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The Camel

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Citation
Webb, P. A. (2024). The Camel. In K. Fleet, G. Krämer, D. Matringe, J. Nawas, & D. J. Stewart (Eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Islam Three* (pp. 12-26). Leiden: Brill. doi:10.1163/1573-3912_ei3_COM_25463

Version:	Publisher's Version
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Downloaded from:	https://hdl.handle.net/1887/4178352

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

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Camel

The history of the **camel** in Asia and Africa encompasses several wild species, two domesticated species (one-humped dromedaries and two-humped Bactrians), and Bactrian-dromedary hybrids. By the beginning of the Common Era, all but one wild species were extinct, but domesticates had spread across the Middle East and affected the history of arid-region pastoralists, trading networks, political forces, and ritual beliefs.

1. Origins

Wild two-humped camels ranged from Mongolia to Kazakhstan, and were probably first domesticated in Mongolia and northwest China in about 4,000–3,000 B.C.E. (Ji et al.; Trinks et al.). By the middle of the third millennium B.C.E. there is evidence of domesticates in the Kopet Dag of Turkmenistan, and, by the late third-early second millennia, in central Iran and Afghanistan (Peters and von den Driesch; Potts; Burger; Heide). Bactrians were initially used as draught animals (Kohl) but became almost exclusively pack animals, because their capacity to withstand extreme cold made them ideal to accompany human expansion into previously inaccessible regions, to connect formerly separated populations, and to develop trans-Asiatic trade routes (Bulliet, chap. 6; Potts, 147–8).

At least two species of wild dromedaries *(Camelus thomasi* and *C. grattardi)* roamed the prehistoric Arabian Peninsula, the Levant, and parts of North Africa (Rowan et al). Rock reliefs at Shiʿb al-Musammā in present-day southwestern Saudi Arabia attest human hunting of wild camels in about 3,000 B.C.E. (Spassov and Stoytchev); large finds of fourth- to second-millennium-B.C.E. camel bones in the United Arab Emirates suggest intensive hunting in eastern Arabia (Jasim; von den Driesch and Obermaier). Dromedary domestication probably occurred in about 1500–1000 B.C.E. in eastern Arabia (Almathen et al; Burger; von den Driesch and Obermaier).

Although Bactrians were domesticated two millennia before dromedaries, they remained rarer in Mesopotamia (Heide, 350), in contrast to increasing textual reference to dromedaries in the late second millennium B.C.E. (Gelb et al., 5:36–7,

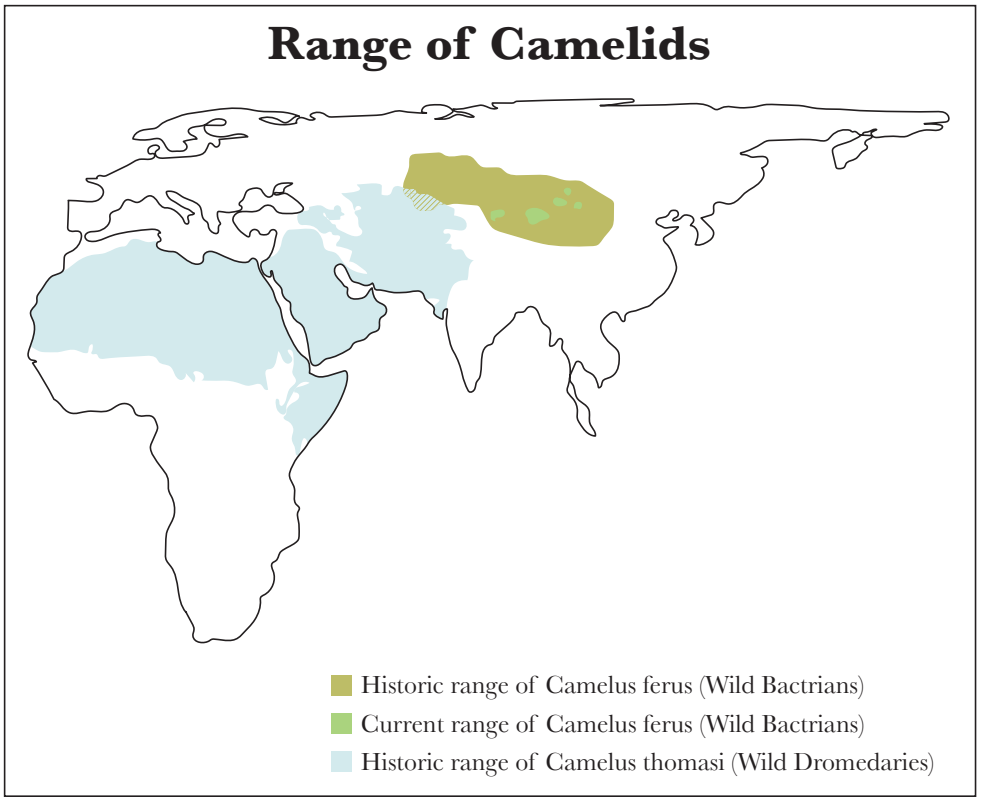

Illustration 1. Meredith Root-Bernstein and Jens-Christian Svenning, "Prospects for rewilding with camelids", *Journal of Arid Environments* 130 (2016) 54–61.

