Uri Rubin

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Muḥammad the Prophet and Arabia

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Uri Rubin
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Quraysh and Their Winter and Summer Journey: On the Interpretation of Sūra 106

1 Preface

A most extensive study of the Islamic ṭafsīr ("exegesis") of Sūra 106 has been published by Harris Birkeland in 1956. In 1984 I have published my own study of the sūra, and in 1987 Patricia Crone discussed the tafsīr materials pertaining to Sūra 106 in a monograph about the Meccan trade.

What seems to be missing from these studies is an attempt at reading the sūra within its own internal qur'ānic context, i.e. in comparison with parallel qur'ānic passages that contain the same ideas as well as vocabulary. In the following discussion, which forms a revised and updated version of my 1984 article, the internal qur'ānic evidence will be taken as a starting point for the re-evaluation of the significance of Sūra 106, and then the evidence of post-qur'ānic tafsīr will be revisited in order to show that rather than being adventitious guesswork, as maintained by Crone, it faithfully represents concepts and ideas of Muslims who projected them back into their own reading of the Qurʾān. These ideas deserve serious attention because they are most revealing with respect to the image of Quraysh as perceived by generations of Muslims.

2 The internal qur'ānic context of Sūra 106

1. Li-ilāfi Qurayshīn
2. Ilāfīhīm riḥlata l-shitā'ī wa-l-ṣayfī
3. fa-l-yā būbā ṭabbā hādīhā l-baytī
4. Ilādīhī aṭ’amahum min jāīn wa-dmānāhā min khwāfīn

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4 I was able to prepare the present version during my stay in 2009/10 as a Research Fellow in the Institute for Advanced Studies, the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. I thank Prof. Michael Lecker for reading a draft of this version and for his useful comments, suggestions and corrections.
In the traditional chronological lists of the Qurʾānic revelations, Sūra 106 appears among the Meccan sūras, and usually as the 28th. Passages in other Meccan sūras are most relevant to the issues addressed in this sūra and especially in its second part (vv. 3–4) where the key words are ʿāja‘, “hunger,” and khawf, “fear.” These are two kinds of hardship against which God is said to have protected Quraysh, and on this idea several Meccan passages have a direct bearing.

To begin with, in a somewhat later Meccan passage (q 16:112–14), a parable is recounted about a town safe and secure to which its means of subsistence came in abundance from every quarter; but it disbelieved (kafarat) in God’s favors, therefore God made it taste the utmost degree of hunger (al-ʿāja‘) and fear (al-khawf). There came to them an apostle from among them, but they rejected him, so the punishment overtook them while they were unjust. The disbelief (kufr) that is condemned in this parable stands for refusal to recognize Allāh as the ultimate source of the prosperity and security that are enjoyed in a town into which provisions are brought from “every quarter.” The idea is of a sacred locality that prospers from incoming pilgrims, but its inhabitants are not taking this prosperity as a sign of God’s favors and do not believe in him.

In other Meccan passages the divine blessing that the local inhabitants ignore is associated with the idea of the haram, i.e., a territory encompassing a town consecrated by God within which bloodshed is forbidden. Thus in q 29:67 Muḥammad’s contemporary unbelievers are condemned for not seeing that it is God who has given them a secure haram “while people all around them are snatched away.” The verse goes on to assert that their kufr consists in disbelieving in God’s benevolence (nīma) while preferring to believe in “vanity” (bâtīl), i.e., idols other than God. Implicit here is the notion that the protection enjoyed within God’s haram should lead its inhabitants to believe in him alone and abandon all other deities who fail to protect their own followers wherever they are. In q 28:57 the same audience is denounced again for ignoring the fact that it was God who has “established for them a safe, sacred territory (haraman ʿāminan) to which fruits of every kind are being brought as a sustenance from us.” This verse encompasses the full dimensions of the idea of the haram, i.e., not only security but also prosperity derived from incoming pilgrims and merchants. But the addressees, i.e., the Meccans, are so unsure that all the benefits of the haram come from God that they refuse to follow Muḥammad lest they should be “carried off from our land.” In the following verse (q 28:58) God draws their attention to the deserted vestiges of old generations of idolaters in towns other than Mecca who prospered and were then destroyed by God. This implies that God’s power superseded that of the local idols who failed to save their followers from extinction.

These passages indicate that the conflict between Muḥammad and his Meccan contemporaries stemmed from different attitudes towards the status of Mecca as a prosperous and secure haram. While the Prophet presents to them a monotheistic demand to see in Allāh the ultimate origin of their worldly welfare and security, the unbelievers are not convinced that this is so and do not abandon the worship of other deities, such as are worshipped also by idolaters outside Mecca.

The Qurʾānic monotheistic approach to the idea of the haram, i.e., that Mecca owes its prosperity and security exclusively to God, is connected in another Meccan passage with the figure of Abraham. In q 14:37 Abraham prays to God saying that he, i.e., Abraham, has made his offspring dwell in a secure, sacred territory (baladan ʿāminan) so that they “may keep up prayer.” Then Abraham implores God to “make the hearts of people yearn towards them and provide them with fruits; haply they may be grateful.” Abraham’s prayer is reiterated in a Medinan passage (q 2:126) where he asks God to make Mecca a secure town (baladan ʿāminan) for those who believe in God and in the Last Judgment, and provide them with fruits. Abraham’s prayer is here the ultimate trigger for the benevolence of God who has let the Meccans prosper near his house, i.e., the Kaʿba, thanks to provisions brought in by pilgrims. This implies that to believe in God as the ultimate source of all the benefits derived from Mecca’s being a haram means to believe in the monotheistic legacy of Abraham.

The same monotheistic approach to the idea of the haram is reiterated in Sūra 106. Here the idea is condensed into the demand put to Quraysh to “worship the lord of this house who has fed them against hunger and secured them from fear” (vv. 3–4). The title “lord of this house,” as also “lord of this town” which occurs in another Meccan sūra (q 27:91), mean that he and no other deity is the origin of the sacred status of Mecca as a haram frequented by pilgrims coming to the Kaʿba. The request that Quraysh worship him means that they must treat him in the proper

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monotheistic way and abandon the worship of other deities who cannot provide their followers with prosperity and protection.6

Not only do the Qurashls deny that Allāh is the lord of the Ka’ba and hence the only origin of the benefits of their haram, they are not even content with those benefits and look elsewhere for more sources of income and prosperity, far away from Mecca. In so doing they turn their back on God and his haram. This condemnation is inherent in the opening passage of Sūra 106 which revolves around the theme of riḥlat al-shī’ta’ wa-l-aḥf, “the winter and summer journey” (vv. 1–2).

