significations, but this emerged only after the poetry was removed from Arabia and its precise coordinates were lost.

It remains to be seen if toponyms of other pre-Islamic poetry collections are equally localised, transitory and of as limited horizon as the majority of the 550 places we examined here. For a conclusion to an exploratory study, the spatial congruences between outlaws, warriors and the tribal collection constitute striking challenges to well-entrenched opinions about the Arabic poetic tradition and the relationship between tribes and space. They invite us to see Arabia not as a Peninsula but as a patchwork of myriad separate, and sometimes competing homelands of groups with independent-minded senses of space.

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