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QUR'ÂN AND POETRY:
MORE DATA CONCERNING THE QUR'ĀNIC
JIZYA VERSE (‘AN YADIN’)

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Franz Rosenthal, in whose memory this article is written, dedicated a special study to some problems in the Qur'ān, including the issue of 'an yadin. This expression appears only once in the Qur'ān, in 9:29. This verse reads (Rosenthal’s translation):

Fight those who do not believe in God and in the Last Day and who do not consider forbidden what God and His Messenger have forbidden, and who do not take as their religious norm the true religious norm, of those who have been given the Book, until they give al-jizyata 'an yadin wa-hum saghirun.

Several scholars apart from Rosenthal have tried to elucidate the meaning of the Qur'ānic 'an yadin, among them Kister, Braumann and others whose studies have been reviewed in detail by R. Paret. I have also added some observations concerning this issue. The present study examines some verses of poetry which make use of the phrase 'an yadin, all of which except one have not yet been studied. Their evidence may shed more light on the significance of the Qur'ānic 'an yadin.

These verses are entirely independent of the Qur'ān and seem to be firmly rooted in the ancient literary legacy of classical Arabic. They use the phrase 'an yadin in various contexts which fall into three main groups:

1. My thanks are due to Prof. Yohanan Friedmann for his comments on this article.
1 Group A: “Generously”

1.1 Muṣ'ab b. 'Abdallāh

A verse by Muṣ'ab b. 'Abdallāh b. Muṣ'ab (d. 236/851), of the descendants of Khādija's father Khalwaylīd, of the Asad of the Quraysh: 6

[kāmil]

Bintu l'amīni wa-ṣīru Ahnada minhumā
	taḥdā za'īnatūhā ilaynā 'an yadī

“The daughter of al-Amīn and Ahmad’s son-in-law are from them, their riding woman has been presented to us ‘an yadin.”

“Daughter (bint) of al-Amīn” is a description of Zaynab, the daughter of the Prophet Muhammad, in a verse attributed to her husband Abū l-Ās b. al-Rabī. 7 Husband and wife were maternal first cousins through Khādija (Zaynab’s mother) and her sister Hālā (mother of Abū l-Ās). 8 This means that they were both among the poet’s ancestors.

Zaynab came from Mecca to Medina after the hijra, but her husband embraced Islam and came to Medina only later. When he finally became a Muslim, Muhammad reportedly gave his daughter back to him as a lawful wife, keeping the old pre-Islamic marriage intact. 9 This generously renewed bond is probably alluded to in the statement that their “riding woman” (za'īna), i.e. Zaynab who rode from Mecca to Medina, 10 was given as a gift, i.e. in renewed marriage, to her husband.

Whether this interpretation of the verses is correct or not, it is in any case clear that the phrase ‘an yadin occurs here in the sense of a generous presentation of some gift. In this context, ‘an yadin is therefore a metaphor signifying the act of handing over something willingly and unconditionally, and as a token of pure generosity.

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9 Ibid., vol. 8, p. 33.
10 For za'īna as standing for women coming from Mecca to Medina see Ibn Sa'd, Tāfaqāt, vol. 1, p. 228; Laylā bt. Abī Ḥathma is said to have been the first Muslim za'īna who came to Medina.
1.2 Durayd b. al-‘Simma

A verse by Durayd b. al-‘Simma (d. 8/629) reads:11

\[\text{surah 141} \]

\[\text{A-‘ādhila inna l-ruz’ā fi mithli Khālidin} \]
\[\text{wa-lā ruz’ā fi māthlaka l-mar’u ‘an yadin.} \]

“O you who repro v e (me), misfortune is in (the death of ) Khālid
and there is no misfortune in what man squanders ‘an yadin’.

The poet says here that unlimited spending of one’s property ‘an yadin
cannot be considered as a misfortune compared to the death of a noble-
man like Khālid. The idea is that one should not hesitate to lose all
one’s possessions for noble causes like charity. It is clear then that ‘an
yadin here signifies generous and unreserved spending of property.

