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The Maqâmah as Prosimetrum: A Comparative Investigation of its Origin, Form and Function

Ailin Qian
University of Pennsylvania, ailin@sas.upenn.edu

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Abstract
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The origins of the maqâmâh genre have sparked heated debates among scholars of Arabic literature. Its longevity and versatility also await an explanation. This comprehensive and comparative analysis of the Maqâmât’s prose (both rhymed and plain) and poetry can provide new angles through which to consider these issues. By introducing the transfer of function/form, we argue that the prosimetric style could have been affected by the functions that the hero inherited from pre-Islamic soothsayers, who were famed for their linguistic virtuosity in both modes of expression. Analogues from the ancient Chinese, Indian, and Greek literary traditions not only suggest the maqâmâh’s intrinsic performability but also highlight the role of admonishers, i.e., heirs of soothsayers/shamans and performers of prosimetra in these literary traditions. The maqâmâh’s homage to previous Arabic genres such as annals, anecdotes, and mimes, and its impact on so-called modern drama and fiction can both be interpreted by reference to the continuity of generations of admonishers. A detailed analysis of the maqâmâh’s final section (envoi), episode proper, and opening formula illustrates the uniqueness of its prosimetric style which links the Arabic genre’s genesis to possible Indo-Iranian and Greek inspirations.

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THE MAQĀMAH AS PROSIMETRUM:
A COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATION
OF ITS ORIGIN, FORM AND FUNCTION

Ailin Qian

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Supervisor of Dissertation

Roger M. A. Allen, Emeritus Professor, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Graduate Group Chairperson

Paul M. Cobb, Associate Professor, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

Dissertation Committee:

Joseph E. Lowry, Associate Professor, Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations
Victor H. Mair, Professor, East Asian Languages and Civilizations
ABSTRACT

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Roger M.A. Allen

This study investigates the prosimetric style of a renowned contribution to Arabic narrative, the Maqāmāt of Bāḍī’ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī (358-398/969-1008). Al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmāt corpus contains fifty-two short tales that are centered on the words and deeds of a fictitious beggar hero. They are also characterized by a consistent alternation of rhymed prose (ṣajʿ) and poetry. These two distinct features of the maqāmah genre were faithfully imitated by al-Hamadhānī’s successors in the following millennium.

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Introduction

Aim of the study

This study investigates the phenomenon of prosimetrum in a unique Arabic narrative genre, the *maqāmah*. As the name implies, prosimetrum is “a text composed in alternating segments of prose and verse.” All ages have provided us with various prosimetra: the Latin Menippean satire, the Chinese *fu*, the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*, the Arabic *A 1001 Nights*, the French *Aucassin et Nicolette*, just to name a few. However, not many monographs or studies have been devoted to this literary phenomenon. The classical Graeco-Latin and Chinese prosimetra probably offer two of the more promising cases for study. Menippean satire, characterized by a style called *spoudaiogéloion* (“serio-comical”), is credited with being one of the “authentic predecessors of the novel.” Sinologists have discussed the Dunhuang transformation texts (*bianwen*), the *huaben* (vernacular story), the *tanci* (strum lyrics), etc. In regard to the Arabic literary tradition, before the appearance of Wolfhart Heinrichs’s and Dwight Reynolds’s articles in 1997, “it is strange to see and embarrassing to admit that the number [of scholarly studies] is almost nil.” Such a paucity holds for other literary traditions as well, and comparative studies of prosimetra across different traditions are even fewer.

What can explain the prevalence of prosimetrum in world literature? How can
such a form be a host to so many different genres? Do those different genres share functional features in addition to their overt formal similarities? By analyzing the prosimetric style of a renowned contribution to Arabic narrative, the *Maqāmāt* of Badīʿ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī (358-398/969-1008), our project seeks to be an initial step in addressing such questions.

The extant fifty-two Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* (sg. *maqāmah*; “assembly” or “session”) are characterized by the alternation of rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) and poetry, and the adventures of a fictitious hero—an eloquent beggar named Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī. As the result of a comprehensive analysis of the *Maqāmāt*’s prose and poetry, we wish to argue that these two characteristics are related to each other: the prosimetric style could have been determined by the functions that al-Iskandarī inherited from pre-Islamic soothsayers, who were famed for their linguistic virtuosity in both modes of expression.

An important aspect of our project is a comparison of the *maqāmah* with similar genres in the Chinese and Indian literary traditions. At certain points parallels from ancient Greek drama will also be drawn. The comparability of different prosimetric genres is very likely derived from the universality of certain aspects of ritual performance, comprising firstly a question-and-answer divination, and secondly a devotional hymn. Alongside analyses of individual texts and examples of genres, considered in their social and political context, we will highlight the role of admonishers, i.e., performers of prosimetra, in these traditions. Such admonishers can include soothsayers, shamans, prophets, poets, preachers, annalists, jesters, actors, dramatists, and even writers of fiction.
Very often we find their admonitions mixed with satire, social criticism, or a touch of frustration. Al-Hamadhānī’s creation of the beggar hero, who usually exits the scene with a short satirical poetry, can be explained by this inherited mission of admonishers. Guided by the transfer of the admonishing function and prosimetric form in certain genres, we are able not only to provide a new perspective on the maqāmah’s genesis but also, on another level, to understand its longevity and versatility. Before embarking on our discussion of the Maqāmāt however, we need to clarify several terms pertaining to the methodology of this study.

An Introduction on Terminology

Prose and poetry

A dichotomy between prose and poetry seems to have existed in most, if not all, literary traditions. It is, for example, clearly expressed by the Arab literary critic Ibn Rashīq (d. c. 463/1070-1): “The speech of the Bedouin is of two kinds—‘strung’ and ‘scattered’” (wa kalām al-‘Arab naw‘ān: manẓūm wa manthūr). This use of the terms “strung” (manẓūm; “poetry”) and “scattered” (manthūr; “prose”) links the analysis of modes of human expression to the stringing of pearls. According to Ibn Rashīq, all discourse was at first “scattered.” The value of spoken expressions became enhanced when they were joined to each other and became easier to memorize.

For traditions such as those of classical Greek, Latin and Sanskrit, poetry is
metrical writing, i.e., consisting of verse per se. To be more exact, it belongs to a subdivision termed quantitative verse which “measures the length of time required to pronounce syllables, regardless of their stress.” In speaking of the terms “measure” and “quantitative,” we can quote the dialogue between Socrates (c. 470-399 B.C.E.) and Strepsiades in Aristophanes’s (c. 450-388 B.C.E.) *The Clouds*:

Socrates. Come now; what do you now wish to learn first of those things in none of which you have ever been instructed? Tell me. About measures, or rhythms, or verses?

Strepsiades. I should prefer to learn about measures; for it is but lately I was cheated out of two choenices by a meal-huckster.

The word “meter” is derived from the Greek *metron* which originally means “a measure or standard.” The Arab scholar, Qudāmah ibn Jaʿfar (d. c. 337/948), states that “poetry is a metrically rhythmic and rhymed discourse expressing an idea” (*innahu qawl mawzūn muqaffān yadullu ‘alā ma’nā*). The Arabic term used in Qudāmah’s definition, “mawzūn” (“weighed”; derived from *wazn*, “weight”), is an exact counterpart of “metrical.” Judged from the fifteen poetic meters recorded by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad (d. c. 170/786), classical Arabic poetry is most effectively analyzed as an example of quantitative verse. Moreover, “the rhyme was the most essential part of the verse (*al-qāfiyah raʾs al-bayt)*.”

In some cases poetry and prose are hardly distinguishable. The Indian poet, Daṇḍin (fl. late 6th and early 7th centuries C.E.), for example, divides kāvyā (poetry), the highly artificial style used by Indian poets, into gadya (prose), padya (verse) and miśra...
(mixed). For him versification is not an essential ingredient of poetry. On the other hand, prose itself may also be “rhythmic, patterned, and poetically structured,” or even rhymed, as is the case with Arabic sajʿ (usually translated as “rhymed prose”). The usage of sajʿ as a style can be traced back to pre-Islamic soothsaying and also to the Qurʾān. Some Arabists suggest a common point of origin for sajʿ and the pre-Islamic rajaz meter, reminding us of the unclear divide between prose and poetry. As we shall see later, sajʿ was to develop into an elaborate mode of writing/speech from the 4th/10th century onward, duly adopted by al-Hamadhānī in his Maqāmāt.

**Forms and functions**

“When a formal differentiation is associated with a functional differentiation, a genre results.” Genre is “a type of literary work characterized by a particular form, style, or purpose.” Speaking of genres, we cannot ignore the Western tripartite division of epic, drama, and lyric. It is interesting that this so-called traditional division did not come into being until the 16th century. As a matter of fact, the Greek tradition had initially preferred a natural classification of genres, just like the other literary traditions which will be discussed here. A few examples of Greek poetic genres are given in the first chapter of the Poetics:

Epic poetry and Tragedy, as also Comedy, Dithyrambic poetry, and most flute-playing and lyre-playing, are all, viewed as a whole, modes of imitation.

For Aristotle (384-322 B.C.E.), those poetic genres are all regarded as modes of imitation
and are differentiated by “their means, their objects and their manner.”\textsuperscript{23} His first criterion is comparable to the classical Sanskrit differentiation between śrāvyakāvya (poetry to be listened to) and dṛṣṭyakāvya (poetry to be seen).\textsuperscript{24} His third criterion, i.e., “the manner in which each kind of object is represented,”\textsuperscript{25} might well have been derived from Plato’s (d. 348/347 B.C.E.) Republic (394c):

…that poetry and mythology are, in some cases, wholly imitative—instances of this are supplied by tragedy and comedy; there is likewise the opposite style, in which the poet is the only speaker—of this the dithyramb affords the best example; and the combination of both is found in epic, and in several other styles of poetry.\textsuperscript{26}

Apart from the epic, the drama, and the dithyramb, there were other poetic genres categorized by distinct meters or different purposes during the Attic age:\textsuperscript{27} iambic, or satirical poetry, was written in iambic meter; elegiac poetry, the elegiac couplet, the epitaph and epigram, were “all classed together because composed in the same meter”;\textsuperscript{28} choral or melic poetry was sung by a chorus; the paeon, the encomium, the epinikion and the epithalamium, were sung at the occasions of triumph and celebration; and the dirge, the hymn, etc.\textsuperscript{29}

This mélange of Greek genres closely resembles the Chinese classification displayed in Xiao Tong’s 蕭統 (501-531 C.E.) Wen xuan 文選 (Selections of Refined Literature). Xiao Tong was the crown prince of Liang dynasty (502-557 C.E.). He listed altogether thirty-seven generic categories including rhapsody (fu 賦), lyric poetry (shi 詩), elegy (sao 騷), eulogy (song 頌), encomium (zan 贊), proclamation (xi 檢), dirge
(lei 語), lament (ai 哀), admonition (zhen 篤), preface (xu 序), letter (shu 書), treatise (lun 論), condolence (diaowen 弔文), etc. The yardstick used in his categorization accords with the definition of genre mentioned above; most of those Chinese genres are characterized either by form (fu is rhymed prose and shi is poetry proper) or by purpose (such as song, zan, zhen, etc).

When we examine Qudāmah ibn Ja’far’s Naqd al-shi’r (Poetic Criticism), there is also a clear classification of a poem by purpose or theme (sg. gharad, pl. aghrād): panegyric (madḥ), lampoon (hijāʾ), elegy (rithāʾ), description (wasf), love poetry (nasīb), etc. Some of the terms in this classification seem similar to their counterparts in the Greek and Chinese traditions. When Qudāmah’s contemporary, Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 328/940), translated Aristotle’s Poetics from Syriac, he rendered “tragedy” as madīḥ and “comedy” as hijāʾ. Later scholars have vehemently criticized his choice of terminology as “surprising misunderstandings.” However, we should not overlook Mattā’s efforts aimed at reconciling cultural differences by equating the familiar with the unfamiliar. We will provide more justification for his rendering at a later point.

In this comparative study of prosimetrum therefore, the choice of generic terms requires a cautious approach, in that every literary tradition has its own system of terminology and genre-classification. Nowadays both Arab and Western scholars describe the Arabic maqāmah as “a prose genre,” whereas the fu, one of the maqāmah’s counterparts in the Chinese tradition, has been ascribed by Liu Xie 劉勰 (c. 465-520 C.E.) as belonging to the category of wen 文 (rhymed writing; “poetry”) as opposed to
bi 筆 (unrhymed writing; “prose”). Similarly campū, the corresponding genre in the Sanskrit tradition, has been regarded as a form of kāvyā and its writers as poets. In fact, the text of an Arabic maqāmah is no less elaborate or poetic than a piece of fu or campū, and the similarities of their styles will be one of our focuses in this study.

**Genre translation**

Some of those genres mentioned above have now become extremely rare (e.g., dithyramb), or have gradually lost their original meaning (e.g., paean). Like organisms which can never remain frozen in time, genres are generated and rejuvenated, and then die or are transformed. The literary critic-historian is able to determine the identification of a work, i.e., to which genre it belongs, “until the genre itself changes, or splits, or falls to pieces and is replaced as new original talents make new demands of it.” In the 1970s, Patrick Hanan introduced “genre translation” in his study of the Chinese short story:

> …that is, the transfer of material from one genre to another, whether the genres belong to storytelling, fiction, or drama. The process could go on repeatedly, from genre to genre and then back again.36

“Material” here denotes “the identifiable subject matter of a text regardless of its order and form.” Generally speaking, if the material of a new genre is also found in other sources, then it will help to suggest the origins of the newcomer. In an ongoing discussion of the genesis of the maqāmah genre in Arabic for example, Beeston, Mattock, and Hāmeen-Anttila have drawn our attention to the predecessors of some maqāmāt in
earlier anecdote collections. Their most convincing argument is the striking affinity of the material used in both al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmāt* and such earlier versions.

We briefly mentioned the *campū* genre at the end of the last section. The most quoted definition of *campū* was given by Daṇḍin in the *Kāvyādarśa* (Mirror of Poetry):

\[ mîsrāṇi nāṭakādīni teṣāṃ anyatra vistaraḥ \\
\quad gadyapadyamayī kācic campūr ity abhidhiyate. \]

There are mixtures such as the drama and their detailed description is (found) elsewhere a composition consisting of prose and verse is called *campū*. We have already mentioned the *campū* genre at the end of the last section. The most quoted definition of *campū* was given by Daṇḍin in the *Kāvyādarśa* (Mirror of Poetry):

Both drama and *campū* are placed in the category of *miśra* (mixed), drama being *drśyakāvya* and *campū śrāvyakāvya*. The origins of *campū* have aroused a good deal of controversy among Indologists. In this study we prefer to trace its origins to a period almost 2000 years ago within a Buddhist context. Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* (The Garland of Birth-stories) is just an earlier example of the *campū* genre:

Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* (The Garland of Birth-stories) is just an earlier example of the *campū* genre:

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Both *jātaka* and *jātakamālā* are categories of genres. *Jātaka* are stories about the previous births (*jāti*) of the Buddha. They are “at least as old as the compilation of the Buddhist Canon at the Council of Vesāli, about 377 B.C.” Altogether there are about 550 *jātaka* stories in the Pali Canon. Since Āryaśūra “must have lived before 424 A.D.” there existed a time gap of about eight centuries between the compilation of *Jātaka* and the Āryaśūra’s composition of *Jātakamālā*. Āryaśūra “does not pretend to tell stories new or
unknown to his readers.” In the preface to the thirty-four Sanskrit legends, he “declares his strict conformity with scripture and tradition.” At the same time, his good taste has been recognized, in that he passes over minor details and hideous descriptions that are still extant in the Pali Jātaka.

“Books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told.” For Hans Robert Jauss, the medieval reception of texts is different from “the modern sensibility which thinks of tradition as written, authorship as single, the text as an autonomous work”, “rather, intertextuality is constitutive, in the sense that the reader must negate the character of the individual text as a work in order to enjoy the charm of an already ongoing game with known rules and still unknown surprises.”

People in medieval times were minimally concerned about the authorship of a work. As a contrast, literary historians nowadays will regularly delve into biographic data and carry out careful textual analyses.

**Style-breaking**

Although a good literary work which uses recycled materials has merits of its own, the practice of “genre translation” seems to be in some way associated with plagiarism, which was a common phenomenon in medieval literatures. For instance, in *al-ʿUmdah*, Ibn Rashīq devotes an entire chapter to plagiarism. According to him, no poet can claim to be entirely free of plagiarism in his composition. He identifies three types of plagiarist:
One of the modern talents (ba’d al-ḥudhdhāq min al-mutaʿakhkhirīn) said: Whoever takes (akhadha) a poetic concept (ma’nā) along with its wording (bi lafẓihi)…is a thief (sāriq); if he changes part of its wording, he is a “skinner” (sālikh); but if he transforms some of the concept in order to hide it (li yakhfiyahu) or totally change its form (qalabahu ‘an wajhihi), this is a sign of his skill (dalīl hadhqihi).55

Ibn Rashīq uses the term “stealing” (sariqāt) to express his disapproval of plagiarism, while also providing ways of discriminating different levels of it. In any case, a copyist of wording (lafẓ) is regarded as a stupid thief. However a transformation of the poetic concept or a clever novelty of form is “a sign of his skill.”

The mid-Tang littérature, Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824 C.E.), advocates in his compositions of both poetry and prose the so-called poti 破體 (“style-breaking”), a term that implies mixing the styles of other genres or breaking the usual style of a genre. Although “the doctrine of generic purity” has been respected by some as an aesthetic criterion56 (or zunti 尊體, “style-respecting” in the Chinese criticism), poti has been applied widely by world littératureurs in their pursuit of literary novelty. Style-breaking is closely related to the discussion of plagiarism in classical Arabic literary criticism. Ibn Rashīq’s predecessor, Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī (d. c. 399/1009), lists three means of concealing theft (ikhfāʾ al-sarq):

(a) presentation in prose of a ma’nā taken from poetry; (b) presentation in poetry of a ma’nā taken from prose; and (c) use of a borrowed ma’nā to different purposes, e.g., in a eulogy instead of descriptive passage.57

The first two means are known, respectively, as ḥall (“untying a knot”/prosification) and ṣaqd/naẓm (“making a knot”/versification). In a subsequent chapter58 we will discuss in
detail al-Hamadhānī’s practice of prosification and versification in the Maqāmāt.

Finally we want to propose a wider definition of “genre translation” based on the above discussion of “concealing theft.” Hanan’s theory basically focuses on the transfer of material in targeted genres. In order to show originality and mark the “differentiation in quality,” this transfer of material (or maʿnā) is inevitably accompanied by a change in modes of speech (versification or prosification) or mixing the styles/forms of other genres. A genre is the combination of a formal differentiation and a functional differentiation. If the form of Genre A is now transferred to Genre B, it is very likely that the function of Genre B will then partly resemble that of Genre A. Therefore, we propose to expand Hanan’s theory to include the transfer of form/function. We will return to this point in Chapter II, where we try to relate the Maqāmāt’s use of sajʿ to al-Iskandarī’s divinatory functions inherited from pre-Islamic soothsayers.

In the following chapter we will introduce the author al-Hamadhānī and his Maqāmāt.

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In the following text, the *Maqāmāt* (italicized, capitalized, and led by the definite article) stand for al-Hamadhānī’s collection of *maqāmāt*.


Qudāmāh ibn Ja’far, *Naqd al-shiʿr* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Khānîj, 1979), 17; Cantarino, *Arabic Poetics*, 120 (with change of “meaning” into “idea”).


George Makdisi, *The Rise of Humanism in Classical Islam and the Christian West* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1990), 131, 194. Rhyme is not totally unknown in Homer (*Iliad* 2.87-88, 9.236-38), Aristophanes (*Clouds* 709-15; *Wasps* 133-35) or Virgil (*Aeneid* 1.625-26, 2.124-25). We may even regard *yamaka* (paronomasia) as a sign of internal rhyme in Sanskrit. However, the use of rhyming (especially end rhymes) in the classical Greek, Latin and Sanskrit poems is definitely not as consistent as in Arabic.


Karl Reichl and Joseph Harris, “Introduction,” in *Prosimetrum*, 1-16 (quotations from 7).


See “genre” and “gender (n., v.),” in *OED*, online version.


Ibid., 2:682.


Garber et al., “Genre”.

Ibid.

Ibid.


See the section “You” of Chapter II.


See “genre” and “gender (n., v.),” in *OED*.


Victor H. Mair, “The Prosimetric Form in the Chinese Literary Tradition,” in *Prosimetrum*, 365-85 (quotation from 373). Hanan’s theory looks similar to “literary genetics” which was proposed by Henry Wells in *New Poets from Old*, 19.


41. Daṇḍin, Daṇḍin’s Kāvyādarśa, 50.


43. Scholars such as Siegfried Lienhard (A History of Classical Poetry, 267) define it in a narrow sense: for him the earliest campū is dated to the beginning of the 10th century. However we prefer to view campū in a broader context.


46. Ibid., xv.

47. Ibid., xvi.

48. Ibid., xxviii.

49. Ibid., xxv.

50. Ibid., xxv, 1.


58. See the section “The lion” in Chapter III.
I Al-Hamadhānī and his *Maqāmāt*

Hamadhān

Although “there is still much scholarly debate concerning the origins of the genre,”\(^1\) the *maqāmah*’s beginning is often associated with Abū al-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn al-Ḥusayn al-Hamadhānī, dubbed “the wonder of the age” (Bāḍī’ al-zamān). At some point towards the end of the 4\(^{th}\)/10\(^{th}\) century, al-Hamadhānī began to compose a collection of fictional narratives. They are called the *Maqāmāt* after which the genre took its name.

Our author was born around 358/969\(^2\) in Hamadhān (Hamadān), a city in the northwest of modern Iran. He once wrote in one of his letters (sg. *risālah*, pl. *rasāʾil*):

“My name is Aḥmad and Hamadhān is my birthplace. Taghlib is my source and Muḍar my lineage.”\(^3\) Although these two lines had been regarded as proof of al-Hamadhānī’s Arab blood, we cannot overlook the possibility that Hamadhān’s deep Iranian roots\(^4\) had played a role in our author’s education. The 1903 Cairo edition of al-Hamadhānī’s *Dīwān* (anthology of poetry) includes three poems which were “a translation of the Persian meaning” (*tarjamat maʾnā fārisī*).\(^5\) It also contains a poem in which al-Hamadhānī panegyrizes Maḥmūd of Ghaznah (r. 388-421/998-1030) and compares him to Frēdōn, the legendary king of Iran.\(^6\) The editors apparently consider al-Hamadhānī as an Iranian master of Arabic language.\(^7\) As is the case with regard to the question of al-Hamadhānī’s mother tongue, it is hard to speculate on the reasons for their comment regardless of
al-Hamadhānī’s own claim in the *Rasāʾil*. Instead we prefer to follow the example of Muṣṭafā al-Shak‘ah who clearly points out that the Iranian influence to be found in his poetic writing is the anticipatable consequence of his education and growth in an Iranian environment.8 We ask our readers to keep this in mind for we will argue in the end of this study that al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmāt* collection may have included some residue of Iranian Buddhism.

**Rayy**

The 4th/10th century marks both the literary renaissance and political rise of the Iranians. It is the century when Firdawsī (d. 411/1020), at the court of Maḥmūd of Ghaznah, composed the great epic *Shāhnāmah* that established the foundations of New Persian. It also witnessed a huge decentralization process in the Arabic-Islamic world. Baghdad was still the seat of the Abbasid caliphs (132-656/750-1258), but their authority was subordinated to that of the Iranian Būyids who had entered Baghdad in the year 334/945.9

The Būyids or Buwayhids were originally *condottieri* from the highlands of Gīlān (northwest Iran). First in the Iranian plateau, then in Iraq, the Shi‘ī Būyid dynasty (320-454/932-1062) marked the “Iranian intermezzo”10 together with the Sāmānid dynasty (204-395/819-1005) of Khurāsān and Transoxania and the Șaffārid dynasty (247-393/861-1003) of Sijistān. In spite of such political turbulence (or even as a consequence of it), a cultural revival occurred, with a number of provincial rulers and
viziers offering patronage. “Hamadhān, Rayy, and Shīrāz, previously overshadowed by Baghdad, became cultural magnets in the tenth century.” One thing that needs to be noted is that the Būyids, as opposed to the Sāmānids to the northeast or the Ṣaffārids to the southeast, covered “a strongly arabised area.” This may help to explain why al-Hamadhānī’s extant works do not show “any more Persian influence than other late 10th-century literature written in Iraq and Iran in general.”

In the year 380/990, al-Hamadhānī left his hometown and arrived at the court of the Būyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib ibn ʿAbbād (d. 385/995) in Rayy. His literary salons (sg. majlis, pl. majālis, meaning “place of sitting; session; assembly”) had attracted figures like the prosaists Abū Bakr al-Khwārizimī (323-83/934-93) and Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawhīdī (d. 414/1023), the critic al-Qāḍī al-Jurjānī (d. 391/1001), the philosopher Miskawayh (d. 421/1030), and the jawwālah (globe-trotter) Abū Dālaf al-Khazrajī.

According to his biography, al-Hamadhānī had already exhausted the knowledge of his teacher, the lexicographer (lughawī) Abū al-Ḥusayn ibn Fāris (d. 395/1004), before he went off to Rayy. However, no matter how well the young man was prepared, his stay did not last very long, probably only for a few months. After all, the salon of the great vizier was full of established scholars, and it was, no doubt, difficult or impossible for Ibn ʿAbbād to attach much importance to the newcomer. Nevertheless, even such a short stay may well have provided him with a taste of “the general atmosphere in the court.” At a later stage Ibn ʿAbbād’s interest in lowlife figures and his ardor for the very ornate saj were to give al-Hamadhānī inspirations for the Maqāmāt.
Our author then headed for Jurjān (or Gorgan), the modern capital of Golestan province in Iran. There he resided for a year or so, in close relationship with an elite Shāfī‘ī family. It would appear that the Shāfī‘ī al-Hamadhānī was better treated here than at the court of Ibn ‘Abbād, the Shī‘ī and Mu‘tazilī vizier. Before long, he decided to move on to Nishapur to meet the great stylist Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī.

It was in the year 382/992 that our author arrived at Nishapur. But the journey was not at all a smooth one. As a matter of fact, highway robbery appears several times as a theme in al-Hamadhānī’s Maqâmāt. In the Maqâmah of Jurjān (al-Maqâmah al-Jurjānīyah), for example, the hero al-Iskandarī complains that the hardship of the journey has made him so poor that he has become “barer than the palm of the hand” (anqā min al-rāḥah), a phrase that is also to be found in one of al-Hamadhānī’s letters. As travel became a requirement in the quest for knowledge and fame, scholars like al-Hamadhānī had to learn to accept whatever mishaps might occur on the way, and to be prepared for abrupt changes in personal fortune or political power. We read in the preface to Abū ‘Alī al-Muḥassin al-Tanūkhī’s (329-384/940-994) anecdote collection *al-Faraj baʿda al-shiddah* (Relief after Adversity) that:

> I have seen the children of this world, [whose fortune is] being changed between welfare and evil, between benefit and harm. In the time of easiness, nothing has been more useful for them than to thank and praise. While in the time of trial, nothing was more beneficial than to forbear and pray.
The hardships of travel probably brought al-Hamadhānī a sense of relief in his new abode. It was in Nishapur that he showed his literary talents. Al-Hamadhānī is said to have dictated four hundred maqāmāt, which he ascribed (nahala) to Abū al-Fath al-Iskandarī, on beggary and other themes. It was also in Nishapur that, at least according to his own version to be found in the Rasā‘il, he won a debate against al-Khwārizmī, after a series of occasions involving correspondence, competition, debate, and contention (mukātabāt wa mubahāt wa munāzarāt wa munāḍalāt). When al-Khwārizmī died in the year 383/993, “the space was vacated for al-Hamadhānī, and he was involved in favorable situations and many journeys” in Khurāsān, Sijistān and Ghaznah until he settled down in Herat.

As opposed to the Maqāmāt’s hero who travels profusely in the Islamic east, al-Hamadhānī probably only traveled east from his hometown. It was in Herat that he “spent the last ten or more years of his life.” There he married the daughter of a local noble and enjoyed a well-endowed and pleasant life until his death in 398/1008.

Four hundred maqāmāt

As we just said, al-Hamadhānī began to compose the maqāmāt “after his arrival in Nishapur but before his debate with al-Khwārizmī.” When people study the history of the Maqāmāt, they often quote one letter in which al-Hamadhānī criticized a poem of al-Khwārizmī. This letter is marked by an angry tone since al-Hamadhānī was informed that al-Khwārizmī had belittled his Maqāmāt:
But I would not have revealed these secrets, torn aside these veils, and pointed out his shame (ʿār) and defect (ʿawār), were it not for reports reaching me of his objections to what I have dictated (fī mā amlaynā), and his ready criticism of what I have recited (fī mā rawaynā), of the maqāmāt of al-Iskandarī, saying that this is all I can do and the most I can achieve. If this worthy man were more just, he would test his own talents on five maqāmāt, or ten lying fictions (muftarayāt)… but if his effort was unsuccessful and his limitations became apparent, he would then acknowledge that someone who can dictate four hundred maqāmāt on beggary (man amlā min maqāmāt al-kudyah arbaʿāmiʿat maqāmah), no two of them alike in either wording or concept, while he is himself incapable of producing even a tenth of them, has every right to expose his faults!38

The number four hundred,39 which must have excluded the six pieces praising Khalaf ibn Aḥmad of Sijistān, does not conform with the numbers to be found in any known Maqāmāt manuscripts.40 However, what interests us most is that al-Hamadhānī seemed to have dictated four hundred pieces from a specific branch of a known genre (maqāmāt al-kudyah). All of which leads to the question as to what the term maqāmah41 meant exactly when our author composed his Maqāmāt?

In a line by Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā (d. c. 607 C.E.) which was quoted by al-Hamadhānī in the Maqāmāh of Jurjān, maqāmāt is used in parallel with andiyah (sg. nādī, “tribal council”):

wa fihīn maqāmātun ḥisānun wujūhuhum
wa andiyatun yantābuhā ʿl-qawlu wa ʿl-fīʿlū

And among those whose faces are fair, there are maqāmāt
and councils that are followed by words and deeds.42

In fact the plural maqāmāt is common to two nouns, maqām and maqāmah. Carl Brockelmann notes that both are derived from the radical q-w-m (to rise, to stand in order
to perform an action) and can indicate “scene of warlike actions” in classical poetry. According to the above line of Zuhayr, a *maqām* is the occasion where a speaker boasts of heroic actions of his tribe. Here *maqām* is used in conjunction with *nadj*, which also means “an assembly.” We suggest that, as *maqām* emphasizes the tribal exploits, *nadj* implies the terse and fervent verbal contest that forms the core of the speakers’ presentations. Edward Lane quotes an anonymous verse to explain the meaning of *nadj*:

\[
\text{atā́ 'l-nadjyya fa lā yaqarrabu majlisī}
\text{ wa aqūdu li'l-sharafī 'l-raffī ḥimārī}
\]

I come to the assembly, and my sitting-place is not made near [to the chief person or persons],
and I lead to the high elevated place my ass.47

The above line vividly describes the audience’s enthusiasm for such tribal gatherings. A *majlis*, understood as literary salon around al-Hamadhānī’s time, might originally mean a seat and therefore emphasizes the posture of council attendees.

During the 3rd/9th century, that is, before al-Hamadhānī and Ibn Durayd’s (223-321/837-933) time, *maqāmāt* may still be interpreted as discourses of military actions. However their connotation was extended to “edifying addresses delivered before a distinguished audience.” For example, Ibn Qutaybah (d. 276/899) arranges in his *ʿUyūn al-akhbār* (Jewels of Information) a chapter entitled “the *maqāmāt* of the ascetics in front of the caliphs and the kings” (*Maqāmāt al-zuhhād ʿinda al-khulafāʾ waʾl-mulūk*), in which he reproduces ten pious homilies designated by the singular *maqām*. The first *maqām* in the *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*, that of the homily of Śālīḥ ibn ʿAbd
al-Jalīl in front of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158-69/775-85), begins as follows:

qāma wa qāla: innahu lammā sahula ‘alaynū mā tawa’‘ara ‘alā ghayrinī min al-wuṣūl ilayka, qummā maqāma al-aḍā‘ anhum wa ‘an rasūl al-lāh ẓallā al-lāh ‘alayhi wa sallama bi izhār mā fī a’nāquīnī min farīdat al-amr wa’l-nahy...

He [Ṣāliḥ] stood up and said: when it became easy for us but hard for others to reach you [al-Mahdī], we stood up to convey from them and from the Prophet of Allah (peace and blessings be upon him) the manifestation of the divine ordinance of command and prohibition that are upon our necks…

It is noteworthy that the phrase “qāma wa qāla” appears three times in those ten maqāms.

When speaking of the word maqāmah, al-Shakʿah cites wa li-kulli maqāmah maqālah (every situation has its own [level of] language) from al-Khwārizmī’s Rasāʾīl. Interestingly, al-Hamadhānī uses wa li-kulli maqām maqāl in the Maqāmah of Jāḥiz (al-Maqāmah al-Jāḥizīyah). His contemporary Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī also quotes li-kulli maqām maqāl in explaining balāghah (eloquence). For al-ʿAskarī, people should not use the words of a female servant (kalām al-amah) in addressing a noble, or those of subjects (kalām al-sūqah) to a king. Such behavior only shows their “ignorance of [appropriate] situations” (jahl biʿl-maqāmāt).

Based on all the above information, two remarks may be made here. Firstly, if maqāmah and maqām were used interchangeably in the time of al-Hamadhānī, then our author might well be using maqāmah to designate pious homily as well. Secondly, since al-ʿAskarī’s definition of eloquence is harmony between maqāl(ah) and maqām(ah), then it can be inferred that al-Hamadhānī probably did not want maqāmah to denote anything but pious speeches made by ascetics or other preachers. His hero, al-Iskandarī,
is an itinerant trickster who frequently changes identity. Therefore his *maqāmāt* should be seen as a collection of proper *maqālāt* spoken in any situation. Moreover, some episodes do not focus on the eloquence of al-Iskandarī but illustrate his picaresque adventures, which echoes or even parodies “heroic actions,” i.e., the original meaning of *maqām(ah)*.

For his great successor, Abū Muḥammad al-Qāsim al-Ḥarīrī (446-516/1054-1122), al-Hamadhānī had created (*abda‘a*) a new genre with its own form and function.

**Imlā‘ vs. inshā‘**

Besides the “four hundred *maqāmāt*” there are other things worthy of our attention in al-Hamadhānī’s letter. Firstly, he claims that no two *maqāmāt* are alike in either wording or concept. But his statement is clearly incompatible with our impression of the extant pieces. Secondly, al-Hamadhānī twice uses the verb *amlā* (to dictate) in his letter. *Imlā‘* (pl. *amālī*, “dictation”), which is the verbal noun of *amlā*, was actually an important genre from “as early as the eighth century.”

With this in mind, what then are the characteristics of an *imlā‘* -dictation? We will begin by quoting al-Qālī’s (d. 356/967) introduction to his *Amālī*:

> Seeing that knowledge is the most precious merchandise, I knew for certain that setting out in search of it would be the best kind of commerce. I therefore left my homeland to hear knowledge transmitted, and I clung to the scholars in order to understand it. Then I busied myself in collecting it, and worked my intelligence in memorizing it, until I had gathered the most significant part of it…I then dictated this book from memory on Thursdays, in Cordova, in the Mosque of the Blessed Shining City, az-Zahra‘…

The italicized words highlight the process of making an anthology of dictations. Before
dictating the anthology in Cordoba, al-Qālī had undertaken a long process of listening, producing written versions, memorizing, and selecting. The Amālī might have gone through several revisions and additions before it took its final shape and thus bore the stamp of al-Qālī and his amanuenses.62

In his article on the extant manuscripts of al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmāt, D. S. Richards points out that while “Ḥarīrī gave us an unequivocal statement of the size of his output when he wrote in his own introduction ‘I have composed…fifty maqāmas’,” “the position with Hamadhānī is less clear.”63 However, if we posit the notion that al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmāt were intended to be a collection of amālī rather than a prefaced book, the aforementioned discrepancies between his statement in the Rasā’il and the actual pieces to be found in today’s Maqāmāt version can be explained.

At this point we need to note that the standard version of fifty-one maqāmāt was edited and expurgated by Muḥammad ‘Abduh (d. 1323/1905) in 1889.64 As the most popular and studied version of the maqāmāt, it will be depended upon heavily in this study. In the margins of al-Hamadhānī’s Rasā’il (published in 1928), there is also an unexpurgated version of the Maqāmāt which contains fifty-two stories.65

In contrast to al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī in the preface to his fifty Maqāmāt uses the verb ansha’a (to compose) three times and its derived noun inshā’ once. If in al-Hamadhānī’s time the maqāmah was still being “dictated,” it is clear that al-Ḥarīrī “composed” his in written form. For instance, the Maqāmah of the Spotted (al-Maqāmah al-Raqṭā’) by al-Ḥarīrī contains a long letter where every other grapheme has a dot on
this kind of linguistic virtuosity surely requires an exclusively visual reception.

What cultural developments occurred during this century-long gap between al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī, resulting in this compositional difference? Firstly, Shawkat Toorawa suggests in his work on Ibn Abī Ṭāhir Ṭayfūr (204-80/819-93) that the shift from “predominately oral to combinations of oral and written” could be dated to the 3rd/9th century. Secondly, “the watershed,” as Jonathan Bloom states in Paper Before Print, “seems to have been crossed by the twelfth century, when the general availability of paper allowed early patterns of oral transmission of authority and knowledge to be altered.” Therefore, the transition from īmlāʾ to īnshāʾ in the field of maqāmah compositions, which may have occurred in late 10th and early 11th centuries, echoes the larger shift from an orality-dominated to a literacy-dominated Arabo-Islamic culture.

**Riwāyah and ḥikāyah**

In the same letter al-Hamadhānī uses the verb rawā (to convey water; to recite; to transmit) alongside amlā. Stefan Leder has the following to say about the application of its verbal noun, riwāyah:

In classical Arabic the noun riwāya mostly applies to the technical meaning of transmission of poems, narratives, ḥadīths and also applies to the authorised transmission of books. Riwāya may sometimes appear synonymous with ḥikāya, and is used in classical Persian in the sense of a ḥadīth; in modern Arabic usage it has become an equivalent of “story, novel, play”.