7:2, 20:22). Once the Neo-Assyrian empire (911–612 B.C.E.) expanded towards Arabia, camels appear regularly on wall reliefs and more consistent use of terminology emerged to distinguish dromedaries from Bactrians (al-Zaidi).

In Achaemenid Iran (539–330 B.C.E.), there is no definitive evidence of camels in pack caravans, but of the twenty-three tribute-bearing peoples depicted on the Persepolis Apadana staircase, five present camels, of which four are Bactrians (Schmidt, 85–9). Parthian-era models of Bactrians (247 B.C.E.-224 C.E.) were found in Mesopotamia and China (Bulliet, figs. 76–8, 105–7); camels also appear on reliefs and terracotta objects from Dura Europos (Bulliet, fig. 79; Yale University Art Gallery 1932.1251, 1932.1252, 1932.1374, 1934.44, 1938.5311), indicating intensification of caravan trade by the first century C.E.

Evidence of camels in Egypt is elusive: a drawing of a dromedary on a fourteenth- to thirteenth-century B.C.E. pottery sherd implies the presence of domesticates (Pusch), and some enigmatic finds suggest even earlier introduction of camels, but Egyptian texts curiously do not mention camels until the first millennium B.C.E., and their vocabulary (Demotic *gmwl* and Coptic *kjamūl*) reflects borrowing from

Arabian/Mesopotamian (Semitic) terminology (Heide, 341–3).

2. Camels in pre-Islamic Arabia

The dromedary's heat endurance and efficient use of water enabled human expansion into the Syrian and Arabian deserts, and camel-caravan networks may have begun in the fourteenth or thirteenth century B.C.E., although the earliest securely dated domesticated camel remains in Yemen are from about 800 B.C.E. (Fedele, 185). Inscriptions suggest trade and powerful kingdoms matured together during the early first millennium B.C.E. Sabaic and Minaean texts indicate that some long-distance caravans were under royal control (early-sixth-century B.C.E. Demirjan I; M 27). Minaean inscription M 247 invokes the gods of Maʿīn to protect caravans in Arabia and Egypt, and an Assyrian-era record from Mari in 760 B.C.E. records the impounding of Sabaean caravans for their failure to pay duties to the Assyrians (Suhu Annals CoS 2.115B iv.26b-38). South Arabian inscriptions also detail camels' local economic functions: caravans of from 300 to 1,200 animals carried supplies, including sesame oil and grape and date wine in repair operations on the Maʾrib dam (CIH 540, CIH 541).

In northern Arabia, Safaitic rock art from the early centuries C.E. frequently depicts dromedaries and horses, indicating their value as high-status possessions (al-Jallad, 6), and inscriptions describe camel pasturing (al-Jallad, 216). Other Safaitic texts mention raiding for camels (WH 179, MA 1, HaNSB 349) and invocations to a deity to protect camels (C 1837, KRS 756). Curiously, inscriptions from the last centuries B.C.E. in Dedan do not explicitly mention camels, despite the city being a staging point in trans-Arabian trade. Some urban Arabian populations, unlike pastoralist groups, may therefore have considered camels a less notable element of their society.

Arabians also employed dromedaries in war: 1 Sam 30:17 describes warriors escaping on camel-back in about 1000 B.C.E., and Assyrian wall reliefs from the seventh century B.C.E. illustrate camel-mounted archers, also in retreat (London, British Museum 124925, 124926). South Arabian royal inscriptions attest to camels as warrior mounts (Iryani 12, Ja649, Ja665, Ja1028), Herodotus reports Achaemenid use of camels against the Lydians (*Histories.* 1:80), and Latin historians recount Seleucid and Persian camel-mounted archers (Irwin, 143–4). Camels are not ideally suited as combat mounts, however, and their main military function was probably conveying soldiers and materiel on campaign. Whilst the spread of horses into Arabia between the first and third centuries C.E. further relegated camels to transport roles (MacDonald, Nabataean kingdom, 103), Muslim-era Arabic literature about sixth-century C.E. Arabian conflicts occasionally mentions warriors fighting on camel-back (for example, Ibn Nubāta, 137).

Whilst the camel lacked the prestige of a war mount, its importance amongst pastoralists and traders did translate into camel-oriented rituals. Monumental camel reliefs in al-Jawf (northeastern Saudi Arabia) from the first century B.C.E. to the first century C.E. indicate ceremonial use by pastoralists and caravan traders (Charloux et al., 180), and Safaitic inscriptions record supplications to deities for good camel pasture (KRS 1886). Safaitic animal sacrifices to local deities are almost always

explicitly camels (AWS 237, C 1658, KRS 1307, LP 317, KRS 75). The camel was also associated with the northern Arabian deity Arṣu (second-century C.E. reliefs at Dura Europos, Yale University Art Gallery 1932.1374, 1938.531a–b; and at Palmyra, Driven 94). South Arabian archaeology has yielded numerous model camels of metal, stone, and clay as votive offerings to deities to preserve new-born calves and herds and to safeguard caravans (RES 4143, RES 4144); RES 4145 records a model camel votive offering in thanks for an individual's good standing at court.