The term riḥla that denotes “journey” occurs only once in the Qur’ān but is nevertheless one out of many other indications that Muḥammad’s Meccan contemporaries were engaged in travelling. The other indications as well appear in Meccan sūras, in admonitions addressed to the unbelievers in request to draw the proper religious conclusion from the fate of ancient generations of idolaters whose dwellings were destroyed by God, and their remnants can be seen daily by the Meccans who pass by them when they travel.7 The Qur’ān refers to the abode of these extinct generations as qurū’ (sing. qaryā), i.e. towns, and asserts that they are located “around you.” The Qur’ān also states that the Meccans use to pass by these places and reproaches them for not drawing the proper lesson from what they see there. Most explicit is q 20:128 as well as q 32:26, in which it is stated that the Meccan unbelievers go (yamsḥūna) through the dwelling-places of the sinful ancient generations (al-qurū’). The Qur’ān mentions among these generations the people of Thamūd about whom it is stated: “So these are their houses fallen down because they were unjust. Most surely there is a sign in this for people who know” (q 27:52; cf. q 28:58). In q 29:38 the same audience is told that the fate of ‘Ād and Thamūd “has become clear to you from their (deserted) dwelling places (māsākin),” which again means that the Meccans can see them with their own eyes (see also q 14:45). The vestiges of the Thamūd are located in the area known to us as Mada’in Šālīh, about 600 km north-west of Mecca. More or less the same

area is known in the classical sources as Wādī al-Quṣṣ, and it is usually explained that “from beginning to end the valley was made of villages arrayed one after the other.”8 However, the name may just as well denote “the valley of the [ruined] cities,” because according to a report recorded by Yāqūt, Wādī al-Quṣṣ – in the vicinity of al-Ḥijr and on the pilgrims’ road from Syria to Mecca – was inhabited in the remote past by ‘Ād and Thamūd; God destroyed them there, and their remnants have survived “till now.”9

The Qur’ān refers to the vestiges of the “dwellers of al-Ayka” [= Leuke Kome] as well. These are also situated “on a manifest roadway” (wa-innāḥa la-bi-mā’in muḥāf; q 15:79), and since they are mentioned in juxtaposition with the deserted ruins of the people of al-Ḥijr (q 15:78), their abode, too, must be located on the road to Syria.10 The Meccans frequented the vestiges of the town of Lot as well (q 29:35; 51:37); the Qur’ān tells the unbelievers that “you pass by them (la-tamurraṭa’alāyhim) in the morning and in the evening” (37:137–8).11 In another verse the Meccans simply “see” its remains (q 25:40). The remnants can be seen because they are “on a road yet remaining” (wa-innāḥa la-bi-sabālān maqūf; q 15:76).

In view of this explicit evidence as to the northbound long-distance journeys of the Meccans, one may safely assume that the riḥla of Sūra 106 is yet another allusion to the same journeys. Their aim was undoubtedly trade, because what purpose other than trade could the Meccans have when going on the roads across Wādī al-Quṣṣ which took them to the north, hundreds of kilometers away from their hometown?12

In Sūra 106 the Qur’ān defines the Meccan travels as “winter and summer journey.” For such a description we have no direct clue within the Qur’ān, therefore we must look at other classical Arabic texts that can throw light on the context in which winter and summer are usually

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6 On the idea of the “lord of the Ka’ba” in connection with the Meccan pre-Islamic polytheism see further, Pavel Pavlovitch, “On the problem of the pre-Islamic lord of the ka’ba,” Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies 2 (1998/99), 49–74. Pavlovitch holds that Allāh was not always regarded as the lord of the Ka’ba and that this shrine was originally dedicated to other deities.

7 See Uri Rubin, s.v. “Remnant,” Encyclopaedia of the Qur’ān, (Brill, 2003), IV, 425.


12 This does not necessarily mean that they pass there twice a day but rather that it is located on their way to and from Syria.

13 Crone maintains that the idea that the winter and summer journey is connected with trade is “simply exegetical interpretation of 106:2, and only one out of many.” See Patricia Crone, “How did the Qur’ānic pagans make a living?,” Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 68 (2005), 395, n. 28.
mentioned. As it turns out, winter and summer often occur in the context of the weather conditions that are associated with them. For example, the Qurashi Abū ‘Ubayda b. Abdallāh b. Zam'a (grandson of Muḥammad’s wife, Umm Salama) reportedly used to look after a certain Khārījī and give him whatever provisions he needed, and each year he provided him with food supplies and clothes (kiṣwā) for winter and summer.14 In the expression kiṣwāt al-shītā wa-l-sayf, “clothing for winter and summer,” which recurs in various sources, the conditions of frost and heat are indeed meant rather than the seasons per se.15 Similarly, in the Qur’ānic expression ṭablīt al-shītā wa-l-sayf, the respective conditions of frost and heat in which the journeys are taken are primarily meant rather than their calendrical season. This does not mean that Quraysh really set out for their journeys in the least suitable time to do so, only that this is how the Qur’ān looks at the journeys, as if to deplore the obsession of Quraysh with such endeavor which they will not give up even in the heat of summer or in the frost of winter.

The Qur’ān has chosen to describe the involvement of Quraysh in their journeys by means of the word lī-ilfā. This is the canonical reading that stands for the verbal noun of ṣala (form IV); it may denote the same as form I (alifā), i.e. “to resort habitually (to a place).”16 This identical sense of forms I and IV seems to be the reason why in some non-canonical variant readings, the word lī-ilfā appears without the letter yā: lī-ilfār or even lī-ilf (verbal nouns of form I).17 This is also the case even in the standard ‘Uthmanic codex where the second occurrence of the same verbal noun (v. 2) appears without the yā: ṭablīhīm. In any case, līfā or līfār or ifī seem to refer to the habitual engagement of Quraysh in the winter and summer journey.

The context of the allusion to the winter and summer journey is the Quraysh and Their Winter and Summer Journey, the same as that of the rest of the sūra, i.e. the haram as a monotheistic value

hidhihi 1-ta‘ajjubi, ay., waylun li-ummi..  

waylun l-i‘adahati 1-ta‘ajjubi, ay., waylun li-ummi..  

waylun li-ummi..  

waylun..  

waylun li-ummi..  

waylun..  

waylun..  

waylun li-ummi..
In this context Sūra 102 is also most relevant. In the traditional chronological lists it appears 15th among the Meccan sūras, and in its very beginning it condemns the Meccans for being preoccupied and distracted (alḥākum) by takāthūr, i.e. greedy competitive strive to gain all the more profits. Medinan passages are even more explicit; they delineate an outright contrast between trade and piety. Thus in q 24:37 the Qurʾān praises “people whom neither merchandise nor selling diverts from the remembrance of God and the keeping up of prayer and from paying the alms.” In q 62:11 people are condemned, who “when they see merchandise or diversion they scatter off to it, and leave you [i.e. the Prophet] standing.” Sūra 106 shows how already in the Meccan period the Qurʾān has disapproved of trade journeys when grown into a compulsive engagement that detracts one from profound religious devotion.

3 The post-qurʾānic tafsīr

The post-qurʾānic exegetes were already aware of the new status of Islam which after the death of the Prophet had defeated mighty empires outside of Arabia. As a result of this historical development, the image of Muhammad, and with him the image of his own tribe, Quraysh – to which the caliphs who succeeded him belonged as well – gained new dimensions in the mind of the believers, far and beyond their qurʾānic limits. However, the involvement of Quraysh in the opposition to Muhammad as documented in the Meccan sūras could not be concealed, but much could nevertheless be done with respect to their pre-Islamic ancestors who had lived before Muhammad became a prophet and so played no part in the opposition against him. These ancestors, and especially those belonging to Muhammad’s immediate ancestry, could easily be presented as righteous and even as proper Muslims way before the Qurʾān was ever revealed to their offspring.