Rawā was first used in the transmission of pre- and early Islamic poetry; the active
participle rāwī (reciter and transmitter) was used to designate the bard who had memorized the works of the poet and was sent to other places to perform the recitation. His function was of course more than a “recorder”; he was to be seen as an apprentice poet. Later, the denotation of rāwī was to cover the transmitters of narrative anecdotes (sg. khabar, pl. akhbār) and reports (ḥadīth). Quoting again from al-Ḥarīrī’s preface to his Maqāmāt:

wa ʿazā ilā Abī al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī nashāʿaṭahā wa ilā ʿĪsā ibn Hishām riyāyatahā wa kilāhumā majhūl lā yuʿrafu wa nakīra lā tataʿarrafu

He [al-Hamadhānī] had referred the origination (of the Maqāmāt) to Abūʾl Faṭḥ of Alexandria and the transmission to ʿĪsā, son of Hishām.—Both of them are persons obscure, not known; vague, not to be recognized.

With the word riwāyah, the relationship between al-Iskandarī and ʿĪsā ibn Hishām is comparable to that between the poet and the bard. Riwāyah also suggests an audience scene. Almost every Hamadhānian maqāmah begins with the opening formula (isnād, “a chain of transmitters”): ʿĪsā ibn Hishām related to us and said (ḥaddathanā ʿĪsā bnu Hishāmin qāla).

In al-Hamadhānī’s time or slightly later, there appeared a prosimetric fiction entitled Hikāyat Abī al-Qāsim. Hämeen-Anttila points out that the Ḥikāyah contains several passages which are found verbatim in al-Hamadhānī’s maqāmāt, especially those connected with beggars. In the preface the author, Abū al-Muṭahhar al-Azdī, quotes the famous passage from al-Jāḥiz’s (d. 255/868-9) Kitāb al-bayān waʾl-tabyīn (Book of Clarity and Clear Expression), summarized by Charles Pellat as follows:
...there existed imitators (ḥākiya) able...not only to copy the mannerisms, gestures, the voice and the habits of speech of the different ethnic groups which formed the population of the empire, and more particularly of the capital, but also to reproduce with the most exact fidelity the demeanour and bearing of various types of people, the blind for example, and finally to imitate the calls of wild and domestic animals.77

Al-Hamadhānī’s chameleonic hero al-Iskandarī, who can mimic the blind and pretend to be monkey-trainer, barber, preacher, or mountebank, is indeed comparable to such a ḥākiyah (the intensive form of ḥākī).78 In fact, the term “mimesis” was translated as hikāyah by Mattā ibn Yūnus in his Arabic version of Aristotle’s Poetics.79 Scholars have pointed out that the medieval Arabs were probably familiar with Greek drama.80 As for al-Azdī, he seems to have had well-developed ideas concerning length, language, and closure for a ḥikāyah:

wa idhā qaddamtu hādhihi al-jumlah fa aqīlu hādhihi hikāyah muqaddarah ‘alā aḥwāl yawn wāḥid min awwalihā ilā ākhirihi aw laylah kadhālika wa innamā yumkinu istīfā’uḥā wa istighrāquḥuḥ fi mithl hādhihi al-muddah...wa ma’a qawl aḥad al-bulaghā’ milḥ al-nādirah fi laḥnīhā wa ḥalāwatuḥā fi qaṣr matnīhā wa ḥarāratuḥā husn muqatī iḥā...

If I presented this proposition, then I would say that it is a form of mimesis whose length should be limited to around a single day, from beginning to end, or likewise [around a single] night, so that the entire work can be preformed and reach its ending within such a space of time... An eloquent person has said that the flavor of a literary anecdote (nādirah) lies in its colloquial language, its sweetness in the brevity of its text, and its heat in the elegant ending...81

According to this statement, a ḥikāyah is not only to be kept “within a single circuit of the sun,”82 but also performed in “(a single) night”83 since the night-conversation (samar or sāmir) was perhaps more suited to some hot regions in the Islamic world.84 It is clear that
both riwāyah and hikāyah are related to a dialogue situation of a session. Likewise, the Hamadhānian maqāmāt are heavily depended upon dialogue. Al-Azdī’s statement also notes the stark constrast of standard and colloquial languages to be found in a literary work. At a later point, we will see that prose and poetry in the Hamadhānian maqāmah belong to different language levels, and the readers could relish such a work when going from one medium to another.

**Al-Jāḥiẓ criticized**

As we noted in the preceding section, pre-Islamic poetry was mostly handed down orally from poet to bard. There is no need for us to repeat the legends about the seven or ten most prized qaṣīdahs (polythematic long poems), the so-called Muʿallaqāt (The Suspended Ones). Probably from the middle of the 8th century C.E. Arabs began to collect and canonize a corpus of pre- and early Islamic poetry. Poetry was even called for the first time, by the critic Ibn Sallām al-Jumāḥī (d. 231/845), the archive of the Arabs (Dīwān al-ʿArab).

*Dīwān* is a loan-word from Persian (*dipi-bān,* “guardian of the documents”) and is also connected with the Neo-Persian word *dibīr* (scribe). From the time of the second Caliph, ʿUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (d. 23/644), to the era of the Būyid dynasty, the word *dīwān* had also been used to designate “department” in the ever-growing administrative apparatus. The gradual transition from orality to literacy, coupled with such a significant development in bureaucratic prose-writing (*inshāʾ dīwānī*) and the class of
scribes (sg. kātīb, pl. kuttāb), led to an emerging situation in which prose came to rival poetry.

The art of Arabic prose writing was said to have begun with 'Abd al-Ḥamīd (d. 132/750) and to have ended with Ibn al-'Amīd (d. 360/970). It is probably no coincidence that both of them were (or once were) chancery secretaries (kātīb rasāʾil). There were also writers who were “free and independent of the government,” including al-Khwārizmī and al-Hamadhānī. Anīs al-Maqdisī divides styles of composition (al-asālīb al-inshāʾīyah) “from the time of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd till today” into three main categories:

1. The parallel style (al-uslūb al-mutawāzin) which is coupled (muzdawij) but not rhymed—it comprises the epistolary works of 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, al-Jāḥiẓ and others like them.
2. The rhymed style (al-uslūb al-musajjaʾ)—comprising the bureaucratic (dīwānīyah) and literary (adabīyah) epistolographies, the magāmat, etc.
3. The unrestricted/free style (al-uslūb al-muṭlaq)—the primary prose style in scientific, historic and sociological works of the past, and the common style of composition in modern times.

The category of scribe often overlaps with the category of adīb (pl. udabāʾ, “littérateur”) in classical Islam. According to George Makdisi, the training of an adīb included fields like grammar, poetry, eloquence, oratory, epistolary art, history, and moral philosophy. We should note that most udabāʾ were Muslims, and thus would also have been familiar with the Qurʾān, Ḥadīth, and even Islamic law (fiqh). Based on a reading of the extant works of Ibn Fāris, al-Hamadhānī’s teacher was certainly such a versatile...
adīb. Al-Hamadhānī himself, in mastering these different subjects, was equally proficient in both prose and poetry:

He would adorn (yuwashshiḥu) his unique qaṣīdah with his noble risālah, then read the prose from the poetry and recite the poetry from the prose. Given many rhymes, he would connect them with elegant lines. Requested [to produce] an abstruse and difficult [piece] of prose, he would extemporize it more quickly than a blink of eye, [more rapidly than the time needed for] the saliva to be swallowed or breath to be stopped.98

For him, poetry and prose have never been innate opponents of each other. His hero al-Iskandarī is made to speak frankly in the Maqāmah of Jāḥīz:

Verily Jāḥīz limps in one department of rhetoric and halts in the other. Now the eloquent man is he whose poetry does not detract from his prose and whose prose is not ashamed of his verse.99

Al-Jāḥīz, the greatest polymath and prosaist in the 3rd/9th century,100 was one of the representatives of the parallel style mentioned above by al-Maqdisī. Making al-Jāḥīz the target of this literary criticism was probably not a random choice for al-Hamadhānī.101 In that Maqāmah, al-Iskandarī states that “every age has its al-Jāḥīz” and opposes granting the prosaist great prestige simply because he had established his status in former times.

Al-Hamadhānī believes that poetry and prose were the two elements in rhetoric. Replicating his own proficiency in both, the eloquent person (al-balīgh) needs to be simultaneously a good prosaist and poet. Judged according to such a standard, al-Jāḥīz “limps” in that he does not have “a single fine poem” that people choose to remember; and he “halts” since “he is tied to the simple language he uses and avoids difficult
words.”\textsuperscript{102} Al-Jāḥiẓ was renowned for his “easy but hard to imitate” prose-writing (\textit{al-sahl al-mumtani‘}). The so-called \textit{badī’} (innovative) movement (since 2\textsuperscript{nd}/8\textsuperscript{th} century) that had first decorated poetry with a larger repertoire of literary tropes—such as paronomasia (\textit{tajnīs}) and antithesis (\textit{ṭībāq})—also spread its influence to prose writing by al-Hamadhānī’s time. Therefore the clear-cut style of al-Jāḥiẓ was regarded by stylists in the 4\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} century as being too simple.

Guided by his faith in the new style, al-Hamadhānī deliberately mixed \textit{sajī} with poetry in the \textit{Maqāmāt}, which were also a much more consistent example of prosimetrum than his \textit{Rasā‘īl} or the anecdotes whose plots he used in the \textit{Maqāmāt}. He probably did not expect that one day his \textit{Rasā‘īl} would come to be described as an “easy but hard to imitate” work.\textsuperscript{103} His \textit{Maqāmāt} were likewise eclipsed by the more ornate and flowery works of al-Ḥarīrī; it was not until 1889 that the collection was first edited and annotated. “Every age has its al-Jāḥiẓ,” as the expression has it; the standards of language and style are continually and inevitably changing.

\textit{Ayyām al-‘Arab}

In a study of early Arabic oration, Tahera Qutbuddin asserts that both \textit{risālah} and \textit{maqāmah} were largely influenced by the form, themes, and style of \textit{khuṭbah} (oration).\textsuperscript{104} Indeed the \textit{maqāmāt} were listed together with \textit{khuṭab} (pl. of \textit{khuṭbah}) in Ibn ‘Abd Rabbīhi’s (d. 328/940) \textit{al-‘Iqd al-farīd} (The Unique Necklace).\textsuperscript{105} In al-Jāḥiẓ’s \textit{Kitāb al-bukhalā‘} (Book of Misers), there is a passage that is quoted by both Prendergast and
al-Shak'ah:

wa jalasa wa’l-gawm ‘Arab wa kānū yuṣīda fī al-ḥadīth wa yadhkurūna min al-shū’arā’ al-shāhīd wa’l-mathal wa min al-khabar al-ayyām wa’l-maqāmāt.

He [the kātib ’Abd al-Nūr] sat down (jalasa). The company were Arabs who were engaged in conversation (ḥadīth), citing evidentiary verses (shāhid) and proverbs (mathal) from the poets, as well as the (battle) days and maqāmāt from the anecdotes (khabar).106

Here we have a sampling of the non-saj’ but beautifully paralleled prose of al-Jāḥiz. In this particular quotation and context, different kinds of poetry and prose were brought together in a conversation (ḥadīth) among Arabs. Here we need to bear in mind the previous discussion of the riwāyah and ḥikāyah, Arabic prosimetrum seems to be bolstered by oral performance and often suggests the dialogue situation of a session. The maqāmāt were clearly labeled by Ibn Qutaybah as a kind of prose-speech,107 but they could not have been “pure” prose, since it is normal to find examples of poetry (shāhid, mathal or tadmīn108) in other prose genres such as anecdotes, orations, letters, and especially the Ayyām al-’Arab.

Ayyām al-’Arab “is the name that Arabic literature applies to the combat, skirmishes, and even wars that Arab tribes fought amongst themselves in pre-Islamic and early Islamic times.”109 Each “day” (yawm) is like an episode, which is usually named after the fighting location or the main characters in the story. In the above passage, al-Jāḥiz places both the maqāmāt and ayyām within the category of khabar,110 a genre that is usually made up of an isnād (a chain of transmitters) and matn (the text proper).
Ayyām stories “are our best candidates for epic literature among the Arabs before Islam,” to quote Heinrichs. They were transmitted orally as historical traditions for generations before being collected by lexicographers like Abū ʿUbaydah (d. 209/824-5), al-Muḍḍal al-Ḍabbī (d. 170/786) and al-Aṣmaʿī (d. 213/828) who were also famous compilers of poetry and proverbs. Generally speaking, the ayyām narratives were composed in “not intentionally artful” prose that is interspersed with verses. In regard to their poetry, Heinrichs quotes a study carried out by Werner Caskel in 1930:

He noticed: (1) that the poetical tradition pertaining to a certain battle-day, i.e., the corpus of poems making reference to the events, is usually grouped together at the end of the story; (2) that other, usually shorter, poems occur within the narrative as improvisations of participants in the events; (3) that some of the latter can be proven to be forged; and (4) that on the whole the prose narrative was not, as Carl Brockelmann had suggested, an elaboration on some of the poetical references and thus secondary, but had enough of its own life to be considered a tradition in its own right independent of the poetry. In some cases he is, however, willing to accept the proposition that the prose narrative was extracted from the poetry.

In that article, Heinrichs deliberately focuses on an ayyām narrative entitled Akhbār ʿUbayd ibn Sharyah al-Jurhūmī which exhibits minimum “scholarly intervention” and “followed the natural procedure of an ayyām performance closely.” Akhbār ʿUbayd begins with “a little frame-story” in which the first Umayyad caliph Muʿāwiyah (r. 41-60/661-680) is shown during his later years to be fond of night-conversations (musāmarah) and listening to the stories of the ancients (ahādīth man maḍā). Thus ʿAmr ibn al-Āṣ (d. c. 42/663) recommends ʿUbayd to him, and the latter “proceeds to give his account of South Arabian history, with Muʿāwiya interrupting him to ask
questions at certain points, mostly at the end of story-units.”

Both Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim and Akhbār ʿUbayd can be placed in the context of night-conversations; their adaptors may have intentionally simulated the original performance environment when “literaricizing the whole setting of an ayyām performance including audience interaction.” For our study on the prosimetric style of the Maqāmāt, it is Caskel’s first point, i.e., evidentiary verses (shāhid) are normally located at the end of a story-unit, that most attracts our attention. If this characteristic is also evident in a less “scholarly-intervened” story such as Akhbār ʿUbayd, the adaptors’ loyalty to real-life performance could indicate that ending a narrative with poetry was an integral part of the ayyām genre.

The inner form

Up to this point we have introduced the original meaning of maqām(ah), and its connections with previous Arabic genres such as riwāyah, ḥikāyah, and ayyām. We also emphasized the importance of the audience scene for these earlier Arabic prosimetra. The Maqāmāt collection of al-Hamadhānī is a work extolling the art of speech (maqālah). In Chapter IV we will show that the core of the Hamadhānian maqāmah is dialogue, and al-Hamadhānī, by using techniques such as isnād and framing, simulated some kind of public presentation. Al-Hamadhānī’s efforts to preserve the characteristics of oral performance in his maqāmāt played a great role in creating their prosimetric style. In the next two sections, we are going to discuss two important features of al-Hamadhānī’s
maqāmah which made for a brand new genre in the end of the 4th/10th century.

René Wellek and Austin Warren have distinguished “outer form” (specific meter or structure) and “inner form” (attitude, tone, purpose) of a certain genre:

The ostensible basis may be one or the other (e.g., “pastoral” and “satire” for the inner form; dipodic verse and Pindaric ode for the outer); but the critical problem will then be to find the other dimension, to complete the diagram.\(^{119}\)

Wellek and Warren continue by stating that “our conception of genre should lean to the formalistic side,”\(^{120}\) implying thereby that much more attention has been paid to “inner form” rather than “outer form.” The tripartite division of epic, drama, and lyric, for example, is based on the criterion of the former. However, any study of a genre will not be complete without a balanced investigation of both forms.

In our discussion of al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmāt thus far, two conspicuous features may correspond to the aforementioned concepts of “inner form” and “outer form,” or to the genre’s functional and formal differentiations.\(^{121}\) The first involves al-Hamadhānī in the creation of two imaginary characters: the hero Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī and the narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām. Each maqāmah is an independent episode prefaced by a similar isnād –“ʿĪsā ibn Hishām related to us and said.” Al-Hamadhānī’s use of unknown yet unified characters sets the Maqāmāt apart from previous anecdotal works like Ayyām al-ʿArab and al-Faraj baʿda al-shiddah. The Maqāmāt were clearly not intended as a record of the author’s own experience,\(^{122}\) whereas al-Azdī clearly states in his preface to Ḥikāyah that “this is an imitation of a Baghdadian whom I used to be closely associated
with for a period of time.”

Wadād al-Qaḍī comments that “al-Hamadhānī founded the *maqāmah* genre, thereby introducing into classical Arabic literature the first work of pure fiction narrated on the tongues of human beings, not on those of animals.” Apart from just one exception, i.e., the *Maqāmah of Iblīs* (*al-Maqāmah al-Iblīsīyah*) whose hero is Iblis the devil, al-Hamadhānī’s use of human characters also differentiates his narratives from animal stories and fables which “were perhaps the most influential early fictitious genre in Arabic literature.”

Hämeen-Anttila has schematized the structure of a typical *maqāmah* into “isnād,” “general introduction,” “link,” “episode proper,” “recognition scene,” “envoi,” and “finale.”

The travel theme is very prominent in the *maqāmāt*; twenty of them are named after Islamic cities such as Jurjān, Baghdaḍ, and Sījistān. ʿĪsā is very likely a traveling merchant who has money and time. After the initial *isnād*, he tells the audience that for a certain reason “I was in such-and-such a city” or “I traveled from here to there”; this constitutes the “general introduction.” That is followed by a transitional formula, like “one day, when I…” (*fa baynānā anā yawman*), “and so on till…” (*wa halumma jarran ilā an*), leading to the “episode proper.” Then through the eyes of ʿĪsā we are introduced to an anonymous trickster who shows remarkable erudition and eloquence, and always succeeds “in swindling money out of the gullible narrator.”

Al-Iskandarī is a master of disguise, quite comparable to a ḥākiyah. He may be in turn a blind man, a monkey-trainer, a hoary preacher, or a well-mannered youth. In the *Maqāmah of Jurjān*, we find him chanting:
Now at Āmid and then at Ras al-ʿAyn
and sometimes at Mayyafāriqīn.
One night in Syria and then at Ahwāz
is my camel, and another night in ʿIrāq.\textsuperscript{131}

Some scholars have argued that the \textit{Maqāmāt} have close connections with the emergence of the picaresque novel.\textsuperscript{132} Some \textit{maqāmāt} do focus on al-Iskandarī’s adventures, which seem to be a parody of the original meaning of the genre’s name (“heroic actions”). In many other \textit{maqāmāt} we never actually encounter al-Iskandarī on his travels; these seemingly frequent travels are only narrated by the trickster himself.\textsuperscript{133} Nevertheless, al-Iskandarī’s frequent travels help him retain his anonymity; he probably does not expect to encounter ʿĪsā who has become very familiar with his ways. At the end of the \textit{Maqāmah of Bukhārā (al-Maqāmah al-Bukhārīyah)}, we read:

\begin{quote}
I followed him, until privacy revealed his face and lo! it was our Shaikh Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī, and behold the fawn was his child. I said:

‘Abū al-Fatḥ, thou hast grown old and the boy grown up;
what of the word of greeting and of converse?’
He answered:--
‘A stranger am I when the road doth contain us,
A friend when the tents do enclose us.’
By this I knew he was averse to conversing with me, so I left him and went away.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

It is al-Iskandarī’s unmatched eloquence that attracts ʿĪsā’s curiosity and leads us to the recognition scene, in which ʿĪsā inquires about al-Iskandarī’s identity, his reason for coming to the place in question, and more often than not, to reproach al-Iskandarī for the trickery he has displayed during the episode. Aristotle has told us that a complex plot involves “sudden plot change” (\textit{peripeteia}) or “recognition” (\textit{anagnorisis}), or both.\textsuperscript{135}
Since the recognition scene occurs in more than half of the Hamadhānian *maqāmāt*, the audience may well have recognized the trickster earlier than ʿĪṣā himself; while the chameleon-like trickster always devises new tricks in each episode, producing, for the sake of the audience, “still unknown surprises” within the context of “known rules.”

In answering ʿĪṣā’s questions, al-Iskandarī then chants an envoi poem, either as an indicator of his identity or also an apologia for his misbehaviors. In many of the Hamadhānian *maqāmāt*, an envoi marks the end of the story, but occasionally the envoi is followed by a “finale,” where ʿĪṣā and al-Iskandarī are described as departing.

**The outer form**

The second conspicuous feature of the *Maqāmāt* is that most of them are written in a style that involves an alteration between *sajʿ* and poetry. The usage of *sajʿ* as a style can be traced back to pre-Islamic soothsaying and also to the Qurʿān. It was after the 4th/10th century that it became the popular style for the bureaucratic and literary epistolographies. Al-Hamadhānī appears to have been following this trend in adopting the very rhetorical and ornate *sajʿ* style. At the same time, poetry is embedded in the majority of al-Hamadhānī’s *maqāmāt*: besides discussing the merits of poets (in which famous Arabic poems are quoted), quite a few *maqāmāt* contain verses chanted by the hero al-Iskandarī at the request of his audience, and are prefaced by the same catchphrases (e.g., *qāla*, “he said”) that lead his *sajʿ*-speech.

In contrast with previous studies devoted to the *Maqāmāt*’s structure, narrative
techniques, and the rhyme and rhythm of *sajʿ*, the prosimetric style has not drawn much attention from scholars. Both Beeston and Mattock noted the mixture of poetry and prose (plain prose, in many cases) in a few earlier anecdote collections, but, since their focus was on the similarity of content between the *Maqāmāt* and earlier sources,\(^{141}\) they did not explain why al-Hamadhānī also used the prosimetric style, and how different his style is from the previous ones. Julia Ashtiany Bray’s study\(^ {142}\) does consider matters of style, in that she illustrates the combination of *sajʿ* and plain prose in the *Maqāmah of Ṣaymarah* (*al-Maqāmah al-Ṣaymariyāh*). Her discussion does not include any mention of poetry, probably because the *Maqāmah* in question is devoid of poems. Hämeen-Anttila concludes in an article that the *maqāmah* genre is new in three aspects: “the frequent but not regular use of *sajʿ*; the use of openly fictive characters; and the knitting together of several episodes.”\(^ {143}\) Again there is no discussion of the use of prosimetrum.

Those studies seem unanimously to lack an interest in the poetry found in the *Maqāmāt*. It is true that the verses, especially the envois of the *maqāmāt*, do not seem as sophisticated and refined as the *sajʿ*, or as Arabic courtly poetry. However we wonder why al-Hamadhānī would decide to place ornate *sajʿ* and “doggerel” side by side?

Al-Hamadhānī was a connoisseur of poetry; Al-Shakʿah even regards him as “a glorious poet” (*šāʿir majīd*) when he composes panegyrics.\(^ {144}\) With the phrase “*milḥ al-nādirah fī laḥnihā*” in mind, we may perhaps find an excuse for his insistence on using doggerel verse.\(^ {145}\) We notice that al-Hamadhānī only uses “*qāla*” or “*yaqūlu*” to introduce al-Iskandarı’s “doggerel” verse, reserving the more formal “*anshada*” for the
poem put in the mouth of Dhū al-Rummah (d. 117/735-6)\textsuperscript{146} and another attributed to Abū Nuwās (d. c. 198/813).\textsuperscript{147} This intentional differentiation may account for the apparent fact that al-Hamadhānī deliberately vulgarizes the poetry he allot to al-Iskandārī.

Heinrichs has drawn our attention to the evidentiary verses located at the end of the \textit{ayyām} stories. In that context it is very interesting to find that al-Hamadhānī also likes to conclude his \textit{maqāmāt} with an envoi, a feature that was later taken over by al-Ḥarīrī and became one of the intrinsic hallmarks of the \textit{maqāmah} genre. Although a detailed discussion is to be found in Chapter IV, it is important for us to note at this point that there are three kinds of envois in the \textit{Maqāmāt}: the refutatory envois for the legends focused on the words of al-Iskandārī, the commentarial ones for the more picaresque pieces, and panegyrical ones dedicated to donors. Both the refutatory and panegyrical envois are dialogic, functioning as al-Iskandārī’s response to ‘Īsā. The commentarial envoi appears in tales such as the \textit{Maqāmah of Baghdad} (\textit{al-Maqāmah al-Baghdādīyah}) where the acting hero ‘Īsā has to “pronounce a few exit lines” even though he has “no audience for his envoi.”\textsuperscript{148} The commentarial envois represent the lessons that the audience is supposed to gain from the story, therefore bearing a resemblance to the evidentiary verses, as well as to maxims in the moral works like \textit{Pañcatantra}.\textsuperscript{149}

\textbf{Prosimetra compared}

According to my research thus far, Heinrichs’s “Prosimetrical Genres in Classical
Arabic Literature” is the only study that has touched on the *maqāmah*’s prosimetric style. This paucity of scholarly interest underlines Wellek and Warren’s concern about the “outer form.” In his article, Heinrichs explicitly says that his focus is on poetry; as a result, there is no discussion of the function of *saj*’ in the *maqāmah*. Not only that, but his discussion of the *maqāmah* is based on al-Hamadhānī’s renowned successor al-Ḥarīrī, whose works are more stylistically uniform and display a greater concern with linguistic virtuosity. Our reason for selecting al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmāt* is that the seemingly disorganized arrangement of the stories, as well as their unbalanced prosimetric style, suggests a stronger connection with oral performance, thus providing more information regarding the genesis of the *maqāmah* genre.

Within the comparative cultural dimension, it is well known that prosimetrum has been frequently used in other literary traditions. One possible reason for this phenomenon, as Dwight Reynolds notes, is that prosimetrum is “closely tied to some form of oral tradition.” Bearing in mind the *Maqāmāt*’s characteristics, we propose to add the Chinese *fu*, Chinese *bianwen/huaben*, Greek Old Comedy, and the Sanskrit *campū* to this discussion.

Chinese *fu*, whose history can be traced back to 4th-3rd centuries B.C.E., is as unique in East Asia as Arabic *saj*’ is in the Near East. A comparison between the two will be provided in Chapter II (“Rhymed prose”), illustrating the stylistic features of rhymed prose, its connections with wizardry and divination, and the possible reason for its usage in particular genres. Such comparisons may help in the determination as to why *saj*’ was
adopted for the *maqāmah* genre and how it affected the content of the narrative. Moreover, Chapter II will draw attention to al-Iskandarī’s connections with pre-Islamic soothsayers. Since *saj* and *rajaz*-poetry are two modes of expression that are most characteristic of them, Chapter III entitled “Poetry” will begin with a survey of the *rajaz* meter in the *Maqāmāt*. After reexamining the favorite poetic meters and themes of al-Iskandarī, we are to discover more traces of his inheritance from soothsayers.

Several Chinese Arabists have noticed the stylistic similarity between the *maqāmah* and the *huaben* in the Song (960-1279 C.E.) and Yuan (1279-1368 C.E.) dynasties (although none of them have explored the issue in detail). Especially at the end of each *huaben*, there is a small piece of poetry as a didactic conclusion to the whole story, a phenomenon that seems very similar to the envoi in the *Maqāmāt*. *Huaben* itself is believed to have emerged from the transformation texts (*bianwen*) of the Tang (618-907 C.E.) and Five Dynasties (907-960 C.E.). As Victor H. Mair notes, these transformation texts “deal with both religious (mostly Buddhist) and secular themes and represent the earliest known examples of the alternating prose-verse (*chantefable*, prosimetric) narrative style in China.”

Indeed, the prosimetric style used in either *bianwen* or *huaben* is very likely imported from India, where it had been widely used for a long time. For example, Buddhist texts such as *Jātaka*, *Lalitavistara*, *Mahāvastu*, and the *Lotus Sūtra* are all prosimetric. However, we would not wish to suggest that the *maqāmah*’s envoi, like the final poem in the *bianwen/huaben*, is the result of direct influence from Indian sources. Even within the Chinese tradition, we should bear in mind
that many *fūs* have a verse section at the end called a *luan* in the above-mentioned *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, the placement of poems at the end of a narrative is a distinct feature, thus raising the question as to whether these earlier works constitute a precedent to features found in the *Maqāmāt*. Therefore in Chapter IV (“Prosimetra”), we shall differentiate three main types (refutatory, commentarial, and panegyrical) of envois in the *Maqāmāt*. By introducing the debate (*agon*), interlude (*parabasis*), and hypermeter (*pnigos*) of Greek Old Comedy, as well as the dialogue-envois of Chinese *fūs* and the maxims of *Pañcatantra*, we attempt to provide parallels for each type and argue for al-Hamadhānī’s originality in creating his trademark envois.

We have already touched on the Indian *campū* genre. Its early development in the Buddhist context, its so-called “florescence” from the 10th century onwards and its continued usage till the 19th and 20th centuries can all be studied alongside the *maqāmah*. Another emphasis of Chapter IV is to compare the opening formula of the *Maqāmāt* to that of the Buddhist *Jātaka* and *Jātakamālā*. In fact, the opening formula, the prose-poetry sequence, and the envoi were adopted and adapted by compilers of all of the three Asian literary traditions in order to group episodes into collections.

One unavoidable problem within the comparative dimension of the current discussion is that the prosimetric genres (*maqāmah*, *fū*, *bianwen/huaben*, *campū*) are hierarchical with regard to the question of language. Each tradition has both elite and popular prosimetra. Within the Arabic tradition, the *Maqāmāt* are composed in an elevated style, in contrast, for example, with that of *A 1001 Nights*. Within the Chinese
Communications among different peoples in the past were clearly substantial and cultural interchange has remained a phenomenon without borders. At the same time, standards of language and style change across time and place, a fact that may help to explain why a prosimetrum like the *Maqāmāt* may occupy a distinct place in the context of its counterparts within the Chinese, Indian, and Greek traditions.


2 It is said that he was born in the thirteenth of the Second Jumādā in 358 A.H. See Yāqūt b. Ṭabdallāh al-Rūmī, *Muʾjam al-udabāʾ*, ed. Ahmad Fārīd Rūfī (Cairo: Maṭbūʿāt dār al-māmūn, 1936-38), 2:162-63.


4 Hamadhānī has an extremely long history. “This name has been interpreted as an Iranian word *hangmata* (place of gathering), but an Elamite form *ḥal. mata. na* ‘land of the Medes’, might suggest another etymology.” See Richard N. Frye, “Hamadhān (Hamadan),” in *EI*. Hamadhān later became the Achaemenian summer capital and one of the residences of the Parthian kings; it remained an important trading city during the Sasanian dynasty.


7 Ibid., 2. Hämeen-Anttila also labels him as “one of the last great Iranian masters of Arabic language,” see *Maqāmāt: a History of a Genre* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), 32.

8 Muṣṭafā al-Shāh al-wāṣṣ, *Ṭabdullāh al-Hamadhānī: Rāʾiʾ ad al-qissah al-ʿarabīyyah waʾl-maqqālāh al-sahāḥīyyah* (Cairo: al-Dār al-miṣrīyyah al-lubnānīyyah, 2003), 433-34. Al-Shāh suggests that al-Hamadhānī’s Arab ancestors could have intermarried with Iranians, see ibid., 156.

9 During this century three Abbasid caliphs, al-Qāhir (d. 339/950), al-Muttaqī (d. 357/968), and al-Mustakfī (d. 338/949), were blinded and deposed. Al-Qāhir was subsequently seen begging for bread on the streets of Baghdad, being “an object-lesson in the fragility of worldly power.” C. E. Bosworth, *The Medieaval Islamic Underworld: the Banū Sāsān in Arabic Society and Literature* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1976), 1: 16-17.

10 Claude Cahen, “Buwayhids or Būyids,” in *EI*.


12 Cahen, “Buwayhids or Būyids.”


14 Abū al-Malik ibn Muḥammad al-Ṭāḥī al-ʿālībī, *Yatīmat al-dahr* (Cairo: Maṭbaʿaḥ al-sāwī, 1934), 4:241. Ibn Ṭabdullāh’s former mentor, Abū al-Fadl ibn al-ʿAmīd (d. 360/970), and the latter’s son, Abū al-Fadl (d. c. 366/977) were already dead. Ibn Ṭabdullāh was then the most powerful vizier for the Buyid amīr Fakhr al-Dawlah (r. 373-387/977-983).

15 For the life and works of Abū Dulaḥ, see Bosworth, *Underworld*, 1: 48-79.


17 The short stay could be the result of the different religious attitudes of al-Hamadhānī and the vizier. Everett Rowson shows that al-Hamadhānī, probably a Shāfīʿī or even Ashʿarī, was against the Muʿtazilites in general. He once lampooned Ibn Ṭabdullāh’s Muʿtazilism in a poem. See Rowson, “Religion and Politics in the Career of Bādīʾ al-Zamān


19 For a short description of Ibn ’Abbād’s interest in pornography and the pornographer Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 391/1001), see Bosworth, Underworld, 1: 63-65. Bosworth ascribes the interest in lowlife to “the progress of urbanization in the Islamic land,” see ibid., 65.


24 In a letter he wrote back to his Jurjān patron, he blamed fate (adhummu al-dahr) for being robbed by highwaymen: “when I entered Nishapur, there were no ornaments save skin, no cloak but ‘crust’” (wa anā dākhil naysābūr wa:lā biyata illā al-jiłāh wa:lā burdāta illā al-qishrāh). See al-Hamadhānī, Rasāʾil, 68. Also see Yaḡūt, Mu jam al-udābā‘, 2:189 (wa innamā al-ībās jiłād wa al-zīy bāl al-qishrāh).


26 Al-Hamadhānī, Rasāʾīl, 19. These personal experiences clearly left traces to be found in his fiction, since there are quite a few cross-references between the Rasāʾīl and the Maqāmāt. See Hāmeen-Anttila, Maqama: a History of a Genre, 120.


28 Al-Thāʿalībi, Yatīmat al-dahr, 4:241.

29 Ibid.

30 Al-Hamadhānī, Rasāʾīl, 17-57.

31 Al-Thāʿalībi, Yatīmat al-dahr, 4:242. Yaḡūt, al-Maqdīšī and Rowson all point out that al-Hamadhānī could have been used by al-Khwārizmī’s opponents in order to undermine the great stylist’s authority in Nishapur.

32 Ibid. Al-Thāʿalībi does not provide dates of his later journeys, but both Wadād al-Qāḍī and Hāmeen-Anttila have tried to offer a chronological sketch with information collected from the Rasāʾīl. See Al-Qāḍī, “His Social and Political Vision,” 200-1; Hāmeen-Anttila, Maqama: a History of a Genre, 28-33. Here however we prefer to follow the more conservative view of Rowson: “it is impossible, and hardly necessary, to trace these travels in sequence.” See Rowson, “Religion and Politics,” 670-71. Rowson also identifies some of his later patrons from the Rasāʾīl and Dīwān, see “Religion and Politics,” 671-73.


34 Al-Qāḍī says that al-Hamadhānī had married in Hamadhān and had at least three children, a girl and two boys. See ibid., 199.

35 The title of al-Hamadhānī’s last letter gives the date of his death: Friday the eleventh of the First Jumādā. See al-Hamadhānī, Rasāʾīl, 179.

36 Rowson, “Religion and Politics,” 669, n. 84.

37 Hāmeen-Anttila points out the resemblance of the sentence to some Qur’ānic verses (2:23, 10:38 and 11:13); “one cannot help but identify al-Khwārizmī with the unbelievers of the Prophet’s time.” See Hāmeen-Anttila, Maqama: a History of a Genre, 27, n. 36.

38 Rowson, “Religion and Politics,” 669, with three added transliterations and a minor change (from “form or content” to “wording or concept”). Also as al-Hamadhānī, Rasāʾīl, 236-37.

39 As Rowson concludes in his note to the translation, al-Thaʿalībi’s account in the Yatīmat al-dahr accords with the mention of “four hundred maqāmāt” in this letter. Al-Hamadhānī also mentioned the four hundred maqāmāt in a letter to the son of Abū al-Hasan al-Baghawī, see al-Hamadhānī, Rasāʾīl, 315.


41 W. J. Prendergast provided a fairly detailed evolution of the word maqāmāh up to al-Hamadhānī’s time. See Prendergast, 11-14. Also see Régis Blachère, Analecta (Damascus: Institut Français de Damas, 1975), 61-7.

42 ’Abduh, 47; Prendergast, 53. The English translation is quoted with some change.

43 C. Brockelmann and Ch. Pellat, “Makāma,” in EI².

44 As attested in Q 19:73.

45 Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole, An Arabic-English Lexicon (London and Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1863-), Book I, pt. 8, 3030.

46 The third form of the radical n-d-w, nādā, means “to summon; to vie in glory with.” See J. G. Hava, Arabic English
I summon” poetry as cultural practice in a North Yemeni tribe

...the reign of al-Mutawakkil (d. 247/861) and which is also found in the...

...the training of oral poet. Also see Steven C. Caton...


Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi (d. 328/940) followed him in arranging a chapter called “the maqāmāt of the slaves in front of the caliphs” (Maqamat al-‘ubbād ‘inda al-khulafā’) in al-‘Iḍ al-farīd (The Unique Necklace). See Hāmeen-Anttila...

...the numbers of the maqāmah found in the Ottoman MSS. is the result of efforts...

...the maqāmah in these versions are close to fifty. What is more, there are at least five Ottoman manuscripts containing exactly fifty maqāmah. Richards has correctly pointed out that “the sum of fifty maqāmas found in the Ottoman MSS. is the result of efforts...to bring Hamadhâni’s oeuvre up to the size of Harrī’s.” See Richards, “Manuscripts,” 94, 98.

...see Allen, Heritage, 272. See also Thomas Chenery (London: Williams and Norgate, 1867-98), 1:105. See Al-Shakūt al-Charīrī’s edition of the Maqāmah (Beirut, 1971), 33.

For example, at the end of the Maqāmah of the Exhortation (al-Maṣūmah al-Wa‘ziyyah), the narrator ‘Īsā is invited to wait till the end of the maqāmah, i.e., the long exhortation made by al-Islāmdarī (Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures, no. 43 (1976): 25-51, esp. 38).