Actual camels were also ritually sacrificed, as evidenced in South Arabia at Raybūn (Sedov, 125) and al-Ḥaḍramawt (Frantsouzoff, 253); on the eastern Arabian littoral, camels were buried in a kneeling position (often with their necks deliberately bent backwards) adjacent to human graves (King; Ibn Ṣarāy, 90–4). These camels appear to have been sacrificed to deceased warriors for riding in(to) the afterlife (see the northern Arabian Jabal Ghunaym inscription in King, 86–7). Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry refers to a similar practice of sacrificing camels (or hamstrung camels left to die next to the grave) as *balāyā* (sing. *baliyya)* (al-Shahristānī, 687–9; the earliest extant prose description is Ibn Ḥabīb, d. 245/859, 323–4). Poetry recites that *baliyya* sacrifice was reserved for elite warriors.

3. Camels and Arabness

The dromedary's eastern Arabian domestication and the association of camels with peoples labelled as Aribi, Arba-aa, and other "Arab" cognates in Mesopotamian inscriptions and with "Ishmaelites" in the Hebrew Bible (for example, I Chronicles 27:30) has suggested an intimate relationship between the camel and Arab identity (ʿĀqil, 52–60; Carmichael, 6–7; Retsö), but the Arab-camel nexus has been critiqued because not all camel herders in antiquity are labelled with "Arab" cognates (MacDonald, Nabatean kingdom, 102–4). Furthermore, camels had spread across the entire Middle East and North Africa by the early centuries C.E., and it is theoretically difficult to sustain the argument that camel herding can, by itself, foster cohesion of an ethnic identity (Webb, 28–30). The word *ibil*, the most common term for "camel" in Akkadian, Sabaic, Safitic, and Arabic, may, moreover, be a borrowing into Semitic languages, perhaps suggesting the origins of camel husbandry in a different linguistic group altogether, although details are still uncertain (Heide, 346). In the final analysis, the dromedary is not strictly proprietary to Arabs, but the range of camel references in the earliest Arabic-language memories of pre-Islamic Arabia and nascent Islam do clearly indicate camels' cultural importance amongst the first Muslims and their ancestors.

Arabic has a host of camel-specific vocabulary. *Ibil* (or *ibl*) and *baʿīr* denote "camel" generically, *jamal* and *nāqa* indicate male and female, respectively, and *rāḥila* and *maṭiyya* refer to riding camels. There are also hundreds of words specifying camels with various physical attributes, ages, reproductive stages, and deformities, which Muslim-era philologists collected in lexicons and books devoted to camel-related vocabulary (for example, al-Aṣmaʿī; Ibn Sīda, 2:147–284). Even if some of these words were rare or gathered by Muslim-era philologists from separate Arabian and neighbouring languages and retrospectively Arabised through philological codification, the variety of camel terminology in pre-Islamic

poetry and Prophetic *ḥadīth* nonetheless demonstrates the centrality of camels in Arabian cultures.

The majority of camels in Arabia were dromedaries, and Arabic texts from at least the second/eighth century use *ibil ʿarabiyya* or *ibil ʿirāb* (Arab camel; al-Khalīl, 4:241; Mālik, 894) to distinguish dromedaries from Bactrians, which were identified as *fālij* (an indigenous Arabic term inspired by the Bactrian's two humps: the root *f-l-j* connotes gaps or things split into two halves). Bactrians were also known by loanwords in Arabic: *duhānij/dahnaj*, *duhāmij/dahmaj*, and *qirmiliyya* (al-Khalīl, 5:265; Ibn Sīda, 2:194; al-Zabīdī, 15:616). Lexicons add that Bactrians were imported from Makrān (al-Khalīl, 6:127) or India (al-Jawharī, 1:336) as studs for mating with local dromedaries: this accords with early-modern hybridisation practice (Potts, 156–8). Hybrids were called *bukhtī*, *bukht*, or *bukhātī*, and hybridisation was known in nascent Islam: several of the Bactrian- and hybrid-specific terms appear in *ḥadīth* and poetry from the first/seventh century (Mālik, 851; Ibn Abī Shayba, 20199; Muslim, *al-Fitan*, 110; Ibn Ḥanbal, 6325; al-Zabīdī, 3:12). A *ḥadīth* ascribed to the early Umayyad-era military commander Busr b. Arṭāʾa (d. between 60/680 and 86/705) indicates that hybrids were encountered during the Muslim conquest of Ifrīqiya (Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam, 284; Ibn Ḥanbal, 17626–7).