The reshaped image of Muḥammad’s Qurashi progenitors is reflected in a series of post-qurʾānic traditions asserting that ‘Abd al-Muṭṭalib, Muhammad’s grandfather, as well as the latter’s father, Hāshim, as well as the latter’s father, ‘Abd Manāf, never worshipped an idol. Several figures belonging to the more remote parts of Muhammad’s Qurashi lineage are also presented in the traditions as righteous monothists, followers of the religion of Abraham. Many of them were even described as bearing in their bodies Muḥammad’s pre-existent luminous entity that shined on their foreheads. Their collective pre-existent entity was said to have been placed as light in front of God two thousand years before the creation of Adam.

Sūra 106 was most appropriate for the back projection of the reshaped image of Quraysh. Among the numerous traditions about the virtues (jādāl) of Quraysh, one finds the following in the commentary of al-Tha’labī (d. 427/1035). It is transmitted by Muhammad’s wife Umm Hani’ on the authority of the prophet himself: “Allāh elevated Quraysh through seven virtues, which were not, nor will be, granted to anyone else: I am from them; the prophethood is from them; the hijāba (custodianship of the Ka’ba) is with them; the siqāya (providing water for pilgrims) is with them; they were given victory over the elephant; they had worshipped Allāh ten years before anyone else; a qurʾānic sūra was revealed concerning them, in which no one is mentioned but them.”

A particular virtue of Quraysh, namely their caliphate, was explicitly read into the exegesis of the sūra; in a tradition attributed to ‘Alī b. Abī Tālib, the words “he secured them from fear” (q 106:4) were explained as though meaning that Allāh protected Quraysh from the fear of losing the khilāfa. This interpretation was designed to delegitimize any attempt at denying the authority of the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid caliphs, and therefore the interpretation was deliberately put into the mouth of ‘Alī, the classic hero of the anti-Umayyad and anti-‘Abbāsid Shi‘ī opposition.

Another bold example of reading the sūra in accordance with the virtues of Quraysh is provided by al-Rāzī (d. 607/1210) who suggests...
that verse 4 could be understood in the sense that God has fed Quraysh against the hunger for knowledge by means of the Qur'anic revelation (to Muhammad), and protected them from the fear of erring by means of guiding them to the right path. Thanks to these favors they were no longer inferior to the "people of the book" (the Jews and the Christians), because they themselves became known as "people of the knowledge and the Qur'an," while the others were known as "the ignorant Jews and Christians." The process of reading into Sûra 106 new meanings is manifest already in the earliest available tafsîr sources, and mainly in the interpretation of the winter and summer journey. In spite of the straightforward wording of the phrase, it was interpreted in a variety of ways which were designed to deal with the potential danger to the image of Quraysh posed by the idea that the journey represented a compulsive preoccupation that stood in contrast to religious duties.

In what follows the manner in which the post-Qur'anic exegesis tried to "improve" the context of the winter and summer journey so as to make it more favorable to Quraysh will be examined through three tafsîr sources stemming from the first and second Islamic centuries (see Appendix). They will be analyzed and compared with later tafsîr as well as some historiographic sources.

3.1 Tanwîr al-miqbâs

We begin with a source containing a commentary attributed to the Prophet's cousin Ibn 'Abbâs (d. 68/667–8). It is named Tanwîr al-miqbâs min tafsîr Ibn 'Abbâs. The material is related on the authority of Muhammad b. al-Sâ'iib al-Kalbî (d. 146/763), from Abû Șallîh (Bâdshâm, mawla of Umm Háni', d. 100/719), from Ibn 'Abbâs. Even if the attribution to Ibn 'Abbâs is questionable, the names of al-Kalbî and Abû Șallîh seem to indicate that we are dealing with a tafsîr stemming from the first Islamic era.¹⁹

The Tanwîr al-miqbâs startswith the assertion that Sûra 106 is Meccan and proceeds to quote Ibn 'Abbâs who reportedly said that the expression li-tâ'af Quraysh means: "Command Quraysh to become habitually occupied with monotheism." The significance of this interpretation becomes clear in view of a tradition recorded by al-Tabarî (d. 310/923) in which the same Ibn 'Abbâs is quoted by his mawla 'Ikrima (Medinan d. 105/723) to the effect that Quraysh were ordered to accustom themselves (ummîrû an yâ'lafta) to the worship of the lord of this house just as they were accustomed (ka-ilîfîm) to the winter and summer journey. In another version recorded by al-Tabarî, 'Ikrima says that Quraysh were accustomed to frequenting Buṣrâ [in Syria] and Yemen in the winter and in the summer, and God ordered them to stay in Mecca.²²

The various versions of 'Ikrima's interpretation correspond with a non-canonical reading attributed to the same 'Ikrima in which the term li-tâ'af is replaced with the verbal form li-ta'laf, i.e. an imperative prefixed by lâm al-amr, the lâm expressing command.²³ 'Ikrima's reading and interpretation takes the sûra to mean that God has ordered Quraysh to worship him at his house instead of just going abroad on trade journeys.

The same idea is retained in some later sources, such as al-Samarqandi's (d. 375/985) Tafsîr in which we have the interpretation of Abû l-Âliya (Rufay' b. Mihrân, Başran, d. 90/709) to the effect that Quraysh did not stay in Mecca neither in summer nor in winter, and God commanded them to remain near "the house," i.e. the Ka'ba, and engage in worship.²⁴

Some exegetes who perceived the sûra in this sense were of the opinion that the prefixed lâm in li-tâ'af expresses wonder (tu'ajjab). Ibn 'Âtiyya (d. 546/1151) explains on the authority of "some mußassârin" that the sûra means:

²² Tanwîr al-miqbâs min tafsîr Ibn 'Abbâs, on margin of Suyûtî, Darr, VI, 389–95. See also Ibn Wahh, al-Wâdih, II, 520.
²³ "mûr qurayshîn li-ya'lâ' ulâ'm l-tawâhid.
²⁴ 'Tabarî, Jâmî' al-bayanî, XXX, 199.
²⁵ 'Iblîd, XXX, 199.
²⁶ 'Iblîd, Jâmî' al-bayanî, XXX, 197. According to al-Qurtûbî (al-Jâmî' li-akbâm al-Qûr'ân, 20 vols. [Cairo, 1967], XX, 202), the reading of 'Ikrima was rather la-yâ' laf (bi-fath l-lâm 'alâ l-amr), and this was also the version of the mushaf of the Companion 'Abdallâh b. Mas'ûd (d. 32/652–3).
Wonder you at the engagement of Quraysh in these travels, and their turning away from the worship of Allah! Then [Allah] ordered them to engage in worship, and made it known to them that he is the one who fed them and protected them, not their travel. The message is therefore that you should worship him who has fed them in response to Abraham’s prayer when he said, ‘Provide them with fruits’ (q 14:37), and he protected them in response to [Abraham’s] prayer when he said: ‘God, make this city a protected haven’ (q 14:35). Therefore they should not be diverted by their travels which are merely a pursuit of profits and a passing matter of this world.16