...for another example of a book that grew out of dictation, see Adam Mez, The Singer of Tales (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2002), 760.

...In Fārāq Sa’d’s edition of the Maqāmah (Beirut: Dār al-‘lāfāq al-jadidah, 1982), the number is also 52. However, the content is partially expurgated by the editor. It is noteworthy that the numbers of the maqāmāt in these versions are close to fifty. What is more, there are at least five Ottoman manuscripts containing exactly fifty maqāmah. Richards has correctly pointed out that “the sum of fifty maqāmas found in the Ottoman MSS. is the result of efforts...to bring Hamadhâni’s oeuvre up to the size of Harrī’s.” See Richards, “Manuscripts,” 94, 98.

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Since these imitations of the ḥākīyah were quite close to theatrical performances, scholars like Shmuël Moreh have regarded the maqāmah as a dramatic performance. For his description of ḥikāyah in the medieval times and its relationship with literary genres like maqāmah and risālah, see Moreh, Live Theatre, 87-122.

For a summary of the maqāmah’s connection with Greek mimes, see Bosworth, Underworld, 1: 96-8.

Al-Azdī, Aбуškāsīm (The Shining Stars concerning the Excellences of Badr al-Dīn). The translation is mine.


As the Platonic Symposium, al-Azdī’s Ḥikāyah takes place in an evening banquet.

In 1960s, the sāmir was identified by Yusuf Idrīs as an indigenous theatrical medium. See Allen, Heritage, 317.

Both ḥikāyah and riwāyah mean “story, narrative” in Modern Standard Arabic.

This point is to be discussed in detail in Chapter IV.

See the section “The outer form” of this chapter.

Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres,” 249.

Ibid., 250-51. While the application of riwāyah spreaded from poetry to prose, ḏiwal, formerly the sole province of Iranian prose-works, came to denote collections of poetry or traditions in Arabic. See G. H. A. Juynboll, “Tadwīr” in E.F.

A. A. Duri, “Ḍiwal,” in E.F.

-abd al-Hamīd ibn Yahyā al-Kātib was the secretary of the Umayyad caliphs. Ibn al-ʿĀmmūd, the Būyid vizier and former mentor of al-Šāhīb ibn al-ʿAbbād, had long been regarded as the pioneer in directing the prose style “towards a greater emphasis on embellishment and elaboration, availing itself of the artifices of saj’, the tropes of bādī’, and citations of poetry and proverbs.” See Allen, Heritage, 241.

Al-Shaʿkh, Bādīʿ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, 74.

Ibid., 78.

Al-Maqdisī, Tāṭawwur, 6 (my translation).

Adīb is the one who is well-versed in the study of adab, which is rendered as “humanism” by Makdisī. Adīb is used today to designate literature proper, thus we encountered the feminine ajective adābiyāh (literary) in Anīs al-Maqdisī’s division of the styles of composition.

Al-Qalqashandī has a list of the requisite knowledge of the scribes in his maqāmah entitled al-Kawākib al-durrīyah fī al-manāqib al-Badrīyah (The Shining Stars concerning the Excellences of Badr al-Dīn). It is also to be noted that the fictional narrator of this maqāmah is called al-Nāṭhir b. Naẓẓām (‘Prose-writer son of Poet’), implying that a scribe should be qualified in both prose and poetry. See C.E. Bosworth, “A Maqāma on Secretariaty: al-Qalqashandi’s al-Kawākib al-Durrīya fī ’l-Manāqib al-Badrīya,” in Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 27 (1964): 291-98 (quotation from pp. 295-97).


Al-Thaʾlībī, Yātimat al-dahr, 4:240 (my translation). In spite of a degree of exaggeration in this passage, we nevertheless obtain a picture of al-Hamadhānī’s talents in extemporizing prose and poetry, and his familiarity of prosification (ḥall) and versification (najm).

Prendergast, 72.


The vizier Ibn al-ʿĀmmūd was nicknamed the second al-Jāḥīz “for he used to question everyone whom he examined for state-service regarding his views on Baghdad and Jahiz.” See Mez, The Renaissance of Islam, 239.

Prendergast, 72; ‘Abduh, 75-76.


There were “books of maqāmāt and orations” (kuṭuḥ al-maqāmāt wa l-kuṭuḥ) which “could amplify your diction and lengthen your pen” (mā yattasmi u bihi manṭiquṣa wa yāṭīlū bihi gālamūkā). See al-Maqdisī, Tāṭawwur, 361. There is a project now to translate all the volumes of this work. The first two volumes have been published. See Ahmad ibn Muḥammad Ibn ’Abd Rabbih, The Unique Necklace, translated by Issa J. Boullata, reviewed by Roger M. A. Allen (vol.1) and Terri DeYoung (vol.2), 2 vols (Reading, UK: Garnet, 2006-2009).

Prendergast, 13. Both the diacritical marks and English translation are slightly changed.

In Kitāb al-shīʾr wa l-shuʿārāʾ (Book of Poetry and Poets), Ibn Qutayba lists the maqāmāt, together with the rasāʾil and jawsāḥāt (reply letters), as a kind of prose-speech (al-kalām al-manṭūr). See al-Maqdisī, Tāṭawwur, 361.

Tadmīn could mean quotation, enjambment and implication, see G. J. H. van Gelder, “Tadmīn,” in E.F. In the risālah style, its meaning is mostly “quotation”, i.e., “interweaving famous verses or parts of them within prose”. See Hāmeen-Anttila, Maqama: a History of a Genre, 52.
Hear from me that night-conversation. See al-Azdī, "Kitāb al-Tijān fī malāk Hīmyar (Ṣanʿā': Markaz al-dirāsāt wa'l-ḥabhāth al-yamanīya, 1979 (?)), 325.

Heinrichs, "Prosimetrical Genres," 257.

In the beginning of the Hikāyah, there is a quotation of Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's verse yā sayyidi wa hadithī kulluhu samaran / ḵaṣagh li-tasma 'a minn ḏālika l-samarū (O my master, all of my talk is night-conversation. Be free of work so as to hear from me that night-conversation). See al-Āzdī, Abūl-Kāsim, 3.


Wellek and Warren, Theory of Literature, 221.

Ibid., 223.

See the section “Forms and functions” in the Introduction.

As we mentioned before, al-Hamadhānī's personal experiences might have been reflected in both his Rasā'il and the Maqāmāt. However, it is dangerous for a literary historian to make an inverse hypothesis, i.e., to regard the Maqāmāt as the record of al-Hamadhānī's life.

Inna ḵādiḥī hikāyah 'an rajul ḥahdādī kantu u 'āshīruhu burhātan min al-dahr. See Al-Āzdī, Abūl-Kāsim, 1. It is interesting that Muhammad al-Muwayliḥī's (1588-1930) Ḥadīth Ḥisā ibn Ḥisām is also dubbed “Fatrah min al-zaman” (A Period of Time).


Technically, ʿIbīs (and al-Shayṭān) can mean a fallen angel or a jinn (genie) in Islamic tradition.

Ḥāmeen-Anttila, Maqama: a History of a Genre, 90.

Ibid., 45-46. Not all of the maqāmāt have a complete set of these parts. Also see Kīlītu, “Le genre ‘Séance,’” 48.

In the Maqāmāt of Bālkh, Ḥīsā tells us that “Trade in cotton stuffs took me to Balkh.” See Prendergast, 32.


We read in Hikāyat Abī al-Qāsim that Abī al-Qāsim “acquired the manners of actors and monkey-trainers and used to learn the arts of the astrologers and jugglers.” See Al-Āzdī, Abūl-Kāsim, 4; Moreh, Live Theatre, 97 (translation adapted).

Prendergast, 54.

Angel González Palencia, Historia de la literatura arábigo-española (Barcelona: Editorial Labor, 1928), 120.

Jareer Abu-Haidar has pointed out this major point of difference from the picaresque novels, adding that “He seems to move from one city of the Islamic world to another in the interval or intermission, so to speak, between two Maqāmas, and the setting of the Maqāma is unimportant if one does not say altogether trivial.” See Jareer Abu-Haidar, “Maqāmāt Literature and the Picaresque Novel,” in Journal of Arabic Literature 5 (1974): 1-10, esp. 3-4.

Prendergast, 78.


Such as the Maqāmāt of Iraq (al-Maqāmāt al-ʿIrāqīyah) and the Maqāmāt of Wine (al-Maqāmāt al-Khamriyyah).

This prosimetric style is not an even one; some maqāmāt use plain prose or are completely devoid of poetry.


See the section “Genre translation” in the Introduction. This point is to be treated in more detail in the section “The Lion” of Chapter III.


Although James Monroe labels the poetry of al-Ikṣandārī as “mediocre,” he also regards al-Hamadhānī “an inordinately skillful portrayer of character, for his true purpose was to create for his readers the amusing figure of a pretentious poetaster rather than that of a gifted poet.” See James Monroe, The Art of Badīʿ az-Zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative (Beirut: American University of Beirut, 1983), 29.

It appears in the Maqāmāt of Ghaylan (al-Maqāmāt al-Ghaylānīyah) and is believed to be forged by al-Hamadhānī. See Prendergast, 48, n. 4.

It appears in the Maqāmāt of ʿIbīs. For a discussion of the misattribution of this poem, see Hāmeen-Anttila,
Maqama: a History of a Genre, 53.


149 Ibid., 53.


151 Mair, Tun-Huang Popular Narratives, 1. According to a narrow definition provided by him, Victor Mair lists seven transformation texts which are preserved in twenty manuscripts in Dunhuang. T’ang Transformation Texts, 14-27.

152 Although iuan is usually interpreted as “disorder,” it also means the coda of movement in ancient Chinese music.

153 See the section “Genre translation” in the Introduction.
II Rhymed Prose

Overview

Chapter II explores in a comparative context the phenomenon of *sajʿ* in the *Maqāmāt*. Firstly, we provide a short survey of the forms and theories of end-rhymes in literary traditions such as those of Arabic, Chinese, and English. Secondly, we focus primarily on the traces of *kāhins* (pre-Islamic soothsayers) that are scattered in the *Maqāmāt* in order to show why al-Hamadhānī employed *sajʿ* to narrate stories about a beggar. We suggest that it is precisely because al-Iskandarī inherits the divinatory functions of the *kāhins* (compared with examples drawn from the Hebrew Bible, Greek drama and philosophy) that he is able to adopt their rhyming style. An exploration of the link between the *kāhins* and the protagonist emphasizes the role that divination played in the forming of rhymed speech. Therefore the third part of this chapter traces the beginnings of the Chinese *fu* and talks about its connection with wizardry and rituals. The third part also discusses ancient Chinese annalists and court jesters and explores the role that admonishment and admonishers played in genres of rhymed speech. In the first chapter we digressed in order to talk about the *ḥikāyah* and *Ayyām al-ʿArab*, and, in the same vein, we make use of the Chinese counterparts of “epic” (*annalist=ayyām* teller) and “drama” (*jester=ḥākī*) in order to reveal the *maqāmah* genre’s intrinsic associations with
two genres that Arabic literature has been constantly accused of lacking.

Rhyme

Sonic repetition

At the end of Chapter I, we stated our intention to compare the Arabic phenomenon of sajʿ with the Chinese fu, two famous examples of rhymed prose. This chapter will focus on the formal comparability of Arabic sajʿ and Chinese fu, as well as their similar origins, practitioners, and fields of application. The introduction of fu to our study will emphasize the universal relationship between eloquence and admonishers. Therefore we understand that al-Hamadhānī did not randomly employ sajʿ to narrate stories about al-Iskandarī whose divinatory functions can be detected from the text of the Maqāmāt.

In this section (titled “Rhyme”) we provide a short survey of the forms and theories of rhymes in these literary traditions. Once we finish the preparatory work that highlights the comparability between Arabic and Chinese poetry and rhymed prose, it will be easy for our readers to appreciate the poetic examples culled from these traditions.

Many of our readers might be skeptical about the comparability of syllabic Arabic with dominantly morphosyllabic Chinese, or between the synthetic former and the analytic latter. However “it is a simple linguistic fact that the number of sounds available
in any language is limited, and its many words must therefore be combinations of only a few sounds.”¹¹ The search for sonic repetition, as well as rhythmic (or tonal) fluctuation, seems to constitute an important branch of linguistic virtuosity.

Rhyme is etymologically associated with Medieval Latin *rhythmus.*² Similar to rhythm, rhyme is a kind of sound harmony and is ultimately related to the temporal nature of a composition. To quote J. M. Lotman, rhyme is created at the intersection of positional (rhythmic) and euphonic (sonic) equivalences in the poetic line.³ Although rhyme is “the most mysterious of all iterative sound-patterns” and “not indigenous” to any known “Indo-European or Indo-Hittite language,”⁴ it has been developed widely in world languages, especially in Chinese, Arabic, French, Irish, Occitan and English.⁵

In a syllabic language like English where the structure of a syllable may be schematized as CVC (initial consonant or consonant cluster + medial vowel or diphthong + final consonant or cluster), rhyme can take shapes such as alliteration (C V C),⁶ assonance (C V C), consonance (C V C), reverse rhyme (C V C), frame rhyme (C V C), rich rhyme (C V C) and end-rhyme (C V C).⁷ End-rhyme is “agreement in the terminal sounds of two or more words or metrical lines.”⁸ Since end-rhyme is almost exclusively used in both the Arabic and Chinese traditions, we shall mainly look into rhymes in this last sense. At the same time, we do not wish to imply that end-rhyme is the best or most difficult⁹ sonic effect to achieve among all types of rhyming. The alliteration¹⁰ displayed throughout *Piers Plowman* indicates the diversity of rhyming in Middle English, even
though we are more familiar with the heroic couplet\(^1\) which William Langland’s (c. 1330-c. 1400) contemporary Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1342/43-1400) developed in the *Canterbury Tales*. When a language still produces distinctive case endings or conjugational suffixes, alliteration (not end-rhyme) may serve as an ideal candidate for accomplishing sonic repetition.

**Three examples**

Previously we noted that classical Arabic verse is quantitative,\(^2\) i.e., “based on the distinction between short syllables (consonant + short vowel) and long syllables (consonant + long vowel, or: consonant + short vowel + consonant).”\(^3\) A poetic line (sg. *bayt*, pl. *abyāt*) in the classical *qaṣīdah* form consists of two hemistiches (*miṣrā*, “one leaf of a door”) that are separated by a caesura. The number of syllables in each line can, depending on the meter, range from sixteen (*hazaj*) to thirty (*kāmil*).\(^4\) At first sight, an Arabic *bayt* is very similar to a couplet (*lian* \(\text{聯}\))\(^5\) in the Chinese *jintishi* \(\text{近體詩}\) (lit. “modern-style poetry”),\(^6\) or a Sanskrit line as seen in Daṇḍin’s definition of the *campū* genre.\(^7\)

As “companion of the meter” (*sharīkat al-wazn*),\(^8\) rhyme was regarded by Arabs as the most essential part of a line. The Arabic word for rhyme, *qāfiyah*, shares the verbal root \(q-f-w\) with *qafā* which means “back of the neck.”\(^9\) According to al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad, rhyme denotes that which is between the last letter of the line and the first

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This seemingly complicated definition can be illustrated with the following example. At the end of the *Magāmah of Sāsān (al-Magāmah al-Sāsānīyah)*, the trickster al-Iskandarī is recognized by ʿĪsā ibn Hishām. He then improvises an apologia envoi:

_Hādhā ʿl-zamānu mashūmā_  
_kamā tarāhu ghashūmū_  
al-ḥamqu fīhi malīḥun  
wāʿl-ʿaqluʿaybun wa lūmū  
wāʿl-māluṭayfūn wa lākin  
wāʿl-ʿamīmī yahūmū_22

This age is ill-starred,  
and, as thou seest, oppressive;  
In it stupidity is estimable  
and intelligence a defect and a reproach,  
And wealth is a nocturnal visitant but  
it hovers only over the ignoble._23

We can detect the repetition of the rhyme “-ūmū” in all of the even-numbered hemistiches, as well as in the first hemistich of the first line. Al-Hamadhānī thus follows the traditional monorhymed *shiʿr* which has a rhyming pattern of *aa ba ca* etc. Because the last syllable of a line is always analyzed as being long, a rhyme must end with a long syllable.

An Arabic rhyme can be the combination of six letters and five vowels. In the above example -ūmū, the rhyming consonant (rawī) is mīm; the letter following the rawī (waṣl or šilah) is wāw; the letter preceding the rawī (ridf) is also wāw; the vowel of the rawī (majrā) is dāmmah; the vowel of the letter preceding the ridf (ḥadhw) is also
Obviously the most important component of a rhyme is $rawî$ which is generally the final radical of the final word in a poetic line. $Rawî$ is both necessary and sufficient for the existence of the rhyme. A minimal rhyme would consist of $rawî$ alone. It is also self-evident that a rhyme normally will not exceed the length of the last word in a line. Otherwise, it would be rich rhyme, not end-rhyme.

Like its cognate $riwāyah$, $rawî$ is related to the transmission of poetry. Especially in an oral poetic tradition, $rawî$ was applied to represent the title of the whole poem. For instance, al-Shanfarā is most famed for his $Lāmiyat al-ʿArab$, i.e., the Arabian $Ode in “L.”$ In fact, anthologies of classical Arab poets were often organized according to rhyme-letters. What is more, a large percentage of medieval Arabic dictionaries are actually rhyme-dictionaries, “arranging roots primarily under the final radical, then the first and any intermediate radicals.”

Rhyme books 韻書 were also popular in China since ancient times. The first extant one is called $Qieyun$ 切韻, composed by Lu Fayan 陸法言 in the year 601 C.E. All the rhyme books in the $Qieyun$ tradition were first divided into tone groups. Then each tone group “is subdivided into rhymes which are conventionally identified by their first entry.” For example, the word 東 $(dong < tuwng)$ leads the first rhyme group of the even-tone $(pingsheng$ 平聲) section which contains words with the two Middle Chinese finals -$tuwng$ and -$juwng$.

A final $(yunmu$ 韻母) can comprise three parts: the medial $(jieyn$ 介音), the
main vowel (yunfu 韻腹) and the coda (yunwei 韻尾). The main vowel and the coda (not always available) are sometimes grouped together as the rhyme.\textsuperscript{38} In the above example -juwng, -j- is the medial,\textsuperscript{39} -uw- the main vowel and -ng the coda. A Chinese rhyme is different from an Arabic qāfiyah. The latter should at least contain the rhyming consonant (rawī), while the minimal form of the former would consist of the main vowel which can be as short as the sound $æ$.\textsuperscript{40}

There are two elements that make rhyme books important. Firstly, Chinese is a dominantly morphosyllabic language, so that it is not always possible to identify the rhyme from the script. Secondly, people composed the so-called modern-style poetry from the Tang era onwards. The modern-style poetry has a stricter requirement of tonal pattern (pingze\textsuperscript{41} “even and deflected tones”), rhyme scheme (xieyun 叶韻), and parallelism (duizhang 对仗) as compared with gutishi 古體詩 (ancient-style poetry). As a probable equivalent to the short/long alternation\textsuperscript{42} in a quantitative verse, the even/deflected tonal pattern was introduced into Chinese prosody before the Sui dynasty (581-618 C.E.). The even tones are regarded as being light and long, and the deflected ones as heavy and short. Normally the rhyme in the modern-style poetry should be taken from the even-tone section, just as in the Arabic system a rhyme often ends with a long syllable.\textsuperscript{43}

The Chinese example we provide here is selected from the anthology of the Zen-monk and poet Hanshan 寒山 (lit. “Cold Mountain”), who was thought to have
lived in the 8th to 9th centuries. It is interesting to note that the poem contains a theme very similar to that of al-Hamadhānī:

極目兮長望 (wang < mjang), 白雲四茫茫 (mang < mang)!
鵖鴉飽腮齣, 鳳凰飢徬徨 (huang < hwang);
駿馬放石磧, 蹇驢能至堂 (tang < dang);
天高不可問, 鶥鷯在滄浪 (lang < lang)!

Straining its eyes it scans the horizon
clouds obscure the four quarters
Owl and crows are fed and relaxed
the phoenix is hungry and anxious
Fine steeds are grazed on the gobi
lame donkeys allowed at court
Heaven is too high to hear
a tailorbird on the waves

Both Hanshan and al-Hamadhānī question the arbitrariness and fickleness of Fortune, just as Boethius (c. 480-524 C.E.) complains in the Consolation of Philosophy: why do the innocent suffer and the wicked prosper? We can note that both poems utilize the antithetic parallelism (stupidity vs. intelligence; crows vs. phoenix; fine steeds vs. lame donkeys) in accentuating their unpretentious satirical tone. The rhyming pattern in this Chinese example is also aa ba ca etc.

Our third example is taken from the Canterbury Tales. Although the main body of this work is written in heroic couplets (aa bb cc etc), Chaucer also uses rhyme royal (ababcc) in the Second Nun’s Tale, and tries tail-rhyme in the Tale of Sir Thopas which is followed by the Tale of Melibee in prose. In the Tale of Sir Thopas, Chaucer
IMITATES AND PARODIES THE “NARRATIVE MOTIFS, METRE, RHYME AND CHARACTERISTIC VOCABULARY” OF MEDIEVAL POPULAR ROMANCES. HE “ALLOWS HIMSELF LICENCES WITH RHYME WHICH DEPART FROM HIS NORMAL PRACTICE,” SUCH AS THE SUPPRESSION OF FINAL -E ON WORDS WHICH NORMALLY CARRY IT AND THE EMPLOYMENT OF LINE-FILLERS. HERE IS THE BEGINNING STANZA OF THE STORY:

LISTETH, LORDES, IN GOOD ENTENT,
AND I WOL TELLE VERRAMENT
OF MYRTHE AND OF SOLAS,
AI OF A KNYGHT WAS FAIR AND GENT
IN BATAILLE AND IN TOURNEMENT,
HIS NAME WAS SIRE THOPAS.

THE RHYME SCHEME IN THIS STANZA IS AABAAB. IT IS NOTICEABLE THAT ENTENT (WITHOUT FINAL -E) IN THE FIRST LINE RHYMES WITH THE LINE-FILLER VERRAMENT (CF. FR. VRAIMENT) OF THE SECOND LINE. THE TAIL-RHYME STANZA IS NO DOUBT MORE COMPLICATED THAN THE HEROIC COUPLET.

EASIER RHYME?

HAROLD WHITEHALL DISTINGUISHES SEVERAL PERIODS OF RHYME IN ENGLISH POETRY. AS COMPARED WITH “FORE-STRESSED OLD ENGLISH,” IN WHICH “RHYME WAS RELATIVELY DIFFICULT AND OCCURS ONLY SPARSELY,” MIDDLE ENGLISH GAVE RISE TO AN EASIER AND MORE FLEXIBLE RHYME. YET EVEN A MASTER LIKE CHAUCER, AS WE HAVE SEEN IN THE PREVIOUS EXAMPLE, HAS TO USE TAGS SUCH AS “VERRAMENT” AND “I GESSE” IN HIS MORE COMPLICATED STANZAS. AFTER THE GREAT VOWEL SHIFT CONSIDERABLY MULTIPLIED RHYMING POSSIBILITIES IN EARLY MODERN ENGLISH (C. 1500-1750), THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY WITNESSED THE VICTORY OF THE PRONUNCIATION OF THE
middle class and rhyme again became difficult. Whitehall’s statement naturally leads us to ask: If rhyme could rise and fall according to changes in lexicon and pronunciation, was it intrinsically easier to rhyme in some languages than in others?

An early efflorescence of Chinese rhyme is attested in the *Shi jing* (Classic of Songs) which is an anthology dated to the Zhou dynasty (c. 1045-256 B.C.E.). Different from the modern-style poetry, poems in the *Shi jing* are normally quadrisyllabic, strophic, multirhymed and without regular tonal patterns. Most of their rhymes can still be distinguished and appreciated by a modern Chinese speaker. The secret behind this three thousand years of rhyming tradition lies in the fact that Chinese characters are pronounced as monosyllables, which are naturally easy to rhyme. Besides, Chinese is an analytic language, thus lacking case endings or conjugational suffixes. This fact also makes end-rhymes meaningful in Chinese. Like the Arabic *rawī* which is usually the radical of a word, the Chinese end-rhyme is an inseparable part of the character—it is the combination of the main vowel and the coda of that monosyllable. Last but not least, the existence of diglossia in Chinese (just as in Arabic) had limited the changes in the standard speech in which most of the poems were composed.

The extant early examples of Arabic poetry (e.g., the *Mu'allaqāt* and the verses in the *Mufaddaliyāt*) display a fairly mature and regulated form of versification. The end-rhymes were there and are still manifest to this day. Since *rawī* is usually a consonant whose pronunciation is relatively stable, rhyming in Arabic is not easily affected by
accidents like a “vowel shift.” What is more, the majrā-vowel of the rawī would normally be elongated by the wasl-letter. It is because of poetic license (li-ḍarūrat al-shiʿr) that the last word of a line does not strictly follow the rules of conjugation or declension as it would in a non-poetic composition.

There are other factors that could have widened the path for end-rhymes in Arabic. Generally speaking, every Arabic word can be schematized into a root which comprises at least three radicals. For example, the often quoted root k-t-b can yield quite a few combinations: kataba (he wrote), kutiba (it was written), kitāb (book), kātib (scribe; writer), maktab (desk; office), maktab (written). This phenomenon is called ishtiqāq, i.e., “derivation” or literally “adoptive brotherhood.” It is to be noted that the last radical of the root, after various morphological changes, is still the ending consonant in those ishtiqāq words. Thus it is relatively easy to search for words with the same rawī.

Under some circumstances, the vowels (alif, wāw, yāʾ) and morphological consonants (tāʾ, kāf, nūn, mīm, hāʾ) can also function as rawī. For instance, yāʾ al-nisbah can be counted as rawī if not accented. With the knowledge that the nisbah (nominum relativum) formation of abstract nouns fosters a huge register of Arabic words with the same -īyah ending, we would not be surprised to see more possibilities of rhyming by employing the above principle.

The preceding three sections explored the basic forms and theories of end-rhymes in the Arabic, Chinese, and English traditions. End-rhymes are more likely to appear
where there is less confinement of conjugation or declension. The poetic examples selected from these traditions just showed the comparability of end-rhymes. Our next step is to discuss the circumstances under which the Arabic and Chinese rhymed prose came into being, as well as their usual practitioners. Such a discussion will shed light upon al-Hamadhānī’s adaptation of saj’ for the Maqāmāt, and his characterization of the eloquent, itinerant, and frustrated hero al-Iskandārī.

Saj’

The kāhin

Anīs al-Maqdisī notes that in the late Jāhilīyah period, the rhymed style (uslūb musajja’) had been quite à la mode among religious circles. Similar to the blurred origins of Arabic end-rhymes, the beginning of saj’ is mostly unknown except its frequent association with the kāhin (pl. kuhān), i.e., the diviner of pagan Arabia.

Medieval Arab philologists traced the word saj’ back to “an imitation of the repeated, jerky and monotonous cooing of a pigeon or dove, or the drawn-out and monotonous moaning of a camel.” As for the etymology of saj’, there exists a Hebrew root sh-g-’ which is probably connected with the Akkadian šegu meaning “to be wild, rage.” In the Hebrew Bible, we come across its cognates like “raging,” “mad,” and “to behave like a madman.” It is also used “contemptuously and mockingly of the
prophets.”72

As for the kāhin, it shares an identical origin with the biblical Hebrew kohen: both denoting guardians of oracles in a sanctuary.73 Later their functions diverged: the kāhin gradually lost his connection with the sanctuary, and sank to the level of a mere diviner; while the kohen acquired fuller sacrifice functions.74 With the advent of Islam, the kāhin’s position deteriorated into “a seer, the organ (mostly) of a jinn, rarely of a god.”75

The implication of the word kāhin seems to be pretty close to that of mantis, the “seer” in Ancient Greece.76 Plato states that no man, when in his wits, attains mantic skills [mantikē] that are inspired [entheos] and true [alēthēs] (Timaeus, 71).77 He goes on to note (Timaeus, 72):

And for this reason it is customary to appoint the lineage of declarers [prophētēs pl.] to be judges [kritēs pl.] over the inspired [entheos pl.] mantic utterances [manteia pl.]. Some persons call them seers [mantis pl.], being blind to the fact that they [=the prophētēs pl.] are only the expositors of riddles [ainigmos pl.] and visions, and are not to be called seers [mantis pl.] at all, but only declarers [prophētēs pl.] of what the seers say [manteuomena].78

It is clear from this statement that the mantis is the intermediary between the source of inspiration and the prophētēs, who put the inspired message (e.g., riddles and visions) into poetic form.79 Surely an Arabic kāhin assumes the functions of both Greek mantis and prophētēs.80 When asked for an oracle, the kāhin would appear to have entered into a trance or seem “demented by some distemper or possession.”81 Then he would not only speak from that altered mental state, but also organize the inspired message into short,
cryptic, rhymed utterance, i.e., sajʿ. People believed that he was inspired by a jinn, since only jinns were able to coin those magical formulae and put them into cabalistic sajʿ form.\textsuperscript{82} In the eyes of beholders, it is hard to tell the difference between “being inspired by a jinn” and “being possessed by a jinn (majnūn),” in which case the kāhin might even look like a mad person making mysterious utterances.

\textit{Un fol}

The kinship of madness and prophetic knowledge is a recurrent theme in literature. In Chapter 37 of the third book of Rabelais’s \textit{Gargantua and Pantagruel}, Pantagruel suggests that his companion Panurge consult a madman (fol), for it is said that a madman can teach a scholar.\textsuperscript{83} In comparison to the “saige mondain,” the true sage who is not only wise but can presage by divine inspiration, “is one who forgets himself, discards his own personality, rids his senses of all earthly affection, purges his spirit of all human care, neglects everything.”\textsuperscript{84} Pantagruel adds that these qualities are commonly attributed to madness (\textit{Ce que vulguairement est imputé à folie}).\textsuperscript{85}

The preceding statement may help explain why in al-Hamadhānī’s \textit{Maqāmah of the Asylum} (al-Maqāmah al-Māristānīyah) ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and Abū Dāʿūd, a 2\textsuperscript{nd}/8\textsuperscript{th} century Muʿtazilī theologian (mutakallim), visited the asylum in Basrah one day. Like Pantagruel, they might initially be seeking knowledge or hoping for some kind of consultation. However what they do not expect is to encounter a madman (majnūn) who
gives a long anti-Muʿtazilī speech in sajʿ. The eloquence and pungency of his speech completely dumbfounded the visitors:

\[
\text{wa taqūlūna khuyyira fa 'khtūra. wa kallā fa inna 'l-mukhtūr(a) lā yah'aju batnah(u) wa lā yafaqū 'aynah(u) wa lā yarmī min hāliqin ibnah(u).}
\]

Ye say man has been given free choice and so he chooses. Never! For the free agent would not rip open his stomach, nor pluck out his eyes, nor hurl his son from a crag.86

This is a blow aimed directly at the Muʿtazilī doctrine of Free Will (ikhtiyār).87 The madman’s sajʿ, though not very complicated, contrasts with the maqāmah’s beginning that is in plain prose.88 The above example also illustrates the primary difference between the rhyming scheme of sajʿ and that of poetry. Whereas classical Arabic poetry is often monorhymed, the qāfiyah of sajʿ “changes after every few (usually two to four) rhyme members.”89

Certainly the madman’s role is clandestinely assumed by al-Hamadhānī’s habitual rogue, Abū al-Fath al-Iskandarī. On another occasion,90 he dresses up like a mad barber (ḥajjām, lit. “cupper”) and tests Ṣāḥib ibn Hishām’s patience by giving a bizarre and almost meaningless sajʿ speech mixed with plain prose. Thus al-Hamadhānī deliberately groups semantically irrelevant rhyme members in his speech, and creates a humorous effect:

\[
\text{wa laqad hadartu fī shahri ramaḍāna jāmiʿahā wa qad ush'ilat fihi 'l-maṣābih(u) wa uqīmati 'l-tarāwīḥ(u) fa mā sha'arnā illā bi maddi 'l-nīl(i) wa qad atā 'alā tilka 'l-qanāḏīl(i)}
\]

I was present there (Qum) in its cathedral mosque in the month of Ramadan when the lamps had been lit and the tarāwīḥ prayers92 were inaugurated, but, before we knew it,
the Nile rose and came and extinguished those lights....

ʿĪsā ibn Hishām is “bewildered at his fluency with his malaprop
d loquacity” (fa baqītu mutaḥayyaran min bayānih(i) fī hadhayānih(i)). He is then told that the barber “babbles the whole day, as you observe, but behind him there are many virtues (wa warāʾahu faḍl kathīr).” In the Maqāmah of Poesie (al-Maqāmah al-Qarīḍiyah), ʿĪsā ibn Hishām also calls al-Iskandarī “fāḍil” for the latter boasts an astonishing knowledge of poetry and poets. But here, by “many virtues” (faḍl kathīr), al-Hamadhānī must have been referring to the barber’s confirmation of the notion that “ability precedes action” (al-istiṭāʿah qabla al-fiʿl), which is the Ashʿarite opinion against the doctrine of Free Will. The anti-Muʿtazilī tone that is so evident in the Maqāmah of the Asylum is also sensed here.

The setting inside the asylum and the madness (junūnuhu) of the anti-Muʿtazilī speakers were very likely invoked by al-Hamadhānī as modes of camouflage against possible accusations from the partisans of the Muʿtazilah. At the same time, al-Iskandari’s “madness” and eloquence suggest a resemblance to the functions of the kāhin. What is more, he seems to be familiar with augury, a trait that is characteristic of those pre-Islamic soothsayers.

Divinatory functions

In the following subsections, we continue to argue that al-Iskandari bear traces of
pre-Islamic soothsayers. The various names of soothsayers provide a picture of their
divinatory functions. These names also lead us to explore the text of the Maqāmāt:
al-Iskandarī has served as augur, sung satire against his opponent, delivered long prayers,
produced and solved riddles, and acted as medicine man. Indeed the beggar hero can be
regarded as their heir. Therefore it was not at random that al-Hamadhānī employed saj’,
one of their trademark styles, to narrate stories about a beggar.

Toufic Fahd has confirmed “the oracular, mantic and augural role of the kāhin” by
listing the various names that designated the exercise of his divinatory functions.101
There are names like ‘arrāf (diviner), ‘ā’if (augur),102 zājir (augur),103 qā’if
(physiognomist),104 nāshid (the singer of poetry) and “several other secondary
designations for particular occasions, such as ḥakam (arbitrator on the occasion of a
munāfara105), khaṭīb (spokesman and messenger), shā’ir (incantator and inciter to battle),
tabīb (medicine man), khabīr (valuer).”106

In the aforementioned Maqāmah of the Asylum, the “madman” al-Iskandarī greets
the visitors with a very professional formula: “If the augury bird is right, ye are strangers”
(in taṣduq al-ṭayr fa antum ghurabā’).107 In the following speech, he describes the
Muʿtazīls as “Magians of this community” (majūs hādhihi al-ummah)108 and uses the
verb taṭayyara (to augur) twice to describe their refusals of the Qurʾān and the “torture of
the tomb” (ʿadhāb al-qabr) respectively.109 Thus we read:
yā a’dā’ā ‘l-kitābī wa ‘l-hadīthī bīmā taḥayyarūn(a)? a bi ‘l-lāhi wa āyāthī wa rasūlihi tastahzi’ūn(a)?

Ye enemies of the Book and the Tradition! By what do ye perform augury? Do ye mock Allāh and his signs and his Apostle?¹¹⁰

In the Maqāmah of Balkh (al-Maqqāmah al-Balkhiyāh), al-Iskandarī’s familiarity with augury makes a good impression upon ‘Īsā ibn Hishām. When he learns that the cotton merchant ‘Īsā intends to go on a journey, he immediately chants a line as follows:

ṣabāḥu ‘l-lāhi lā ṣubhu ‘nṭlāqī
wa ṭayru ‘l-waṣlī lā ṭayru ‘l-fūraqī¹¹¹

May it be a morn divine and not a morn of departure,
the bird auguring union, and not separation.¹¹²

This line sounds like a magic spell for safe travel.¹¹³ Al-Iskandarī’s verse must sound favorable to ‘Īsā ibn Hishām who ends up giving the beggar a dinar for his eloquence and the good fortune that he foretells.¹¹⁴

Traces of the kāhin are scattered in other maqāmāt as well. Al-Iskandarī is seen lingering at the devil’s valley in the Maqāmah of Iblīs.¹¹⁵ He is described as wearing the turban (‘amāmah) of the devil, a reference through which al-Hamadhānī hints at the beggar’s connection with the supernatural beings which are possible sources of his insight and eloquence. These references demonstrate that the functions of pre-Islamic kāhins have contributed to the character of al-Iskandarī (and even that of ‘Īsā ibn Hishām¹¹⁶). These functions may well have prompted the employment of saj⁴ and poetry
in the *Maqāmāt*. The pair of divinatory function and prosimetric form would serve as evidence for our suggestion of a “transfer of form/function” to be found in the Introduction.

The other names of the *kāhin* are also useful for our discussion of the prosimetric style. For instance, *khaṭīb* recalls *maqām* (“pious homily”) and the similarity of *maqāmah* and *kuṭbah*. As for the term *nāshid*, its root *n-sh-d* initially means “to seek after a stray beast” or “to give information of something lost.” In the *Maqāmah of Iblīs*, the devil does show ʿĪsā ibn Hishām the way to his camels. Another name of the *kāhin*, the *shāʿir*, is known to be related to lampoons (hijāʾ) chanted at battlefield. The metaphor that links lampoon poetry to the quiver of arrows is attested in ʿĪsā ibn Hishām’s self boasting in the *Maqāmah of Iraq* (al-*Maqāmah al-ʿIraqīyah*):

\[
\text{wa taṣaffaḥtu dawāwīna ʿl-shuʿarāʾi ḥattā ṣanāntunī lam ubqī fi ʿl-qawṣi minzaʾa zafarīn.}
\]

I had turned over the pages of the *dīwāns* of the poets until I thought to myself I had not left in my quiver a victorious shaft.