Islamic law contains elaborate provisions for the taxation of camels, implying that early legislators engaged frequently with peoples for whom camels constituted the primary form of wealth. Muslim-era histories of pre-Islamic Arabia and the early Caliphate in Medina also depict the strategic importance of *ḥimā*, sacrosanct preserves where only the camels (and other livestock) of the land's protector were allowed to graze, and, during the early Caliphate, land reserved for camels collected as tax by the state (al-Māwardī, 317–20). The ability to assert control over *ḥimā* pastureland was a powerful statement of independence and sovereignty at the dawn of Islam (see stories of Kulayb b. Rabīʿa's aggressive *ḥimā* defence, in Ibn Nubāta, 92), and Prophetic *ḥadīth*s exhibit efforts to eliminate competing Arabian sovereignties by declaring that only God and the Prophet are entitled to declare a *ḥimā* (al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ, al-Musāqāt*, 11; Ibn Ḥanbal, 16422; Ibn Ḥajar, 6:178–80). Muḥammad reportedly established five *ḥimā* camel-grazing reservations (al-Samhūdī, 4:72–101), and the caliph ʿUmar (r. 13–23/634–44) declared more, leading to friction with pastoralists (al-Wakīʿ, ps.-al-Ḥarbī, 80–1; Abū ʿUbayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām, 274–6; al-Samhūdī, 4:76–89). The salience of the *ḥimā* in memories of Arabian formation underlines a functional centrality of camels in framing status and wealth; the willingness to sacrifice camels to feed guests likewise features in pre-Islamic and early Muslim-era poetry as a symbol of both generosity and nobility. The expressions reached great hyperbole in poetry and prose anecdotes, including the willingness to slaughter heavily pregnant camels, prized camels, or even the readiness to slaughter one's last remaining camel for guests, as the supreme sign of noble generosity. These elaborations could only have developed amongst people for whom camels represented the ultimate possession.

The symbolic equation of camels and status is also manifested in ritual texts of Muḥammad's period: the pre-Islamic ode

(qaṣīda) regularly features long descriptions of the poet's female riding-camel in the transitional section *(raḥīl)*, which probably reflected cultic function, and the Qurʾān invokes the "she-camel of God" *(nāqat Allāh)* as the miraculous sign given to the Arabian Thamūd people (Q 7:73–7, 11:64, 26:155–6, 91:13). Q 88:17 invites its audience to contemplate camels as a miracle of God's creation, and Q 81:4 summons camel imagery to illustrate the panic of Judgement Day, revealing that people will be so terrified that they will even abandon their "heavily pregnant camels" *(ʿishār)* (for further references to camels in the Qurʾān, see ʿAbd al-Raḥmān). Ritually intoned camel references also appear in stories of the Prophet and early Muslims. Muḥammad chose his home in Medina by observing where his she-camel knelt down (Ibn Hishām, 1:495–6), sacrificial camels *(juzūr)* marked important ceremonies during Muḥammad's lifetime (Wheeler), and public ceremonies of *juzūr* sacrifice continued in Umayyad times (al-Azraqī, 2:108–9). Early apocalyptic texts invoke camel imagery too: one sign of the End of Days, for instance, was "a light from the south that will illuminate the necks of camels in Buṣrā" (al-Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ*, *al-Fitan*, 24). Such symbolic salience of camels in early Muslim texts reveals a desert/pastoralist character in nascent Islam, and, when they are read alongside other early texts evidencing the more common Near Eastern traditions of donkeys in religious contexts (Bashear, 39–46, 60–74), we apprehend the formative mixing of beliefs and peoples in early Islam.

Camels were the primary pack animals for the armies of the expanding Caliphate, the caliphal *ḥimā* in Arabia bred camels for campaigns, and camels are featured in some historical narratives. The Prophet's wife ʿĀʾisha (d. 58/678?) observed her troops in the First Fitna from a camel palanquin, prompting the name "Battle of the Camel" for her fight against the Caliph ʿAlī in 36/656. The celebrated and decisive quick march from Iraq to Syria in 13/634 of the commander Khālid b. al-Walīd was achieved using an ingenious method of compelling some of his camels to drink excess water and then trussing their mouths, forcing the water to remain in their stomachs, reportedly unadulterated, which could then be extracted when the camels were slaughtered (al-Ṭabarī, 3:408–11). Whether this method was as efficacious in practice as the narratives suggest seems untested, but the camels' role in Khālid's victory is, in any case, central to the epic narrative memorialised in Arabic historiography.

These facts suggest the centrality of camels in the worldviews and communal identity of the first Muslims, continuing an Arabian pastoralist background; the poet Jarīr b. ʿAṭiyya (d. c.112/730) even used the expression "those who ride camels" as a metaphor for all the people of the Umayyad-era Muslim community (Jarīr, 1:89). Today's cliché of camels as "ships of the desert" can be traced to the term *sufun al-barr* (lit., land ships) first coined in Umayyad poetry (for example, al-Farazdaq, d. c.112/730, 371, and Dhū l-Rumma, d. c.117/735, 2:1003). Al-Thaʿālibī (d. 429/1038) believes that the poets were inspired by Q 26:41–2, which mentions ships and riding animals together (al-Thaʿālibī, 355–6); less explicit, yet nonetheless metaphorical descriptions of camels in terms rich in nautical allusion can also be found in pre-Islamic poetry (Montgomery, 178–80). Camels

therefore played a role in the Umayyad-era elite's sense of identity and perpetuated aspects of the animals' pre-Islamic symbolic salience. Interestingly, however, second-third/eighth-ninth-century texts downplay the position of the camel in discussions of Arabness. Early ʿAbbāsid-era literature comprises the first writings in Arabic about people who explicitly called themselves "Arabs," but the most important animal in these discussions of Arab nobility is the horse, not the camel.