The reference to Abraham’s prayer in this interpretation keeps the idea of Mecca as a prosperous and safe haven that owes its position to incoming pilgrims who contribute to its wealth and prosperity. The same tone of reproach as conveyed by the authority of the tradition about the Medinan b. al-Sakan who is said to have heard (way1;iakum), the origin of the narrator of this tradition may explain her readiness to transmit a prophetic utterance that is anything but flattering to Quraysh. The same perception is reflected in other sources, as for example in the interpretation of Mujāhid (d. 104/722) who says that li-ta’āf Quraysh means ni’matf ‘ala Quraysh.41 This is also related on the authority of Sa’īd b. al-Tabarānī, al-Muṣaffar al-wajīz fi taṣfīr al-kitāb al-‘asīr, 16 vols. (Rabat, 1975–91), XVI, 369: ‘Vow to you (wayhakum), Quraysh, worship the lord of this house who has fed them against hunger and secured them from fear!’ 39 The Anṣārī (Medinan) opinion of the narrator of this tradition may explain her readiness to transmit a prophetic utterance that is anything but flattering to Quraysh.40 Such explanations are free of the pro-Qurashī attitude that is distinctive already in much earlier interpretations such as that of Ibn ‘Abbās and his mawālī ‘Ikrima. The latter’s interpretation is already phrased in a less offensive fashion, without the sense of ta’a’ījab. As we have seen, the form li-ta’āf has been replaced by the more neutral imperative li-ta’āf. ‘Ikrima is even reported to have condemned those who adhered to the reading li-ta’āf,41 and his objection seems to be aimed against the sense of reproach inherent in the prefixed li. Therefore ‘Ikrima’s attitude, although not far removed from the basic message of the sūrat as confirmed by its internal Qurānī context, allows us a glimpse at the first stage in the transition of the winter and summer journey from a compulsive engagement to a less condemnable habit.

A similar wording of the same message is recorded on the authority of Abū Šāliḥ: ‘Allāh knew how much they loved Syria, so they were commanded to keep to the worship of the lord of this house, just as they kept to the winter and summer journey.’40

The Tanwīr al-miqābās goes on to report that some say that verse 1 means: ‘Mention my benevolence unto Quraysh so that they become habitually occupied with monotheism just as they are occupied with the winter and summer journey.’ In this formulation explicit reference is made to God’s benevolence (ni’matf ‘ala Quraysh) which expressly turns their winter and summer journey from an objectionable occupation into a sign of God’s blessing.

The same perception is reflected in other tafsīr sources, as for example in the interpretation of Mujāhid (d. 104/722) who says that li-ta’āf Quraysh means ni’matf ‘ala Quraysh.44 This is also related on the authority of Sa’īd b.
Jubayr (Kūfān d. 95/713–14) from Ibn 'Abbās.48 Mujāhid adds that Quraysh became habitually occupied with the journey so that no winter or summer journey was too hard for them.49 It is implied here that God has made the journey easy for them.

The sense of the winter and summer journey as signaling divine favor could even be maintained with the perception of the prefixed li of li-ila'f as expressing wonder. Al-Farrā' (d. 207/823) says: "Wonder you, Muhammad, at the benevolence of Allāh towards Quraysh... so let them not be diverted by it from following you, and from believing in Allāh."50 This time the wonder expresses admiration.

The transformation of the winter and summer journey from a compulsive engagement into a non-problematic routine, or, as put in al-Mawardī's (d. 450/1058) taṣfīr, al-ʿāda al-maʿālīfī, "the customary habit," is reflected in further interpretations recorded in the taṣfīr sources. Qatada (d. 117/735) maintains that li-ila'f means luzām, i.e. the clinging of Quraysh to their caravans,51 or, according to al-Farrā', their engagement in the preparation of the winter and summer journey.52 It was explained that Quraysh had to worship Allāh in order to be able to prepare their journey, so that it would proceed uninterruptedly.53

Some commentators emphasized the idea of the winter and summer journey as representing divine benefaction by having recourse to a grammatical reinterpretation according to which the term li-ila'f is not merely transitive, as in form 1 ("to resort habitually to a place"), but ditransitive ("to cause someone to resort habitually to"), so that it governs

50 al-Mawardī, Muḥammad, Makāra (Cairo, 1977), IV, 398 (from Sa'īd b. Mānr and Ibn al-Mundhir). This is also implied in the interpretation quoted from al-Khalil b. Ahmad (d. 170/786) to the effect that the Qur'an says li-ila'f because God dālafūhum dhalīkā, "habituated them" (Mawardī, Nukat, VI, 345).

51 Al-Zayjāj, Muḥammad b.揭d. 170/786) to the effect that the Qur'an says li-ila'f because God dālafūhum dhalīkā, "habituated them" (Mawardī, Nukat, VI, 345).

52 Al-Zayjāj, Muḥammad b. Ar-Razīq, ed., Ahmad Saqar (Cairo, 1973), 414–5. A similar perception is adopted in a tradition recorded on the authority of Abī Mālik: kānū yastajārinna flī-iliyfinna wa-l-aṣyfī fī-dalālafūhum dhalīkā, "they used to trade in winter and in summer, and I (i.e. Allāh) habituated them to it." See Suṣūfī, Durr, VI, 398 (from Sa'īd b. Mānr and Ibn al-Mundhir). This is also implied in the interpretation quoted from al-Khalil b. Ahmad (d. 170/786) to the effect that the Qur'an says li-ila'f because God dālafūhum dhalīkā, "habituated them" (Mawardī, Nukat, VI, 345).

53 See also al-Thabrāsī, Muḥammad b. Ar-Razīq, ed., Ahmad Saqar (Cairo, 1973), 414–5. A similar perception is adopted in a tradition recorded on the authority of Abī Mālik: kānū yastajārinna flī-iliyfinna wa-l-aṣyfī fī-dalālafūhum dhalīkā, "they used to trade in winter and in summer, and I (i.e. Allāh) habituated them to it." See Suṣūfī, Durr, VI, 398 (from Sa'īd b. Mānr and Ibn al-Mundhir). This is also implied in the interpretation quoted from al-Khalil b. Ahmad (d. 170/786) to the effect that the Qur'an says li-ila'f because God dālafūhum dhalīkā, "habituated them" (Mawardī, Nukat, VI, 345).

54 Ibn Qutayba, Ta'wil mushkil al-Qur'ān, ed., Ahmad Saqar (Cairo, 1973), 414–5. A similar perception is adopted in a tradition recorded on the authority of Abī Mālik: kānū yastajārinna flī-iliyfinna wa-l-aṣyfī fī-dalālafūhum dhalīkā, "they used to trade in winter and in summer, and I (i.e. Allāh) habituated them to it." See Suṣūfī, Durr, VI, 398 (from Sa'īd b. Mānr and Ibn al-Mundhir). This is also implied in the interpretation quoted from al-Khalil b. Ahmad (d. 170/786) to the effect that the Qur'an says li-ila'f because God dālafūhum dhalīkā, "habituated them" (Mawardī, Nukat, VI, 345).