What ʿĪsā ibn Hishām implies here is possibly an imagined munāzarah (literary debate) between himself and poets, other than a combat of real arrows and swords. However the magic of words can dispel the army, as we read in the Chinese story entitled the *Memoir of the Capture of Ji Bu* (捉季布傳文), and can cause great harm to the opponent without shedding blood. Al-Hamadhānī uses a formula twice to depict the loser in
such a combat of speech:

\[\text{wa inni la ar a fihī inkisāran ḥattā iftaraqnā.}\]

…and verily I perceived in him [Dhū al-Rummah] humiliation until we parted.\textsuperscript{122}

\[\text{wa innī la a'rifu fi Abī Dā'ūda inkisāran ḥattā aradnā 'l-iftirāqa.}\]

…and verily I was conscious of humiliation in Abū Dāʾūd until we desired to separate.\textsuperscript{123}

The first example is found in the \textit{Maqāmah of Ghaylan}, when al-Farazdaq (d. 110/728 or 112/730)\textsuperscript{124} finds no need to respond to Dhū al-Rummah’s lampoon. The second example appears in the \textit{Maqāmah of the Asylum} after al-Iskandarī pugnaciously calls his visitors “the dross of the corrupt (khabath al-khabīth).”\textsuperscript{125} Therefore, it would appear that poetry and \textit{saj} are equally effective in besting the opponent. At a later point,\textsuperscript{126} we will discuss in detail the importance of the debate theme to the \textit{maqāmah} genre.

Although the next chapter will focus on poetry, it seems necessary to say a few words about the Arabic \textit{rajaz} meter here. Scholars have suggested a similar origin for both \textit{saj} and \textit{rajaz}.\textsuperscript{127} Fahd, who is fond of using roots to trace the origins of ancient cults, calls our attention to the root \textit{r-j-z} (and its double \textit{r-j-s}) that had designated both the divine rage and trance of the \textit{kāhin}.\textsuperscript{128} Since \textit{saj} and \textit{rajaz} were customary styles of expression used by the \textit{kāhin}, it does not surprise us that \textit{rajaz} appears side by side with \textit{saj} fourteen times in the whole Hamadhānian \textit{Maqāmāt}.

The \textit{Encyclopedia of Islam} lists the uses of \textit{saj} in “astrometeorological sayings”
and “descriptions of clouds and rain” as “outside kahāna before Islam.”

We would like to propose that the prediction of rain or climate change could be connected with sacrifice and divination, which are important not only for a sedentary culture but also for migratory Bedouins. The great Abbasid poet al-Mutanabbi (303-354/915-965), “he who pretends to be a prophet,” was reported to have been able to control the rain while living with the Bedouins in his youth. In the second episode of the *Maqāmah of Moṣul* (al-*Maqāmah al-Mawṣilīyah*), al-Iskandarī alleges that he can divert the flood from a village by means of a prayer, on the condition that the villagers sacrifice a yellow heifer (*baqarah ṣafrāʾ*) in the water and marry him to a young virgin (*jāriyah ḍhrāʾ*).

What is more, it is probably not a mere coincidence that Ibn Durayd’s *Kitāb waṣf al-maṭar waʾl-saḥāb* (Book of the Description of Rain and Cloud), which displays an ample use of *saj*, includes quite a few sections that resemble the *maqāmāt*.

**The staff**

The quotation from *Timaeus* 72 in our section “The kāhin” suggests that poetry (or rhymed prose) is related to prophecy and inspiration. We need to add that *aoidos* (“singer”), the term by which Hesiod (fl. c. 700 B.C.) presents himself, “had remained in the sacral realm of prophecy” after *poiētēs* entered the secular realm of poetry. Aoidoi like Hesiod and Homer (fl. 9th or 8th century B.C.E.) had always invoked the divine inspiration of the Muses before singing. Such opening formulae are not exclusive to the
Greek aoidoi. Benediction to Śiva, the Naṭarāja (King of Dance/Drama), is attested in the beginning of the Sanskrit drama Śakuntalā. Daṇḍin’s Kāvyādarśa begins with the Maṃgala-śloka (benediction-verse) devoted to the Goddess Sarasvatī. Likewise in many of the maqāmāt, our rogue al-Iskandarī opens his saj′-speech by praying to Allāh:

fa rafā‘a ʿaqīratahu wa qāla: al-lahumma yā mubdiʿa ʿl-ashyāʾi wa muḥīyāʿ ʿl-īzāmi wa mubīdahā wa khāliqa ʿl-miṣbāḥi wa mūdīrah(u) wa fāliqa ʿl-īshāḥi wa munīrah(u) ....

He raised his voice and said: ‘O God who createth things and causeth them to return again, the quickener of bones and the destroyer of them, the Creator of the sun and who causeth it to revolve; the Maker of the dawn to appear and its Illuminator….138

In the beginning of the Theogony, Hesiod confirms that the Muses breathed a god-inspired voice into his mouth (l. 33). They also gave him a staff (skēptron) “as a symbol of his sacral authority to proclaim the absolute truth.” Rhapsody, which usually denotes a part of an epic poem, is thought to be derived from rhapstein (to stitch) plus oide (song). Some musicologists have preferred to trace rhapsody to the Greek rhapdos (rod, staff), for “the rhapsodists were wandering reciters who carried a long staff.”

There is a Greek proverb that says “[e]ven beggar (πτόχος) with beggar vies; singer competes with singer” (Works and Days, l. 26). The juxtaposition of beggar and singer provides a linkage to the fact that our rogue al-Iskandarī appears in three maqāmāt as a beggar holding a staff. A staff may serve as Hesiod’s symbol of divine inspiration;
it is also used as a percussion instrument in the Maqāmah of the Blind (al-Maqāmah al-Makfūfiyah), where ʿĪsā ibn Hishām describes to us such a blind beggar:

wa sharraḥtu ʿl-tarfā min hu ilā ḥuzuqqatin kaʿl-qurān bāʾ mā makfūf(īn) fī shamlati ṣūf(īn) yādūru ʿaʾl-kludhrūf(ī) mutabarnisan bī aṭwāla min hu muʾamidan ʿalāʾ ṣāwṣān fīhā jalaʾjīlī yaḵẖītū ʿl-qurān bī ṣāwṣān ḍīna in ghanījī(īn) bi laḥnin hażījī(īn) wa ṣawṣīn šajjī(īn) min ẓadrīn ḥarījī(īn).146

I passed my eye over him and I found him to be a person short and portly like a beetle, blind, and wrapped up in a woolen blanket, whirling round like a top, wearing a burnous too long for him, and supporting himself with a staff to which were attached a number of tiny bells. With this he was beating the ground with a rhythmical sound, while with plaintive air and pathetic voice proceeding from a straightened breast.… 147

What ʿĪsā ibn Hishām describes here is clearly a whole set of pre-chanting or pre-singing performance situations. The beggar taps the ground in order to attract and gather people around him. He may also use the same process to ponder over the topic and improvise the verses that would sound most favorable to his audience.148

As illustrated by the transliteration, al-Hamadhānī uses two sets of rhymes in picturing the beggar’s appearance and performance respectively. To contrast with the first set, which is marked by the rhyme -ūf(īn) and a pattern made with nearly all long syllables, in the second set al-Hamadhānī adopts the rhyme -ij(īn) and repeats the rhythm (X -- -- U -->) in almost every colon.149 Although the frequency of short syllables mimics the beggar’s shortness of breath, the humorous touch of the first rhyming set warns us not to take his sadness too seriously. The poems he sings after the prologue are in the rajaz meter, thus echoing the rhythm of the second rhyming set—it being the only meter
that permits three consecutive short syllables.\textsuperscript{151}

The veil and the ochre

If madness represents the state of receiving divine inspiration, then blindness, at least seen in the legend of Teiresias, could also be a trait endowed by god.\textsuperscript{152} Since the beginning of human history blindness was closely associated with domains such as poetry, prophecy, divination, storytelling, singing, etc. Jorge Luis Borges reassures us that “being blind has its advantages.”\textsuperscript{153} Homer, Rūdakī (d. 329/940-1), Abū al-ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī, al-Aʿmā al-Tuṭīlī (d. 525/1130-1),\textsuperscript{154} Sūrdās (d. 1563), the blind presenters of fu\textsuperscript{155} in pre-Qin times, and the blind singers of taozhen 道真 since the Song era, would be merely a few in a long list of blind artists. Even our protagonist al-Iskandarī also pretends to be blind in the above cited maqāmah.\textsuperscript{156}

One of the epithets of the kāhin is Dhū al-khimār, namely the possessor of the veiling. It is said that they had a custom of covering themselves at the time of their visions.\textsuperscript{157} The Clouds records an interesting parody on the initiation (ll. 237-62) when Socrates matriculates Strepsiades into his school. Socrates first dredges the old man with some powder.\textsuperscript{158} He then prays to the Clouds while Strepsiades veils himself for the fear that it will shortly rain.\textsuperscript{159} In the end, both of them have the vision of the goddesses and Strepsiades requests them to turn him into “the best of Greeks in speaking by a hundred stadia.”\textsuperscript{160} Obviously the procedure of veiling, although being distorted in Aristophanes’s
parody, is a necessary step before one should have visions.

As a matter of fact, al-Hamadhānī mentions in the *Maqāmah of the Date (al-Maqāmah al-Azādhīyah)* a beggar “who had modestly covered his face with a veil.”¹⁶¹ In the *Maqāmah of Sāsān*, there is a more detailed description:

\[
\text{fa bayna anā yawman } \text{`alā `bābi dārī idh ṭala `a `alayya min banī sāsāna katībatun qad laffū ru`ūsahum wa ṭalaw bi `l-maghrati labūsahum wa ta`abbaṭa kullu wāḥidin minhum ḥajarān yaduqqu bihi ṣadrahu.}
\]

Now one day when I was at the door of my house there suddenly appeared before me a troop of the sons of Sāsān. They had muffled up their faces, and besmeared their clothes with red ochre while each of them had tucked under his armpit a stone with which he beats his breast.¹⁶²

In both *maqāmāt*, Īsā ibn Hishām finds out the identity of al-Iskandarī when he lowers (*amāṭa*) the veil. Veiling, as well as smearing the body (face, hands, forearms, clothes)¹⁶³ with red ochre, must have been a usual practice among the Banū Sāsān, the notorious denizens of the medieval underworld. Bosworth explains that their use of ochre was to “give an appearance of madness,” and they beat themselves with stone in order to “convey an impression of self-mortification.”¹⁶⁴

**Visions and dreams**

Our previous discussion does not establish a solid linkage between al-Iskandarī’s veiling and vision. Nevertheless, we find him declaring in the *Maqāmah of Isfahan (al-Maqāmah al-Isfahānīyah)* that he had a vision of the Prophet Muḥammad in a dream.
Macrobius, the commentator on Cicero’s *Dream of Scipio*, tells us that dreams can be divided into five types. Among them there are three that might “communicate some significant truth or foretell future events: the *somnium* (an enigmatic dream needing interpretation), the *visio* (a prophetic vision), and the *oraculum* (in which an authoritative figure appeared to give advice).”

As both a *mantis* and a *prophētēs*, al-Iskandarī surely receives and describes visions. He vividly portrays his pleasant and fantastic dream as follows:

> raʾaytuḥu ʿallāʾ l-lāḥu ʿalayhi wa sallama fī ʿl-manāmī(ī) ka ʿl-shamsī tahta ʿl-ghamāmī(ī)
> wa ʿl-badrī layla ʿl-tamāmī(ī), yasīrū wa ʿl-nujūmu tatba ʿuh(ū) wa yasḥabū ʿl-dhayla
> wa ʿl-malāʾ ikatu tarjāʾuḥ(ū).

I saw the Prophet in a dream!—May God send His blessings upon him—like the sun beneath the clouds, and the moon at the full. He was walking, the stars following him; he was trailing his skirts and the angels held them up.

Al-Iskandarī constructs here a kind of ethereal peace by mobilizing images like the sun, clouds, full moon, stars, and angels. Al-Iskandarī’s dream clearly belongs to the *oraculum*. Who can be more authoritative than the Prophet, who shines in glory and walks like a celestial monarch? Such a pompous opening aims to make the audience believe the following message:

> thumma ʿallamāʾ duʿāʾan awṣānī an ʾallima dhālika ummatahu. fa katabtuḥu ʾalā hādhihi ʿl-awrāqī bi khalīqin wa misk(īn) wa zaʿfarānīn wa suk(kīn). fa man ʿstawhabahu minnī wahabtuḥ(ū) wa man radda ʿalayya thamana al-qirṭāsī akhadhtuḥ(ū).

Then he taught me a prayer and admonished me to teach it to his people. So I wrote it
down on these slips of paper with the perfumes of Khalūq, musk, saffron and socc, and whoever asks for a copy as a gift, I will present it to him, but whosoever hands me back the cost of paper I will accept it.  

Authorized by the vision, the slips of paper are sure to bring good fortune to the reciters. The vision’s association with *laylat al-qadr*, which “is better than a thousand months,” leaves an especially auspicious mark on the prayer itself. Although the decision to follow what the Prophet commanded (*awṣā*) should not be materially rewarded, al-Iskandarī tells the audience that those slips have been pretreated with precious perfumes (whose names rhyme), thus turning them into an actual sample of luxury.

The authority of writing and speech is what al-Hamadhānī tries to establish throughout his elaborate *maqāmāt*, even though one of their primary topics and contexts is that of *kudyah* (begging) and the central character is depicted as belonging to many despicable professions. In this particular *maqāmah*, al-Hamadhānī dexterously transfers the authority of the Prophet to al-Iskandarī’s prayer, though its actual content remains unknown to us. In another context we learn of al-Hamadhānī’s complaint about the uselessness of *adab* (polite letters) in everyday life. In the fictitious world constructed by our author, al-Iskandarī is definitely justified in keeping the dirhems he earns as the reward for his *adab*.

Visions are depicted as being very important for people who live by means of speech. Ezekiel condemns those who have prophesied without having had a vision (Ezek. 13:3). Indeed, his model of prophetic vision had been imitated or parodied by
medieval Jewish writers like Judah al-Ḥarizi (1165-1225), the author of the Hebrew *maqāmah—Book of Tahkemoni*.\(^{173}\) The use of vision is also to be found in the aforementioned *Piers Plowman* and *Consolation of Philosophy*. Reliance on the use of vision as a literary device, or trope, became as common a practice for medieval authors as for their remote counterparts in ages past.

**Riddles**

In the beginning of Ezek. 17, the prophet is ordered to say a riddle (ḥud ḥidah) and speak a proverb (umshol mashal) unto the house of Israel. *Mashal*, the cognate of the Arabic *mathal*, has a wider meaning than that of a simple proverb. It may also be an allegory, a parable, a simile, etc. As for *ḥidah*, it is used in 1 Kings 10:1 where the Queen of Sheba came to Solomon in order to test him with riddles (*va tavo le-nasoto be-ḥidot*).\(^{174}\) The latter’s talent at solving riddles, together with his extravagant lifestyle and the burnt-offering he offers at the temple, causes the queen great astonishment.

*Mashal* and *ḥidah* are mentioned together in Ezekiel, as both of them need to be expounded and commented upon. Plato informs us that it is the *prophētēs* who were responsible for expositing riddles and visions. In the following verses (Ezek. 17:3-10), we are told that the prophet complies with the divine call and provides the allegory of the eagles in the biblical “high style.”\(^{175}\) James Kugel comments as follows:

> Within the biblical orbit, figurative language, bold imagery, and the like were conceived
to belong specifically to the world of “song” (šîr) or “proverb” (māšāl or ḥîdâh), and it is
certainly of significance that prophets sometimes invoked these genres in introducing
their oracles. “Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard,” Isaiah
says in introducing a famous parable concerning the fate of his people (Isa. 5); later on in
the same book, the prophet’s words of consolation take up a well-worn introductory trope
known to us from the Psalter, “Sing to the Lord a new song, his praise from the end of the
earth!” (Isa. 42:10).

In quite a few beginning sections of the Psalter, we encounter terms concerning
instruments or tunes used in the chanting. Both King David and his son Solomon
probably still functioned like priest-kings or philosopher-kings, skilled in singing songs,
offering sacrifices, and solving riddles. It is known that there existed special cantillation
systems for biblical books (Ketuvim). We will return to the connection between music
and poetry at a later point.

When the kātib ‘Abd al-Nūr sat down with the Bedouins, he listened to them
citing proverbs/parables (al-mathal). A mathal is also semantically akin to an
exemplum, and we know that Chaucer’s Pardoner is especially fond of relating exempla.
Unlike his English counterpart, al-Iskandarī seems to enjoy coining riddles. In the
Maqāmah of Balkh, he initially entertains ‘Īsā ibn Hishām with the augural verse, and
then relates a riddle in saj:

fa qāla idhā arja’aka ‘l-lāhu sāliman min hādhā ‘l-ṭariq(i) fa’staṣhib li ‘adīwan fī
burdati šadīq(in) min njīrī ‘l-sufr(i) yaḍ ‘ilā ‘l-kufr(i) wa yarqṣu ‘alā ‘l-zufr(i) ka
dārati ‘l-ayn(i) yahuṭṭu thiqala ‘l-dayn(i) wa yunāṣṣu bi wajhayn(i).

He said, ‘If God bring thee back in safety from this road, bring with thee for me an
enemy in the guise of a friend, in golden vein that invites to infidelity, spins on the finger,
round as the disc of the sun, that lightens the burden of debt and plays the role of the
two-faced.”

He is perhaps too ashamed to directly beg for dinars. But more likely, he is anxious to
please ʿĪsā ibn Hishām once again with his linguistic skills. Al-Hamadhānī seems to be
fond of this riddle; a slightly different version is used in the *Maqāmah of the Yellow.*

As defined in the *Oxford English Dictionary,* a riddle is “a question or statement
intentionally worded in a dark or puzzling manner,” something that needs to be
propounded metaphorically or allegorically “in order that it may be guessed or
answered.” The poser of riddles needs to provide all kinds of clues for the answerer. In
the above quotation, six aspects of the dinar are divided into two sets of rhyming
members. Of course al-Iskandarī wants ʿĪsā ibn Hishām to find the solution by offering
many suggestions, without which he probably will not earn the dinar.

Mention of riddles is also found in the *maqāmat* of literary criticism, where
al-Iskandarī provides very challenging poetic examples of riddles set in *saj.*
Al-Hamadhānī does not attach all the solutions to the riddles in the text. Some of them
have been provided by commentators, while others require inductive reasoning on the
part of the interested reader. In fact al-Ḥarīrī has put it quite straightforwardly in the
preface to his set of *maqāmat:* he studded his *Maqāmat* with “Arab proverbs” (*al-amthāl
al-ʿarabīyah*), “grammatical riddles” (*al-aḥājī al-naḥwīyah*) and “lexical quibbles” (*al-fatāwā al-lughawīyah*). In view of the fact that his *Maqāmat* were memorized and
emulated and “had remained a yardstick of literary education well into the eighteenth
century,” these riddles on “serious” subjects must have been regarded as one of the
virtues (sg. fadl) of the maqāmah genre.

As seen in the riddle of the dinar, rhymes are more regularly and densely used in
the Hamadhānian riddles than, for example, in the madman’s speech in the Maqāmah of
Asylum. In the following example taken from the Maqāmah of the Spindle (al-Maqāmah
al-Mighzaliyyah), we witness a quite sophisticated construction of rhymes:

“May God strengthen the Shaikh! This youth entered our house and seized a kitten with
vertigo in its head, with the sacred cord and a whirling sphere around its middle. Gentle
of voice, if it cries; quick to return, if it flees; long of skirt, if it pulls; slender of waist,
weak of chest, of the size of a plump sheep. Staying in the town, yet not abandoning
travel. If it be given a thing, it returns it. If it be tasked with a journey, it goes
energetically, and, if it is made to draw the rope, it lengthens it. There it is, bone and
wood. It contains property, immoveable and moveable, a past and a future.”

Al-Hamadhānī skillfully employs several devices to avoid the tightness and monotony
caused by rhyme-density. Firstly, the regular alternations between rhymes made of nouns
(-ār, -ar, -ashab) and those of verbs (-arra, -adda) are quite amazing. It is also obvious
that every colon of the same rhyming group tends to follow the same rhythm.

Secondly, in the synonymous couplet “nahifū ’l-munattaq(i), da ’tifu ’l-muqarṭaq(i),” he
inlays another pair of rhymes (-īfu) besides the normal end-rhymes. Thirdly, he links this couplet with the synthetic one “muqīmun bi’il-ḥadār(i), lā yakhlu min ‘l-safār(i)” by bestowing the rhyme -ar to “fi qadri ‘l-harar(i),” thus deviating from the usual alliance of semantic and sonic repetitions. Lastly, when we expect the appearance of -ashab in the end, al-Hamadhānī surprisingly gives us a rhyme-free couplet.

Munāzarah

Riddles expect an answer. Therefore they are by nature dialogic. Both question and answer can be expanded into long speeches of sajʿ, or poetry, or simply plain prose. Thus it is natural to see a prosimetric text of riddles. In the above quotation, both the rhyme-density and the rhythmic uniformity inside the rhyming group confirm the closeness of some Hamadhānī sajʿ paragraphs to wasf (description) poems. In that maqāmah, the sajʿ riddle is followed by another one composed in the rajaz meter. The second riddle is also heavily rhymed; the rhyme appears in every two or three words and changes every two or four lines. Thus rhyming schemes in the two riddles are somewhat similar to each other.

A riddle could easily be recast into a debate (munāzarah). In al-Iskandari’s absence, ’Īsā ibn Hishām mediates between the two suitors who present their cases in the above-mentioned riddles. He succeeds in arbitrating their dispute by solving the two riddles: “Give him back the comb in order that he may return to thee the spindle.”
‘Īsā’s function, as proved by the greetings of both suitors—“may God strengthen the Shaikh” (ayyada ’l-lāh ’l-shaykh),
190 is as a judge. We have mentioned in the section “Divinatory functions” that ḥakam is exactly one of the kāhin’s titles.

The *Maqāmah of the Spindle* bears strong resemblance to the Chinese story *Liang xiaoer bian ri* (Two Lads Debated over the Sun) in *Lie zi* 列子. 191 The suitors of the maqāmah are “two young men (fatayān),” and their arbiter, ‘Īsā ibn Hishām, is said to be “wide of fame and abundant of reputation.” 192 In the Chinese story, it is Confucius (d. 479 B.C.E.) judging between two small children who are debating, in semi-rhymed prose, the sun’s nearness or distance at different times of the day. In the Chinese context the character bian 辯 (to dispute, to debate) is combined with a yan 言 (speech; word) and double xins 辛 (instrument of punishment; pungent). Thus bian could be depicting the debate of two parties in a lawsuit. Double xins also reflect the sharpness of speech, something that we have already noted in our discussion of the hijā’ (lampoon), be it poetry or rhymed prose. 193

*Saj*’s connection with legal debates has long been known. In the famous ḥadīth of the fetus, 194 after the Prophet (nicknamed the ḥakam) had determined that blood money should be paid for both the mother and the fetus in her womb, the accused could not help speaking saj’ in front of him. The Prophet, whose attitude towards pagan soothsaying greatly confined the development of saj’ in the following two centuries, immediately forbade him to speak like a kāhin. We could infer that in a pre-Islamic legal debate both
suitors would give formal speeches, using the same kind of rhetoric as kāhins did.

We should keep in mind that the debate we encounter in the Maqāmāt is different from the aforementioned real-life legal debate. The Arabic munāzarah genre came into being during the late 8th-early 9th centuries, probably under the influence of kalām (theology), falsafah (Hellenizing philosophy), and badi‘ (innovative) style. The medium of debate literature can be prose or verse or both. Arabic debate poems such as the one between coffee and tea and that of rose versus narcissus have merited scholarly attention. These works, with their mixture of poetic genres like wasf, fakhr (boast), and hijā’, were à la mode among both elite and popular circles. Around and after al-Hamadhānī’s time, it was also a fashion to write debates in saj’, mostly in the genre of risālah. For instance, al-Hamadhānī’s Rasā’il give an account of the munāzarahs between him and al-Khwārizmī. The popularity of the debate-theme in literature reflects the intellectual life from the 3rd/9th century onward. In that connection we can note that most of the literary debates took place in salons (majlis) and in the presence of a dignitary as hakam.

In a recent article, Victor Mair draws our attention to the debate of birds, a theme which appeared in medieval Eurasian literary works like Chaucer’s Parliament of Fowls, Farīd al-Dīn al-ʿAṭṭār’s (586/1190) Manṭiq al-ṭayr (Conference of the Birds) and the Tibetan Bya chos rin cheng ’phreng ba (The Dharma among the Birds, a Precious Garland). The Sufi Manṭiq al-ṭayr is also called Maqāmāt al-ṭuyūr (The Maqāms of Birds)
by later generations. Although the Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* look quite different from Sufi *maqāms*, they all rely upon the debate to construct their own ideals of excellent speech (*maqāl(ah)*). Indeed the debate theme, as well as that of the riddle, was one major inspiration for al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmāt*. The flexible forms used in order to reflect these themes also to some extent influenced the prosimetric style of the *Maqāmāt*.

**Fu**

**The sources**

In the previous eight sections we have argued the following balance of function and form: since al-Iskandarī inherits the divinatory functions of pre-Islamic soothsayers, it is very appropriate for al-Hamadhānī to employ the *saj*’ style in the *Maqāmāt*. When we look at another great example of rhymed prose, i.e., the Chinese *fu*, we are perhaps able to detect a similar transfer of form/function. We will select several representative practitioners of the Chinese *fu* and compare them to al-Iskandarī.

Guo Weisen 郭維森 argues that in pre-Han times, *cifu* 辭賦 (the synonym of *fu*) was primarily used in lawsuits (*susong* 訴訟), diplomacy (*pinwen* 聘問), sacrifices and prayers (*jizhu* 祭祝). It was also related to *chengxiang* 成相 songs and riddles (*yinyu* 隱語). In regard to some of these functional aspects, as well as the formal characteristic of being in rhymed prose, *fu*’s similarity to *saj*’ is quite evident.
The name of *cifu* reveals two sources for Chinese rhymed prose: *ci* of the *Chu ci* and *fu* of the *Shi jing*. *Chu ci* is usually translated as *Songs of Chu* or *Elegies of Chu*, which stands for the group of poems written by Qu Yuan (c. 339-278 B.C.E.) and his followers. Because of the prominent place of Qu Yuan’s *Li sao* (Encountering Sorrow), we find both Liu Xie and Xiao Tong, the two Chinese literary critics, using *sao* to name the genre whose best representative is the *Chu ci* anthology. Unlike the strophic *Shi jing* style, the *sao* genre does not have a fixed form. David Hawkes has identified two basic categories for its meters; A is lyrical and B sounds “epic” or “elegiac.” In some Category B poems, the lyrical measures of Category A would make an appearance in the *luan* or envoi. Thus the *sao* genre can be described as prosimetric, on the grounds that there is no better term to delineate the mixture of meters and that of their different functions in a piece of poetry. *Maoshi xu* (The Great Preface to Mao’s Edition of the *Shi jing*) might shed some light upon this kind of mixture:

詩者，志之所之也。在心為志，發言為詩。情動於中，而形於言；言之不足，故嗟歎之；嗟歎之不足，故詠歌之；詠歌之不足，不知手之舞之，足之蹈之也。

Poetry is the extension of thought. What is thought in the heart becomes a poem when words issue forth. When emotions stir one within, they take shape in his words. When his words are insufficient, then he exclaims and sighs; when exclamations and sighs are insufficient, he chants and sings; when chant and song are insufficient, without thinking, he automatically gestures with his hands and stamps his feet.

The process of gliding from one meter (of speaking) to another (of sighing or singing) was seen to be in tune with different needs of the poet’s emotion. The *Preface* also draws
our attention to primitive Chinese sung-poetry (shengshi 聲詩) which mixed lyrics, music and dance, and can thus be regarded as a genuinely synthetic performance-genre, very likely connected with sacrificial rituals. Here we can note that Qu Yuan, an aristocrat and minister to the Chu kings, was twice exiled because of his unpopular political views. Since wizardry and superstition were prevalent in the Chu culture, the poetry that he composed during his periods of exile seems to have absorbed many folk shamanistic elements.

In an earlier section, we pointed out a possible relationship between Socrates and the priestly function. In fact, Aristophanes’s play, *The Clouds*, contains a mixture of the spoken iambic trimeters of the *prologos*, the chanted anapaest tetrameters, and the grave dactylic rhythm of ancient song in the *parodos*. The Greek voice “rises from the monotone of chant to the many tones of true song.” At the conclusion of Qu Yuan’s *Chou si* 抽思 (The Outpouring of Sad Thoughts), similarly, we hear *shao ge* 少歌 (“little song”), *chang* 倡 (“singing”), and *luan*. This kind of meter-change might ultimately have been decided as part of the drama/opera performance.

The second source of *cifu* is *fu*. While nowadays it can denote rhymed prose as a whole, *fu* was defined by the Confucian school as one of the six principles dominating the composition of *Shi jing*. Scholars have traced it etymologically to taxation (*fulian* 賦斂), hence it gained the sense of “enumeration” that was later rendered as “[an exhaustive] narration.” If Chinese rhymed prose acquired musicality and imagination by
means of *Chu ci*, it also inherited from *Shi jing* a very lively descriptive nature.

Throughout most of the Han dynasty (202 B.C.E.-220 C.E.), “there were no clear delineations between *sao* and *fu*.” Both *sao* and *fu* could be transformations (*bian* 變) of *shi*. This connection is preserved not only in the rhythms of the two later forms, but also from time to time in their arrangement of a poetic envoi (*luan*). Early *sao*-style *fus* like Song Yu’s 宋玉217 *Gaotang fu* 高唐賦 (*Fu* on the Gaotang Shrine) or *Shennü fu* 神女賦 (*Fu* on the Goddess of Wu Mountain) are not lacking in description, but it is not until Mei Cheng 枚乘 (d. c. 140 B.C.E.) composed his *Qi fa* 七發 (*Seven Stimuli*)218 that the hyperbolic and even imaginative description of objects (*tǐwù* 體物) became a prominent characteristic of Han *fu*,219 which was to become the dominant court genre in the reign of Emperor Wu 漢武帝 (141-87 B.C.E.). It is noteworthy that all three pieces contain an unrhymed introductory prose section before moving to the real *fu*-narrative. What is more, they all adopted the dialogue form that Xunzi 荀子 (c. 313-238 B.C.E.) had used in his *Treatise of Fu* (*Fu pian* 賦篇).

**The needle**

The *Treatise of Fu* is one of the thirty-two treatises left by the Confucian philosopher Xunzi. It comprises five rhymed riddles dealing with abstract themes such as ritual principles (*lǐ* 禮) and wisdom (*zhī* 知), as well as actual objects like clouds (*yún* 雲), silkworms (*chān* 蠶), and needles (*zhēn* 箴).
Each example of Xunzi’s riddles utilizes the dialogue form. After the inferior (official/student) sets up a riddle in mostly quadrisyllabic couplets, his superior (king/gentlemen/wu tai 五泰220) answers him in an equally descriptive manner but using different meters.221 The questions not only have a formulaic beginning like “Here is a thing” (有物於此), but also usually end in a polite manner like: “Your servant stupidly does not recognize it and presumes to ask Your Majesty about it.” Then the answers will start with the formula “said (the superior).” Like the qualified authorities cited in Arabic munāzaraḥs, those superiors immediately find out the answers. In order to show their mastery of perfect speech, all of them give their own descriptions of the objects, cast as a series of questions led by “Is it not” (此夫) and ended with either “All this winds up in one thing” (請歸之) or “This refers to” (夫是之謂). From this we can infer that rhymed riddles were a highly formulaic genre around Xunzi’s time—the Warring States Period when numerous philosophers and diplomats vied with each other in speech, writing and strategy. Xunzi’s riddle of the needles may be used as an example:

有物於此，生於山阜，處於室堂 (tang < *dang)。無知無巧，善治衣裳 (chang < *djang)。不盜不竊，穿窬而行 (xing < *grang)。日夜合離，以成文章 (zhang < *tjang)。以能合從，又善連衡 (heng < *grang)。下覆百姓，上飾帝王 (wang < *wjang)。功業甚博，不見賢良 (liang < *ljang)。時用則存，不用則亡 (wang < *mjjang)。臣愚不識，敢請之王 (wang < *wjang)。222

Here is a thing:
Born in hills and mountains,
It dwells in palaces and pavilions.
Lacking knowledge and without skills,
It is accomplished at sewing every kind of clothing.
It does not rob nor does it steal, 
Yet it moves by making tunnels and holes. 
From dawn to dusk it joins together what is separate 
In order to complete designs and patterns. 
Using it one is capable of joining together the Vertical 
And being expert in connecting the Horizontal. 
Below it provides coverings for the Hundred Clans; 
Above it provides adornment for Di Ancestors and kings. 
Its achievements and works are very far-reaching, 
But it does not make known its own worth and virtue. 
If on suitable occasions you employ it, it will remain; 
But if it is not used, it will disappear. 
Your servant stupidly not recognizing it, 
Presumes to inquire of Your Majesty about it.223

Its meter and rhyme (-ang) are completely regular. Moreover, the first four sentences look quite close to the Arabic riddle of the spindle.224 It may appear strange that Xunzi should compose riddles to accompany his more serious works. John Knoblock prefers to regard the hidden theme of the five riddles as “the qualification of the gentleman, and in particular of Xunzi himself, to hold office.”225 In the second half of the riddle, there are phrases like zongheng 縱横226 and xianliang 賢良 (worth and virtue), with the help of which Xunzi deliberately allows his riddle to be interpreted allusively and allegorically.

The Han fu writer Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.E-18 C.E.) once regretted writing ornate fìs since they encourage (quan 勸) [luxury and immoderate way of life] a hundred times and criticize by indirection (fēng 諷) only once. For him, they are similar to the unrestrained and extravagant music of Zheng 鄭 and Wei 衛 that plays ya 雅 (elegant) tunes only in the end.227 The entertainment provided by riddles and proverbs,
the enjoyment engendered by the ornate rhymed prose and playful music are all overt. Just as the genre of Fürstenspiegel (mirror for princes) is usually found amusing even by small children, the entertainment is no doubt the exoteric aspect of such a composition. A wise ruler or reader will naturally discover the “sentence” of the text, i.e., the esoteric meaning designed for the initiated few. After all, direct exhortation and criticism are not always appreciated, let alone when they are directed from an inferior person to a superior whose temper is ever changing and never predictable. When fu was adopted as the predominant court genre of Han, plays on words were to become more and more an essential part of its poetic technique. In the riddle of Xunzi already cited, the pun of the needle (zhēn 針) and admonition (zhēn 箴) fosters the curious alliance of probing and criticism. Admonition can function as cure for social problems in the same way that bloodletting or acupuncture may do for human diseases. At the conclusion of the question section, the official reminds the king that he needs from time to time to employ social criticism, or else “it will disappear” (不用則亡), thus causing harm to his ruling.

Immediately after the fu on the needles, the Treatise contains three coda poems “lamenting the current ‘upside-down’ world,” the same theme as expounded by both al-Iskandarī and Cold Mountain. If it is a custom for musicians of Zheng and Wei to play ya tunes at the conclusion, Xunzi also deems it natural to end these playful riddles with a satirical coda. The coda seemed to be Xunzi’s employment of the “needle,” so that his addressee may have listened to this less indirect criticism and “realized exactly
how it was intended."

Description (tiwu) and expression (yanqing 言情, “articulating the emotion”) are two facets of a fu composition. A descriptive fu also has the potential to invoke either praise or satire. In fact, when al-Hamadhānī used the image of the moth in both the Maqāmah of Iblīs and the Maqāmah of Nishapur, he must have been fully aware of the similar potential of saj.

**Ritual and description**

Bearing in mind our previous discussion of saj and its relationship to the kāhin, it is not surprising to find themes like ritual principles, wisdom, cloud, and wu tai’s divination in Xunzi’s riddles. Ritual was central to Xunzi’s thought. He had an additional Discourse on Ritual Principles (禮論篇) in which the need to cultivate oneself by obeying various ritual rules is emphasized. Li (ritual) could stand for “the highest sense of morality, duty, and social order as well as the most minor rules of good manners, the minutiae of polite forms.” At the time of the Zhou dynasty (c. 1045-256 B.C.E.) such a “polite” person would show great respect for his superiors by obeying the strict social order. He would also supplicate and give thanks to spirits and ghosts through sacrifices and offerings. Besides, official positions like dream diviners (zhanmeng 占夢) and major sacrificial priests (dazhu 大祝) were all to be found at the ministry of rites. In this way, some of the Shang (c. 1766-1046 B.C.E.) wizardry and mysticism was no doubt included and converted into the learning of rituals, which in turn constituted one
branch of the Confucian curriculum.\textsuperscript{242}

In the \textit{Book of Zhou li 周禮} (Ritual of Zhou), there is a passage describing the carving of different birds and insects on the wooden frame of ritual bells.\textsuperscript{243} The linguistic precision and orderly enumeration which were later displayed in many \textit{fu} writings were probably decided by the administrative and ritualistic requirements of the Zhou dynasty. For example, \textit{Zhou li} lists the name \textit{gumeng 瞽矇} as blind musicians who participated in ritual ceremonies.\textsuperscript{244} One commentator notes that he who has no lens is called \textit{gu 瞽}, he who has a lens but no eyesight is called \textit{meng 矇}, and he who has no pupils is called \textit{sou 瞈}.\textsuperscript{245} Al-Tanūkhi’s “weaver,” the unemployed \textit{kātib}, also tells his future patron that “As for the two soldiers with the same names, a person with a split in the upper lip is called \textit{aʿlam}, but if it is in the lower lip \textit{aflaḥ}.”\textsuperscript{246} In the Abbasid \textit{dīwāns} which were highly divided and hierarchical, an ideal \textit{kātib} had to be familiar with all the various departments, master their jargons and difficult vocabularies, and exhibit great linguistic precision in both his speech and writing. Similarly, ancient Chinese scholars of ritual “enjoyed great prestige for their exhaustive knowledge of the arcana of ceremonies.”\textsuperscript{247} In this sense, the \textit{Book of Zhou li} looks very much like a work composed by the \textit{kātibs} who were the practitioners and developers of \textit{adab}.