2 Group B: “Voluntarily”

2.1 Majnūn Laylā

The following verses are attributed to Majnūn Laylā, the famous hero
of the romantic story of the lover who lost his reason because he could
not marry his beloved Laylā.12 They read:13

\[\text{[surah 141]} \]

\[\text{A-raaytuki in lam u’thki l-hubbā ‘an yadin} \]
\[\text{wa-lam yaku ’idāti idh abayti ibā’ū.} \]
\[\text{A-rārihatī li-mawti anti fa-mayyūtin} \]
\[\text{wa-mā li-na}//\text{fūsli l-hā’ī yāti baqī’ū.} \]

11 Al-‘Asma‘ī, ‘Abd al-Malik, al-‘Asma‘īyyāt, Ahmad Muhammad Shahīd and ‘Abd
al-Salām Hārin (eds.), 2 vols. (Cairo, 1964), vol. 1, p. 107. This verse was already
noticed by Kister (‘An yadin, pp. 277-8), but his interpretation is different from the
one suggested here. Brahmam’s interpretation (op. cit., p. 206f.) of the verse is
more to the point. My previous interpretation of the verse is insufficient. See Rubin,
op. cit., p. 140, note 51.

12 See Ch. Pellat, “Majnūn Laylā”, EI², s.v.

13 Abū l-Faraj al-Jalālī, Kitāb al-aghāni, 30 vols. (Cairo 1285/1868, repr. Beirut
1970), vol. 1, p. 183. I am grateful to Yohanan Friedmann and Elan Kohlberg for
their help in translating these verses. The form a-raaytuki (for a-m‘aytuki) is required
by the meter.
"Tell me, if I do not give you love ‘an yadin
and if you refuse, I have no power to refuse -
Would you leave me to die so that I would indeed die?
fearful souls cannot stay alive."

In these verses the poet asks his beloved to remember that he cannot control his love for her, and that he has not given it to her of his own free will (‘an yadin), and that even if she refuses, he has no power to subdue it. He therefore asks his beloved not to let him die of his severe illness, implying that his cure is in her hands.

There is another version of the relevant verse which uses the opposite term of ‘an yadin, i.e. ‘an qilan, but leaves the idea of the verse intact. This is achieved by replacing the negative lam u’aslki by the positive a’taytuki.14

[tawṣīf]
A-raytuki in a’taytuki l-wudda ‘an qilan

"Tell me, if I only give you love against my own will (‘an qilan)...

The appearance of ‘an qilan as the opposite of ‘an yadin leaves no doubt as to the significance of ‘an yadin in the former version. When the poet declares there that he did not give his love ‘an yadin, it certainly means that he did not give it willingly and of his own accord.

2.2 ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr

A verse by an anonymous poet in praise of an unidentified hero, but said to suit ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr, reads:15

[ra’jaz]

... Ya’bă fa-yu’tī ‘an yadin wa-yamna’u.

"Resilient (ya’bă), gives ‘an yadin, and refuses (humiliation)".

The person praised here appears as one who cannot be forced to give anything away (ya’bă), and gives only of his own free choice (‘an yadin), and is able to resist harassment. Therefore ‘an yadin here means giving voluntarily.

3 Group C: “Submissively”

3.1 Al-Juhaniyya

A verse by al-Juhaniyya reads:

\[
\text{[sa'ād]}\\
\text{Wa-laysa bi-mi'tā'ī l-žulāmātī 'an yadīn}\\
\text{wa-lā dūna a-lā sa'ūrātī l-majdī qābulū.}
\]

“He does not give in to injustice and does not agree to less than the highest degree of dignity.”

Here ‘an yadīn describes lack of resistance in the face of injustice, which means that it may be translated as “submissively”. Literally, the idea is of giving oneself away to injustice with one’s own hands. The hero is praised here for not being used to such submissive conduct.

3.2 Muhammad b. Hāzim

A verse by Muhammad b. Hāzim al-Bāhiliūr (lived in al-Ma’mūn’s time) reads:

\[
\text{[sa'ād]}\\
\text{‘Alā annakum tarāuma bi-l-dhul li sāhibān}\\
\text{wa-tu’tūna man lāhakum u-l-ajmūna ‘an yadī.}
\]

“You are pleased with humiliation as a companion.”