55 See also al-Thabrāsī, Muḥammad b. Ar-Razīq, ed., Ahmad Saqar (Cairo, 1973), 414–5. A similar perception is adopted in a tradition recorded on the authority of Abī Mālik: kānū yastajārinna flī-iliyfinna wa-l-aṣyfī fī-dalālafūhum dhalīkā, "they used to trade in winter and in summer, and I (i.e. Allāh) habituated them to it." See Suṣūfī, Durr, VI, 398 (from Sa'īd b. Mānr and Ibn al-Mundhir). This is also implied in the interpretation quoted from al-Khalil b. Ahmad (d. 170/786) to the effect that the Qur'an says li-ila'f because God dālafūhum dhalīkā, "habituated them" (Mawardī, Nukat, VI, 345).
The literary role of the Syria-Yemen space becomes even clearer in early Islamic traditions in which this pair of zones marks the idealized northern and southern borders of the Islamic domain. Thus Muhammad's mother, Âmina, sees, when giving birth to Muhammad, light emerging from her that illuminates the whole region between Syria and Yemen.\(^5\) The adjustment of the scope of the Qur'anic winter and summer journey to the same boundaries turns it into yet another sign predicting the Islamic expansion that was set in motion in a blessed act of God. Coming back to the Tanwil al-miqbas, Syria and Yemen are mentioned again in the subsequent comments, but this time the journey is bound for Yemen in the winter and for Syria in the summer. This particular timing conveys a specific aspect of blessing which is clarified in further sources telling us that in the frosty winter Quraysh could find warmth in the south, and in the hot summer they could enjoy the cool weather of the north. This is stated in so many words in a tradition recorded by al-Tabari on the authority of Ibn Zayd (Medinan d. 182/798) to the effect that in winter they could not travel to Syria because of the cold and therefore they went to Yemen.\(^6\) Ibn Abi Hatim (d. 327/938) has a tradition on the authority of Ikrîma that envisions their pleasurable journeys differently: in winter they used to travel by sea to Ayla and thence to Palestine, seeking warmth, and in summer they betook themselves to Baṣra and Adh-dîrî for coolness.\(^7\) According to Abū Sa'id as well, both their journeys were to Syria; in winter they went to its warmer regions and in summer – to its cooler zones.\(^8\) As for the Tanwil al-miqbas, here we find a further assertion of the pleasurable nature of the winter and summer journey: "Some say that monotheism shall not be difficult (la yaṣhuqqu) for Quraysh, just as the winter and the summer journey was not difficult for them:'\(^9\)

Further on, the Tanwil al-miqbas explains that the statement that God has fed Quraysh against hunger (v. 4) means that he satiated them after a seven-year famine. The idea of God's protection against hunger has thus been detached from the general idea of the ārah and pilgrims that pour into it with provisions, and was connected instead to a specific event of divine intervention that has terminated a seven-year famine. The number seven is symbolic and occurs elsewhere in the Qur'ān (q 12:48) in connection with the seven years of drought at Joseph's time. Besides, a seven-year drought is mentioned in widely-current traditions relating that Quraysh persecuted Muhammad and rejected him as an impostor and therefore the Prophet prayed and invoked upon them seven years of drought like Joseph's years. In the famine that ensued they were forced to eat carrion.\(^10\) These traditions retain a less flattering aspect of Quraysh who, when Muhammad was already acting as a prophet in Mecca, offered him tough opposition. This did not prevent al-Râzî from including the episode in his commentary of q 106:4, explaining that Quraysh rejected Muhammad and therefore the prophet invoked a seven-year drought upon them, like those of Joseph, and when they repented, Muhammad prayed again and they regained their prosperity.\(^11\) But the Tanwil al-miqbas is more sensitive to the image of Quraysh and therefore has censored the circumstances of the famine so that the attention is focused exclusively on its termination thanks to God's benefaction unto Quraysh. No mention is made of the fact that the famine was a divine retribution for their disbelief in Muhammad.

The same explanation is repeated by al-Farrā' who adds some significant details. He says that the famine in Mecca was terminated when the Syrians who possessed abundance of corn brought provisions to the region of Mecca (al-Abta), and so did the Yemenites who carried their food supplies to Jeddah. In this manner God provided Quraysh with provisions from two regions sparing them the trouble of the winter and summer journey (wa-kafahumu l-rihlakayni). At this point al-Farrā' reverts to Muhammad's own times saying that if Quraysh follow Muhammad and stay close to the house (= the Ka'ba), God will again spare them the trouble of the two journeys as he did before.\(^12\)

This explanation reads into the sura the idea that already before its revelation, way back in pre-Islamic times, Quraysh could afford to give up the winter and summer journey and thus not neglect their religious duties as regards God and the Ka'ba. This was a divine benevolence extended to them through the Syrians and the Yemenites.

In more versions the favors done by the Yemenites unto Quraysh are expounded, which betray a political interest to praise this particular

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\(^{5}\) Rubin, "Pre-existence," 88-9.

\(^{6}\) Tabari, Jami' al-bayân, XXX, 199.

\(^{7}\) Ibn Abi Hatim, Ta'rif, X, 3467 (no. 19491).

\(^{8}\) Tha'alibi, Kashf, X, 302.


\(^{11}\) fa-in itaba'âka wa-lazimâ l-bayta kafâhuma ilâhu l-rihlakayni ayydan ka-mâ kafâhuma.
group of early Islamic society. A tradition of al-Kalbî (d. 146/763) as quoted in the Tafsîr of al-Huwâwîrî (d. 280/893), relates that Quraysh used to go each winter and summer to Yemen and Syria respectively, till their hardships increased. Now, the Yemenite coastal towns of Tabâlî and Jurash were prosperous. The latter carried their merchandise on camels to al-Muḫaṣṣab (near Minâ), and the former brought provisions by sea to Jeddah. Thus the Meccans could get as much provisions as they liked, and Allâh spared them the trouble of the two journeys. It should be noted that the people of Tabâlî and Jurash used to go each winter and summer to Yemen and Syria respectively, till they could get as much provisions as they liked, and the former brought provisions by sea to Jeddah. Thus the Meccans provided them with food and protection. This seems to mean that he turned Mecca into a pilgrimage destination and a protected place.

The assertion that already before the revelation of Sûra 106 Quraysh were spared the trouble of the winter and summer journey has turned them into righteous people enjoying God’s blessing so that there is no longer any trace of misbehavior on their part, and the sûra has thus been reduced to a mere request that they thank God for his benevolence.

In more variations of the same idea the virtues of cities have been interpolated. According to one of them, Abraham asked God to provide Mecca’s people with fruits (q 2:126; 14:37) and thereupon God transferred the city of al-Ṭa‘îf from Syria to Arabia. Implicit here is the idea that Mecca’s people have a warm resort to protect them against the cold of winter, and a cool resort to protect them against the heat of summer. Allâh reminded them of this blessing.

The next interpretation recorded in the Tanwîr al-miqâbîs keeps to the same line, saying that Quraysh used to travel twice each year, to Yemen in winter and to Syria in summer, and God warded (dafa‘a) this trouble off them.

A more explicit version of the same interpretation has been recorded by al-Ṭabarî with the family insâd of the Kûfîn ‘Atîyya b. Sa‘d al-‘Awfî (d. 111/729) from Ibn ‘Abbâs:

He (i.e. God) forbade them to travel, and he ordered them to worship the lord of this house, and he spared them the trouble. Their journey took place in winter and in summer, and they did not have rest during winter nor during summer. Afterwards he provided them with food against hunger, and protected them from fear, and (henceforth) they journeyed at their pleasure (wa-alifī l-rahîlata) i.e. if they wished they set out, and if they wished they stayed (at Mecca). This belonged to the benefit of God unto them.

Here, as in the Tanwîr al-miqâbîs, God is kind enough to spare the Meccans the trouble of traveling and provides for their sustenance and security, but this time the origin of the prosperity is not in al-Ṭâ’îf, but rather within Mecca itself. This is implied in the assertion that only after Quraysh were used to being absent from Mecca, God intervened and provided them with food and protection. This seems to mean that he turned Mecca into a pilgrimage destination and a protected haram, thus enabling Quraysh to stay home when they felt like it. This interpretation reflects a transition in the perception of the haram from an age-old state dating back to Abraham’s time to a more recent development, but still old enough to have liberated Quraysh from the burden of the winter and summer journey way before the revelation of Sûra 106.