The abovementioned passage of \textit{Zhou li} has been compared to Han Yu’s \textit{Huaji 畫記} (Record on Painting),\textsuperscript{248} whose highly concise and ornament-free style received mixed critical reviews in Song times. As a great stylist and prosaist, Han Yu seems to
break (po) the usual prose style of his time. On closer examination however, he was actually following (zun) the style that had been established since the beginning of Chinese literature.\textsuperscript{249} Although the \textit{Huaji} was not put in ornate or rhymed prose, its concise style has no negative effect on the descriptive vividness. In about seventy characters, Han Yu took twenty-nine snapshots of different horses. Coincidentally, one of al-Hamadhānī’s most excellent descriptions is also dedicated to the horse:

\[
\text{huwa ṭawīlu 'l-udhnayn(i) qalīlu 'l-ithnayn(i) wāsi'u 'l-marāth(i) layyīnu 'l-thalāth(i) ghalīzu 'l-akru(i) ghāmiḍu 'l-arba(i) shādīdu 'l-nafās(i) lafīfū 'l-khams(i) ḍayyiqū 'l-qait(i) raqīqū 'l-sīt(i) ḍadīdū 'l-sam(i) ghalīzu 'l-sab(i) daqīqū 'l-lisān(i) 'arīdu 'l-thamān(i) mādidu 'l-dīl(i) qāşīrū 'l-tis(i) wāsi'u 'l-shajr(i) baʿīdu 'l-ʿashr(i) }
\]

He is long in both ears, scanty of two, spacious in the rectum, soft of three, thick in the shank, depressed of four, strong-winded, fine of five, narrow in the gullet, thin of six, sharp of hearing, thick of seven, fine of tongue, broad of eight, long in the ribs, short of nine, wide of jaw, remote of ten.\textsuperscript{250}

Al-Iskandarī gives a close-up view of a single horse in a manner akin to setting riddles. But we do not sense any substantial difference between his account and that of Han Yu,\textsuperscript{251} who remarked at the end of the \textit{Huaji} that the record was made before he sent the scroll back to its original copier/owner. His \textit{Record} must have reminded him from time to time of those vivid sketches that he once possessed.\textsuperscript{252}

**The chengxiang**

Besides the \textit{Treatise of Fu}, Xunzi composed a piece of \textit{chengxiang 成相} which
is noted for its rhymed stanza form. Ban Gu’s (32-92 C.E.) *Yiwen zhi* 藝文志 (Treatise on Literature), a *Fihrist*-like catalogue of books, lists eleven pieces of *chengxiang* under the category of *zafu* 雜賦 (miscellaneous *fu*). Some scholars ascribe *chengxiang* to the domain of popular literature. For example, Knoblock renders it as “Working Songs.” The following is his translation of Xunzi’s first stanza:

請成相 (*xiang* < *sjang*), 世之殃 (*yang* < *ʔjang*), 愚闇愚闇墮賢良 (*liang* < *ljang*).
人主無賢 (*xian* < *gin*), 如瞽無相, 何倀倀 (*thjang*!)

Let me sing a working song!
The ruination of our generation:
stupid and benighted, stupid and benighted, bringing into naught the worthy and virtuous,
these rulers of men who have no worthies
are like the blind without their staff.
How aimlessly they wonder about!

*Chengxiang* is interpreted as the beating of *xiang*, which was probably the wooden staff held by a blind person (*gu*). Yao Xiao’ou 姚小鷗 suggests that the *chengxiang* was not originally a vernacular genre since its rhymes perfectly accord with the standard of *yayan* 雅言 (polite speech). He prefers to see it as a descendent of the official *guqu* 瞽曲, the singing of blind musicians with a prelude consisting of percussion instruments. According to *Zhou li*, the ministry of rites of spring 春官宗伯 should have 300 blind musicians under the supervision of the music masters 師 (shi). A blind musician’s responsibilities included the recitation of poems and imperial genealogies while plucking *qin* 琴 and *se* 瑟 as accompaniment (諷誦詩，世奠繫，鼓琴瑟). The *Guo yu*
國語 records that, when King Li of Zhou 周厲王 (d. 828 B.C.E.) forbade people’s right of speech, his minister Zhao Gong 召公 exhorted him to hold courts where:

使公卿至於列士獻詩，瞽獻曲，史獻書，師箴，瞍賦，矇誦，百工諫，庶人傳語，近臣盡規，親戚補察，瞽史教誨，耆艾修之，而後王斟酌焉。

the ministers and officials present [the king] with poetry, the gus with songs, the [exterior] annalists with historical documents, the [minor] music masters with admonition, the sous with fu, the mengs with chanting, the various workmen with remonstrance, the plebs with [admonitory] speech, his intimate servants with regulations, his relatives with scrutiny, the gus (major music masters) and the [major] annalists with edification, the elders with readjustment. Then the king ponders and weighs [their suggestions].

In order to maintain a healthy governmental system based on both consensus and royal authority, the monarch should encourage the free airing of views and listen to opinions conveyed via many media, be it poetry, songs, rhymed prose, or history lessons.

The Book of Historical Documents（Shu jing）contains a report that a king of the Xia dynasty (c. 2070-1600 B.C.E.) would send a herald (qiu 遬), who carries with him a staff with bells, to both collect feng poetry (airs) from people and convey the king’s orders to the public. What interests us is the same usage of staff and bells as that found in the Maqāmah of the Blind, in which al-Iskandarī seems to have combined some of the functions of both the blind musician (gu) and herald (qiu).

Let us now return to the chengxiang poem, the extant text of which contains fifty-six stanzas. Each stanza can be divided into “five verses of 3 + 3 + 7 + 4 + 7 characters,” with a rhyming pattern of aaaba. If Xunzi is indeed imitating blind
musicians, then his work may well have also inherited the admonitory aspect of their compositions. Unlike Zhao Gong who exhorted his king in a direct way, Xunzi did not hold a high position, in addition to which he lived in an age just before a king was going to name himself *huangdi* (emperor) two epithets associated with ancestors and heavenly gods. That may help to explain why he seems to have deliberately made his admonitions sound trivial and jestful. Analogously, al-Hamadhānī’s *maqāmāt* on *kudyah* could well have functioned like the pious homily of Šāliḥ, although the satirical flavor was much more intense in the former than the latter.

Here we have to mention again *Akhbār ʿUbayd*, whose frame-story tells us that the caliph Muʿāwiyah liked to listen to stories of the ancients in his later years. ʿUbayd may have made use of night-conversations held in the royal court to give the genealogy of the South Arabian kings, using poetic closures to depict their feats and failures. Bear in mind the above discussion of the Chinese annalists and blind musicians, the admonitory function of an *ayyām* teller is obvious. When the *maqāmah* absorbs traits from previous genres such as the *ayyām*, it may have inherited both its admonitory function and prosimetric form.

**Frustration of a guji**

Admonition is authoritative counsel against wrong practices. It emphasizes the evil state of the age and provides advice so that people will not commit acts of folly. It
actually can be related to other genres. In the poetry of al-Iskandarī, Cold Mountain, Boethius, Qu Yuan, and Xunzi we have seen lamentations on the upside-down world. There are also many examples of the so-called “frustration” fu that are virtually indistinguishable from such poems. When an exhorter becomes too pessimistic to provide a solution that is valid in this world, his work gains a sense of detachment like that of a piece of zuhdiyah (ascetic) poetry, or may even reveal a libertine, Epicurean way of thinking which can be attested in many poems recited by al-Iskandarī.

While Xunzi uses the forms of riddles and chengxiang to accommodate his political criticisms, there exists a group of licensed practitioners who enjoyed much more freedom of speech in the court than others. These are the court jesters, like Will Somers (d. 1560) of King Henry VIII, the Fool in King Lear, and Dongfang Shuo 東方朔 (154-93 B.C.E.) at the time of Emperor Wu of Han.

At the beginning of Biographies of the Humorists (Guji liezhuan 滑稽列傳) the historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (c. 145-c. 87 B.C.E.) explains why he has organized a complete chapter on humorists: with [their] indirect allusions that nevertheless hit their mark, they are able to point to solutions of knotty problems (談言微中，亦可以解紛). In the same paragraph, Sima Qian cites from Confucius the government-reforming functions of every branch of liu yi 六藝 (Six Arts). Although the “problem-solving” function of humorous speech was meant to be inferior to those of Six Arts, it does not imply that some Chinese humorists were not familiar with the traditional jing studies; in
fact, they were well trained in other areas as well. For instance, the courtier and jester Dongfang Shuo was not only a great scholar, *fu* writer, and naturalist, but also a diviner and self-acclaimed fencer and military strategist. Nevertheless, as he complains in the *Da ke nan* (Answer to a Visitor’s Objections) which is a “frustration” *fu* in dialogue form, he did not live in an age when feudal lords would compete with each other to attract talented gentlemen to their service. Instead, it was an era in which:

遵天之道，順地之理，物無不得其所 (*suo < *s(k)rjaʔ*). 故絨之則安，動之則苦 (*ku < *khaʔ*); 尊之則為將 (*jiang < *tsjangs*), 卑之則為虜 (*lu < *C-raʔ*); 抗之則在青雲之上 (*shang < *djangs*), 抑之則在深淵之下 (*xia < *graʔ*); 用之則為虎 (*hu < *xaʔ (?)*), 不用則為鼠 (*shu < *hjaʔ*); 雖欲盡節效情，安知前後？

Our ruler honors the Way of Heaven, abides by the principles of earth, and there is nothing that does not find its proper place. Should he choose to leave men in peace, they will rest easy; should he move against them, they will be troubled. Should he honor them, they may be his generals; should he degrade them, they will become slaves. Raised up, they may soar above the blue clouds; thrust down, they will find themselves beneath the deepest springs. Chosen for office, they turn into tigers; unchosen, they remain mice. So, although one might strive to exert the utmost fidelity and put forth the greatest effort, how can he tell what the future may hold?

The use of parallelism and quatrisyllabic lines does not differ a great deal from that of Xunzi’s riddles. In fact Dongfang Shuo was known as a master of rhymed riddles and “guess-what’s-under-it” (*shefu* 射覆), a game similar to the one that the Queen of Sheba invited King Solomon to play. His ability to compose rhymed descriptions is also represented in the above-cited paragraph which compares the earthly ruler to an awe-inspiring and almost divine figure.
According to the biographer Ban Gu, Emperor Wu always listened to Dongfang’s exhortations. Dongfang probably had more freedom of speech than Xunzi, while the great Confucian scholar certainly commanded a higher social status than his. Sima Qian once complained that historians and astrologers were similar to diviners and sacrificial priests, a status that resulted his being kept as one of the "chang you" 倡優 (singers and actors) by Emperor Wu and not respected by the common people.286 Emperor Wu was the first monarch to adopt Confucianism as the state philosophy; from that we may imagine that topics such as divination and astrology came to be regarded as heterodox, although the emperor still actively used them in calendar-making or guessing games. The fate of the kāhins after the advent of Islam probably was similar to that of Chinese diviners and astrologers after the adoption of Confucianism.

Some imprints of these frustrated scholars are to be found in the Maqāmāt as well. In the Maqāmah of Sijistan (al-Maqāmah al-Sijistānīyah), al-Iskandarī acts as a mountebank selling nostrums to the audience, but he first presents a lengthy rhymed piece of self-praise287 in order to prove the efficiency of his medicine:

\[
\text{salū 'l-mulūka wa khazā inahā wa 'l-aghlāqa wa ma'ādinahā wa 'l-unūra wa bawā'ınahā wa 'l-ulūma wa mawā'ınahā wa 'l-khuṭūba wa maghāliqahā wa 'l-hurūba wa maḍā'iqahā man 'l-ladhī akhadha mukhtazanahā wa lam yu'addi thamanahā wa man 'l-ladhī malaka maṣāliqahā wa 'arafa maṣāliqahā anā wallāhi fa'altu dhālika}.
\]

Ask of kings and their treasures, precious stones and their mines, affairs and their inwardness, sciences and their centres, weighty matters and their obscurities, wars and their difficult situations. Who has seized their hoards without paying the price? Who has got possessions of their keys and known the way to victory? By Heavens! it is I who have
This quoted passage does read very much like an enhanced version of Dongfang Shuo’s self-recommendation letter to the emperor. “Chosen for office, they turn into tigers; unchosen, they remain mice.” The erudition and capability of intellectuals can never challenge the whim of monarchs; especially in an era when personal fortune and political power were exposed to abrupt changes. The ability of those unchosen “mice” is unquestionable. In the *Maqāmah of the Quest* (*al-Maqāmah al-Maṭlabiyah*), a group of elite youth believe that al-Iskandarī is going to guide them to two enormous treasures. In such a context, it may well not be a coincidence that Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī, the court jester of al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād and a possible prototype of al-Iskandarī, was also a famed mineralogist. Thus we can be sure that al-Iskandarī’s success in that *maqāmah* is partly based on people’s trust of those frustrated but knowledgable wanderers, whose signature eloquence does not seem to be affected by their status as either a tiger or mouse.

**The eccentric**

Dongfang Shuo never left the emperor, and yet at court he regarded himself as a recluse, and there are stories telling about his crazy behavior. Once, for example, he cut off a portion of meat without waiting for the imperial command and put it inside the breast of his robe. What is more, he squandered all his salary on beautiful women and replaced his wife every year. His biography in the *Han shu* is an enlarged version of
what we read in Zhu Shaosun’s appendix to the *Biographies of the Humorists*. Grouping together anecdotes concerning the same hero is a usual practice of historians, traditionists, storytellers, fictionists, dramatists, etc.; as long as there is an audience that wishes to learn more about the hero’s life, the series of anecdotes tend to accumulate by adopting and adapting materials from external sources. Partly because of the random accumulation of materials, the anecdotes do not necessarily follow a chronological order. However the “recycling” of materials, together with the possible anachronisms caused by it, did not seem to have impeded the medieval reception of texts. Here we want to remind our readers that the Hamadhānīan *Maqāmāt* are a series narratives about the words and deeds of the beggar hero al-Iskandarī. In Chapter IV, we will also draw attention to the stylistic similarity between the *maqāmah* and the Indian genre of biography (*ākhyāyikā*).

Our investigation of the development of *saj‘* has led us to observe the intrinsic connection of al-Iskandarī with the *kāhin*. After examining the anecdotes of some *fu* writers and poets, we find that Dongfang Shuo is never alone as a “recluse.” Shu Xi 束皙 (d. c. 304) who composed the *Bīng fu 饅賦* (*Fu on Pastries*) is said to have successfully summoned rain after praying for three days. Li Bo 李白 (701-762), the great Tang poet, was a *fu* writer, lyricist, swordman, and Daoist. His contempt for etiquette and dignitaries is best revealed in the anecdote in which the drunk poet asked the powerful eunuch Gao Lishi 高力士 to take off his boots when the emperor asked him to compose poetry. When the prosaist Han Yu was demoted to Chao Zhou 潮州, an
area in which people were being plagued by crocodiles, he offered the river a goat and a pig, together with his Address to the Crocodiles (祭鱷魚文).

Anecdotes such as these might easily fit into the magāmāt about al-Iskandarī. In a surprising uniformity, these eccentric figures seemed to be born with a talent for eloquence and an enormous knowledge of unorthodox sciences. Not restrained by social norms, they usually long for a free mode of thought and are unconcerned about the niceties of etiquette. Only sensible people such as Pantagruel and Ḥīsā ibn Hishām are able to appreciate their virtue (fadl) in spite of their apparent eccentricity. In the Maqāmah of Jāḥīz the table manners of al-Iskandarī are described in an amusing way:

wa ma’anā alā ‘l-ta’āmi rajulun tusāfiru yaduhu alā ‘l-khiwān(i) wa tasfiru bayna ‘l-alwān(i) wa ta’khudhu wujūha ‘l-raghfān(i) wa tafa’u ‘uyūna ‘l-jīfūn(i) wa tar‘ā arda ‘l-jīrān(i)…wa huwa ma’ā dhālika sākitun lā yanbīsu bi ḥarfīn.

Now with us at the feast was a man whose hand wandered over the table playing the rôle of an ambassador between the viands of various hues, seizing the choicest of the cakes and plucking out the centres of the dishes, pasturing on his neighbour’s territory….And withal he was silent and spoke not a word.295

After this particular “silence,” al-Iskandarī proceeds to present excellent comments on al-Jāḥīz that we have expounded in Chapter I. Al-Hamadhānī understands the importance of contrast between outer madness and the inner sagacity. When Dongfang Shuo is called a madman by his colleagues, Emperor Wu declares: if Shuo was without these blemishes, which one of you could compete with him?

Al-Hamadhānī shows a very similar tolerant attitude to his hero towards the end
of Maqāmah of Ṣaymarah. This piece is unlike the typical Hamadhānian maqāmāt in that it is devoid of poetry and characterized by an uneven use of rhymed prose. The narrator and the hero are the same Abū al-ʿAnbas al-Ṣaymarī (213-75/828-88), the court jester of the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil (206-247/822-861) and also a renowned faqīh, astrologer, oneiromancer, poet, and belle-lettrist. The plot of the maqāmah closely resembles that of Timon of Athens. The bankrupt al-Ṣaymarī has been deserted by all his so-called friends. He finds himself in a desperate situation: as “a madman escaped from a cell, or an ass going around the enclosure.” Later when he has accumulated a good deal of property, he returns to Baghdad and punishing his faithless friends by shaving off their beards. When the vizier al-Qāsim ibn ʿUbaydallah hears about his revenge, he laughs heartily. “Then he sent me a splendid robe of honour, led to me a horse with a carriage and forwarded to me fifty thousand dirhems as a mark of his admiration of my action.”

Having now introduced Dongfang Shuo to our discussion, we can observe the close resemblance to al-Ṣaymarī and al-Iskandarī. Dongfang became frustrated when the emperor would not treat him as a “tiger.” When al-Ṣaymarī discovers the cruelty of “friendship,” he becomes desperate. What might have happened to al-Iskandarī before we encounter him as a poor wanderer? He is always frustrated about Time (dahr) whose fickle nature is comparable to that of the ruler. Neither does he believe in friendship or company—or he would not be chanting the couplet in the end of the Maqāmah of
Bukhārā. As a panegyric always embellishes the truth and hides unsavory elements, the happy ending of the *Maqāmah of Nājim* is nothing but a dream that al-Hamadhānī has coined for such frustrated recluses.\(^{300}\)

**You**

To some extent Dongfang Shuo’s biographies are comparable to the Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* that present us with episodes of al-Iskandarī’s life. The previous two sections have emphasized Dongfang’s eloquence, erudition, frustration, “madness,” and eccentricity, while frequently referring to our hero al-Iskandarī who is also an admonisher proficient in rhymed speech. In the following section, we shall continue exploring the figure of Dongfang and discuss the role duodrama plays in both Dongfang’s biography and some Hamadhānian *maqāmāt*.

Beatrice Otto suggests that the best Chinese counterpart of jester is *you* "優," which might now be translated as “actor” in both Chinese and Japanese. Two of the three humorists in Sima Qian’s original text are precisely termed *you*: 優孟 You Meng (Meng the Actor) and 優旃 You Zhan (Zhan the Actor). You Meng was also a musician, and You Zhan a singer (倡 `chang`). Judged from Sima Qian’s complaint (倡優畜之), the functions of `chang` and *you* in ancient China might well have overlapped to some extent.

*You*’s performance might consist of either monodrama or a form that depended upon dialogues. In the *Biographies of the Humorists*, a *you* would pose a riddle or speak a
proverb to the ruler, who in turn played the supporting role. In the biography of Dongfang Shuo, we find him sometimes collaborating with Guo Sheren 郭舍人 (Guo the Courtier)302 to entertain Emperor Wu.

If Xunzi’s riddles aim at serious admonitions, those of Dongfang and Guo are of a more humorous nature. In these hilarious and farcical speech-duels, Dongfang is always the winner and well paid by the emperor. Guo the Courtier, like our narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām, never manages to best his adversary in regard to eloquence or wit. Once he is not convinced by Dongfang’s success in shefu, and says:

臣願令朔復射，朔中之，臣榜百 (bai < *prak)，不能中，臣賜帛 (bo < *brak).

I would like to have Shuo guess again. If he guesses correctly, I am willing to accept a hundred blows of the cane; but if he fails, I am to be given all the presents of silk!303

It is not hard to guess that in the end Guo was indeed beaten by the official in charge of changs (chang jian 倡監).304 The word “hundred” (百) could have been used by Guo to rhyme with “silk” (帛). Surely Guo would not have named a hundred if he had known the way things would end. We can also observe the process of beating the minor player who is less clever at the conclusion of the Maqāmah of Baghdad. We have noted in Chapter I that al-Iskandarī was absent in that piece. As in the duodramas of you, it is enough to have ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and the simpleton in order to entertain the audience.305

This kind of slapstick duodrama was to find a counterpart in the canjun xi 參軍 戲 (adjutant plays).306 Said to have originated in the first half of the fourth century at the
latest, the *canjun xi* flourished in the Tang and Song dynasties and usually included the ridicule or even beating of a disgraced minor official (*canjun*) by *canghu* 蒼鶻 (“black falcon”).

The rewards given for *you* also demand some note here. Abū al-ʾAnbas al-Šaymařī once questioned his friend Abū al-ʾIbar Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad (d. 250/859) as to why he used his talent for composing humorous and even silly verse. The latter answered:

> Do you desire that I find no market for my poetry while you find a ready market for yours? You too are an intelligent poet and a Mutakallim, so why have you renounced learning and erudition (*al-ʿilm*) and turned to composing nearly 30 treatises on silly themes (*fī al-raqāʿah*)? Tell me. If reason and rationality (*al-ʾaql*) were in much demand and its market brisk, do you think you would have been given precedence over al-Buḥtūrī... You were given the prize and he was denied his. You were shown favour and he was sent away in shame.

What Abū al-ʾIbar (lit. “father of the lessons”) refers to here is al-Šaymařī’s victory in his *munāẓarah* with Abū ʿUbāda Walīd ibn ʿUbayd al-Buḥtūrī (206-284/821-897), the great court poet and student of Abū Tammām (*c.* 188-231/804-845). The judge of their *munāẓarah* was the caliph al-Mutawakkil, at whose instigation al-Šaymařī “improvised an obscene satire on al-Buḥtūrī in the same rhyme and meter as the poem the latter had just addressed to the caliph.” Al-Šaymařī was then rewarded the same amount of dirhams as the poet.

> “The jester is often associated with the poet.” Both seem to have depended
exclusively on their patron, entertaining the monarch in order to be compensated materially. In this regard, they are not that different from beggars or wandering ḥākīs whose major donors were the bourgeois or common people. In the case of the munāzarah between al-Buḥturī and al-Ṣaymarī, the former is the producer of eulogy (madīh) while the latter provides the lampoon (hijāʾ). The judge’s preference, as Abū al-‘Ibar’s remark clearly shows, was definitely the burlesque and obscene hijāʾ. Therefore al-Buḥturī was doomed to be ranked second.\textsuperscript{312} When Mattā ibn Yūnus (d. 328/940) translated “comedy” as hijāʾ, he was perhaps thinking of satirical farces such as these and the blurred borderline between poet and jester. What we can be sure of is that al-Buḥturī did not appreciate being treated as a jester. In that sense he resembles Sima Qian, who laments the declining status of traditional historians/astrologers. From Sima Qian’s comment we can infer the growing prevalence of \textit{chang you} in both elite and popular circles. Jesters like Dongfang, al-Ṣaymarī, and Abū Dulaf were well versed in the art of rhyme, and their broad range of knowledge also suggests a functional similarity between them and the shamans/kāhīns. Within the context of this study, the popularity of jesters may have even facilitated the production of prosimetra, works either composed by them or for them.

\textbf{The stranger’s travelogue}

Al-Buḥturī returned to Syria without leave from the caliph, bemoaning that
“learning has vanished and adab has perished.” In the *Maqāmah of Ṣaymarah*, al-Ṣaymarī who was betrayed by friends also left Baghdad and traveled widely in the Islamic world. Since it seemed now to be the case that traditional adab and learning could no longer bring profit to their bearers, al-Ṣaymarī began to equip himself with:

\[
\text{al-nawādir} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-akhbār} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-asmār} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-fawāʾid} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-āthār} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{as-hārī} \\
\text{al-mutāṭarrīfīn} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-mulhīn} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-asmārī} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-mutayyamīn} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-akhāmī} \\
\text{al-mutafalsīfīn} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-mushāʾīdīn} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-nawāmīsī} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-mutamakhrūqīn} \\
\text{al-nawādiri} \quad \text{al-munādīmīn} \quad \text{wa} \quad \text{al-riżqī} \quad \text{al-munājīmīn} \quad \text{al-lūṭfī} \quad \text{al-mutāṭabbībīn} \\
\text{al-kīyādī} \quad \text{al-mukhammāthīn} \quad \text{al-dakhmasati} \quad \text{al-jarābīzātī} \quad \text{al-shayṭanātī} \\
\text{al-ābālisātī} \ldots
\]

rare sayings, anecdotes and night-conversations, witticisms and traditions, poems of the humourists, the silly verses of the buffoons, the night-conversations of the lovesick, the wisdom of the pseudo-philosophers, the tricks of the conjurors, the artifices of the artful, the rare sayings of boon companions, the fraud of the astrologers, the finesse of quacks, the deception of the actors, the guile of the cheats, the devilry of the fiends….

The various branches of knowledge that al-Ṣaymarī’s lowlife teachers mastered definitely overlapped with those of the kāhins. His list brings our attention to Socrates’s comment that emphasized the custom common among such figures of praying for divine inspiration. Poets, philosophers, singers, storytellers, quacks, astrologers, and soothsayers could look exactly like beggars and strangers. Al-Ṣaymarī had to travel widely to gain the sort of profitable knowledge and to become mature and invulnerable in order to bring changes to his life. The globe-trotting Abū Dulaf may have accumulated knowledge of minerals through travels. His experience with beggars and their tricks led to the composition of the pamphlet-like *al-Qaṣīdah al-Sāsānīyah*. For various reasons,
people voluntarily went on temporal or permanent journeys, and they would often record fresh experiences and unexpected happenings on the road.

In some sense, the *Maqāmāt* can be read not only as al-Iskandarī’s biography, but also as ‘Īsā ibn Hishām’s travelogue. The *Maqāmah of the Lion*, the *Maqāmah of al-Fazārah*, and the *Maqāmah of the Amulet* (*al-Maqāmah al-Ḥirzīyah*) contain descriptions of travels by land and sea. In many other cases, ‘Īsā ibn Hishām simply tells us that he came to such and such place. This kind of accumulation of placenames is attested as early as in the *Mu’allaqāt* where the pre-Islamic poet would tell us that “Here in the desert between al-Dakhūl and Ḥawmal, and between Tūḍīḥ and al-Miqrāt.…” Likewise, Qu Yuan favored a pattern to convey the passage of time and space in his *Li sao*.

Sometimes, the status of stranger can be occasioned by banishment and relegation. Both Qu Yuan and Ovid were forced to leave the capital city and wander in remote territory. Both composed travelogues (*Li sao* and *Tristia*) during their exiles. Their exilic poetry reads more like elegies, full of nostalgia for the homeland and good times in the past. Al-Iskandarī, the “invisible” traveler in the *Maqāmāt*, at one point tells ‘Īsā ibn Hishām that he has been:

\[
\text{wafdu} \ 'l\text{-layli} \ \text{wa} \ \text{barīdhu} \ \text{wa} \ \text{fallu} \ 'l\text{-jū’i} \ \text{wa} \ ūrán \ qādahu \ 'l\text{-durr(u)} \ \text{wa} \ 'l\text{-zamanu} \ 'l\text{-murr(u)}\ldots\text{wa gharībun ūqidat} \ 'l\text{-nāru} \ \text{alū} \ \text{safārihi} \ \text{wa} \ \text{nabaḥa} \ 'l\text{-awwā’u} \ \text{alā} \ \text{atharihi} \ldots\text{fa niḍwahu} \ \text{ṣalīḥ(un)} \ \text{wa} \ \text{ayshuḥu} \ \text{tabrīḥ(un)} \ \text{wa} \ \text{min} \ \text{dūnī} \ \text{farkhayhi} \ \text{mahāmahun} \ \text{ṣīḥ(un)}.}
\]
The envoy of night and its messenger, the defeated and hunted of hunger, a well-bred personage in the leash of misfortune and bad times...an exile after whose departure the fire of banishment was kindled, in whose wake the howling dogs have barked....His jaded camel is fatigue; his pleasure is affliction, and between him and his two chicks is a vast desert.324

Whether or not this travelogue of al-Iskandarî is true, it is part of his stock in trade to arouse the benefactor’s sympathy, so that the latter will compensate him for the pain of exile. Al-Iskandarî often admits in the recognition scene that he is a voluntary traveler and is addicted to playing tricks on people in different places. As compared with Ovid who did not give up the hope of returning to Rome, al-Iskandarî is a total pessimist who abandons himself to exile and vice.

As for Qu Yuan, we are not sure whether his Li sao was meant to be read by the king. In quest of the wise ruler, the pessimist poet describes many an imaginary flight “through the celestial realm of gods, goddesses, and other supernatural creatures.”325 Since his search fails every time, he finally hints that he is going to throw himself in the river, which is his way out of this world’s frustrations.

As one of the fu’s subgenres, jixing fu 紀行賦 (fu on recounting travel) is no doubt derived from Qu Yuan’s travelogue. The motivation for such travels, as we read Liu Xin’s Suichu fu 遂初賦 (Fu on Fulfilling My Original Resolve), Ban Biao’s 班彪 Beizheng fu 北征賦 (Fu on Northward Journey), and Ban Zhao’s 班昭 Dongzheng fu 東征賦 (Fu on Eastward Journey), was the relocation of poets. David Knechtges comments that the poetic travelogues provide the earliest
“examples of a poet who clearly situates himself in a particular time and place, and who
directly speaks in his own voice.” 

Here we should quote the opening passage of

*Dongzheng fu* as an illustration:

> 惟永初之有七 (qi < *tshjit* ī)，余随子乎柬征 (zheng < *tjeng*). 时孟春之吉日 (ri <
> *njit* ī)，撰良辰而将行 (xing < *grang*). 乃举趾而升舆兮，夕予宿乎偃师 (shi <
> *srjij*). 逐去故而就新兮，志憀悢而怀悲 (bei < *prjij*)! 

It is the seventh year of Yongyuan, 
And I follow my son on an eastward journey.
The time is an auspicious day of spring;
We choose a propitious hour for our departure.
Then, I stride forth to mount the carriage;
At dusk we lodge at Yanshi.
Then, leaving the old, we advance toward the new;
My heart, sorrowful and sad, is full of care.

The meter of this *fu* is clearly derived from the Category B of the *Chu ci*. It is known
that the son of the poetress and historian Ban Zhao had been appointed chief of
Changyuan, and so she accompanied him on the eastward journey that started from the
capital Luoyang. Probably for this reason, Ban Zhao confirms that the departure took
place at a propitious hour (*liangchen* 良辰) on an auspicious day (*jiri* 吉日). In the
following text, Ban Zhao relies heavily on allusions from the Confucian classics like *Shi
ing* and *Analects*. She acts very much like the Zhou annalist or the Arab *ayyām*-narrator
who is to “offer advice to her son on his official career.”

As a parallel, we can cite the opening of al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmah of Qazwīn*
which is the only *maqāmah* with a particular date:
ghazartu 'l-thaghra bi-Qazwīn(a) sanata khamisin wa sab īn(a) fīman ghazāhu fa mā ajaznā ḥaznan illā habatnā baṭnan ḥattā waqafa 'l-masīru binā 'alā baʿdi qurāhā.

In the year A.H. 75 I took part in a raid, on the frontier of Qazwīn, with those who raided it. We crossed not a rugged upland, but we also descended into a valley, until our march brought us to one of the villages.335

When 'Īsā ibn Hishām travels to Qazwīn, he meets a beggar who turns out to be al-Iskandarī. In this maqāmah, the latter alleges that he is a Byzantine Christian convert to Islam and wishes to pray for the Muslim raiders and offer them help. Both his poem and sajʿ speech include many allusions to the Qurʾān.

At least in this maqāmah, the placename is not “trivial”336 for the advancement of the plot; indeed we would suggest that it is specifically due to the particular place and time in which 'Īsā ibn Hishām is situated. Before the recognition scene, 'Īsā ibn Hishām and al-Iskandarī seem to have divided the function of Ban Zhao in the Dongzheng fu; the former is the traveler while the latter acts as an admonisher. The coda of Dongzheng fu may intensify the pieces of advice that are given in the main text, but al-Iskandarī’s envoi teaches 'Īsā ibn Hishām how to change identity as Time changes.

This section on “travelogue” also marks the end of our comparison of the Chinese fu with the maqāmah genre. The representative practitioners of Chinese fu, with their eloquence, admonition, frustration, eccentricity, and deep knowledge of both orthodox and unorthodox sciences, do look similar to our hero al-Iskandarī, the inheritor of pre-Islamic soothsayers and master of divinely-inspired eloquence. Both the Chinese fu
and the Arabic sajʿ were derived from primitive religions and have unbroken links with ritual/divinatory functions. In the section “The sources” that opens this lengthy discussion of “Fu,” we have seen that the Chinese rhymed prose was developed after absorbing two poetic styles, those of the descriptive Shi jing and the expressive Chu ci. Likewise, the Arabic sajʿ is closely related to the ancient poetic meter named rajaz. Al-Hamadhānī used in his Maqāmāt the rhymed style (al-uslūb al-musajjaʿ), which is known to have the same repertoire of literary tropes (such as paronomasia and antithesis) with which the so-called badīʿ (innovative) movement had first decorated the classical Arabic poetry since the 2nd/8th century. This section on “travelogue” also showed that both the Hamadhānian maqāmah and a piece of Chinese fu would arrange a routine description of the passage of time and space which is characteristic of previous poetry. Our study of the prosimetric style analyzes not only the independent sajʿ and poetry in the Maqāmāt, but also, with a comparative point of view, reveals such intrinsic connection between the two modes of expressions.

**Conclusion**

As we approach the end of this chapter, we need to note that only a few points from the enormous collection of Chinese fu have been selected to compare with the Hamadhānian Maqāmāt. Our discussions of the origins of both Arabic and Chinese rhymed prose, their practitioners, the functional and stylistic transfers accompanying the
genre translation, can shed further light on al-Hamadhānī’s adaptation of the *saj*.

Even as a competent *adīb*, al-Hamadhānī did not create a genre *ex nihilo*. What he wished this genre to convey is partly associated with his use of a mature style that was popular in his own time. It is because of this maturity and density of *saj* that we find shadows of other literary genres within the sphere of the *maqāmah*. The comparison with the Chinese *fu* serves to confirm the *maqāmah* genre’s connections with pre-Islamic soothsaying, *ayyām* storytelling and *ḥikāyah* mimesis. Our discussion of your performance has further stressed the importance of ʿĪsā ibn Hishām for the character-building of al-Iskandarī. As a judge in a dispute, answerer of a riddle, undertaker of the invisible travels of al-Iskandarī, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām’s role is inseparable from the content of the *maqāmah*.

At this point it is clear that our exploration of the *Maqāmāt*’s prosimetric style is closely associated with the discussion of the various practitioners of both prose and poetry (the *adīb*, the *kāhin*, the philosopher, the annalist, the jester, etc.) in different ancient and medieval traditions. In the next chapter, we will stay in the comparative frame and discuss the poetry to be found in the *Maqāmāt*.

2 “Rhyme, n.” in *OED*.
5 Brogan, “Rhyme.”
6 The underlined letter stands for the repeated consonant or vowel.
7 Brogan, “Rhyme.”
8 “Rhyme, n.” in *OED*.
9 *Yamaka*, the internal rhyme in Sanskrit prosody, can display a much more complicated sonic pattern than end-rhyme.

10 It is “commonly suggested” that alliteration is a distinctive feature of Anglo-Saxon literature. It was revived in the fourteenth century after disappearing with the Norman Conquest. See Early Middle English Verse and Prose, eds. J. A. Bennett and G. V. Smithers (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), xvi. *Piers Plowman* is written in the so-called “alliterative long line.” Generally speaking, such verse contains in a line “at least four major stressed syllables,” three of which “begin with the same sound.” After the fifteenth century, the form of alliterative long line was superseded by the heroic couplet and became a lost tradition. See William Langland, *Piers Plowman*, eds. Elizabeth Robertson and Stephen H. A. Shepherd (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2006), xi, xxi.

11 Rhyming iambic pentameter.

12 See the section “Prose and poetry” in the Introduction.


14 Strictly speaking (as categorized by al-Akhfash al-Awsaṭ [d. 215/830 or 221/836] and Ismat’ī ibn Ḥannām al-Jawhari [d. 393/1003 or later]), the ḥazāj meter mentioned above belongs to the mazzāʾ (“shortened by one foot each hemistich”) group. In the māshṭūr (“halved”) or mānhīk (“emaciated”) meters, a verse is made up not of couplets but of single lines. Therefore the minimal number of syllables in a poetic line will be seven (mānhīk al-munsāriḥ, “the emaciated munsāriḥ”).

15 A līn contains two jūṣ (line, sentence).

16 *Jintishi* includes lišī (lit. “regulated verse”) and jêjû (lit. “the cut verse”). Lišī usually comprises eight lines or four couplets. Parallelism is required between the lines of the second and third couplets. While jêjû is a quatrains and equals to the first half of a līshī. Parallelism is not required in jêjû. If a piece of lišī exceeds eight lines, it is called *palki* (排律). All forms of *jintishi* are monorhymed and can be either five-character or seven-character.

17 The most frequently used meter of classical Sanskrit poetry is sloka or anusṭubh. A sloka stanza has two verses (hemistichs). Each verse has sixteen long (guru) or short (laghu) syllables with the following pattern: X X X X | U -- -- X || X X X X | U -- -- X || X X X X | U -- -- X || (U is short syllable, -- is long, X is either or “anceps” in the terminology of Greek and Latin meter). A long syllable is one that contains a long vowel or a diphthong, or a short vowel followed by more than one consonant.