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17 Probably the pre-Islamic Sūdā b. al-Shamardal. See Sezgin, GAS, vol. 2, p. 311. Or Sāmā b. Majdā’ (Makhda’a’?). See a verse by her in Lisān, s.v. h.m.z. (vol. 2, 908 col. 2) and s.v. s.m. ('l). (vol. 3, 2087 col. 1), and s.v. n.j.d. (vol. 6, 4506 col. 1).
18 For yu' 'īl-žulāmātī in the sense of “give in to injustice”, see Lisān, s.v. h.m.z. (vol. 6, 4098 col. 3).
and you give in to wrongdoing\textsuperscript{21} coming from whoever quarrels with you, ‘\textit{an yadin}.’\footnote{In Arabic: \textit{daym}. For a tense \textit{daym} in the sense of “give in to wrongdoing”, see Ibn Bukayr, Yi\c{a}nis, \textit{Kit\c{e}b al-	extit{dayar wa-Lmgh\c{a}t\c{a}Muhammad Ibn Ish\c{a}q}, S. Zak\c{a}r, ed. (Damascus, 1978), p. 164; Ibn \textit{As\c{a}kir, Mukht\c{a}s\allowbreak ar}, vol. 29, p. 132: “Fight! because fighting is justice, and you will never see the warrior submitting to injustice (\textit{yu\textasciitilde{l}d\textasciitilde{am}a}) till he makes peace.”}

Here certain people (according to the story, this refers to the tribe of Numayr) are condemned for their lack of resistance against wrongdoing, and therefore ‘\textit{an yadin}’ may again be conceived in the sense of “submissively”.

Summing up, it is clear that in all the above examples, ‘\textit{an yadin}’ is an adverbal expression describing an act of handing over something. Common to all groups is the absence of resistance when the act of handing over is being carried out. In groups A and B resistance is absent due to generosity and willingness, and in group C it is absent due to submissiveness. In the latter case, the act is not so much of handing over as it is of giving in. \textit{Yadin} in all groups is the metaphorical instrument with which the act of handing over or giving in is carried out.

4 The Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;nic ‘\textit{an yadin}

Equipped with these examples we are now in a position to re-consider the Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;nic ‘\textit{an yadin}. Since the context is evidently of tax payment (\textit{jizya}), group A is irrelevant because generosity is not an option in the case of an obligatory tax. Group B is irrelevant for the same reason. We thus have group C which indeed fits perfectly well into the immediate context of the Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;nic verse. The Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;n seems to demand of the Jews and the Christians to pay the \textit{jizya} submissively. Nevertheless, one can also imagine that the demand is for full payment without holding back any part of the tax, thus echoing the meanings of groups A and B as well.

The Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;nic phrase \textit{wa-hum s\guillemotleft a\guillemotright aghir\guillemotright un} is an extension of the demand for submissive obedience, or as put by the lexicographers:\textsuperscript{22} \textit{al-s\guillemotleft a\guillemotright aghir} is he who agrees to humiliation (\textit{dhull}) and wrongdoing (\textit{daym}). This means that the Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;n requests that the \textit{jizya} be paid submissively (‘\textit{an yadin}’), while the paysers remain lowly and content with their humiliated status (\textit{s\guillemotleft a\guillemotright aghir\guillemotright un}). In other words, the Qur\textsuperscript{2}‘\textacutes;n requests of the People of the Book to agree to the very humiliating situation which according to

\textsuperscript{21} In Arabic: \textit{daym}. For a tense \textit{daym} in the sense of “give in to wrongdoing”, see Ibn Bukayr, Yi\c{a}nis, \textit{Kit\c{e}b al-	extit{dayar wa-Lmgh\c{a}t\c{a}Muhammad Ibn Ish\c{a}q}, S. Zak\c{a}r, ed. (Damascus, 1978), p. 164; Ibn \textit{As\c{a}kir, Mukht\c{a}s\allowbreak ar}, vol. 29, p. 132: “Fight! because fighting is justice, and you will never see the warrior submitting to injustice (\textit{yu\textasciitilde{l}d\textasciitilde{am}a}) till he makes peace.”