The next passage of the Tanwîr al-miqâbîs reverts to the idea that the winter and summer journey signals divine blessing, but now it is part of a wider benefaction that starts in Sûrat al-Fil (105). This sûra deals with the defeat of the “people of the elephant,” whom the exegetes identify with the army of Abrahâ, the Ethiopian leader who besieged Mecca and planned to destroy the Ka‘ba. The Tanwîr al-miqâbîs says that God
has secured Quraysh from the fear of the Ethiopian Najāshī and asserts that Sūra 106 is joined (ma’tūf) to the pervious sūra (al-Fīl).

This explanation implies that God has defeated the people of the elephant in order to protect and maintain the winter and summer journey of Quraysh. This is stated in so many words by Ibn Ishāq (d. 150/767) who quotes the two sūras in one sequence, explaining that the defeat of the people of the elephant protected Quraysh against any change in their state, due to God’s favorable purpose regarding them, if only they subsequently believed.

The same interpretation is repeated in al-Farrā’s commentary where it is explained that the prefixed lī in lī-illāf is synonymous with illā, which denotes addition of something to something else; as if the divine benevolence was applied to the winter and summer journey that has thus been added to the one recounted in Sūra 105. But the prefixed preposition was also explained as denoting purpose (= kay), as if God destroyed the people of the elephant in order to maintain the consolidation of Quraysh and their mutual solidarity as well as their winter and summer journey.

The combination of Sūra 105 and 106 into one is just another exegetical attempt at reading the sense of divine benevolence into the winter and summer journey and does not seem to represent the original state of the qur’ānic text, as suggested by Shahid. In fact, in the early chronological lists, Sūra 105 and 106 are never subsequent, and in ‘Aṭā al-Khurāsānī’s list, for example, Sūra 105 is the 18th, whereas Sūra 106 is only the 28th.

The attachment of Sūra 106 to Sūra 105 is only one aspect of the historical impact attributed in post-qur’ānic tradition to the defeat of the people of the elephant. A further aspect is revealed in Ibn Ishāq’s report to the effect that “when Allāh turned back the Ethiopians from Mecca and inflicted upon them his vengeance, the Arabs admired Quraysh and said: they are the people of Allāh. He has fought for them, and spared them the trouble of their enemies.” A report of Ibn Jurayj (d. 150/767) maintains that this was the stage when Quraysh started to be aware of the sacredness of Mecca and, in due course, they established a special din of their own, known as Joms, which was marked by its profound devotion to the Ka’ba and to the sacred haram of Mecca. Accordingly, they confined all their religious ceremonies to this sacred territory. In this exposition Quraysh emerge as the most devoted Arabian group to God’s house at Mecca, way before the revelation of Sūra 106.

The same message is conveyed in the report of al-Tha’alibī (d. 429/1038) to the effect that originally Quraysh used to trade only with merchants coming during the sacred months to the markets near Mecca; Quraysh did not leave their abode and did not go out of their haram because they were devoted to their din and loved their haram and their bayt, and used to serve the incoming pilgrims. Only afterwards they obtained security pacts from the tribes and could travel safely beyond the boundaries of the haram. In this formulation the contrast between the winter and summer journey and the injunction to worship “the lord of this house,” as put forward in Sūra 106, has been eliminated.

In sum, the Tanwīr al-miqbās has recorded a whole range of exegetical approaches that were designed to read into the Qur’ān the post-qur’ānic idea of the constant righteousness of Quraysh whose conduct was guided by God’s blessed benevolence. In some interpretations the idea of divine benevolence was applied to the winter and summer journey that has thus changed from a distracting preoccupation that must be given up into a sign of divine blessing which God himself helped Quraysh go on with since pre-Islamic times. In other interpretations, the winter and summer journey has retained its sense of a habitual preoccupation with worldly matters, which accords with the internal qur’ānic context of the sūra, but God himself is said to have already spared Quraysh the trouble of the
journey, helping them to forgo it thanks to provisions brought to them from outside. This implies that already before the revelation of the sūra they have changed their priorities and became sufficiently religious and righteous.

Let us now proceed to our second tafsīr source.

3.2 Muqātīl b. Sulaymān

In the Tafsīr of Muqātīl b. Sulaymān (d. 150/767),[77] the winter and summer journey is again a burdensome preoccupation, and the divine benevolence consists once again in helping Quraysh give it up, way before the revelation of the sūra. But the details of the divine help are new. Muqātīl says that Quraysh were merchants who in winter procured provisions in Jordan and Palestine because the route along the seashore was warmer, and in summer they abandoned that route because of the heat and went to Yemen for provisions. But then the matter became arduous for them and therefore there was no more trade and they were cut off of provisions. This is the meaning of the words ḥūfīma ṭihātār l-shīrātā wa-l-ṣayf. Muqātīl goes on to say that God eventually put it into the heart of the Ethiopians to carry food on ships and sell it in Mecca. So they carried it to the Meccans and the latter set out towards them on camels and donkeys and procured their food in Jeddah, at a distance of only one or two days from Mecca. This went on for years and so God has spared them the trouble of the winter and summer journey. Further on Muqātīl says that the term ṭāf is derived from the trouble of moving between different places.[78]

Muqātīl’s reference to the Ethiopians represents a tendentious bias rather than a historical development. They appear here as the agents of God’s benevolence unto the Meccans, and this seems to have been designed to improve the image of the Ethiopians in Islamic society, especially in view of the negative role played by them in the traditions about Abraha’s expedition to Mecca. This strategy becomes clear in another version of Muqātīl b. Sulaymān, Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān, ed. ‘Abdallāh Mahmūd Shiḥṣātā, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1979), IV, 861-3.

3.3 Ibn Ishaq

Ibn Ishaq is best known for his Sīra, i.e. the biography of Muḥammad, but his compilation contains plenty of tafsīr material that sheds light on the earliest stages of the Islamic Qur‘ān exegesis. As already seen above, Ibn Ishaq treats the winter and summer journey as a sign of divine blessing bestowed on Quraysh together with the destruction of the people of the elephant. But Ibn Ishaq links the origin of the winter and summer journey to a time much earlier than the expedition of the elephant, to the glorious deeds of Ḥāshim, father of Muḥammad’s grandfather and ancestor of the ‘Abbasid caliphs.

Ḥāshim’s magnification as the initiator of the winter and summer journey was designed not only to glorify Muḥammad and the ‘Abbasids, but also to disparage the Umayyads, descendants of Abd Shams, brother of Ḥāshim. Ibn Ishaq has accomplished this task most efficiently. He praises Ḥāshim for both aspects of the winter and summer journey as perceived by the exegetes. On the one hand he says that Ḥāshim was rich and used to stay in Mecca to look after the affairs of the pilgrims, God’s guests who had come to worship Allāh at the Ka‘ba, in contrast to ‘Abd Shams who, Ibn Ishaq says, was given to traveling and hardly ever stayed

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[78] wa-l-ṭāfīma mina l-mu‘a wa-l-ikhdāf.
Hashim, 'Abd ru'ud Quraysh in Mecca. With such a description Ibn Ishaq has managed to present Hashim as extremely devoted to God and to the Ka'ba as well as to the pilgrims coming to it, much in anticipation of the demand put to Quraysh in Sura 106. In this manner Hashim has been isolated from the rest of Quraysh, the sinful ones, who only traveled and turned their back on God and the Ka'ba.