19 Hava, Dictionary, 621.


21 In this episode, al-īskandarī disguises himself as the head of Bânī Sāṣān. Bânī Sāṣān, literally “the children of Sāṣān,” is “the blanket designation in mediaeval Islamic literature for the practitioners of begging, swindling, confidence tricks, the displaying of disfiguring diseases, mutilated limbs, etc.” See C. E. Bosworth, “Sāṣān, Bânū,” in *EI*. Also see Bosworth, *Underworld*.


23 See the meter schemes in Stoetzer, “Prosody,” 621.

24 The letters that are absent in this example are kharbīj (one of the letters alif, wāw, yāʾ that succeeds a movent wasl ḥāʾ), taʾsīs (the letter alif indicating the long vowel ā in the second syllable before the rawī) and dakhil (the letter between the taʾsīs and the rawī). The absent vowels are naḍīḥ (the vowel of the ḥāʾ when there is a kharbīj following it), tawījīh (the vowel of the short syllable before the rawī) and rass (the vowel of the letter before the taʾsīs). See Drory, *Models and Contacts*, 86-88.

25 It is the only consonant, while all the other components—taʾsīs, ridāf, wasl (if not followed by a kharbīj)—are signs indicating long vowels. See Drory, *Models and Contacts*, 95.

26 Ibid., 65.

27 The *Luzūmīyāt*, which is short for *Luzūm mā lā yalzam* (“Observing rules that are not prescribed”), is a diwān of over 1500 poems. Its author, Abū ʿAlā al-Maʿarrī (d. 449/1057), took the challenge of adopting at least another radical before the rawī to form its rhyming. Even in such a diwān, al-Maʿarrī rarely deviates from his maximum norm of three consonants (including morphological consonants like ḥāʾ, tāʾ, kāf, nān and mīn) per rhyme. See ibid., 74-76.

28 Both of them are originally related to water and irrigation. A discussion of rūwāyāh is found in the section “Rūwāyāh and hikāyāh” in Chapter I.


30 See J.A. Haywood, D. N. MacKenzie and J. Eckmann, “Ḵāmūs，“ in *EI*. “The first major work to use this system” is
al-Sihâh compiled by the lexicographer Ismâ‘îl ibn Ḥannâm al-Jawharî, a contemporary of al-Hamadhâni. See ibid.

32 The title literally means “cutting rhymes” which refers to the Chinese spelling method of jâmqie 反切 (translated by Bernhard Karlgren as “turning and cutting”). This method is thought to have originated during the second century C.E. and “possibly influenced by knowledge of Indian phonology.” See William Hubbard Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology* (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), 33.

33 Such as Tangyun 唐韻 and Guanyun 唐韻.

34 They are the groups of pingsheng 平聲 (“even tone”), shangsheng 上聲 (“rising” or “up tone”), qusheng 去聲 (“departing tone”), and rusheng 入聲 (“centering tone”). See William Hubbard Baxter, *EI2*.

35 Ibid., 34.

36 The first transliteration is pinyin, the second one is its Middle Chinese reconstruction according to Baxter.

37 As a notion contrast to Old Chinese and Modern Chinese, Middle Chinese (hereafter abbreviated as MC) can refer to the Chinese language used during the Southern and Northern Dynasties (420 C.E.-589 C.E.), and the Sui (581-618 C.E.) and Tang (618-907 C.E.) Dynasties.

38 Ibid., 6-7.

39 Similar to the coda, the medial is absent in some finals (e.g., the final -swng).

40 See ibid., 766.

41 What is not pingsheng, i.e., shangsheng, qusheng and rushing, is considered a ze 去 (deflected tone).


43 It can either be the elongated pausal form (e.g., the aforementioned rhyme -imā where the vowel of the rawī is elongated by the waṣī or the truncated form (e.g., the rhymes -ā with [a vowelless rawī sīn] and -mah [with a vowelless waṣī hā] to be found in ’Abduh, 37). The truncated one was the only pausal form used in saf’. See Dmitry Frolov, “The Place of Rajaz in the History of Arabic Verse,” in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 28, no. 3 (1997): 242-90, esp. 265.

44 The date of this mysterious poet has remained a controversial question. The translator Red Pine opines that “he would have been born around 730” and died around 850. See Hanshan, *The Collected Songs of Cold Mountain*, trans. Red Pine (Port Townsend, WA: Copper Canyon Press, 2000), 13.

45 Ibid., 78-79. The poem pays attention to the rhyme and parallelism requirements of lūshì. However, it does not strictly observe the pingze. For example, we scanned five consecutive ze sounds in 禁馬放石磧 (Fine steeds are grazed on the gobî). We would note that Qu Yuan 屈原 (c. 339-278 B.C.E.) had used the theme several times in his poems. See the luan of Shì jiàng 涉江 (“Crossing the River”), in *Chu ci ji zhu* 楚辭集註, ed. Zhu Xi 朱熹 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1953), 76a-76b; and David Hawkes, *The Songs of the South* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), 161.


47 The end-rhymes wang 望, mang 茫, huang 黃, tang 堂 and lang 浪 either belong to the Yang 陽 rhyme (containing words with the MC finals -jang and -iawng) or the Tang 唐 rhyme (containing words with the MC finals -ang and -awng). In the Qieyun these two rhyme groups are placed in adjacent positions, “reflecting the fact that all of these finals normally rhyme with each other freely in poetry of the time.” See Baxter, *A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology*, 34.

48 It is similar to the rhyming couplet (muzdawij) which came into being in the Abbasid times, possibly under Iranian influences. “By restricting the constraint imposed by the rhyme, it became possible to compose narrative, historical or didactic poems of some length.” See Manfred Ullmann and Wolfhart Heinrichs, “Radjaz,” in *EF*. In many of the so-called new yuefu 樂府 (Music Bureau of Han dynasty) poems by Bo Juyi 白居易 (772 C.E.-846 C.E.), the usage of rhyming couplet is very evident, see Fu Rong Ren 砥成人 whose English translation is found in Arthur Waley, *Translations from the Chinese* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1941), 174-77.

49 “By tail-rhyme romances are meant romances composed in stanzas of twelve lines divided into four groups of three, each group containing, as a rule, a couplet with four accents to the line, and a concluding line, a ‘tail,’ with three accents. The four couplets, in most of the poems, have different rhymes, while the tail-lines rhyming with one another organize the stanza into a whole.” See A. Mcl. Trounge, “The English Tail-rhyme Romances,” in *Medium Ævum* 1, no. 2 (1932): 87-108 (quotation from 87). The *Tale of Sir Thopas* adopts a stanza-form of “only six lines, rhyming aabaab or aabccb.” See Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales*, ed. Jill Mann (London: Penguin Books, 2005), 993.

50 Chaucer, *Tales*, 991.

51 Ibid., 992.

52 The reverse also occurs, i.e., the adding of final -e to words which would not normally carry it. Actually in the *Ormulum* which was about 150 years earlier than CT, “forms with and without -e were used indifferently in words belonging to the same grammatical category.” Final -e was totally discarded after c. 1400. See Early Middle English Verse and Prose, xxix, xxxi.

53 VII: 712-717, see Chaucer, *Tales*, 501. Actually the rhyme scheme Chaucer applies in the tale is quite similar to

For other Chaucerian examples, see *Early Middle English Verse and Prose*, li.

Whitehall, “Rhyme: Sources and Diffusion,” 26. Old English (Anglo-Saxon) is the language spoken and written in England before 1100; Middle English is the vernacular spoken and written in England from about 1100 to about 1500. See “Old English language” and “Middle English language,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, academic edition, online version.


The change affects the long and stressed vowels. Some Middle English vowels, like /æː/ (as in “see”) and /ɛː/ (as in “east”) were gradually combined into one vowel, i.e., /eː/ in Modern English.

The script of *Shijing* and, to some extent, its text have been reworked towards the end of the first millennium B.C.E., see William Baxter, “Zhōu and Hān Phonology in the Shījīng,” in *Studies in the Historical Phonology of Asian Languages*, edited by William G. Boltz and Michael C. Shapiro (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins Pub. Co., 1991), 1-34.

Diglossia is “the coexistence of two varieties of the same language throughout a speech community. Often, one form is the literary or prestige dialect, and the other is a common dialect spoken by most of the population.” See “diglossia,” in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, academic edition, online version.

It is a collection of 126 old-Arabic poems made by the Kufan philologist al-Mufaddal al-DAbbī. 61

Because of both the scarcity of written evidence and the prevalence of orality in pre- and early Islamic literatures, it is hard “to trace with any certainty either the early development or diffusions” of the Arabic end-rhyme. See Whitehall, “Rhyme: Sources and Diffusion,” 22.


In fact, al-*Ajājī (d. c. 91/710) once composed a 200-line rajāj poetry (urjūzah) with the same -iyī rhyme. See Ullmann et al., “Radjāz.”

Muslims use the term *Jāhiliyyah* (“Age of Ignorance [of the divine truth]”) to refer to the historical period before the advent of Islam, i.e., the paganism of Arabia.


Toufic Fahd, Wolfhart Heinrichs and A. Ben Abdesselem, “Sāḏī,” in *EF*. Fahd was quoting from Tāj al-ʿarāṣ.


See Dt 28:34.

See 1Sam. 21:16.

*HALOT*, 1415.

About the kāhin’s function as guardian, see Toufic Fahd, *La Divination Arabe* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1966), 107-12.

Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2006), 462 (hereafter cited as *BDDB*). Toufic Fahd explains why the kāhin is better translated as diviner than priest. The predominance of nomadism not only assigned the function of sacrifice to tribal leaders but “prevented the establishment of an official form of worship and fixed places of worship,” thus weakened the kāhin’s role as a sacrificer. See Toufic Fahd, “Kāhin,” in *EF*.

*BDDB*, 993.

*Mantis* and *maniā* are connected by the same root *men-*; thus both can stand for “one who is in a special [that is, marked or differentiated] mental state.” Gregory Nagy, “Ancient Greek Poetry, Prophecy and Concepts of Theory,” in *Poetry and Prophecy: the Beginnings of a Literary Tradition*, ed. James L. Kugel (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1990), 56-64 (quotation from 60).

Ibid. Nagy’s translation is quoted and adapted from Benjamin Jowett’s version, to be found in Plato, *Dialogues*, 467. Unlike Jowett, Nagy does not term the seers “prophets,” nor what the seers say “prophesy.”

Nagy, “Ancient Greek Poetry, Prophecy and Concepts of Theory,” 60. Nagy only gives the singular and normal form of the Greek word.

Ibid., 61.

Nagy remarks that the seer Teiresias of Greek myth is also the “prophētēs of Zeus,” reflecting an earlier and undifferentiated stage. We are also reminded of Aaron, the first Kohen Gadol (Great Priest), who was supposed to be the tongue of the Prophet Moses, the less eloquent seer.

Plato, *Dialogues*, 467.

Although most of the Qur’ānic verses are in fact *saj*’ (see Devin Stewart, “Sāj” in the Qurʾān: prosody and structure,” in *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21 [1990]: 101-39), discussion of the style of Qurʾān became a taboo subject.
following the advent of Islam. The majority of Muslims believe that there is no divination after the Prophecy (lā kihānata ba da al-nubūwah). Fortunately, the Qurʾān does not prohibit the speaking of jinn, therefore, as we shall see in the following discussion, these supernatural beings were frequently associated with prodigious intelligence, eloquence, and repartee.

83 “J’ay souvent ouy en proverbe vulgaire qu’un fol enseigne bien un saige.” See François Rabelais (d. 1553), Oeuvres complètes (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1962), 1:558. Pantagruel emphasizes that the roles of fool (Sot) or jester (Badin) always went to the most experienced actors in a company. Interestingly, Feste in Shakespeare’s Twelfth Night is also described as “wise enough to play the fool.”


85 In fact, these attributions could fit well Chinese hermits like Jie Yu 捺與 and Sang Hu 桑扈, as well as mysterious monks like Cold Mountain, Wang “the Brahmacārīn” 王梵志 and Crazy Ji (Daoji 道濟), who were noted for their madness and eccentricity, and were highly popular among the Chinese people.

86 Abdūh, 122-23; Prendergast, 101. The qāfīyah is represented in bold letters. The letter inside the parentheses stands for the part of qāfīyah (khurūj in this case) that is usually not pronounced in the recitation of saj’.


88 A discussion of the maqāmah’s prologues is to be found in the section “Thus have I heard” in Chapter IV.

89 Drory, Models and Contacts, 105.

90 The Maqāmah of Hulwān (al-Maqāmah al-Hulwāniyāh).

91 The transliteration ā is actually the combination of rass and ta’sīṣ.

92 See A. J. Wensinck, “Tarāwīḥ (a.),” in EF.

93 Abdūh, 173-74; Prendergast, 133.

94 The English term malapropism (cf. Fr. mal à propos, “ill-suited”) comes from a character named Mrs. Malaprop in Richard Brinsley Sheridan’s (d. 1816) play The Rivals (1775).

95 Prendergast, 134; ‘Abduh, 174. We would like to point out that the word hadhayān (sometimes together with khurāfah, namely “fable” or “myth”) was often used by Maimonides (1138-1204) to refer to the pseudo-science “that is not based on the evidence of the senses or on rational argument.” “The appearance of this tag is an indication that the book or books so labeled contain lengthy incoherent babbling (hadhayān tāvīl), like the talk of a person afflicted with madness or hallucinations.” See Sarah Stroumsa, Maimonides in His World: Portrait of a Mediterranean Thinker (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2009), 138-52 (quotation from 141, 145).

96 Prendergast, 135 (with change); ‘Abduh, 175.

97 Qurʾān is a synonym of shiʿr which comprises the qaṣīdaḥs and qiṭʾaḥs (fragments). It “would add the idea of cutting into the living flesh of words, a material which resists and does not let itself be easily manipulated.” See A. Arazī, S. Moreh, J. T. P. de Brujin, J. A. Haywood, M. Hiskett, “Shīʾr,” in EF.

98 ‘Abduh, 6. Prendergast translates it as “learned one,” see Prendergast, 27.

99 Prendergast, 134, n. 5.

100 Al-Hamadhānī’s patron in Rayy, the powerful Būyid vizier Ibn ‘Abbād, was both Shīʿī and Muʿtazilī. Therefore it is easy to understand the reason behind the barber’s madness.

101 Fahd, “Kāhin.”

102 The verb ʿāfā means “to augur from the flight of (birds),” see Hava, Dictionary, 513.

103 The verb zayāra means “to scare a bird away for drawing auguries,” see ibid., 284.

104 Toufic Fahd, “Kiyyāfa,” in EF.

105 Munāfarah means a dispute. It is the synonym of munāzarah.

106 See Fahd, “Kāhin.”

107 Prendergast, 100; ‘Abduh, 121.

108 Prendergast, 100; ‘Abduh, 121.

109 “Because of their uncompromising interpretation of God’s unity (tawhīd) as expressed in Q 27:26, Q 112, etc., the Muʿtazilīs were strictly opposed to the admission of anything co-eternal with God.” For example, they insisted on the “createdness of the Qurʾān.” See Sabine Schmidtke, “Muʿtazila,” in Encyclopædia of the Qurʾān, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (Leiden: Brill, 2009), online version.

110 Prendergast, 101 (translation adapted); ‘Abduh, 124. Rhyming with morphological suffix alone is one of saj’s deviations from the classical rule. This kind of sound-poor qāfīyahs “appear side by side with” sound-rich ones in the maqāmah genre. See Drory, Models and Contacts, 114.

111 ‘Abduh, 15. The meter is wāfīr and is schematized as U --- --- | U --- --- | U --- --- | U --- --- | U --- --- | U --- --- | U --- --- | U --- --- |

112 Prendergast, 33, with a little change.

113 Muḥammad ‘Abduh briefly explains in his annotation how augury was practiced in the era of the Jāhiliyyah. If you
scared (in zajartahu) the bird and it flew away to your right and chirped, that meant a good omen. On the other hand, it would be an evil omen if the bird flew to your left side. See `Abduh, 15, n. 8.

Augury is hinted in Aristophanes’s The Birds, see The Comedies of Aristophanes, 1: 334-35. Pushpodbhava, one of Danḍin’s ten princes, also resorts to augury to foretell the reunion with Rajavahana. See Danḍin, Danḍin’s Dasha-kumara-charita; The Ten Princes, trans. Arthur W. Ryder (Chicago: Chicago UP, 1960, c1927), 39, 42, 43.


For example, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām acts in the Maqāmah of the Spindle (al-Maqāmah al-Mighzaliyyah).

See Hava, Dictionary, 769.

See Arazi et al., “Shīʿa” and Ullmann et al., “Radjāz.”

Prendergast, 113; ʿAbduh, 142.

Preserved among the Dunhuang manuscripts of popular literature, it is a monorhymed narrative poem comprising 320 lines. See Xiang Chu 節楚, Dunhuang bianwen xuanzhu 敦煌變文選註 (Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1989), 139-90. The first part depicts how Ji Bu succeeded in dispelling the forces of Liu Bang 劉邦 by the Chinese equivalent of a hijā (臣罵漢王三五口，不施弓弩遣抽軍, see ibid., 139).

In the Xijing fu 西京賦 (Fu on Western Metropolis), Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139 C.E.) describes a group of itinerant persuaders and disputants (遊麗, 辯論之士). “Whatever they liked grew down and feathers; whatever the detested grew wounds and ulcers” (所好生毛羽, 所惡成創瘡). See Liu chen zhu Wen xuan 六臣註文選 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1987), 44-62 (quotation from 52); Wen xuan, 1: 180-241 (quotation from 205).

Prendergast, 50; ʿAbduh, 42.

Prendergast, 102; ʿAbduh, 125.

Al-Farazdaq, Jarīf (d. 110/728-9) and al-Akhtal (d. 92/710) were extremely famous for the naqāʿ id or flytings among themselves. See G. J. H. van Gelder, “Naḵāʿ id,” in EI2. Nabia Abbott’s Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri: III. Language and Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972) mentions their flytings several times.

Prendergast, 102; ʿAbduh, 124.

See the sections “Munāzarah” and “You” in this chapter, “The dinar” in Chapter III, “Agon” and “Duet and solo” in Chapter IV.

See the end of the section “Prose and poetry” in the Introduction.

Fahd, La Divination Arabe, 154. The applications of rajaz in pre-Islamic times are noted in battlefield lampoon, urging camels and casting spells, functions that accord with those of the shāʿ ir mentioned above. See Ullmann et al., “Radjāz.”

Fahd et al., “Sadī.”

Outbuddin also mentions the oration-cum-prayer carried out in times of drought (istiqāṣ) and eclipses (kusūf), see Outbuddin, “Khutha,” 198-99.


Its first episode relates how al-Iskandarī and ʿĪsā ibn Hishām pretended to bring back a dead man to life by means of amulets—a practice seems very similar to that of the witch doctors (it echoes the kāhin’s name taḥīīb). Al-Hamadhānī’s account was no doubt a satirical one. Both episodes can be read as parody on the kāhin’s witchcrafts; al-Iskandarī also scoffs the stupidity of the people in the environs. Apparenply as an offering for river deities. The sacrifice of heifer is an allusion to Qurʾān 2:67-73.

Prendergast, 87; ʿAbduh, 102. This proposal reminds us, in the Chinese tradition, of witches in the Warring States period (476-221 B.C.E.) who used to “marry” (i.e., to sacrifice/drown) young virgins to the god of the Yellow River 河伯. It is mentioned in the story of Ximen Bao (司馬遷, c. 145-c.87 B.C.E.).


Kālidāsā (fl. 5th century C.E.), Śākoontala; or, The Lost Ring, trans. Monier Monier-Williams (London: George Routledge and Son, Ltd., 1898), xxxi, 1. Kālidāsā ends his play with another prayer as well. See ibid., 207, n. 1.

Danḍin’s Kāvyādāsṛasa, xiv, 1, 4.

ʿAbduh, 44; Prendergast, 51-52. This prayer appears in the Maqāmah of Adhbarṣayjān (al-Maqāmah al-Adhbarṣayjāniyyah). The series of the vocatives is a vivid reminder of some of the Meccan āṣṣāṣīnāt (pl. of qāṣṣās). There is even a proverb “a qāṣṣ loves not another qāṣṣ.” See Charles Pellat, “Kāṣṣ,” in EI2.
For example, al-Iskandari carries a walking-stick in the aforementioned Maqāmah of Adharbayjān.

Shaft al-Dīn al-Hilī’s (d. c. 750/1349) al-Qaṣīdah al-Sāsānīyah (v. 24) mentions the use of sticks and tambourines at the time of recitation. “And on how many forays for extracting money have I recited poetry from the back of a camel, declaiming in a loud voice, whilst my companions shake tambourines and beat sticks in time to the verse!” See Bosworth, Underworld, 2:296.

Abduh, 78-79. “Rhyming a geminated consonant with a single one” (ghanij(in) / hazij(in) / shajj(in) / harij(in)) is permitted in saj’ and archaic rajaz. See Frolov, “The Place of Rajaz,” 265.

Prendergast, 74.

The tiny bells (sg. juljul; pl. jalājil) attached to the staff accentuate the rhythm of the beats. His tapping may function in the same way as the formulaic tunes which lead the vocal prelude (ka’ipan 間篇) in the Chinese tanci. The use of bells and the improvisational nature of his “raps” remind us of the Chinese shulaibao 數來寶, which was originally performed by wandering beggars. Shulaibao can be performed as solo or by two persons. The fast, rhymed oral performance is usually accompanied with the beating of bamboo castanets, cow hiphones (each attached with thirteen bells), etc.

Mahmūd al-Mas’ādī has worked on the rhythms (iqā) of saj’ in al-Hamadhānī’s maqāmāt, see Mahmoud Messadi, Essai sur le rythme dans la prose rimée en arabe (Tunis: Abdelkerim Ben Abdallah, 1981). According to him (20, 55), a Hamadhānīan colon would most frequently comprise six to nine syllables, and the essential rhythm is schematized as U -- U --, which is exactly the iambic dipody. In fact, the rhythm X -- -- U -- reminds us of the dochmius (U -- -- U --) in Greek comedy. See John Williams White, The Verse of Greek Comedy (London: Macmillan and Co., 1912.), 206. White holds that the dochmius “is in origin an iambic tripod” for it is chiefly associated with iambic rhythm in both Greek tragedy and comedy. Ibid., 297 (§§ 627-29).

The reciter may also become breathless after reading such a combination of long syllables. One of the faults in composing the Chinese modern-style poetry is called san lian ze 三連仄 (the sequence of three even-tone sounds in the end of a line), which should be avoided for it causes difficulty in articulation and breaks the balance of short and long sounds.

His first rajaz-poem contains more short syllables than the second. We have even noted one occurrence of three consecutive short syllables in the end of afoot (yā gawmu ham baynakumu min ḥarr, scanned as -- -- U -- -- U U U | -- -- |), which somewhat reminds us of san lian ze 三連仄 (the sequence of three deflected-tone sounds in the end of a line) which in Chinese verse is regarded as being a fault. Dmitry Frolov informs that the pattern of fa’ilatun (U U U --), or the five-harf segment (al-fāṣilah al-kabārā), is considered “a grave metrical defect” by the theory of Ārūd (classical Arabic metrics), “and fa’ilatun does not occur in rhyming clauses of any Ārūd meter, including professional urjīzā.” See Frolov; “The Place of Rajaz,” 264, 269.

The Greek prophet is said to have been blinded by Athena. She then granted him acute hearing, thus including the ability to practice augury in light of birdsong.


He was one of the great muwashshah-poets of Muslim Spain. The name means “the blind [bard] of Tudela.” We will discuss the genre of muwashshah in the sections “The dimeter” in Chapter III and “Kharjah” in Chapter IV.

Liu Xie, 88-89. It is put as gufu 疊賦 or soufu 莊賦. As mentioned in the section “Riwiwāh and ikīwāh” in Chapter I, a būțivah can mimic the blind. The beggar who feigns blindness is called ʾistil in Abū Dula’s al-Qaṣīdah al-Sāsānīyah (v. 51). See Bosworth, Underworld, 1: 39, 2: 196.

Fahd et al., “Sadi.”

“All this is a close parody on the rite of purification as practiced by itinerant superstition-peddlers on ignorant dupes.” See Aristophanes, Clouds, ed. Lewis Leaming Forman (New York: American Book co., c1915), 109.

Strepsiades’s fear accords with our previous proposal of the kāhin’s involvement in “astrometeorological sayings” and “descriptions of clouds and rain.” It is known that one of Socrates’s teachers was the female seer Diotima of Mantinea. Then it would not surprise us that the Clouds later call him “O priest of most subtle trifles.” See The Comedies of Aristophanes, 1:133. Socrates’s prayer, which is in anaenastic tetrameter, beautifully pictures the august goddesses in different shapes at four directions of the world. This prayer will make a nice comparison to some of Qu Yuan’s poems. Cf. David Hawkes, “The Quest of the Goddess,” in Asia Major, n.s.v. 13 (1967): 71-94.


Prendergast, 31.

Abduh, 92; Prendergast, 81-82.

See Abū Dula’s al-Qaṣīdah al-Sāsānīyah (v. 59): “who dyed his hands and face with red ochre and declaims poetry in public,” quoted from Bosworth, Underworld, 2:198.

Ibid., 1:100.


Abduh, 53-54; Prendergast, 58.

Abduh, 54; Prendergast, 58.

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Such as the monkey trainer (The Maqāmah of the Ape [al-Maqqāmah al-Qidīyāh]), the barber (The Maqāmah of Hulwān), and the mountebank (The Maqāmah of Siṣṭān [al-Maqqāmah al-Sīṣṭānīyāh]).


In one of the Sanskrit Jātakamālās by Āryaśūra, the prince Sutasoma saved himself by prevailing four gāthās to the cannibalistic Kalnāśhapādā. Interestingly, the prince had previously learnt those gāthās from a Brahmin and paid him one thousand pieces of gold for each.

Alan Cooper, “Imagining Prophecy,” in Poetry and Prophecy, 26-44 (quotation from 34).

Al-Ḥarīrizi is also famed for being the Hebrew translator of al-Ḥarīrī’s Maqāmah. In medieval Hebrew literature, “a quasi-prophetic revelation” became a conventional mode of framing in various maqāmāt and related rhymed narratives. “At the outset the author would describe, for example, how he had been commanded by an angel or a heavenly voice to write his book.” See Dan Pagis, “Poet as Prophet in Medieval Hebrew,” in ibid., 140-50 (quotation from 143).

Midrash Mishle (Proverbs) contains a version of the Queen’s riddles. See Jacob Lassner, Demonsizing the Queen of Sheba: Boundaries of Gender and Culture in Postbiblical Judaism and Medieval Islam (Chicago: the University of Chicago Press, 1993), 161-62. The queen’s ability to coin riddles is also said to be inherited from her jinn-mother.


See the beginning of the section “Ayyām al-ʿArab” in Chapter I.

Abduh, 16; Prendergast, 33-34.

We need to observe that the devil poses a riddle for Īsā ibn Hishām in the Maqāmah of Iblīs. See Prendergast, 141; Abduh, 183-84. In this relatively long riddle, the devil compares the flame in a lamp to the effect of moths (ṣūr) on clothes. The same metaphor is used in the Maqāmah of Nishapūr (al-Maqqāmah al-Nayṣābūrīyāh) where al-Iskandari satirically likens a judge (gādi) to a moth that attacks orphans’ woolen garments. See Prendergast, 150; Abduh, 199.

“Riddle, n.1,” in OED.


Allen, Heritage, 72.

Abduh, 164-65; Prendergast, 128-29.

In our discussion of “The staff,” we have already mentioned this phenomenon in the Maqāmah of the Blind.

Rina Drory draws our attention to the maximal sound similarity displayed in the maqāmah’s rhyming scheme. It is not only more than what early saj ‘demanded, but close to that of wasf poems. See Drory, Models and Contacts, 114.

This rajaz-poem is to be discussed in the section “The dimeter” of Chapter III.


Prendergast, 129.

In one story of the Hibbur yafeh, the 11th-century Jewish version of al-Faraj ba da al-shiddah, a woman seeks the king’s judgment by beginning her speech with a similar formula: “May God prolongs the king’s life!” See Nissim ben Jacob ibn Shāhīn, An Elegant Composition concerning Relief after Adversity, trans. William M. Brinner (New Haven: Yale UP, 1977), 173.


Prendergast, 128.

See the section “Divinatory functions” above. Unlike the successful arbitration of Īsā ibn Hishām, Confucius becomes dumbfounded after hearing the case.

See al-Maqqāsid, Tatāwur, 13. This piece is often quoted to prove the connection of saj’ with kāhin.

It is probable that the pre-Islamic maʃkārah (boasting of the merits of one’s tribe to the detriment of another), and the large element of fakhr (self-glorification) to be found in early Arabic poetry in general, played its part in the development of the munāzarah. See Mattock, “The Arabic Tradition,” 154.

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila, “The Essay and Debate,” in Arabic Literature in the Post-Classical Period, 134-44 (quotation from 141). This again points to the blurred boundaries between the risālah and maqāmah.

Guo Weisen and Xu Jie, Zhongguo cifu fazhan shi 中國辭賦發展史 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1996), 6-8, 84-86.

The character ci 詞, which is used in phrases like xìci 倫辞 (rhetoric; lit. “refined ci”), contains a xin and could originally be connected with lawsuit. Cf. the abovementioned character bian 辯. Chu 楚 is the name of an ancient southern kingdom (770-223 B.C.E.) located in the central valley of the Yangtze River.

See the section “Forms and functions” in the Introduction.

“The typical song line of Shi jing is one of four equally accented syllables.” The stanza, with is usually rhyming quatrains, has the same tum tum tum tum beat throughout the four lines. See The Songs of the South, 40.

Category A is prosodically similar to Shi jing, while the Category B poems (e.g., the Li sao) “are almost wholly written in long, flowing lines suitable for recitation.” The long line of the Category B has the pattern tum tum tum ti tum tum xi: tum tum tum ti tum tum. Xi is the refrain-word or breath particle and ti represents the unstressed syllable (compared to the stressed tum). See ibid., 41. We may add that the Category B meters could be compared to the elegiac couplet (the dactylic hexameter plus the hemiepes [half-epic]) that Ovid used in his Tristia and Heroïdes. The aforementioned poem in Consolation of Philosophy (Liber I, Metrum V) also uses the elegiac couplet.


Shisan jing zhushu: Maoshi zhengyi 十三經註疏: 毛詩正義 (Beijing: Peking UP, 1999), 1:6-8. This preface was made by the commentator Mao Heng 毛亨, whose exact date of birth is unclear. It is said that Mao Heng had studied Shi jing with Xunzi 荀子 (d. 238 B.C.E.). For the English translation of this preface, see Jeffrey Riegel, “Shih-ching Poetry and Didacticism in Ancient Chinese Literature,” in The Columbia History of Chinese Literature, 97-109 (quotiation from 108). Also see Dore J. Levy, “Literary Theory and Criticism,” in ibid., 916-39, esp. 919-20.

Guo and Xu, Zhongguo cifu fazhan shi, 11.

For example the aforementioned Tian wen 天問, which is “a shamanistic (?) catechism consisting of questions about cosmological, astronomical, mythological and historical matters” (The Songs of the South, 38), reminds us of the Zoroastrian Gāthās, see Helmut Humbach, The Gāthās of Zarathushtra and the Other Old Avestan Texts (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1991), 1:120ff.

See n. 159 above.

Heinrichs also compares the maqāmah genre to opera: “to see the rhymed-prose speeches as recitative, and the ‘unnecessary’ poems as arias. Some of the poems are, of course, clearly described as songs.” See Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres,” 270.

The six principles are divided into two categories: 風 feng (airs), 雅 ya (odes) and 歌 song (hymns) “mark distinctions of genre among the poems,” while fu, 比 bi (comparasion or simile) and 興 xing (affective image) “are techniques whereby the artist organizes language to create certain effects.” See Levy, “Literary Theory and Criticism,” 920-21.

Connelly, “Sao, Fu, Parallel Prose, and Related Genres,” 224.

Song Yu’s date is unknown to us. He is said to be the student of Qu Yuan.


As compared with the expressive nature (yanqing 言情) of Chu ci.

Wu tai or the Five Great Ones were the answerers of the riddle of the silkworm. Whether they are interpreted as shamans or the Five Di Ancestors, it is clear that they functioned as diviners (五帝占之曰). Therefore the superior figures in the Treatise of Fu can easily be compared with arbiters in the pre-Islamic context.

We will not quote the king’s answer in full, but it is to be noted that both its rhyme and meter change after a few colons. A change of style is supposed to break the monotony and demarcate the answer from the question.

“This is an allusion to the attempt by political thinkers of the day to create the Vertical Alliance between Han, Wei, Zhao, and Chu, with Yan and Qi sometimes included, to block the advance of Qin and the rival Horizontal Axis between Qin and Qi, which would divide the world into two spheres of influences.” See ibid., 3: 358–59, n. 19.

Ban Gu 班固, Han shu 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 2609 (《漢書·司馬相如傳贊》: “揚雄以為靡麗之賦，勸百而風一，獵騂騂之聲，曲終而奏雅，不已戲乎！”) Also see Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶, Fayan yi shu 法言義疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 45–49.

Chaucer: Sources and Backgrounds, 42.

For the same reason al-Harīrī believes that sensible people will rank his Maqāmāt “in the order of useful writings, and class them with the fables that relate to brutes and lifeless objects.” See The Assemblies of al Harīrī, 1:107.

Knoblock, 3:191.

In the Introduction, we have mentioned the admonition genre listed in the Wenxuan.

Bloodletting or acupuncture by means of a stone needle (bian 碑) was indistinguishable from our more familiar idea of acupuncture with a metal needle (針).

Xunzi ji jie, 480–84.

Knoblock, 3:192.

See the section “Three examples” above.

The last coda poem was thought to be dedicated to the Lord of Chunshen 春申君 (d. 238 B.C.E.), Xunzi’s patron.

Knoblock, 3:191.

See n. 179 above.

Knoblock, 1:45.

Knoblock, 3:49. Loosely speaking, the concept of ī is very close to that of adab. Thus today we can use limao 禮貌 (the countenance of ī) to translate mu’addab (someone who possesses adab, who is cultivated), the Arabic word for “courteous.”

They look extremely similar to some of the divinatory functions of the kāhins. Ancient Chinese divination and sacrifice were also closely connected with rhymed speech. For example, Qu Yuan’s Zhao hun 招魂 (Summons of the Soul), a poem of the Category-A meter, is supposed to be the speech of Wu Yang 巫陽 who was the Master of Dreams and acted as a soul-summoner in that poem.

It is called liu jing 六經 (Six Classics; lit. “Six Warps”) which comprises the Historical Documents (Shu jing 書經), the Shi jing, the Changes (Yi jing 易經), the Music (Yue jing 樂經, not extant), the Rituals, and the Annals (Chunqiu 春秋 or the Spring and Autumn Annals). See Knoblock, 1: 42–49.


Knoblock, 3:114.


Han Yu was one of the initiators of the “Classical Prose Movement” 古文運動 in mid-Tang, which opposed to the prevalence of parallel prose since the Six Dynasties (220 C.E. –589 C.E.). The parallel prose inherited many of the ornament of Han ēu. As for Han Yu’s dichotomy of poti and zunti, see the section “Style-breaking” in the Introduction.

“Abduh, 152–53; Prendergast, 120. Horses were important for human civilizations, especially for military uses. An-Tânkhī mentioned that the kātīb in the army department needs to know “the good points of horses.” See Beeston, “The Genesis,” 4. Zhou izers also allot several chapters on positions connected with horse breeding. In the beginning of the Mahābhārata story Nāla and Damayanti, we are told that King Nala was well-versed in (the knowledge of) horse. Horses also left their traces in ancient Iranian languages like Kavi Vištāpa (Vištāpa) who was Zoroaster’s great patron, and Pourušasp, the father of the prophet. See Humbach, Gāthās, 1:9. In the prologos of The Clouds, Strepsiades recounts how he and his wife decided to name their son Pheidippides, which means “thrift-horse.” The horse al-Iskandar praises here is said to belong to the great Ḥamādānī amīr Sayf al-Dawlā (303–356/916–967). The prince Sayf al-Dawlā was not only a brutal and successful ruler, but also a poet and philologist. He was most famous for...
his patronage of the philosopher Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950) and the poet al-Mutannabī.  
251 In Rui he tu juan 瑞鶴圖卷 (Scroll of Auspicious Cranes) dated 1112 (second year of the Zhenghe 政和 Era), Emperor Zhao Ji 趙佶 (1082-1135 C.E.) painted twenty cranes. Two of them were standing on the roof, while the others were flying above in different positions. From his colophon it is known that only two cranes were “real,” thus the other eighteen images are depicting the motions of the two. Likewise, Edgar Degas’ (1834-1917) “Dancers in Green and Yellow” (Guggenheim, New York) could be interpreted as five different poses of the same dancer.
252 If a connection can be established between description (wasf) and sketch, then we probably can understand why many illustrated manuscripts of al-Ḥarīrī’s Maqāmāt are extant to this day. Among them there is one made by Yahyā ibn Mahmūd al-Wāṣīṭī in 634/1237. The manuscript is now kept in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, coded arabe 5874 (168 folios, 37*28 centimeters). See Oleg Grabar, “The 1237 manuscript of the Magamat al-Ḥarīrī,” in Al-Maqāmāt al-Ḥarāris, illustrated by Y. Al-Wasiti, facsimile ed. (London: Touch@rt, c2003), 7-17.
253 The Fihrist (“The Index”), composed by the Shi’ī bookseller (warrāq) Abū al-Faraj Muḥammad ibn al-Nadīm (d. c. 385/995), “is intended to be an index of all books written in Arabic.” According to the larger edition of this work, there are ten discourses (maqālāt) or chapters which deal with books on both Islamic and non-Islamic subjects. See J. W. Fück, “Ibn al-Nadīm, Abu ‘l-Farajī Muḥammad b. Abī Ya’kūb Isḥāk al-Warrāk al-Baghdādī,” in EI².
254 Han shu, 1701-84, esp. 1753. Yiwen zhi is said to be a verbatim copy of Liu Xín’s 劉歆 (d. 23 C.E.) Qi lue 七略 (Seven Summaries).
255 Guo and Xu, Zhongguo cifu fazhan shi, 85.
257 Xinzi ji jie, 457; Knoblock, 3:172 (we changed “assistant” to “staff”).
259 Le Tcheou-li, 1:405.
260 It is a five- or seven-stringed plucked instrument.
261 It is a twenty-five-stringed plucked instrument, somewhat similar to the zither.
262 Zhourli zhengyi, 1865; Le Tcheou-li, 2:54.
263 The book is said to be written by the blind historian Zuo Qiuming 左丘明 (556-451 B.C.E.), who was also famous for Zuo zhuan 左傳, his commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals.
264 Guoyu ji jie 國語集解, compiled by Xu Yuangao 徐元誥 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 2002), 11-12.
265 It is also interpreted by one commentator as musicians, see ibid., 11.
266 We translated this passage after consulting the Chinese commentaries included in Guoyu ji jie.
268 Liu Xin suggests in his letter to Yang Xiong that this kind of practice continued into the Qin dynasty (221-207 B.C.E.). These heralds and envoys were in search of “expressions of various eras” (代語, children’s ditties 童謠, songs 歌, and skits 戏.” For an English translation of the letter, see David Knechtges, “The Liu Xin/Yang Xiong Correspondence on the Fang Yan,” in Monumenta Serica 33 (Sankt Augustin, 1977-78), 309-25 (quotations from 312).
269 Knoblock, 3:171.
270 Namely Qin Shihuang 秦始皇 (259-210 B.C.E.), the founder of the Qin dynasty.
271 Ibn Qutaybah, Uyun al-akhbār, 2:333. See the section “Four hundred maqāmāt” in Chapter I.
272 See the section “Ayyām al-‘Arab” in Chapter I.
273 See “admonish, v.,” in OED.
274 Knoblock, 3:192.
275 Both libertine and ascetic aspects are central to the characterization of the maqāmah genre’s heroes. Al-Ḥarīrī’s rogue, Abū Zayd al-Sarāji, repented and became a Sufi in the end of his Maqāmāt. The mixture of two extremeities is also shown in stories about the Arab poet Abū al-ʿAtīḥiyah (130-212/748-828) and the Chinese poet Li Bo (701-762).
276 For a comparative study of jesters, see Beatrice K. Otto, Fools are Everywhere: the Court Jester around the World (Chicago: Chicago UP, 2001).
277 Sima Qian, Shi ji 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1959), 3197-214. Sima Qian’s successor Zhu Shaosun 褚少孫 added biographies of six humorists to that chapter. The story of Ximen Bao mentioned in the section “Divinatory functions” (n. 134 above) is one of Zhu’s additions, see ibid., 3211-13.
278 Ibid., 3197.
279 Liu yi denotes the Zhou aristocratic education of rituals, music, archery, charioteering, writing, and arithmetical (li 禮, yue 歌, she 射, yu 驅, shu 書, shu 數).
281 Han shu, 2864-68; Courtier and Commoner, 96-100.
282 Han shu, 2865; Courtier and Commoner, 98.
283  
Han shu, 2843; Courtier and Commoner, 81.
284  
Lassner, Demonizing the Queen of Sheba, 195-96.