\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Lisan}, s.v. \textit{gh.r} (vol. 4, p. 2453 col. 3).
the above verses any true Arab nobleman is expected to resist. Therefore
the jizya in its Qur'anic sense draws a clear ethical line between Arabs
and non-Arabs.

4.1 The tafsir

The various interpretations of the Qur'anic 'an yadin have already been
surveyed in my previous study, but in view of this new data some further
observations are possible.

One of the interpretations takes the Qur'anic 'an yadin to mean that
the taxpayer should pay the highest sum possible, to make him prefer
becoming a Muslim, and thus be exempt from jizya.23 We can now
observe that this interpretation carries the basic meaning of the phrase
(lack of resistance) to its most extreme limits.

Some exegetes perceived the Qur'anic "hand" as standing for that of
the receiver, not the payer.24 Such perception has no basis in the above
discussions, but it nevertheless accords with another usage of the word
yad, when it denotes ni'ma, "benefaction". One example will suffice: a
verse by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Malik al-Zayyāt reads:25

\[
\text{[fawārī]}
\]

\[
\text{Wa-mā naṣarūhu 'an yadin salafat lahu...}
\]

"They did not help him due to a benefaction (yad) which he
had to his credit (with them)...."

But the relevance of this verse to the Qur'anic 'an yadin is limited,
because it lacks the verb a'tā or other verbs denoting giving or spending,
which appear in all the other verses quoted above, as well as in the
Qur'an. In spite of these disadvantages, the interpretation based on
yad as ni'ma did gain access into the tafsir, in which case the Qur'anic
injunction would be that the jizya must be paid as a reward due for
a benefaction.26 This interpretation indicates that some exegetes and
jurists liked to think of the jizya as a symbol of the mercy of the Islamic

23 Rubin, op. cit., p. 135 (no. 2).
24 Ibid., pp. 136-7.
26 This was indeed how Bena'mīn (op. cit., p. 199) perceived the Qur'anic 'an yadin. He explained that the People of the Book must pay the jizya in recompense
for the right to stay alive as non-Muslims.
As for the texts of some *jizya* treaties which were concluded with non-Muslims during the early Islamic era, I have noted\(^{28}\) that some of them contain the injunction that the tax should be paid *'an ayydāhim* ("out of their hands"). We can now observe that rather than preserving the basic meaning of the Qur'ānic injunction, these treaties merely provide for a practical rule in which *yad* means "property". This rule links between poll-tax rates and wealth, much in accordance with pre-Islamic provincial Sasanian policy.\(^{29}\)

By way of conclusion, a look at what Ibn al-Qayyim (d. 751/1350) has to say on the matter might be useful:\(^{30}\)

> "An *yadin* describes a state (*hād*), i.e. they must give the *jizya* while they are humiliated and oppressed (*adhi’llā* *mughārin*). This is the correct (*al-sāfīn*) interpretation of the verse. Some said that the meaning is "from hand to hand, in cash, not on credit". Others said: "From his hand unto the hand of the receiver, not sending it nor delegating its payment." Others said: "It means due to a benefaction on your part unto them by agreeing to receive payment from them." But the accurate opinion is the first one, and the people are agreed on it. The most far-fetched opinion that misses God's intention is that of those who say that the meaning is: "Out of their ability to pay it, which is why [the *jizya*] is not collected from those who can't afford it". This rule is correct, but its application to the verse is wrong. No one of the Companions of the Prophet and of the Successors interpreted it in this manner nor anyone of the old masters of the *umma*. It is only the witty inference of some later scholars.

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\(^{27}\) For a general overview of the *jizya* in the discussions of Muslim jurists, see Paul L. Heck, "Poll Tax", *EQ*, s.v. (vol. 4, pp. 151–4); Yohanan Friedmann, *Tolerance and coercion in Islamic interfaith relations in the Muslim tradition* (Cambridge, 2003), pp. 77–80.


\(^{29}\) Ibid., p. 142, with reference to Cl. Cahen, "*Djizya*", *EP*, s.v.