Ibn Qutayba's (d. 276/889) *Faḍl al-ʿArab*, a spirited defence of Arabness, considers horse husbandry as evidence of the Arabs' superiority over all other peoples (§§1.5.8–11, 2.2.1–11), and his work contains little information on camels. His *al-Maʿānī al-kabīr*, a catalogue of poetic tropes, opens with forty-six chapters on horses (*al-Maʿānī*, 1:13–145), whereas its now lost camel section contained only sixteen (*al-Maʿānī*, 1:9). Memories of fabled pre-Islamic Arabian warriors also favoured horsemen *(fursān)* (for instance, Abū ʿUbayda, 15–23), whereas camel riders *(rukbān)* were rarely categorised or specifically praised. Two unusual references in which horse- and camel-mounted warriors are celebrated equally appear in a poem ascribed to the pre-Islamic Qurayṭ b. Unayf and in an anecdote about the battle of Qādisiyya (15/636) (al-Tibrīzī, 1:21–2).

Ibn al-Kalbī (d. 204/819 or 206/821) and Ibn al-Aʿrābī (d. 231/846) wrote books on the lineage of Arabian horses, connecting them to the prophet Ishmael or to Solomon (Ibn al-Kalbī, 12–7; Ibn al-Aʿrābī, 77–8; Webb, 262–3), whilst—outside of one possibly spurious text ascribed to Ibn Ḥabīb (cited without source in al-Ḍāmin, 7), brief glosses on the Qurʾānic references to the "Camel of God," and references to famous camels of pre-Islamic kings (al-Damīrī, 1:28)—Arabic littérateurs neither relished camel lineages nor elaborated on camels in narratives of ancient prophets. Although camel-specific words in Arabic significantly outnumber horse-specific vocabulary, there are more philological books on horses than on camels: Yāqūt's (d. 626/1228) *Muʿjam al-udabāʾ* enumerates twenty-one books about horses compared to nine on camels, Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist* (written 377/987) lists twenty-one compared to thirteen, and the seventh/thirteenth-century Ashrafiyya catalogue contains five texts on horses and none on camels (Hirschler, 359, 361, 364, 1208, 1221a). Thesauri and collections of poetry also give horses precedence (Ibn Sīda, 2:97–268; al-ʿAskarī, 2:967–1016).

The camel's symbolic cachet seems to have diminished after the centres of Islam left Arabia and Muslims developed new sources of wealth. The superior utility of horses in battle probably guided the new communities of Arab elites to skew projections of their identity towards their war horses rather than camels to complement their status as the Caliphate's warrior elite, and the self-styled "Arab" communities in Islam's urban centres in the late first/seventh and the second/eighth centuries distinguished themselves from *aʿrāb* pastoralists (Athamina; Binay; Webb, 319–24), adding further incentive to dissociate early ʿAbbāsid-era impressions of noble Arabness from pastoralist camel husbandry. The shift relegated the camel to the status of a more quotidian domesticate, hence the impression that the camel remained "central in Arab culture" following the Muslim conquests (Rugiadi, 226; Pellat) needs qualification, as references to camels in pre-modern Islamic cultural production attest.

4. Camels in pre-Modern Islam (fourth-eleventh/tenth-seventeenth centuries)

Camels did retain a place in some courtly ceremonies: an ʿAbbāsid-era triumphal procession in Sāmarrāʾ included a troop of seventy camel riders (al-Ṭabarī, 9:206; al-Yaʿqūbī, 2:480), and the *maḥmal* palanquin that led the official *ḥajj* caravan was carried by camel from no later than the sixth/twelfth century until the twentieth (Porter), but references to ritual sacrifice of camels, so common in nascent Islam, are extremely limited. One exception is an indication from the Fāṭimids in North Africa during the early third/ninth century that suggest an officially organised she-camel sacrifice ritual during the ʿĪd celebrations (Fierro). Camels are noted as pack animals for armies and considered a source of wealth across Arabic literature, but the narratives treat camels in a matter-of-fact fashion and accord them neither decisive roles nor portentous significance.

Camels were clearly the foundation of the flourishing Muslim-era land trade across the Middle East (Bulliet), and the spread of camel-borne Muslim traders extended camel-caravan networks, notably in West Africa (Insoll, 212). Camel owners who hired the animals to caravans and worked as cameleers *(jammāl, karī, mukārī)* do not, however, appear as members of a noble profession, nor are they cited in elite or praiseworthy contexts (for example, al-Jāḥiẓ's negative impression of the *jammāl*, 3:147, the nameless, murdered *mukārī* in al-Tanūkhī, 3:373, and the story of an unlucky *jammāl* falsely arrested in al-Ibshīhī, 2:130). Whilst camels were ubiquitous in the pre-modern Middle East, the most lucrative and highest-volume trade between China and Iraq was by sea, and, because camel-owning Bedouin pastoralists were not high-status elements of Muslim society, the animal ultimately lacked prestige amongst urban Muslims. The shift from the camel's pre-Islamic salience to a commonplace beast of burden in the background of mediaeval Islamic society is expressly epitomised by al-Damīrī's (d. 808/1405) comment (1:26) that the everyday familiarity of camels had dulled his contemporaries' awareness and appreciation of the animal's remarkable physical characteristics and utility.