285  
Unlike Boethius who needed Lady Philosophy’s comfort, writers of “frustration” fu such as Dongfang Shuo, Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 B.C.E.), Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.E.), and Sima Qian consoled themselves (zi guang 自 forthcoming) by including examples of supurb rhetoric within their rhymed prose. 

286  
“夫文星歴近乎卜祝之間，固主上所戲弄，倡優畜之，流俗之所輕也。” See Han shu, 2752. In fact, he was castrated by the same emperor who did not accept his intercession for a defeated general and was angered by his exhortation.

287  
The Maqāmah of the Nājjīm (al-Maqāmah al-Nājjīmiyyah), which is a panegyric maqāmah to Khalaf ibn Ahmad, contains a shorter version of self-praise. Note that Khalaf was actually the ruler of Sijistān.

288  
‘Abduh, 20-21; Prendergast, 36 (with change of “springs” into “jewels”).

289  
Courrier and Commoner, 79-80.

290  
V. Minorsky, “Abduh, 74; Prendergast, 36 (with change of “springs” into “jewels”).

291  
We may recall here many of ‘Īsā’s censures of al-Iskandarī when the latter acts like a monkey-trainer, a blind, the head of Banū Sāsān, etc. In following the succession of maqāmah, al-Iskandarī may well may have had a wife in Samarra (the Maqāmah of Poesie), spent all his money on khadrat al-dimnah (“the greenness of a dungheap,” i.e., a beautiful woman of base stock) (the Maqāmah of Shiraz [al-Maqāmah al-Shīrāzīyāh]), and married the virgin as a condition to appease the flood (the Maqāmah of Mosul).

292  
The tenth century Taiping guangji 太平廣記 (The Extensive Records of the Taiping Era) has listed him as one of the immortals and gathered some of his supernatural anecdotes that are not extant in the historical biographies. See Taiping guangji, comps. Li Fang 李昉 et al.(Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1961), 39-41.

293  
Li dai fu lü 歷代賦彙, ed. Chen Yuanlong 陳元龍 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1987), 416. As with the critics of the Maqāmah, Shu Xi’s contemporaries found the subtle humor of the Bin gu 杯 fu quite vulgar. For a more detailed introduction of Shu Xi and his Bin gu, see David Knechtges, “A Literary Feast: Food in Early Chinese Literature,” in JAOS 106, No.1 (1986): 49-63, esp. 58-62. Food is one of al-Hamadhānī’s favorite topics throughout the Maqāmah. In the Maqāmah of Fresh Butter (al-Maqāmah al-Nahidīyāh), there is a very enticing description of khubz-bread that can be compared to Shu Xi’s Pastries. See Prendergast, 136-37; ‘Abduh, 177-79.

294  
For Shu Xi’s life, see Fang Xuanling 房玄齡, Jin shu 晉書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1974), 1427-34, esp. 1427.

295  
‘Abduh, 74; Prendergast, 71.

296  

297  
Prendergast, 159.

298  
Prendergast pointed out the anachronism of this maqāmah for the vizier could not have lived in al-Šaymarī’s time.

299  
Ibid., 163.

300  

301  
Otto, Fools are Everywhere, 1.

302  
Guo Sheren is one of the gujīs listed by Zhu Shaosun, and indeed he was also a chang “who enjoyed great favor with the emperor for his never-ending fund of waggery.” See Han shu, 2844-45; Courtier and Commoner, 81.

303  
Han shu, 2844-45; Courtier and Commoner, 81.

304  
It also proves the importance of action (ke 科) besides the spoken part (bai 白) in you’re performance.

305  
In the typical maqāmah, ‘Īsā is the credulous whom al-Iskandarī often fools. But al-Hamadhānī’s cast was flexible. Thus in the Maqāmah of the Maḏīrāḥ (al-Maqāmah al-Madīrīyāh), al-Iskandarī became the victim of the garrulous merchant. Also in the Maqāmah of Armenia (al-Maqāmah al-Armīnīyāh), both ‘Īsā and al-Iskandarī were deceived by a village boy. After all, there has to be winner(s) and loser(s) at the end of a Hamadhānīan maqāmah.

306  

307  
Ren Na proposed that this kind of drama already existed in Eastern Han (25 C.E.-220 C.E.) at the lastest, although the name “canjun xī” was used during the reign of Shi Le 石勒 (274-333 C.E.) who was Emperor Ming of Late Zhao 後趙 (319 C.E.-351 C.E.). See ibid., 824.

308  
A major difference between the Maqāmah and the canjun xī is that it is the adjunct that plays the leading role, and he can frequently change his identity. See ibid., 413. Surely we can think of another similar duo, namely Karagöz (“black eye”) and Hacivat. These are the two main characters in Turkish shadow plays. Similar to the relationship of al-Iskandarī and ‘Īsā, Karagöz always gets the better of the gullible Hacivat. See Metin And, Karagöz: Turkish Shadow Theatre (Ankara: Dost Yayınları, 1975). The greatest virtue of the sketches of Karagöz “was their adaptability to local circumstances so that they could serve as effective means of political and social criticism.” See Allen, Heritage, 321. Similarly, Ren Na regarded political criticism as the soul of canjun xī. See Ren, Tang xinong, 325.

309  

310  
McKinney, Case of Rhyme, 139-40, n. 28.

Al-Sharīfī, the commentator on al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt*, quotes from Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī saying that al-Buḥturī “was versed in every kind of poetry, except satire.” See *The Assemblies of al Ḥarīrī*, 1:292.


For the problem of sources in this *maqāmah*, see Bray, “ʿIsnāds and Models of Heroes.”

ʿAbduh, 212. Unlike the even parallelism, rhyming in this paragraph depends greatly upon the morphological consonant *ṭūn*.


After Strepsiades has a vision of the Clouds, Socrates informs him that they “feed very many sophists, Thurian soothsayers, practisers of medicine, lazy-longhaired-onyx-ring-wearers, and song-twisters for the cyclic dances, and meteorological quacks,” for “such men celebrate them in verse.” See *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, 1:131.

He “roamed over deserts and wastes, seeking warmth at the fire and taking shelter with the ass.” See Prendergast, 160.

The *Maqāmah of Raṣūfī* (al-*Maqāmah al-Raṣūfyah*) also contains a long list of thieves and their artifices.

“Separation once hurled me hither and thither until I reached the utmost confines of Jurjān” or “I was at Isfahan intending to go to Rayy and so I alighted in the city as alights the fleeting shade.” See Prendergast, 26, 55-56.

*Chu ci ji zhu*, 18a, 27b; *The Songs of the South*, 73, 77.

*Tristia* emphasizes from the outset the pain and suffering of being a stranger (Book 1, 2.1-110). Ovid’s description of the storm at sea (especially 2.19-22, see Ovid, *Sorrow of an Exile: Tristia*, trans. A. D. Melville [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992], 5) would make an interesting analogy with the *Maqāmah of the Amulet*: “Now when the sea had got the ascendency over us, and the night enveloped us, there overwhelmed us a cloud raining in torrents and marshalling mountains of mist with a wind which sent the waves along in pairs and the rain in hosts.” See Prendergast, 98.

See the section “The inner form” in Chapter I.

ʿAbduh, 26-27; Prendergast, 39.


He was the father of the historians Ban Gu and Ban Zhao (also known as Cao Dagu 曹大家).

Ibid., 152.

*Liū chen zhu Wen xuan*, 185.

The manuscript reads the seventh year of Yongchu 永初 (i.e., 113 C.E.). For a discussion on why it could be a mistake for Yongyuan 永元, see *Wen xuan*, 2:172 (note of ll. 1-2).

Ibid., 2: 172-73.

Many of the *jixing jīs*, including this piece, have a concluding *luan* which applies lyrical meters of Category A.

The Changyuan 長垣 prefecture is in northeast of Luoyang. For Ban Zhao’s itinerary, see *Wen xuan*, 2:172.

This is an allusion to the first song of *Jiu ge* 九歌 (Nine Songs) song-cycle, in which Qu Yuan chants “on a lucky day with an auspicious name” (吉日兮辰良). *Chu ci ji zhu*, 30b; *The Songs of the South*, 102. Similarly, the augur al-Iskandarī would make sure there were good omens before Ḩāṣa went on his journey (the *Maqāmah of Balkh*).

*Wen xuan*, 2:173. Similarly in the *Maqāmah of Advice* (al-*Maqāmah al-Waṣīyah*), a supposed aged al-Iskandarī gives an admonition that is full of vulgar proverbs when he “ equipped his son for commerce.” See Prendergast, 153-55; ʿAbduh, 204-6. We also find that Kanwa prepares a long compendium “of every wife’s duty” when he bids farewell to his daughter ʿAṣkaṭalā. See *Saksoontalā*; or, *The Lost Ring*, 102.

ʿAbduh, 86; Prendergast, 78 (for a discussion of the year A.H. 75, see n. 3 on the same page).

III Poetry

Overview

As we mentioned in Chapter I, the Hamadhānian maqāmāt have two conspicuous features: the creation of two imaginary characters and an alternation between sajʿ and poetry. Chapter II explored the relationship of the choice of sajʿ to al-Iskandarī’s divinatory functions. The introduction of Chinese rhymed prose, which is noted to have an origin in primitive religion, provided comparative evidence to assist in our understanding of certain features of Arabic sajʿ (as examples, its descriptive nature and themes of riddle and debate) and located several Chinese counterparts of our frustrated, eccentric, and satirical hero al-Iskandarī.

Both Arabic and Chinese rhymed prose reveal a close relationship with poetry in their formative phases. Prose and poetry are nowadays separated as being two distinct modes of expression. However we should admit, especially after comparing the two famous exemplary traditions of rhymed prose, that the two modes have many more connections than has generally been acknowledged. For instance, the Arabic debate theme provides the context for discourses of both sajʿ and poetry. In al-Hamadhānī’s definition, an eloquent person is able to switch freely from one mode to another. Since examples of the maqāmah genre did not appear until the 4th/10th century, its prose must
have absorbed many poetic tropes and themes, and an individual *maqāmah* could even display functional properties similar to those of classical *qašīdah* poetry.

The fifty-two Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* have 119 poetic segments which employ twelve different meters altogether. Among these the *rajaz* and the other iambic Khalīlian meters occupy an extremely important position.¹ What is more, the iambic meters provide a perfect linkage to al-Hamadhānī’s *sajʿ*-rhythm. According to a study made by Maḥmūd al-Masʿadī,² a Hamadhānian *sajʿ*-colon would most frequently comprise six to nine syllables, and the essential rhythm is schematized as U -- U --, which is exactly the iambic dipody. In this chapter, we will first discuss the basic forms and functions of *rajaz* meter.

Generally speaking, the quantity of poetry found in the *Maqāmāt* is less than that of *sajʿ* and plain prose combined.³ Poems in a typical *maqāmah* are mostly constructed as speeches made by al-Iskandarī. Besides the envoi, the episode proper often contains verses pronounced by the protagonist accompanying his *sajʿ*-speech. These verses have been labeled as “doggerel”⁴ although most of them are put into the mouth of the same eloquent beggar. The jump from ornate *sajʿ* to “doggerel” is an intriguing phenomenon. But their apparent difference in aesthetic value should not lead to an unbalanced exploration of the *Maqāmāt*’s prose and poetry. In this chapter we will argue that the “doggerel” can reveal as much information as *sajʿ* in regard to the genesis of the *maqāmah* genre. When reexamining the favorite poetic meters of al-Iskandarī, we will
discover more traces of his inheritance from pre-Islamic kāhins. The function of the sudden switches to poetry between two paragraphs of sajʿ will be discussed.5 We will also draw attention to the flexible forms (both sajʿ and verse) of the poetic themes of hunting, drinking, eating, and asceticism as found in the Maqāmāt. The presence of such themes in the Maqāmāt may be a collective echo of the polythematic features of qaṣīdah poetry.

The rājīz

Eleven syllables

Our discussion will begin with a survey of the rājaz meter in the Maqāmāt. In the following three sections, we will introduce two basic forms of this meter and relate it to several divinatory functions.

Sajʿ and rājaz 6 can both characterize the speeches of pre-Islamic kāhins.7 They are often thought to stand for two primitive forms of Arabic literary expression, with rhyming being their common “markedness.” As a technical term in prosody, rājaz indicates an Arabic meter that is different from those of classical Arabic poetry (qarīḍ):

Whereas in other metres the lines of verse consist of two symmetrical half-lines, separated by a caesura, the line of verse of the rājaz is in one part only and has no caesura. In general, the rājaz lines are only half as long as the lines of other metres. The basic element is the dipody which consists of four syllables. The first and second syllables can be long or short, but the third one must be short and the fourth one long. Three such dipodies form a trimeter, which is by far the most widely used form of the
Similar to an iambic trimeter\(^9\) \((X \ -- \ U \ -- \ | \ X \ -- \ U \ -- \ | \ X \ -- \ U \ -- \ |)\) in Ancient Greek dramas, a trimeter-rajaz line is divided into three dipodies \((X \ X \ U \ -- \ | \ X \ X \ U \ -- \ | \ X \ X \ U \ -- \ |)\). Its twelve syllables are equal to about four to three words; therefore “every fourth or fifth word must be a rhyme word.”\(^{10}\) Later the rajaz poem can also be composed as a distich, which in fact eases the rhyming. According to al-Jawharī (d. 393/1003 or later), the Bedouin (\(al-'Arab\)) divided their poetry into four types: \(tāmm\) (“complete”), \(majzū’\) (“shortened by one foot per hemistich”), \(mashfūr\) (“halved”), and \(mahnūk\) (“emaciated”).\(^{11}\) Rajaz is the only meter that has forms in all of the four divisions, and they are \(al-rajaz al-tāmm\) (the acatalectic form has 24 syllables per line), \(majzū’ \ al-rajaz\) (16 s/l), \(mashfūr \ al-rajaz\) (12 s/l), and \(mahnūk \ al-rajaz\) (8 s/l).\(^{12}\)

Out of the 119 poetic segments in the \(Maqāmāt\), fourteen adapt the rajaz meter. The dimeter appears only once, i.e., in the \(Maqāmah\) of the Spindle.\(^{13}\) The other \(urjūzahs\) are either constructed in \(mashfūr \ al-rajaz\) (the trimeter line) or \(al-rajaz al-tāmm\) (the trimeter distich).\(^{14}\) For example, the first poem in the \(Maqāmah\) of the Blind adopts the trimeter line. To be exact, it is of the catalectic form \((X \ X \ U \ -- \ | \ X \ X \ U \ -- \ | \ X \ -- \ -- \ |)\) for the second syllable in the third dipody is long and the third (short) syllable is missing:\(^{15}\)

\[
yā \ qawmu \ qad \ athqala \ daynī \ zahrī\n\]
\[
wa \ ūlābatnī \ ṭallātī \ bi \ l-mahrī\n\]
\[
āsba’tu \ min \ ba’di \ ghinan \ wa \ wafrī\n\]
\[
sākina \ qafrin \ wa \ ḥalīfa \ faqrī\n\]
yā qavmu hal baynakumu min ḥurrī
yu ’inunī ’alā šurūfī ’l-dahrī
yā qavmu qad ’ila li-faqrī sabrī
wa- ’nkashaṭat ‘annī dhuyūlu ’l-sitrī….

O people, my debt weighs down my back,
And my wife demands her dowry,
After abundance and plenty, I have become
A dweller in a barren land and an ally of penury.
O people, is there a generous man among ye,
Who will aid me against the vicissitudes of time?
O people, because of my poverty my patience is exhausted,
While now no flowing robes my state conceal…. 16

There is a natural caesura between two neighboring lines of the catalectic form.
The incomplete third dipody seems to be well attuned to the great distress which prevents
the beggar from articulating long, uninterrupted sentences. Most importantly, this poem is
presented as the lyric of the blind singer who is beating the ground with his staff: 17 The
Maqāmah of Qazwīn (al-Maqāmah al-Qazwīnīyah) provides a parallel poem which is not
sung, but recited “to the beat of the drum (‘alā ĭqā al-ṭubūl)”: 

\[
ad'ū ilā 'l-lāhi fa hal min mijīb 
ilā dharan raḥbin wa mar'ān khaṣīb 
wa jannatin 'āliyatin mā tānī
quṭūfuhā dāniyatan mā taghīb....
\]

I pray to God, is there an answerer?
To a spacious shelter and luxuriant pasture.
To a lofty garden the fruits whereof cease not to be
Near to gather and never vanish from sight…. 18

The meter of this poem is sari’ (X X U -- | -- X U -- | -- U -- ||), which is another
Arabic iambic meter in Wright’s definition. Each hemistich of its *bayts* has eleven syllables arranged in a pattern quite similar to those of a catalectic trimeter-rajaz line.

The eleven syllables of these meters, as well as the usage of staff and drum, bring us back to the discussion of the Chinese genre of *chengxiang* to be found in Chapter II. The strophic Chinese *chengxiang*, which was a Chu folk genre and adapted by Xunzi to carry out his political admonishment, is noted for the use of a staff (*xiang*). As we mentioned in Chapter II, the last two verses of each stanza have exactly eleven (4+7) syllables or characters. We cannot be sure whether this similarity results from the use of percussion instruments as accompaniment, or from a common source of inspiration. The strophic form of *chengxiang*, the use of eleven syllables, and the geographic position of the Chu kingdom in south China all invite us to take a quick look at the Zoroastrian Gāθās. In the *Uštavaitī Gāθā* (Yasna 43-46) and *Spāṇta.mainyū Gāθā* (Yasna 47-50), there are stanzas made up of four or five verses of 4+7 syllables. The meter of these Avestan liturgical hymns is in its turn related to the Vedic *triṣṭubh* and *jagatī* meters, which have four *pādas* (lit. “foot”) of eleven and twelve syllables respectively. “It is now a commonplace of Comparative Metric that the primitive poetic forms in Aryan speech were a dimeter of eight and a trimeter of eleven or twelve syllables.” As we will see in the following two sections, the dimeter- and trimeter-rajaz lines could also form the basis of a variety of meters in *urjūzah* and *qaṣīdah* poetry.
The “blind” singer al-Iskandarī is probably not as interested as we are in the counterparts of the catalectic trimeter rajaz. Nevertheless, he makes use of the pattern to construct a very persuasive request for money. Hearing the sad lamentation concerning his poverty and loneliness, Ḥṣā ibn Hishām is greatly touched and gives him a dinar. The overjoyed al-Iskandarī, forgetting that he is not supposed to “see” the gift, improvises the next rajaz poem which is both a description of the gold coin and a eulogy of its donor:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{yā ḥusnāhā fāqiˈatun ṣafrāˈū} \\
\text{mamshūqatun manqūshatun gawrāˈū} \\
\text{yakādu an yaqtura minhā ˈl-māˈū} \\
\text{qad athmarathā himmatun ˈalyāˈū}....
\end{align*}
\]

What beauty is here and how intensely yellow.
Light, stamped and round,
Water almost drops from her luster,
A noble mind hath produced her….25

Even with the relatively few examples to be found in the text of the Maqāmāt we get a feel for the versatility of the rajaz meter.26 It is said that in pre-Islamic times rajaz was often improvised and “comprised only three to five verses.”27 It is “the metre for tunes,” sung during rhythmical activities such as the urging on of camels, drawing water, dancing, and incantation.28 The battlefield was still another typical situation for the recitation of rajaz. Comprising self-praise (fakhr) and lampoon (hijāʾ), the verses were thought to have magic power to intimidate the enemy.29 In the beginning of the
Maqāmah of al-Aswad (al-Maqāmah al-Aswādiyāh), Īsā ibn Hishām encounters a Bedouin boy who is reciting a poem. When he doubts the latter’s ability to versify so well, the boy immediately retorts in rajaz:

\[
\text{innī wa in kuntu ṣaghīra ‘l-sinnī}
\]
\[
\text{wa kāna fī ‘l-‘ayni nubūwun ‘annī}
\]
\[
\text{fa inna shayṭānī amūr ‘l-jinnī}
\]
\[
\text{yadhhabu bī fī ‘l-shī‘rī kullā fannī}
\]
\[
\text{ḥattā yarudda ‘āriḍa ‘l-taźannī}
\]
\[
\text{fa-‘mdī ‘alā rislika wa-‘ghrub ‘annī}
\]

And verily though I be young
And the eye distain me,
My demon is the chief of the Jinn
And he takes me through all the range of the poetic art,
Until he drives away what doubt may occur.
Therefore go at thine ease and depart from me.\(^{30}\)

The boy boasts that his shayṭān (devil) is the chief of the jinn who will not and need not plagiarize.\(^ {31}\) If the work of a Bedouin boy represents a pristine state of versification, then al-Hamadhānī’s choice of the meter may be seen as a reflection of the close relationship commonly believed to exist between jinn and rajaz.\(^ {32}\)

The Maqāmāt have thus restated the ancient belief that the linguistic charms of both saj and rajaz are empowered by supernatural inspiration. It is important to mention here that, by the time of al-Hamadhānī, not only saj but rajaz had witnessed a revival, very likely as a result of a process of learning from and competition with qarīḍ poetry. An earlier developer of the rajaz meter is al-Aghlab al-‘Ijlī (d. 21/642), who is said to have
been the first poet to break the confines of “three to five verses” and compose longer urjūzahs. In the 4th/10th century, the poet Kushājim (d. c. 350/961) produced numerous descriptive (wasf) poems in rajaz; “He thus asserted the rights of the radjaz in a field which otherwise is dominated by other metres.” If al-Iskandarī is the heir to pre-Islamic kāhins, he is also adopting, in the 4th/10th century, a more complicated and rhetorically developed version of their utterances in order to match the older functions.

The similarity between sajʿ and rajaz can be explored in another field: satirical descriptions. As is well known, Muḥammad ʿAbduh, the editor of the maqāmāt, omitted the Maqāmah of Šām because of its obscene content. This maqāmah is a sajʿ-‐debate between al-Iskandarī and his two wives. Both the husband and his first wife compose very indecent lampoons of his/her opposing party’s physical defects. The aforementioned poet, al-ʿIjlī, has an urjūzah about the wedding night of the pseudo-‐prophets, Musaylimah and Sajāh. Firstly the corpulence of Musaylimah is sarcastically described, then the poet fabricates an erotic dialogue between the couple which is divided by “conventional expressions such as kultu ... kālat.” Such poems surely have a long history. They are attested in the Indian vedas and the Chinese Shi jing, being related to sacrificial rites and wedding ceremonies respectively. While al-ʿIjlī’s urjūzah seems to follow such a universal tradition, al-Hamadhānī’s flyting in order to settle a divorce case is indeed a parody of the verse of consummation.
The dimeter

The significant role played by poetry (especially *rajaz*) in the Hamadhānian maqāmāt should now be clear. In some legends, the alternation between *saj* and poetry is partly determined by the flexible forms of such themes as riddle and debate. The *Maqāmah of the Spindle* is an excellent example of mixing the two themes with the two forms, as its *saj*-riddle is immediately followed by another one put in the dimeter-*rajaz*:

murahhafīn sinānuhū
mudhallaqīn asinānuhū
awlādūhu aʾwānuhū
tafriqū sharmin shānuhū
muvāhibun li šāhibih
muʾallaqun bi shāribih
mushtabiku ʾl-ānyābī
tīʾl-shībi waʾl-shabābī
tulwun malīhuʾl-shakī
dāwin zahiṣuʾl-akū
tāmin katīruʾl-nablī
tawfaʾl-liḥā waʾl-sablī

Pointed is his spearhead, sharp are his teeth,
His progeny are his helpers, dissolving union is his business.
He assails his master, clinging to his moustache;
Inserting his fangs into old and young.
Agreeable, of goodly shape, slim, abstemious.
A shooter, with shafts abundant, around the beard and the moustache.\textsuperscript{41}

Clearly the dimeter-*rajaz* line is an especially short meter. The first and second groups of six verses in this poem are of acatalectic (8 s/l) and catalectic (7 s/l) forms respectively, and the rhyme has to appear every two or three words.
In al-Hamadhānī’s *Magāmāt*, *rajaz* lines are very often to be read semantically as distiches. But this poem is the only multirhymed piece and sounds closer to rhyming couplets than *qarīd*-distiches. M. Ullmann notes that the dimeter is used less frequently than the trimeter, and it is probably the difficulty in rhyming that leads al-Hamadhānī to change the rhyme every two or four lines, thus making the rhyming scheme of this poem reminiscent of that of the preceding *saj*'-riddle. When an *urjūzah* becomes longer and is applied to the treatment of narrative, or historical, scientific, and didactic topics, “the principle according to which one and the same rhyme is obligatory for the entire poem is abandoned.”  

This results in the appearance of multirhymed varieties: *urjūzah muzdawijah* (rhyming couplet in the *rajaz* meter), *urjūzah muthallathah* (triplet), *urjūzah mukhammasah* (cinquain) or even *urjūzah mu’ashsharah* (ten line stanza).  

It is in the *muzdawij* form that Abān al-Lāḥiqī (d. c. 200/815) chose to versify the famous collection of fables, *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*.  

At this moment, it is suggestive that different poetic forms such as the monorhymed distich (*qasīdah*), the rhyming couplet (*muzdawij*), and the strophe (*musammaṭ* and its possible Andalusian offshoots, *muwashshah* and *zajal*) can be related to each other. Our guiding principle in this issue is the *rajaz* meter, whose convertibility into distich and couplet has been just discussed. M. Bencheneb notes that there is also a kind of *rajaz*-strophe called *muzdawijāt*: “they consist of strophes of five hemistichs in which the first four hemistichs rhyme together and the fifth ones have a
common rhyme.”

The discussion of the rajaz can shed some light on meter variations in other literary traditions. In Chapter II, we presented three poetic examples from the Arabic, Chinese, and English traditions. The third example is the first stanza of Chaucer’s Tale of Sir Thopas, whose tail-rhyme is metrically different from al-Iskandarî’s mujtathth-distich and Cold Mountain’s seven-character distich. A tail-rhyme stanza has “twelve lines divided into four groups of three, each group containing, as a rule, a couplet with four accents to the line, and a concluding line, a ‘tail,’ with three accents.” Thus each stanza has 4*(4+4+3) accents, while Chaucer’s parody of the tail-rhyme measure, as seen in the opening verses of the Tale of Sir Thopas, has 2*(4+4+3) accents. It is known that the heroic couplet in the main body of the Canterbury Tales has ten iambic feet (5+5) and is often thought to be connected with the Alexandrine (12 syllables per line) or iambic hexameter. When we bear in mind the variations of the rajaz meter, it does not seem totally impossible to relate the tail-rhyme stanza to the heroic couplet.

If we can consider a line of twelve syllables as a basic unit in prosody, the dividability of the number twelve (with the interplay of rhymes and tones in some cases) is able to generate a variety of meters in quite a few literary traditions. Having roughly 8 and 12 syllables per line respectively, the Categories A and B meters in the Chinese Chu ci are indeed comparable to the Arabic dimeter- and trimeter-rajaz measures. The Category A meter either has equally accented 8 syllables, or consists of 7 accented
syllables and an unaccented 8\textsuperscript{th} one. The Category B meter often has the pattern $tum\ tum\ tum\ tum\ tum\ xi$: $tum\ tum\ tum\ tum\ tum\ tum$. If we exclude the breath particle $xi$, this meter becomes the combination of 10 accented and 2 unaccented syllables.\textsuperscript{54} Rajaz’s variants can indeed reveal for us the common ground of the rhyming couplets (Category B) in Li sao\textsuperscript{55} and the multirhymed descriptions (Category A) in Zhao hun.

As we mentioned in the end of the section “Eleven syllables,” “the primitive poetic forms in Aryan speech were a dimeter of eight and a trimeter of eleven or twelve syllables.” Both the Arabic and Chinese poetic traditions seem to have been developed from a similar pair of dimeter/trimeter, except that both traditions had applied rhyme to accompany such rhythms. Moreover, some universal divinatory functions are glued to the primitive Arabic and Chinese poetic forms. With this in mind, the apparent similarity of Xunzi’s quatrisyllabic Needle\textsuperscript{56} to al-Hamadhānī’s dimeter Comb in both content and style is not surprising.

**The lion**

After the above introduction of the rajaz meter, we now turn to a discussion of poetic themes to be found in the Maqāmāt. Some of these themes are closely related to the rajaz, others may reveal the divinatory functions of our hero al-Iskandarī. Most importantly, the saj’ part often echoes al-Hamadhānī’s exploration of these poetic themes. Such theme-sharing leads to a semantically congruent prosimetric style of the Maqāmāt.
In this section (titled “The lion”) we will introduce the poetic theme of hunting (ṭardīyāt). The Arabic sub-genre of hunt poetry, which initially constituted one theme in the pre-Islamic qaṣīdah, was later identified as “a separate category of topic-based poem during the Islamic period.” We arrange this section right after our general discussion of the rajaz meter because the majority of the full-fledged hunting poems are indeed urjūzahs. For example, Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī (320-357/932-968), the cousin of Sayf al-Dawlah (d. 356/967), composed a hunting muzdawij of 137 lines. Hunting poems often have a beginning that resembles the travel section (raḥīl) of pre-Islamic qaṣīdah. Sometimes they simply start with anʿatu kalban, the hunter’s description of his faithful hound. Hunting animals, trained birds of prey, and their quarry are among the favorite subjects of Arabic hunt poetry, whose ecphrastic nature again suggests a kinship between rajaz and saj. As with the debate and riddle, the hunting theme has a flexible form which is clearly shown in two very interesting and elaborate maqāmāt, the Lion and the Bishr.

In the first episode of the former, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām recounts how he and his traveling companions encountered and killed a lion. Al-Hamadhānī’s saj’ description of the lion, which is divided into three parts, is one of the most picturesque wasfs in the Maqāmāt, but we also need to point out that it is very likely related to an anecdote located in Kitāb al-mahāsin waʾl-ṭaddād (Book of the Merits and the Opposites) which “was current in its present form during the first half of the 9th century A.D.”
Al-Hamadhānī first creates a very frightening atmosphere by depicting the horses that sense the lion’s approach. As the company takes up arms,

\[
\text{fa idhā ’l-sabu’u fī farwati ’l-mawti qad ūala’a min ghābih(i) muntafikhan fī ihābih(i) kāshiran ’an anyābih(i) bī-țarfin qad mulī’a ṣalafan wa anfīn qad ḥushiya anafan wa šadrin lā yawrubuhu ’l-qalb(u) wa lā yaskumu hu ’l-ru b(u).}
\]

lo! There appeared a lion, in the garb of doom,\textsuperscript{65} ascending from his lair, with inflated skin, showing his teeth, with an eye full of arrogance, a nose distended with pride, and a breast from which courage never departed and wherein terror never dwelt.\textsuperscript{66}

This description gives a terrifying portrait of the lion, employing parallelism, end and internal rhymes, and juxtaposition of cognates (\textit{anf} “nose” and \textit{anaf} “pride”). Between this example and another one that illustrates men’s fighting with the beast, al-Hamadhānī embeds a line to provide a snapshot of a youth who advances to meet the lion:

\[
\text{akhḍaru ’l-jildati fī bayti ’l-’arab}
\text{yamla’u ’l-dalwa ilā ’aqdi ’l-karab}
\]

Tawny of skin of the family that comprises the nobility of the Arabs,

Who fills his bucket full to the knot of the rope that ties the middle of the cross-bars.\textsuperscript{67}

According to commentaries, the \textit{bayt} is made of two separate half-lines by al-Faḍl ibn ‘Abbās al-Lahabī (al-Farazdaq’s contemporary).\textsuperscript{68} Such quotations of well-known verses, as well as basing the narrative on earlier work(s), are a means of easing the reception process for the audience. There is no need to provide here a lengthy description which would not only undermine the leading role of the lion, but also imply a much less vivid human-animal conflict than what we find in the third \textit{saj’} description. The switch to
poetry serves to eliminate any monotony that could be caused by three continuous sajʿ-descriptions. At the end of the first episode, al-Hamadhānī also introduces a further line of poetry⁶⁹ when the company bury the dead friend after the bloody combat.

In the aforementioned example, the narrator does not give any hint of switching to and from the verse. In the Maqāmāt, this kind of a sudden switch to poetry often represents “an excess of emotions,”⁷⁰ and, as displayed in the example quoted above, aims at a fuller description of its object. These verses are not examples of direct speech introduced by the formulaic “qāla” or “anshada.” They constitute a part of the narrative, but can often be deleted (except in two cases⁷¹) without negatively affecting the content. In this regard, they cannot be categorized as taḍmīn (enjambment), a stylistic feature that weaves verses into the syntax of the surrounding prose.⁷² This technique of sudden switch clearly shows a functional similarity to tamaththul (quotation of a poetic parallel) which “is the preponderant mode of existence for poems in the Arabian Nights,”⁷³ except that poems in the Nights are often preceded by catchphrases such as kamā qāla fīhi baʿdu wāṣifīhi (as one describer has said concerning it) and kataba lisānu ḥālinā yaqūlu (the voice of our situation recorded as follows).⁷⁴

Al-Hamadhānī’s archetype for the first episode, namely the anecdote in Kitāb al-maḥāsin waʾl-āddād, has a structure that recalls Akhbār ʿUbayd. It starts with the caliph ʿUthmān’s request to the storyteller (an Arab Christian poet named Abū Zubayd al-Ṭāʿī): “I hear that you describe lions well,“⁷⁵ and ends with a poem depicting the lion
for the second time. Whether we can regard this concluding wasf-poem as an example of tamaththul or the versification (‘aqd) of the preceding saj’, it is clear that it functions quite differently from the evidentiary verses (shāhid) that usually conclude an ayyām tale. Taking into account the functional changes of poetry to be found in the ayyām accounts, the pseudohistorical anecdote, and the maqāmah, we suggest that, if the anecdote in Kitāb al-maḥāsin waʾl-āḍād marks the first step in the modification of an ayyām archetype, then the Maqāmah of the Lion applies other narrative techniques in order to further that transformation. Hämeen-Anttila holds that the Lion is an early maqāmah, one of his reasons being that “the spirit of the maqama is narrative but not (yet?) fully picaresque.” The use of static poetry (as opposed to action poems) in the first episode could confirm this narrative spirit and its connection with earlier Arabic prosimetra (both ayyām accounts and anecdotes).

It is probably a coincidence that the other maqāmah which contains a description of the lion is also a non-typical piece—the Bishr. As a matter of fact, the aforementioned Kitāb al-maḥāsin waʾl-āḍād provides many parallels to the Maqāmah of Bishr as well. The Bishr is a mulḥah (“witty tale, anecdote”) appended to the 51 maqāmāt in the 1928 edition of al-Hamadhānī’s Rasāʾil. Although introduced by the familiar opening phrase “‘Īsā ibn Hishām related to us and said,” this maqāmah is recounted in the third person, and some of its plots have been compared by James Monroe to the Arabic folk epic (sg. sīrah, pl. siyar). The protagonist Bishr was a
pre-Islamic vagabond (ṣuʿlūk). He once married a beauty, but the latter advised him to propose to his cousin, the more beautiful Fāṭimah. After he has killed two terrible beasts (the lion Dādh and the serpent Shujāʿ), Bishr’s proposal is accepted by his uncle. Soon he meets an anonymous youth who easily defeats him and goes on to tell him that he is his son by the woman introduced at the beginning of the story. Bishr then marries his cousin to his son and swears (ḥalafā) “never to ride a noble steed or wed a fair lady.”