On the other hand, Ibn Ishaq also praises Hashim for being the first to have established for Quraysh the winter and summer journey. Ibn Ishaq has thus remained faithful to the idea that the winter and summer journey signaled divine blessing, and did not fail to credit Hashim with that providence as well. Ibn Ishaq has been able to adduce for this twofold virtue of Hashim some poetic verses on the authority of an anonymous poet. They praise 'Amr (= Hashim) for being the first to provide the famished Meccans with food: the root 'al-mujabbiriin, "those who restore people from poverty to wealth." The four of them were the first to obtain for Quraysh pacts of security ('isam) from the leaders of Syria, Ethiopia, Persia and Yemen, respectively, which enabled them to set out safely for journeys outside the haram.

This as well as other traditions about the four brothers elaborated on q 29:67 which, as seen above, speaks about the secure haram with which God has blessed the Meccans, "while people all around them are snatched away." Ibn al-Kalbi's tradition maintains that Quraysh were protected even outside the haram thanks to the pacts of security obtained for them by 'Abd Manaf's magnificent sons.

In further versions the root 'lf; emerges being used to describe the relations established between the four brothers and the leaders of the neighboring states. This is the case with Abu 'Ubayd al-Harawi (d. 224/838) who explains that Sura 106 alludes to pacts ('uhd) obtained by the sons of 'Abd Manaf who established friendly relations (yu'ilfa) with each of the neighboring non-Arab kings. According to al-Baladhi's version of the report of Ibn al-Kalbi, Hashim was called sahib ilafr Quraysh al-rihatayni, "the one who habituated Quraysh to the two seasonal journeys." This formulation is based on the perception of the qur'anic word li-ilafr in its ditransitive sense and turns Hashim into the agent of God's benevolence unto Quraysh in habituating them to the winter and summer journey. The tradition goes on to say that Hashim and his brothers obtained

\[\text{4 Pacts of security}\]

The perception of the winter and summer journey as the main or even sole origin of the Meccan prosperity and security has already been encountered above in Ibn Qutayba's commentary; further traditions expressing the same idea add more details that revolve around the theme of the pacts of security that were reportedly obtained for Quraysh during the journeys. These traditions are recorded in historiographical and lexicographical sources.

One of these traditions has been recorded in al-Tabari's Ta'rikh on the authority of Kalbi (d. 146/763) as quoted by his son, Hisham b. Muhammad (d. 204/819). Ibn al-Kalbi relates that after the death of 'Abd Manaf, his four sons - Hashim, 'Abd Shams, Nawfal and al-Muttabi - ruled Quraysh together, being called al-mujabbiriin, "those who restore people from poverty to wealth." The four of them were the first to obtain for Quraysh pacts of security ('isam) from the leaders of Syria, Ethiopia, Persia and Yemen, respectively, which enabled them to set out safely for journeys outside the haram.

For an extensive survey of these reports see Kister, "Mecca and Tamim," 116ff.

\[\text{67 al-Suhayli, al-Rawd al-unuf, ed. 'Abd al-Ra'uf Sa'd, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1971), I, 76 (from Abu 'Ubayd).}\]
security pacts from the neighboring kings and consequently they were all habituated to the two journeys (ja-aliffl l-fiylataynil). 84

Most significant are the versions that use the definite form al-ilaf as an independent technical term denoting the pacts of security, thus being synonymous with terms like ‘ahd, hab, etc. This form appears, to begin with, in a report about Hāshim as recorded by al-Jāhiz (d. 255/869) in his epistle, Fadil Hāshim al-‘ād ‘Abd Shams. 85 Al-Jāhiz says that Hāshim was the first to have obtained the ilaf for Quraysh before any of his brothers, and this is the meaning of q 106:4, “and he secured them against fear,” i.e. their fear of the tribes and the enemies in whose territories they passed. The idea that Hāshim was the first to obtain the ilaf recurs in a tradition attributed to Ibn ‘Abbās as quoted in the lexicographical sources. It is explained here that ilaf means pact (ahd) and protection (dhamām). 86

Al-ilaf is also the name given to the security pacts in the traditions about the four brothers. The Kūfī philologist Ibn al-‘Arabī (Muhammad b. Ziyād, d. 231/845) says that ‘Abd Manaf’s four sons were aṣḥāb al-ilaf, “initiators of the ilaf.” They were called al-mujārin, “providers of jiwar,” i.e. protection, because they used to “put the jiwar together” (yu’alifāna l-jiwarra), i.e. “to provide it in one sequence” (yu’alīna ba’ādu ba’āda). 87 In this report the title al-mujābirīn has been changed into al-mujārin which, without the diacritics, looks the same as al-mujābirīn.

The term al-ilaf recurs also in a further version of Ibn al-Kalbī’s tradition which has been recorded by Ibn Ḥabīb (d. 245/859) in his Munammāq. 88 It is explained here that al-ilaf means that Quraysh were secure when passing through the territory of those who granted them the ilaf without the need for alliance (hilf). According to another version, Quraysh were isolated within the haram, being prevented by the hostile Arabs from setting out to procure provisions. When the four sons of ‘Abd Manaf came of age they became leaders of the Arabs and they managed to open up the road for the Quraish merchants and invented the ilaf that God has mentioned in the Qur’ān. 89

84 Baladhuri, Anwāb, 1, 66; Ya’qūbī, Ta’rīkh, 1, 244: al-akhlāṣhīna l-’ahda min ʾaṣḥāb ba’ādu ba’āda.
89 Ibn Sa‘īd, Nashwāt al-ṭanāb, 329.

The ilaf emerges also in poetic verses attributed to Matrūd b. Ka‘b in praise of the sons of ‘Abd Manaf. Here we find sometimes the assertion that they possessed security pacts in all the surrounding lands and took the journey of the ilaf. 90 In fact, from further sources we learn that the sunna, i.e. precedent, of the ilaf became a kind of topos which could be used for praising anyone of Quraysh, as was for example, Dirrār, son of ‘Abd al-Muttalib, in verses attributed to his own father. 91

4.1 The pacts and Sūra 106

In spite of the clear tendentious shaping of the traditions and poetic verses about the ilaf agreements, the mere idea of the pacts of security may well be historical. Moreover, it may well be, as maintained by Kister and others, that the pacts were indeed known as ilaf or ilaf. The traditions to this effect do not seem to owe their existence to tafsīr because they almost never appear in the tafsīr sources, only in the lexicographical and the historiographical ones. 92

If this is really the case, i.e. the pacts of security were indeed known as ilaf, then we gain a better insight into their usage when used in Sūra 106. We have seen above that the internal context of this sūra indicates that it disapproves of the high priority allotted to trade journeys by Quraysh, and now we can observe that to express this disapproval the Qur’ān has borrowed one of the best-known names of the pacts – ilaf – and has given it a new context, deliberately downgrading it to a verbal noun meaning compulsive engagement in an improper enterprise. The same disapproval is conveyed through the downgrading of the commercial caravans into