In Arabia, however, camels remained tied to status and wealth, to which the fourth/tenth-century Yemeni scholar al-Hamdānī attests via precise narratives about the "most noble" *(akram)* camels, the *mahriyya* breed, from the Mahra region in eastern Yemen. Tellingly, the Arabian al-Hamdānī exhibits more ritual symbolism for the camel, claiming that the *mahriyya* were the remnants of the herds of the prophets Hūd and Ṣāliḥ. Al-Hamdānī also evidences specialised camel husbandry that maintained various breeds of dromedaries for specific purposes: he details varieties of the *mahriyya* (*Ṣifat*, 320; al-Damīrī, 1:27), and notes the *majūdiyya* from central Yemen as of secondary "nobility." These must have been preferred breeds for riding, whilst a breed known as the *saksakiyya* (named after the Sakāsik tribal group residing across northern Yemen) were used as pack animals (*Ṣifat*, 196). The detail al-Hamdānī provides about caravan organisation is also exceptional: he describes trading caravans of 1,000, 1,600, and 3,000 camels, which could be so long on the narrow passes between Yemen and central Arabia that the head of the caravan would reach its destination before the tail end could set off, making elaborate procedures necessary to organise movements (*al-Jawharatayn*, 170–4). The ritual

significance of camels amongst Arabian pastoralists is also attested in continued camel sacrifices at graves (Jasim, 96), and eighth/fourteenth-century graves containing both camel and human bones in the Syrian Desert near Jabal Qurma suggest continuation of *baliyya* practice outside of urban centres (Peter Akkermans, pers. comm.).

Literary sources from the central Islamic lands seldom provide precise inventories of camel numbers, although some references to the *ḥajj* are revealing: losses of camels to Bedouin raids on pilgrim caravans in the late third/ninth century are occasionally enumerated: five thousand were reportedly stolen in 269/882 and twenty thousand in 355/965 (al-Ṭabarī, 9:613; Miskawayh, 5:343). The chroniclers' narrative aim was to stress the shock of raids against pilgrims, and the numbers they cite consequently lie somewhere between qualitative impression and quantitative data, but they may be reasonable approximations, given that other sources report that the princess Khātūn al-Masʿūdī took thirty thousand water-carrying camels *(nāḍiḥa)* on her pilgrimage in 579/1184 (Ibn Jubayr, 144–5), caliphal gifts alone to the Meccan shrine during the seventh/thirteenth century required one hundred to two hundred camels (al-Khālidī, 129–31), and, during the *ḥajj* of 366/977, the Ḥamdānid princess Jamīla's personal caravan numbered four hundred camels (al-Hamadhānī, 323).

Further systematic collation is needed to substantiate the camel's functions in pre-modern urban Islam. As one example of the sources' possibilities, the history of Egypt *Badāʾiʿ al-zuhūr* ("The fabulous blooms from the beds of time") by the late-Mamlūk-era chronicler Ibn Iyās (d. c.930/1524) has hundreds of references to camels in the daily events of ninth/fifteenth- and early tenth/sixteenth-century Cairo. Camels were the essential pack animal for military expeditions (Ayalon, 270–1), but Ibn Iyās indicates that the state did not keep enough animals, and soldiers were paid cash to buy a camel before expeditions (4:99, 119, 382). Camels in private hands were also appropriated for the army (1/2:770). Ibn Iyās shows that camels were included in gifts offered to the sultans (1/2:345) and that camels constituted a basic commodity: the records of physical spoils of war, plunder from raids, and state confiscations are commonly stated in terms of camels, alongside horses, mules, textiles, and weapons (1/2:722, 2:323, 4:106, 252, 399, 405, 457, 458, 5:75). Soldiers' salaries were occasionally paid partly in specie with camels (4:122), and the state used camels to parade stripped and bound criminals, brigands, and rebels in the streets of Cairo (4:24, 40, 42, 87, 275, 286). It appears that Cairo's drinking water was transported daily into the city by specific water-supply camels *(jimāl al-siqāya)*, which numbered 120 in the early tenth/sixteenth century (3:237, 4:364). There seems to have been a trade in camels imported from the Ḥijāz to markets in Cairo and rural Egypt, which, in times of economic distress, was lucrative (1/2:697). Ibn Iyās usually counts camels in general terms, such as "a number" *(ʿidda)* or "an uncountable number" (*mā lā yanḥasir*, for example, 1/2:719, 4:209, 5:75); when specifics are provided, we find small numbers where peasant traders are concerned—for instance, two camels that accidently caused havoc in Cairo; 4:135)—whilst official caravans of fifty to 150 are recorded, and at least one large procession in the reign of Sulṭān Qānṣawh al-Ghawrī (906–22/1501–16)

had one thousand (1/2:183, 708, 4:102, 411, 5:42). Ibn Iyās's express references to *bukhātī* camels indicate the presence of hybrids in Cairo (for example, 1/1:44, 1/2:111, 183, 345, 2:323, 4:252, 456, 5:8).

5. Camels in Islamic-era material culture

Depictions of camels in material culture offer another window into social perceptions. Roger II's famous mantel made in 528/1133–4 (Vienna, Schatzkammer, WS XIII 14) represents graphically a camel being devoured by a lion: this may seem, prima facie, a symbol of Roger's sovereignty over Muslim Sicily, under the presumption that a camel must symbolise Islam, but, as set out in this section, images of camels are, in fact, rare in material culture, and, as pre-modern texts likewise do not ascribe to the camel a symbolic association with Islam, the interpretation of Roger's mantle as symbolising victory over Islam may be anachronistic (Grabar, 37; Dolezalek, 7–8). In early Islamic-era courtly architecture, dromedaries appear, along with other animals, in the second/eighth-century frescos at al-Walīd b. Yazīd's (r. 125–6/743–4) hunting lodge and baths at Quṣayr ʿAmra, and the courtyard of al-Muʿtaṣim's (r. 218–27/833–42) palace at Sāmarrāʾ was decorated with stucco reliefs of Bactrians (Hertzfeld, 3, pls. 100–5; London, Victoria and Albert Museum. A97–1922; London, British Museum. OA+.11131). A camel appears on the border of a third/ninth-century Egyptian textile (New York, Metropolitan Museum, 1974.113.4), several bowls with camels as their main design survive from the fourth/tenth to the sixth/twelfth centuries (for example, New York, Metropolitan Museum, 64.259; Paris, Louvre, MAO379/12, MAO 341; Kuwait National Museum LNS 108C), and a seventh/thirteenth-century architectural tile depicts a camel (Paris, Louvre, AD11071).

In the main, however, images of camels are distinctly less frequent than those of horses, dogs, wild predators and prey, other animals of the hunt, birds, and (from the Mongol period onwards) mythical dragons and phoenixes on tiles, metalwork and other media created from Egypt to eastern Iran from the fourth/tenth century. The rise of the Seljuks (Saljūqs), with their central Asian pastoralist roots, may have triggered increased interest in representing camels during the sixth/twelfth and early seventh/thirteenth centuries (for example, New York, Metropolitan Museum, 64.59; Nasser D. Khalili Collection, POT 857; Rugiadi), but Seljuk-era representations of horses and hunting animals were more frequent.

Scenes of everyday life rendered in miniature (especially on manuscripts of al-Ḥarīrī's *Maqāmāt*) also feature camels (Istanbul, Esad Efendi, 2916; BNF, Arabe 5847; London, British Library, Or. Add. 22114), but the majority of camel depictions appear in illustrations of historical figures from the pre-Islamic past or in idealised images of Arabian Bedouin, historic and present-day (Persian miniatures in Freer Gallery of Art, F1946.12.30, 12.64, 12.169, 12.253). The popular romance story of the Sāsānid monarch Bahrām Gūr (r. 420–38 C.E.) and Azada contains an episode of hunting on camel-back, which was a particularly popular motif in Iranian art from the sixth/twelfth century onwards represented in the majority of camel depictions on pottery (New York, Metropolitan Museum, 57.36.13, 10.56.2, 57.36.2; Paris, Louvre, MAO1221; London, Victoria and Albert Museum, 1841–76). Overall, artists' greater emphasis on

horses, hunting scenes, and fabulous animals indicates the preferences of courtly patrons in mediaeval Islam; the limited attention to camels (and other agricultural domesticates) further suggests the quotidian status of such animals amongst urban patrons, in contrast to pre-Islamic Arabian art, where images of camels in Sabaean carving were so prominent (for example, Paris, Louvre, AO1029; London, British Museum, 102601, 125682), and in Arabian rock art, where life-sized or ever larger images of camels are a common feature (Charloux, Guagnin, and Norris).

6. The modern period

The Ṣafavids organised extravagantly choreographed camel sacrifices to accompany new interpretations of Shīʿī ceremonies in the eleventh/seventeenth century (Rahimi); this may represent a continuation of the Fāṭimid sacrifice ʿĪd ceremonies noted above. In the Ottoman world, camels are attested as part of some official processions, such as the presentation of the ambassador of the Ottoman Bayazid II (r. 886–918/1481–1512) to the Iranian Āq Qoyunlu court witnessed by the Venetian Giovanni Dario (d. 1494), where three racing camels formed part of the ritual gift-giving, although six fine horses with expensive saddles were presented first (quoted in Berchet, 150). Overall, the camel appears in Ottoman records primarily as a beast of burden that accompanied armies and traders and in construction and canal-digging projects (Tuchscherer; Mikhail, 329–30). While camels clearly played an important role in rural economies and local trading networks in Anatolia (İnal), camels were of middling value in rural Egypt, compared to other livestock (Mikhail, 328). The seizure of camels by the authorities appears to have been used to weaken difficult-to-control nomadic groups: the Tunisian Ibrāhīm al-Sharīf (r. 1114–7/1702–5) impounded vast numbers of camels and horses in an effort to force pastoralists into more easily controlled agricultural settlements (Ibn Abī Ḍiyāf, 2:80).