90 Baladhuri, Anwāb, 1, 67; Ya’qūbī, Ta’rīkh, 1, 244: al-akhlāṣhīna l-’ahda min ʾaṣḥāb/ wa-l-nahlāna li-nihātān l-ilaf.
91 Baladhuri, Anwāb, 1, 98: Sanna li-Fihim sunnata l-ilaf, fl l-qurri hūna l-qurri vs l-layyaf.
92 Crane (Meccan trade, 212) says: “The proposition that Quraysh had agreements known as ilaf can also be rejected. If ilaf had been a technical term for an institution of central importance for the Meccans, as also for the tribes with whom they were in contact, it would have been a very familiar word. Yet later scholars, many of them Meccans, were puzzled by it. They disagreed over its pronunciation and also over its meaning, and where some took it to be a singular, others understood it as a plural. All this shows clearly enough that this was a word that they had never encountered before.” But the term ilaf is indeed a very familiar word, as is clear from the traditions just seen about Hāshim and his brothers. If the Muslim scholars are “puzzled” at all, it is regarding the reading (qurra) of the Qur’ānic text, not regarding the very idea that the pacts were known as ilaf. The issue of the variant readings of the Qur’ān has dynamics of its own which are not relevant to the question of how the pre-Islamic security pacts were called.
something absurdly burdensome and superfluous, a mere "winter and summer journey."

Furthermore, the function of the term *ilāf* in ancient Arabic is not confined to pacts of security but is used also in the sense of protection granted within a sacred territory defined as *haram* which was considered as God's sacred zone. In view of this we may surmise that the request in Sūra 106 that Quraysh worship the lord of this house means that they are instructed to shift from a human *ilāf* to a divine one. This could only be achieved by giving up the habitual preoccupation with trade journeys and with temporal *ilāf* agreements that were seldom observed. All this should be abandoned in favor of a monotheistic devotion to Allāh and to his *ilāf* as symbolized in his Meccan sanctuary.

4.2 The pacts and the exegetes

As noted above, the traditions about 'Abd Manāf's sons and their pacts of security are widely current in the historiographical as well as the lexicographical sources, but are almost entirely missing from the classical *tafsīr* sources. Here they are seldom used to illustrate the manner in which the winter and summer journey represented divine blessing. This calls for explanation.

It seems that much as the exegetes were sensitive to the image of Quraysh, their primary aim in interpreting the Qur'ān was to draw from it didactic, moral and religious lessons relevant to the community of believers. The pacts of security could not serve this aim because as soon as Islam spread throughout Arabia the pacts became superfluous and irrelevant. More urgent was the need to praise the status of Mecca which became one of the three most sacred Islamic cities, as well as to elevate the value of the pilgrimage which became one of the pillars of Islam. This was the reason why the pacts were left out of the *tafsīr* and why other traditions were preferred, which glorify the idea of the *haram* and the pilgrimage.

One of the earliest manifestation of this approach is provided in the interpretation of Qatāda to the effect that the protection of Quraysh when travelling outside the *haram* was based on their sacred status as people of God's *haram*. As for the pilgrimage, this was presented as the ultimate source of the Meccan prosperity instead of the pacts. Accordingly, it was explained that the two seasonal journeys were actually the *hajj* and the *umrah*, i.e. the travelling of non-Meccans into Mecca. This forms part of the wider perception of the pilgrimage as the main origin of Mecca's livelihood. Another variant of the same idea appears in the *tafsīr* of the Shi'i commentator al-Qummī (d. 307/919). He explains that at first Quraysh depended on their trade journeys which were their blessed origin of livelihood, and then Muhammad appeared as a prophet and people began coming to him as well as going on pilgrimage to Mecca, and so Quraysh could give up their own trade journeys. Here the status of Mecca as a pilgrimage center begins only in Islamic times, as a result of the prophetic charisma of Muhammad, and is taken to be a blessing that surpassed the blessing of the trade journeys.

The wish to find in Sūra 106 confirmation for the elevated status of Mecca eventually went beyond the sphere of trade and economical welfare. Thus, for example, when al-Farrā' explains the fear from which God has protected Quraysh (v. 4), he says that it is leprosy (*judhām*). This indicates that Muslim exegetes have read into Sūra 106 the virtues (*faddāl*) of Mecca as a protected *haram* whose inhabitants were immune.

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98 See Kister, "Mecca and Tānim," 119: "... the *ilāf* agreements had not been actually carried out. Quraysh feared that some tribes might refrain from carrying out the terms of the pacts."
against serious kinds of illness. Similar traditions are found in the ḥudūd of Medina, the second Islamic ĥaram of Arabia; for instance, the statement ascribed to the Prophet to the effect that Medina was immune against the ṣaʿīn ("plague").

5 Epilogue: The dating of Sūra 106

Although Sūra 106 appears in the chronological lists among the Meccan sūras, some scholars of the first Islamic century reportedly held that it was revealed in Medina. Their view seems to preserve the initial sense of the winter and summer journey as an improper habit, and its dating to the Medinan period seems to have been designed to find in the sūra divine justification for Muhammad’s attacks on the Meccan caravans which were launched after the hijra when the Prophet was already operating from Medina. As if to say that since the Qur’ān deplores the winter and summer journey, Muhammad in Medina was fully justified in attacking the Meccan caravans. With this re-dating the exegetes merely extended to the Medinan period a religious monotheistic message that was already delivered in Mecca.

105 See also Tabari, Jāmi’ al-bayān, XXX, 200; Zamakhshari, Kashshāf, IV, 287; Rāzi, Tafsīr, XXXII, 109; Birkeland, The Lord guideth, 126.


Western scholars have already noticed that according to Muslim sources, before the five daily prayers became part of the “pillars” of Islam, the Muslims used to pray only twice a day. Goldziher states that “before the duty of prayer was extended to five times a day, the Muslims are said to have observed only two canonical times of prayer: morning and afternoon...” 1 Other scholars, like Mittwoch, for instance, who studied the evidence of Muslim sources, maintained that the first two prayers which the Muslims reportedly used to pray daily were salat al-fajr (before sunrise), and salat al-‘isha’ (after sunset). 2

In the present study various reports and traditions are examined which may give us a better insight into the evidence of Muslim sources concerning the first times of prayer in Islam, their special significance, and their position in relation to other times of prayer.

I. Șalât al-ḍuḥā

A. The first report to be examined was recorded on the authority of al-Waqidi (d. 207H/823), by al-Baladhuri (d. 279H/892). 3 This report was quoted from al-Baladhuri by Ibn Hajar, 4 and it was also reproduced by al-Maqrizi, 5 who in turn was quoted by al-Halabi. 6 The most coherent version of this report of al-Waqidi is that of al-Maqrizi. It reads:

"In the month of Rajab, a call was heard by Caliph Umar ibn al-Khattab to pray șalât al-‘isha’, and at the same time the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was sleeping. Mocking him, the people said: ‘What is the Prophet doing? He is still sleeping!’  uncle of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) called the two imams, Husayn and ‘Ali, and they went out and prayed șalât al-‘isha’. (At that time) they saw the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) wake up, and they said to the Prophet (P.B.U.H.): ‘We have just prayed șalât al-‘isha’, so now we do not pray it again!’. The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: ‘No, you have already prayed it, but I have not yet started mine!’. When the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) prayed șalât al-‘isha’, the people of Medina who had gathered in Ta’if were already praying. Therefore, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) sent the news to them. If it had been otherwise, the people of Ta’if would not have prayed șalât al-‘isha’."

References:

5. Maqrizi, Imâr, I, 16-17.