Camels served Middle Eastern land-trading networks until the development of mechanised transport in the late nineteenth century. The *Description de l'Égypte* records that 22,000 animals were available for hire in Cairo under ʿAlī Bey (1156–68/1743–54), including donkeys and horses; camel markets were apparently concentrated near the citadel, given their military utility (Raymond, 1:347–8, 2:383). Muḥammad Saʿīd al-Qāsimī reports that two hundred camel hirers *(mukāriyya)* operated in Damascus until the advent of the railroad in the early twentieth century, which extinguished the trade (1:47–8, 156–7, 2:466–7). By the mid-twentieth century, significant camel caravans continued only in regions of limited infrastructural development, such as the Sahara, Ethiopia's Afar region, and western China (for salt-trading caravans in Niger, see Lovejoy, 95–7, 182–90; for Mauritania and Mali, see Lydon).

During the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century, camels found new employment in European armies. The French used pack camels during their expansion into Algeria, and in 1856 the United States Army briefly formed a Camel Corps to equip soldiers in America's newly acquired Mexican territories (Harvey). In the attempt to lift the Mahdī's siege of Khartoum in 1884, the British became the first Europeans to form a militarised Camel Corps, comprising English mounted infantrymen who, like Arabians 2,500 years earlier, rode

camels on patrol but fought on foot. In the First World War, the British established a larger Imperial Camel Corps, which saw action in Libya, Palestine, Transjordan, and the Ḥijāz (Wilson). The British also raised a Somaliland Camel Corps in 1912, manned mostly by Somalis (Mohamed), and in 1902 the French formed an armed camelry called the Compagnies Méharistes Sahariennes as part of the Armée d'Afrique, originally recruited mainly from the Chaamba nomadic tribe of the northern Sahara and commanded by officers of the French Affaires Indigènes (Huré et al., 225–8). The French term Méharistes derives from Mahri, the pre-modern Arabic name for the most prized breed of camels from southeastern Yemen, noted above. Mechanisation of warfare by the Second World War ended the viability of these units.

Small-scale camel-borne trade continues in less developed regions, where camels still constitute a basic form of wealth for semi-pastoralists across Africa and Asia, but, as evidenced in anthropological research from Mauritania, camel herding itself is not a high-status profession (Freire, 426). Conversely, the camel's contemporary status has increased furthest in the Arabian Gulf since the 1970s, when elites of the oil-rich states embraced stereotypical Arab-Bedouin identity and celebrated their countries as the home of original Arabness. A surge in interest in camel racing and breeding is amongst the core "invented traditions" of modern Gulf identity (Khalaf; Irwin, 178), and camels are consequently a symbol of status for local families. Modern herds are also a source of income for outsiders, such as Sudanese and Mauritanian immigrants to the Gulf, whose experience tending camels brought them to the Gulf for temporary work as camel herders (Freire, 430). Gulf camels are increasingly herded by Sudanese and South Asians, particularly Bangladeshis, who receive their training once they arrive.

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Crimean Tatar (language)

Crimean Tatar is a Turkic language which developed in the Khanate of Crimea on the Crimean Peninsula during the dissolution of the Golden Horde in the fifteenth century. Crimean Tatar is a Far Western Kipchak language (like Karaim), and thus belongs to Western Kipchak (as do Tatar, Bashkir, Kumyk etc.). Because the Khanate of Crimea became an Ottoman "vassal" state as soon as it was formed, and as that situation continued up to the late eighteenth century, Crimean Tatar (like other Turkic languages of the Crimean region, such as Krymchak, Crimean Karaim, and Urum) shows strong Ottoman influences. Krymchak is most probably the Crimean Tatar sociolect of an originally "Jewish" group, great numbers of which were killed by the SS-Einsatzgruppe D during the German occupation in World War II, while Urum is the sociolect of the Greek population of the Crimean Peninsula and neighbouring regions. The Muslim Crimean Tatars were deported to Uzbekistan by Stalin in 1944 where, against all expectations, they did (at least to some extent) preserve their language in a comparatively different (i.e. Southeast) Turkic linguistic milieu and a totally alien cultural environment. Only after the dissolution of the Soviet Union could the Crimean Tatars return to the Crimean Peninsula, which had been, in Soviet times, handed over by the Russian Socialist Federal Union Republic to the forerunner of the recent Ukrainian Republic. After Crimea became part of the Russian Empire in the late eighteenth century, several waves of Crimean Tatar emigrants moved into the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, where they became, to a greater or lesser extent, assimilated.

The first attempts to write Turkic in Arabic script in the Khanate of Crimea were made as early as the fifteenth century (e.g. in the poetry of Khan Mengli Girey) as a consequence of the strong