An obvious feature of the *Maqāmah of Bishr* is the large amount of iambic-metered poetry that it contains. Except for the long wāfir-poem on lion-hunting, the other six are all urjūzahs: three dialogues, a *tamaththul*, an action poem in monologue, and a proverb in monologue. In a word, the *Maqāmah of Bishr* seems like the script of a storyteller who can mimic the female voice in the dialogue, recite both *tamaththul* and proverb, and probably even sing the 24-line hunting poem after informing the audience that it was a letter to Fāṭimah written on Bishr’s shirt in lion’s blood.

This long wāfir-metered poem is a condensed version of the *Maqāmah of the Lion’s first episode*, but, we might suggest, presents a lively picture of lion-hunting, blending poetic themes (sg. *gharat*) such as *fakhr*, *wasf*, and *rithāʾ* and simulating one dialogue between Bishr and the colt, and another between him and the lion. At the end of the poem for example, we read words of condolence to the dead lion:

```
fa lā tajzaʾ fa qad ṭaqayta kurran
yuḥāḍhiru an yuʿāba fa mutta ḥurrā
```
fa in taku qad qutilta fa laysa āran
fa qad lāqayta dhā ṭarafayni hurrā

But grieve not, for thou didst meet an ingenuous one
who is careful not to be blamed, therefore, thou hast died honourably.
For, if thou art slain, there is no disgrace,
for thou didst meet one freeborn on both sides.89

With its heroic traits and compassion for animals, this poem follows the pre-Islamic ṣu‘lūk tradition90 and is absolutely distinct from the courtly hunting poem of Abū Firās al-Ḥamdānī. It has also been pointed out that al-Hamadhānī quotes lines from this poem, “using them metaphorically to describe his encounter with Abū Bakr” in his account of their debate.91

Indeed, the inclusion of the Bishr in the Maqāmāt serves to confirm the stylistic richness of al-Hamadhānī’s prosimetric tales. The copious use of the rajaz meter and poetic dialogues may also show this maqāmah’s connection to the ayyām genre.92 A recent study by Thomas Bauer has refuted that the hunting poetry “loses its importance as a genre and passes into relative obscurity” in the late 4th/10th century.93 The Maqāmah of Bishr uses the iambic meters to interpret the hunting theme, very likely paying homage to the long-standing relationship between this theme and the speeches of the pre-Islamic kāhīns.

The wine song

The hunt, besides its relationship to food supply, royal authority, and military
training, had ritual significance for human societies. A ritual has a beginning and an end, and should follow certain steps to ensure its efficacy. In an Arabic hunting poem, the hunt is very likely to be followed by drinking and eating. Therefore our next two sections are devoted to the other two enjoyments respectively. We will firstly explore the flexible forms of these two themes. Secondly, we will argue that the Maqāmāt’s inclusion of them once again betrays al-Hamadhānī’s ideal of a polythematic structure.

After the revelation of the Qurʾān 5:90, drinking wine became taboo, implying that such practice “was current among all classes in pre-Islamic Arabia.” Even so, wine-drinking continued in Islamic times, and was especially popular among the elites who were often uninterested in making their behavior conform to a strict interpretation of Islamic law. Poets such as al-Ḥārithah ibn Badr al-Ghudānī (d. 64/684) and Abū Nuwās openly disregarded the prohibition on the consumption of wine. Interestingly, the descriptions of heavenly drinks in the Qurʾān (Q 76:5-6, 17-8; 83:25-8) seem to be echoed in some of the sensuous lines to be found in khamrīyāt (wine poetry), another free-standing subgenre of classical Arabic poetry.

Al-Hamadhānī is of course familiar with both pre-Islamic and Islamic Bacchic lines. In the Maqāmah of Iblīs, he forges a wine poem of 11 lines in Abū Nuwās’ name. The Maqāmāt also contain quite a few references to drinking parties, as, for example, at the beginning of the Maqāmah of Jāḥīz:
wa qawmin qad akhadhū ‘l-waqa’ta bayna āsin makhdūd(in) wa wardin mandūd(in), wa
dannin mafṣūd(in) wa nāyin wa ‘ūd(in) fa šīrnā ilayhim wa šārū ilaynā

…and we found ourselves among a company who were passing their time amid bunches of myrtle twigs, and bouquets of roses, broached wine vats and the sound of the flute and the lute. We approached them and they advanced to receive us.100

Although al-Hamadhānī’s sketch is crafted in sajʿ, it resonates with the “not very detailed references to wine-parties” that are “common in pre-Islamic poetry.”101 In the Maqāmah of Wine (al-Maqāmah al-Khamrīyah), we find an excellent description of the color, taste, and fragrance of the beverage:

khamrun ka-rūqī fī ‘l-‘udhūhāti wa ‘l-ladhūhāti wa ‘l-halāwah
tadhurū ‘l-ḥalīma wa mā ‘alayhi li-ḥilmīh adnā ṣulāwah102
ka annamā ‘ṭaṣarāhā min khaddī ajdādu jaddī wa sarbalūhā mina ‘l-qārī bi-mithli hajrī
wa Saddī wadī’atu ‘l-ḥūr(i) wa khābī’atu jaybī ‘l-surūr(i) wa mā zālat tatwārathūhā
‘l-akhyār(u) wa ya khudhu minhā ‘l-laylu wa ‘l-nahūr(u) ḥattā lam yabqa illā araj(un)
wa shū (un) wa wahaj(un) ladhdhā (un) rayḥānatu ‘l-nafs(i) wa darratu ‘l-shams(i)
fatātu ‘l-baraq(i) ‘ajāzu ‘l-malaq(i) ka ‘l-lahabī fī ‘l-wūq(i) wa ka bardi ‘l-nasīmi fī
‘l-hulūq(i) miṣbāhu ‘l-fikrī(f) wa tiryāq sammi ‘l-dahr(i) bi-mithilīhā ‘uzzīza ‘l-maytu fa
‘ntasha‘ra wa dūwiya ‘l-akmahu fa abṣara

Wine, in sweetness, deliciousness and pleasantness, like the dew of my mouth,
It leaves the clement one without the smallest quantity of the grace of his clemency.
It is as if my grandfather’s ancestors had pressed it from my cheek and coated it with
pitch like unto my separation and aversion; the trust of the ages, the hidden thing in the
bosom of happiness. The righteous have not ceased to inherit it and the nights and the
days to take away from it, until nought remaineth save aroma, rays, and a pungent
flavour. It is the sweet basil of the soul, the fellow-spouse of the sun, the damsel of the
lightning, a coaxing old dame. It is like the heat in the veins and the coolness of the
gentle breeze in the throats, the illumination of thought and the antidote to the poison of
the sage. With the like of it the dead is strengthened and raised to life again, and the one
born blind is treated so that he sees.103

In this delightful description, the modern commentator Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn ʿAbd
al-Ḥamīd located sixteen references to poems that were composed either earlier or after al-Hamadhānī.\(^{104}\) The images such as the rosy cheek, sweet basil (rayḥān), and the flame in the veins invite readers to make a direct association with famous Bacchic lines. Regarding the magical effects of wine, Abū Nuwās comments:

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Wine is called mudām ["perpetual"], so drink it perpetually;} \\
\text{Take goblet after goblet: it will turn the old man into a boy.}^{105}\n\end{align*}\]

The last rhyming couplet of the quoted saj'-passage seems to be based on this declaration. Such an exaggeration also recalls a similar one to be found in the *Maqāmah of Poesie* when al-Iskandarī boasts that his speech can “cause the deaf to hear and draw down the white-footed goats from their mountain haunts (yusmiʿu ʿl-ṣumm(a) wa yunzilu ʿl-ʿušm(a)).”\(^{106}\)

Before considering the functional link between wine and speech, we should observe that the quoted description may have been the lyrics of a song. As seen in the above-mentioned passage from the *Maqāmah of Jāḥiz*, “broached wine vats” are immediately followed by “the flute (nāy) and the lute (ʿūd).” A fourth century Chinese littérature and official, who was also a famous toper, holds that the human voice is better than the sound of si ⧬ (string instrument) or zhu ⬤ (bamboo flute) for its closeness to nature.\(^ {107}\) In the *Maqāmah of Wine*, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and his boon-companions are greeted by the proprietress of the tavern: “when her glances killed, her words made one alive again (idhā qatalat alḥāzūhā ahyat alfāzūhā).” According to the narrative,\(^ {108}\) the
supposed lyrics are cited by the proprietress when ʿĪsā ibn Hishām inquires about the quality of her wine. With her “glances and words,” she surely qualifies as a singing girl (sg. *qaynah*, pl. *qiyān*), whose countenance and voice have exactly the same magic of the wine. However when the description ends, the company asks: “By thy father, this is the stray! And who is the minstrel (*muṭrib*) at thy court?” It is at that moment that the vintner introduces al-Iskandarī to them.

Our previous discussion of al-Iskandarī’s staff has put him in parallel with the Greek *aoidos* and the Chinese blind singer (*gu*). In the recognition scene of the *Maqāmah of Damascus* (*al-Maqāmah al-Dimashqīyah*) by al-Ḥarīrī, the rogue hero Abū Zayd is not merely seen in a tavern plucking the lute, but also singing a strophic *musammaṭ* poem in the *mutaqārib* meter. The rhyming scheme (*aaab cccb*) of the *musammaṭ* is similar to that of the tail-rhyme used in the *Sir Thopas*. Just as Chaucer imitates and parodies the meter and rhyme of medieval popular romances in the *Sir Thopas*, al-Ḥarīrī may use these stanzas to reproduce the singing of a *muṭrib*.

The word *muṭrib* can mean both musician and singer. The quoted description in the *Maqāmah of Wine* may be performed by the female vintner to the musical accompaniment of al-Iskandarī. It seems more possible to us that, once the vintner has chanted the two lines of poetry, it is al-Iskandarī who finishes the rest of the song, thus betraying his trademark eloquence.

The female vintner introduces al-Iskandarī as an old man whom she has met in the
monastery (dayr) of Mirbad on Sunday. Moreh has drawn our attention to the semi-theatrical character of the Shaʿānīn feast (Palm Sunday) and the debate-like Syriac dialogue poems in Oriental churches. As ancient Greek drama is thought to be derived from the cult of Dionysus, it is natural that monasteries, where the production and consumption of wine were allowed, are connected with quasi-theatrical performances in the Muslim world.

There is much evidence to indicate that wine serves as inspiration for eloquent speech. The Chinese poet Li Bo is said to have composed a hundred poems after drinking a dou of wine. Chaucer’s Pardoner wishes to recount the tale while drinking ale (CT, VI, ll. 327-328). In al-Ḥarīrī’s Maqāmah of Damascus, Abū Zayd chants his song in the tavern of ʿĀnah. Likewise, this song of al-Iskandarī is made for wine and by wine. Since drink is said to be able to revive the dead and cure blindness, the eloquence displayed in an inspired composition can surely make the deaf hear again. It is in the Maqāmah of Wine that elements like poetry, saj’, song, voice, and music are united together under the theme of wine.

In the eyes of ʿĪsā ibn Hishām, al-Iskandarī’s profession of singer is no less despicable than that of barber. It is known that names of famous singers, jesters, court companions, historians, and genealogists are all listed in the third chapter of Ibn al-Nadīm’s famous Fihrist. We recall here the previous mention of the historian Sima Qian’s complaint of being kept as one of the chang you (singers and actors) by
Emperor Wu.\textsuperscript{125} The ability to sing and play musical instruments was extolled and regarded as one prominent feature of the biblical prophets.\textsuperscript{126} Chinese blind singers who recited poems and imperial genealogies were inseparable from the process of carrying out certain Zhou rituals. Unfortunately, as its masters became employed entertainers rather than leaders or admonishers of ancient communities, music gradually lost its divine connotations.\textsuperscript{127} In the eyes of Ḥasan ibn Hishām, al-Iskandarī is able to maintain a balance, criticizing drinking in the daytime\textsuperscript{128} while praising wine at night. In this regard, he sounds more eccentric than Aḥmad ibn Naṣr who “begs his companion, ‘Sing to me, Sulayman, and give me wine to drink; serve me a goblet to distract me from the muezzin’s call’.”\textsuperscript{129} In response to his criticism, al-Iskandarī explains:

\begin{quote}
\textit{sā’atan alzamu mihrāban wa ukhrā hayta ḥānī}
\textit{wa kādhā yaf’alu man yā’iqū fī hādha ‘l-zamānī}
\end{quote}

At one time I cleave to the prayer niche, at another to the location of the wine-shop.
And thus acts whoever is wise in this time.\textsuperscript{130}

With music and wine our frustrated hero is able to find some temporary peace of mind, forgetting “the holding back of subsistence from men of his ilk.”\textsuperscript{131} It is possible that, as long as religious teachings and wine songs can stir emotions among people and earn coins for their performers, they do not differ much in the eyes of al-Iskandarī. It is also possible that they were originally united under a somewhat primitive form of religious drama, and our rogue hero is one of the inheritors of the tradition.
**Guest and host**

This section will focus on the dialogic form of the food theme found in the *Maqāmāt*. In his *Of Dishes and Discourse*, Geert Jan van Gelder argues for the existence of Arabic gastronomic poetry as a minor poetic genre. Among his quotations, there is Kushājim’s *wasf* of the *jūdhābah*-sweet and Ibrāhīm ibn al-Mahdī’s (d. 224/839) *muzdawīj*-recipe for *narjīsīyāh* (“narcissus dish”). The ability to describe food or even cook dainties could be one of the signs of the inheritors of pre-Islamic *kāhins*. In a previous note to Shu Xi’s *Bing fu* (Fu on Pastries), we briefly touched on the theme of food in some *maqāmāt*. Browsing through al-Hamadhānī’s verbal descriptions of food (either in *saj*’ or poetry), we find that they are usually cast in an unbalanced dialogue between a loquacious addressee and one or more silent addressees. Although these descriptions can nourish the imagination in the same way as stilllife paintings do, they are at the same time able to provoke the internal audience and create humorous narrative effects in the *maqāmāt* in question.

In the *Maqāmah of Sāsān*, for example, al-Iskandārī chants “a litany of *urīdu* (‘I want’) sentences concerning different foodstuffs,” which is known to have been borrowed by al-Hamadhānī from an earlier source:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{urīdu minka rāghīfā} \\
\text{ya’lū khuwānan nazīfā} \\
\text{urīdu milḥān jarīshān} \\
\text{urīdu baqlān qātīfā}
\end{align*}
\]
I desire from thee a white cake upon a clean table.
I desire coarse salt, I want plucked greens.
I desire fresh meat, I want some sour vinegar.
I desire a sucking kid, I want a young ram.
I desire water with ice, filled in a rare vessel.
I desire a vat of wine from which I may get up drunk….
O what an excellent guest am I! and what a charming host art thou!
I will be content with this from thee, and I do not wish to impose.138

The meter of the poem is mujtathth whose “swinging lilt”139 is considered appropriate
for the enumeration of names of food and other pleasures. Hearing it, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām
gives al-Iskandarī a silver coin and promises to entertain him with all the enjoyments that
he requests. Because its penultimate verse reads yā ḥabbadhā anā ḍayfān / lakum wa anta muḍīfān (O what an excellent guest am I! and what a charming host art thou!),
Hämeen-Anttila considers that the possibility of the adoption of a preexisting poem does
not quite fit the plot of this maqāmah.140 However, when greeted by the Banū Sāsān, ʿĪsā
ibn Hishām is described as being at the door of his house (ʿalā bāb dārī).141 On other
occasions, he has displayed the appropriate manners of hosts in front of poor and hungry
strangers. In ancient Indian literature, the usual behavior in the reception of guests includes preparing water, Madhuparka (mainly composed of honey and curd), and even a cow. Demanding guests such as the itinerant priest (prātaritvan) are frequently mentioned. In al-Hamadhānī’s maqāmah, ‘Īsā’s response to the urīdu-requests provides a strong parallel to the good-tempered Indian host who tries to satisfy his guests with a series of dadāni (I give).

This poem in the Maqāmah of Sāsān praises the Bedouin virtue of hospitality. Narrated again in the Maqāmah of the Famine, it constitutes a part of a saj’-description that is used to satirize a stingy host. If the poem comes from an earlier source, then its appearance in both maqāmāt serves as good examples of ikhfāʾ al-sarq (concealing theft), a concept elaborated by al-Hamadhānī’s contemporary, Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī.

The Maqāmah of the Famine takes place “in Baghdad in a famine year,”147 when ‘Īsā ibn Hishām comes across “a youth with a lisp in his tongue and a space between his front teeth (fatan dhū luthghatin bi-lisānih(i) wa falajin bi-asnānih(i)).”148 The very same front teeth (thanāyāhu)149 appear at the conclusion of the Maqāmah of Poesie: when ‘Īsā ibn Hishām recognizes the rogue-hero by this particular mark, the former pronounces a Qurʾānic verse (Q 26:18):

a lam nurabbika finā wǎlidan wa labithta finā min umrika sinīna?

Did we not rear thee as a child and didst thou not pass years of thy life with us?"150
Since in the Qurʾān the question is directed to Moses by the Pharaoh, al-Hamadhānī may deliberately intend that his hero should be taken as the prophet in both maqāmāt. The youth in the Maqāmah of the Famine greets ʿĪsā with the words: “What is thy affair (mā khaṭbuka),” which is the exact text of Moses’s question to the pseudo-prophet Sāmirī (Q 20:95). The “lisp in his tongue” also echoes Moses’s speech impediment: in the same sūrah (Q 20:27), Moses prays to Allāh to remove the block from his tongue.

This mirror image of the youth and Moses is interesting. In the following text from the Maqāmah of the Famine, the youth fabricates a tripartite description of a banquet in front of the extremely hungry ʿĪsā:

What sayest thou to a white cake on a clean table, picked herbs with very sour vinegar, fine date-wine with pungent mustard, roast meat ranged on a skewer with a little salt….Is that preferable to thee, or a large company, full cups, variety of dessert, spread carpets, brilliant lights, and a skilful minstrel with the eye and neck of a gazelle? If thou desirest neither this nor that, what is thy verdict regarding fresh meat, river fish, fried brinjal, the wine of Quṭrubbul, picked apples, a soft bed on a lofty place, opposite a rapid river, a gushing fountain, and a garden with streams in it?¹⁵¹

This banquet, which sounds much more resplendent than that one depicted in the
Maqāmah of Jāḥiẓ, is yet another location where a charming muṭrib appears. The youth’s description is structured as a crescendo, starting with the prosified (ḥall, “dissolved”) verses in the Maqāmah of Sāsān and rising through a climactic simile to the heavenly banquet. Spread carpets, full cups, a soft bed in a lofty mansion, these are well-known images associated with the Qur’ānic heaven. The addressee’s identity as a youth (fatan/ghulām) also leaves a hint of his similarity to the immortal servants in the Garden of Paradise (Q 76:19).

When the youth has completed his description, ‘Īsā ibn Hishām exclaims: “I am the slave of all three (anā ‘abd al-thalāthah)!” At this point, the audience must have understood that the enjoyments offered by his host are too lofty to be real: al-Iskandarī not merely looks like the prophet Moses, but also fascinates ‘Īsā with many Qur’ānic references. He is indeed a heavenly servant who nourishes ‘Īsā with his eloquence, something that can both revive desire and “grip their palate.”

The structure of the Maqāmah of the Famine is reflected in the one entitled Fresh Butter, which consists of a tripartite dialogue between a Bedouin host and his “guests who have tasted nothing for three nights.” Unlike the usually very hospitable Bedouin, the host coughs (tanaḥnaha) and starts describing his extremely luxurious dates, bread, and roasted kid. This maqāmah “is remarkable for recondite words and technical terms” and its description somewhat resembles the provision of recipes. There is a very similar Bedouin discussion of food recorded in the Kitāb al-aghānī (Book of Songs).
by Abū al-Faraj al-Iṣbahānī (284-356/897-967). Al-Hamadhānī may have adapted the anecdote, which “is not adorned with the saj’, assonances and parallelisms so often found in sayings ascribed to the ancient Bedouins.”

He also divided it into parts and used it as another interesting piece of mockery aimed at both stingy hosts and ignorant guests who should have noticed the cough in the very outset.

The other maqāmah named for food, the Maqāmah of the Maḏīrah (al-Maqāmah al-Maḏīrīyah), follows the same narrative configuration. We are told that a certain Baghdad merchant invites al-Iskandarī to a maḏīrah-lunch. Once their host-guest relationship has been established, the merchant bores al-Iskandarī with his never-ending boasts about his house, wife, table, basin, slave, or even lavatory. If the Maqāmah of the Famine is marked by its Qur’ānic associations and the Maqāmah of Fresh Butter by the typical Bedouin eloquence, then the Maqāmah of the Maḏīrah can be read as one about mores, for its discussion of middle-class values, together with its satirical touch, closely resembles Petronius’s (d. 66 C.E.) Cena Trimalchionis.

The loquacious merchant makes the Maḏīrah the longest Hamadhānian maqāmah in ‘Abduh’s edition. Its employment of exhaustive saj’, dialogic form, and the covering of themes beyond that of food (although it remains the most significant one) also suggest a similarity to Mei Cheng’s Seven Stimuli. Mei Cheng’s development of the food theme, as one of the seven enjoyments, was aimed at curing an overindulged prince. The Seven Stimuli can be traced back to the Zhao hun and the Da zhao (The Great
Summons),\textsuperscript{164} where a display of food names was used by Chu shamans to lure back departed souls. The food described in the highly idealized Chu homeland is comparable to that in the Qur\’\'anic Garden. In both the Chinese and Arabic traditions, these images about food became immortal by means of people’s recollection of the theme’s religious functions. When heavenly pleasures were secularized and enjoyed by rulers, aristocrats, and even merchants, they still seem to have inspired rhymed compositions for different purposes. For example, the poet Ibn al-Rūmī’s (221-283/836-896) panegyric of his hosts is introduced by ten verses describing delicacies.\textsuperscript{165}

It has been the aim of this short survey of the maqāmah’s resort to the food theme to illustrate al-Hamadhānī’s talent in switching from poetry to saj’, and creating different versions of almost identical subjects. Readers may also have become aware of “the charm of an already ongoing game with known rules and still unknown surprises.”\textsuperscript{166} The dialogic form, as we will elaborate in the next chapter, is connected with debate and plays an important role in the existence of envoi in the Maqāmāt.

**Grey hairs**

This section deals with the poetic theme of asceticism in the Maqāmāt and its importance to the characterization of the beggar al-Iskandarī. Up to this point, we have discussed the themes of hunting, wine-drinking, music, food, and their contributions to the prosimetric style of the Maqāmāt. As important sub-genres of classical Arabic poetry,
they echo al-Iskandari’s divinatory functions and can easily be cast into rhymed prose. In the section “The rājiz,” we talked about the kinship between saj’ and rajaz, and suggested the rajaz meter’s parenthood of the monorhymed distich, the rhyming couplet, and the strophe. Therefore al-Hamadhānī’s resort to the rajaz meter and his development of relevant poetic themes agree with the Maqāmāt’s saj’ part that has, in Chapter II, revealed many traces of al-Iskandari’s inheritance from pre-Islamic soothsayers. We also noted several times the functional similarities between the maqāmah and qaṣīdah. Al-Hamadhānī very likely focuses on a single theme in one maqāmah. However a group of maqāmāt could collectively provide the kind of entertainment that the audiences were known to find in a polythematic qaṣīdah.

In Chapter II, we emphasized the role played by the admonisher in genres of rhymed speech. Therefore we include here a section on the poetic theme of asceticism which best reflects al-Iskandari’s admonishing function. It is known that one of al-Iskandari’s favorite disguises is as a popular preacher (wā’īz). He has a loud voice that manages to weaken his chest and produce feebleness in his spine (as in the Maqāmah of the Date). For al-Hamadhānī this is a characteristic shared with loud-voiced poets (al-jahīr al-kalām) such as Dhū al-Rummah (in the Maqāmah of Ghaylan). Similar to the Indian prātaritvans who are both strangers and priests,167 al-Iskandari has made many profitable journeys by peddling clerical services. In the Maqāmah of Adharbayjān, we find him deliver a benediction-like prayer to Allāh168 before soliciting aid in the face of

159
exile. In the *Maqāmah of Isfahan*, he recounts the *oraculum* in order to sell slips of prayer.\textsuperscript{169} He appears with a naked boy in the *Maqāmah of Bukhārā*; while he is giving a sermon on the dangers of heedlessness, the boy chants a panegyric that begins with a description of the ring donated by ʿĪsā ibn Hishām.

It is during the period of political turbulence in the 4\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} century that al-Hamadhānī composed many *maqāmāt* on the combined theme of beggary/asceticism. According to Jonathan Berkey’s study, many popular preachers and storytellers in Mamluk Egypt and Syria were peripatetics. There are two themes popular with them and their “always new and different”\textsuperscript{170} audiences: the first is “poverty (al-faqr) and a renunciation of worldly goods and powers,” and the second involves “death, judgment, and salvation.”\textsuperscript{171} Bearing in mind al-Iskandarī’s other lucrative divinatory skills, we may class him as a practitioner of popular religiosity in medieval Islam. Chaucer’s Pardoner, who may represent the English popular preacher of the 14\textsuperscript{th} century, has a routine very similar to that of al-Iskandarī: he delivers speeches as loudly as a bell, shows off fake relics in glasses, sells nostrums to farmers and herders, and preaches many a moral tale.\textsuperscript{172}

However in the *Maqāmah of the Exhortation* (*al-Maqāmah al-Waʿẓīyah*), the one that is named precisely for preaching (*waʿz*), al-Iskandarī is not seeking coins. Furthermore, the anonymous bier-bearer in the *Maqāmah of Ahwaz* (*al-Maqāmah al-Ahwāzīyah*) delivers a long sermon on mortality in front of ʿĪsā and his
boon-companions and then declares that he has no need of “the goods of this world.”173 This “non-profit” piety on the part of the bier-bearer leads ʿAbduh to doubt his connection with al-Iskandari.174 However, even if most Hamadhânian maqāmāt have warned us not to take his ornate speeches too seriously, we can be sure that this is indeed our chameleon-like hero (or at least his double).

When a frustrated hero becomes too pessimistic, he may resort to both the wine poetry (khamrīyāt) and ascetic poetry (zuḥdīyāt).175 The Abbasid poet Abū al-ʿAtāhiyah (130-212/748-828), whose 320-verse urjūzah muzdawijah is regarded as “a forerunner of the didactic poem in Arabic,”176 had composed many libertine verses (love-songs and drinking-songs) in his early years.177 Abū Zayd’s “sincere repentance” and “pure and unremitting devotion”178 at the end of the Ḥarīrian maqāmah suggests that at some point the picaresque hero would need to contemplate such a retirement. After all, there are enemies that nobody can overcome. In the Chinese tradition Dongfang Shuo stopped being a comedian just before he died. He admonished Emperor Wu, providing the latter with serious suggestions.179 In al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmah of Ahwaz the menace of death is, no doubt, represented in the image of bier; and the bearer’s voice invites two allusions to the Resurrection.180 The other public enemy is old age. In the introduction to the Maqāmah of Kūfah, the narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām recounts how he prepares for the ḥajj “when the day brightened my night (when my hair turned grey).”181

The Maqāmah of the Exhortation consists of two sermons.182 The first one is in
sajʿ and full of Qur’ānic evocations. The second contains nine ṭawīl-metered fragments which “are separated by short comments in prose.” After al-Iskandarī finishes the sermons, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām at first fails to recognize him for the latter’s hoariness (shayb).

Then his old companion chants the envoi in the mutagārib-meter:

\[
\begin{align*}
nadhīrun wa lākinnahu sākitū \\
wa ḍayfun wa lākinnahu shāmitū \\
wā ishkhsu mawtān wa lākinnahu \\
ilā an ushayyīʾahu thābitū
\end{align*}
\]

A warner, but a silent one,
   And a guest, but a gloating one,
The messenger of death, but
   Verily he will stay on till I accompany him.\textsuperscript{184}

In the first sermon of the \textit{Maqāmah of the Exhortation}, al-Iskandarī urges the audience not to cling to the impermanent world, but to make ready for the hereafter. This conventional zuhd-theme is enhanced in the second homily, where the hero restates that Death has destroyed many great nations and kings. The mention of grey hair in the envoi “underlines the burden of his sermon”\textsuperscript{185} and also demands another reading of al-Iskandarī’s double in the \textit{Maqāmah of Ahwaz}. If grey hair is indeed the silent warner, the man with a staff in his right hand and a bier on his shoulder seems to be a loud and clear admonisher sent by Death himself.

Grey hairs are related to ascetic poetry in other traditions as well. In one of the Jātaka stories\textsuperscript{186} the sight of a single grey hair fills a righteous and mighty king named
Makhādeva with deep emotion. He not only gives up the throne, but decides to follow the ascetic’s path ever after. When his ministers inquire as to the reason for his renunciation of the throne, the king holds the grey hair and recites a śloka:

\[
\text{Uttamaṅgarūhā mayham ime jātā vayoḥarā}
\text{pārubhūtā devadūtā, pabbajīsamayo mamā 'tī.}
\]

Lo, these grey hairs that on my head appear
Are Death’s own messengers that come to rob
My life. ’Tis time I turned from worldly things,
And in the hermit’s path sought saving peace.\(^{187}\)

It is noteworthy that this Makhādeva-Jātaka is dubbed Devadūta-Jātaka,\(^{188}\) the devadūta (pl. devadūtā), or Yama’s messenger,\(^{189}\) being the Pali counterpart of the Arabic ishkḥās mawt that appears in the Maqāmah of the Exhortation.\(^{190}\) Although the Pali poem is in śloka (4*8 syllables) and the Arabic one in mutaqārib (4*11 syllables), both of them are concise but resolute statements of the need for renunciation evoked by grey hair.

Andras Hamori informs us that the image of grey hair was used as early as in Şālīḥ ibn ‘Abd al-Quddūs’s (d. 167/783) Naṣīḥah (sincere advice), a long poem that blends “zuḥd with maxims of general piety and practical wisdom,”\(^{191}\) in which the poet “conventionally spurned by a lady on account of his grey hair, resolves that it is time to give up the world.”\(^{192}\) Similarly in the Makhādeva-Jātaka, the king is informed by his barber of the existence of a grey hair. The Arabic ascetic poetry “is most profoundly rooted in the Qurʾān,” but it also has many precursors in pre-Islamic times. The verse of
the Arab Christian poet ʿAdī ibn Zayd (d. c. 600 C.E.), for example, recalls “the rhetorical tradition of the homilies of the Eastern Church.” The strategic location of Arabia and the vast territories of the Islamic empires contribute to Arabic literature’s role as a melting pot for many ideas, themes, and styles. Ascetic poetry, as an Arab preacher’s stock in trade, surely welcomes cross-cultural transfer. This may account for the comparison of grey hair with the death’s messenger to be found in both the Maqāmah of the Exhortation and the Makhādeva-Jātaka.

In C. B. Cowell’s preface to the edition of the Jātaka stories he mentions that:

Some of the birth-stories are evidently Buddhistic and entirely depend for their point on some custom or idea peculiar to Buddhism; but many are pieces of folk-lore which have floated about the world for ages as the stray waifs of literature and are liable everywhere to be appropriated by any casual claimant.

We should add that the vast hoard of Jātaka stories resulted from the Buddhistic absorption of pre-existing motifs and themes. It is probably not mere coincidence that a jātaka story is a model for Chaucer’s Pardoner’s Tale. The exemplum of the popular preacher seems to be a ready vehicle for interesting, wildly imagined, or even blasphemous stories. This may partly explain why the “two important figures in the early history of the zuhdiyyah—Ṣāliḥ b. ʿAbd al-Quddūs and Abū ʿl-ʿAtāhiyah—were suspected of tainted religious beliefs.” When people adopt universal themes, such as the ubi sunt motif, the image of grey hair, and Radix malorum est Cupiditas, it becomes more likely that foreign notions, representative beliefs of other religions, or
even a particular prosimetrical style may make their way into their compositions, generating thereby something that is distinctive from their own literary tradition. Therefore the next chapter will discuss, in the context of Chinese Buddhist preaching, the prose-poetry sequence to be found in the second sermon of the *Exhortation*.

For now, we would like to draw attention to al-Iskandari’s comment on knowledge (‘ilm) and scholars (‘ulamā́) inserted between the first and second sermons. At first sight, this passage does not seem to follow the zuhd-motif:

\[
a lā wa inna l-‘ilm ahsanu ‘alā l-‘ilāth(i) wa l-jahla aqabahu ‘alā bālāth(i) wa innakum ashqā man azallathu l-samā́(u) in shaqiyā bikumu l-‘ulamā́(u)….wa l-nāṣu rajulānī ‘ālimun yar ā wa muta’ālimun yas ā wa l-bāqūna hāmilu na ‘ām(i)na wa rā‘ī’u an ‘ām(i)na waylu ‘ālin umira min sājīl(ih) wa ‘ālimi shay’in min jāhīl(ih)
\]

Verily knowledge, whatever its failings, is good, and ignorance is bad under all conditions. Ye are surely the most wretched overshadowed by the heavens if, through you, the learned are in distress….Men are divided into two classes, the observant scholar and the striving student, as for the rest, they are abandoned ostriches and beasts pasturing at pleasure. Woe to him of high degree commanded by one beneath him, and woe to the knower of something who is ruled by one ignorant of it!198

The last sentence bears a strong resemblance to the frustration verse or rhymed prose mentioned in Chapter II. Why does al-Hamadhānī allow the hoary preacher to insert such a warning or complaint? Although al-Hamadhānī was belittled for his maqāmāt on beggary, he had in fact equipped his hero with extremely erudite speeches and allowed him to express many emotions characteristic of littératoirs. Al-Iskandari’s frustration is often heard in the envois to the maqāmāt. His “ravings” (hadhayān)199 are invoked to
poke fun at the Muʿtazilīs in the Būyid court. There is even a direct satire on a hypocrite judge in the *Maqāmah of Nishapur*. For al-Hamadhānī many religious leaders are neither knowers (ʿālīm) nor models. The voice of the author stands out in the *Maqāmah of the Exhortation*, even though it is sandwiched between the homilies of a possibly sincere preacher. It would seem that this is the message that al-Hamadhānī really wants us to hear and thereby to be duly admonished.

**Conclusion**

Al-Hamadhānī’s collection of *Maqāmāt* is comprehensive in its inclusion of many pre-existing themes and styles, which are naturally grouped together through the creation of the character of Abū al-Fatḥ al-Iskandarī. Al-Hamadhānī deliberately selects rhymed utterances that would be most characteristic of his rogue hero. The functions that al-Iskandarī inherits from the pre-Islamic soothsayers play an important role in the crafting of the prosimetric style.

In this chapter we first suggested the need for a deeper understanding of the *rajaz* meter which appears fourteen times in the *Maqāmāt*. Since *saj*ʿ and *rajaz* can be traced back to a common point of origin, it is much easier to understand why they should both serve as vehicles for common themes such as riddles, debates, hunting, and food. Frolov holds that Arabic verse was developed “from *saj*ʿ via *rajaz* to *Qaṣīd*.” The peculiar flexibility of trimeter- and dimeter-*rajaz* measures indicates that the *rajaz* may well have
been one of the ancestors of the system of meters that was to be codified by al-Khalīl ibn Aḥmad. When urjūzahs (rajaz poems) become longer, multirhymed varieties also appeared. Thus we have suggested that the monorhymed distich (qasīdah), the rhyming couplet (muzdawij), and the strophe (musammaṭ, muwashshah, and zajal) are all connected to each other, and thus the successor of the pre-Islamic soothsayers would surely be able to use these various poetic forms in his speeches.

Secondly the collection of Maqāmāt enhances the ancient belief that the linguistic charms of both saj` and rajaz are empowered by supernatural inspiration. During the initial phases of many a literary tradition, poets (e.g., Homer, Hesiod, Ezekiel, and Qu Yuan) are shown to have shared the faculties of prophets. The Prophet Muḥammad is known to have disliked being called a poet or a kāhin. The linkage of poetry and prophecy seems to have continued in Islamic times, even when poets concentrated on their role as panegyrists and their urjūzahs and qasīdahs were compensated with silver and gold. At least in popular circles, the power of their eloquence was venerated, as can be seen in the early life of al-Mutanabbī, the poet whose nickname means “the pseudo-prophet.” For al-Hamadhānī, masters of poetry can be of any age and any walk of life. A young Bedouin is able to recite poems that do not “accord with his powers of improvisation.” This also accounts for ʻĪsā ibn Hishām’s admiration for al-Iskandarī’s poetry in despite of his frequently despicable circumstances.

Thirdly, the discussion of al-Iskandarī’s role as singer and preacher (wāʻīz) in the
Maqāmāt serves to emphasize his function as admonisher. The verses, whether they involve religious teachings or wine songs, do not differ all that much in the eyes of our frustrated hero. Even so, we should avoid simply categorizing him as a hypocritical practitioner of popular religiosity. Instead the comment on knowledge and scholars inserted into the Maqāmah of the Exhortation may give us a better idea of al-Hamadhānī’s motivations in creating such a character. Al-Iskandārī is to be construed as the tongue for other inheritors of the pre-Islamic kāhins: performers of ayyām narratives, hākīs, anecdote composers, etc. Al-Hamadhānī himself is also a frustrated admonisher of society; from time to time his voice can be heard in the envois. Although these envois may remind us of Yang Xiong’s sardonic remark that ornate fūs encourage a hundred times but criticize by indirectness only once, they are indeed the pinpricks that al-Hamadhānī used to stimulate his audience and reveal his social commitment almost a thousand years earlier than the Arab writers of the iltizām (commitment) movement in the mid-20th century.

Since many a prosimetricum has such an envoi section, in the next chapter we will begin our survey of the Maqāmāt’s concluding poem, to see whether it functions similarly to the luan in the Chinese fū, or to the śloka-maxim in the Sanskrit Pañcatantra, or perhaps to some other literary equivalent.

1 The twelve meters are: tawīl (30 poetic segments), rajaz (14), kāmil (13), mujtathth (12), basīṭ (11), wāfir (10), ramal (9), mutaqārīb (9), ḥaffīf (5), ḥazaj (2), sarīʿ (2), and munsarīḥ (1). For Wright, the rajaz, sarīʿ, kāmil, and wāfir meters are four iambic Khallīan meters. See C. P. Caspari, A Grammar of the Arabic Language, trans. and ed. W. Wright (London: Williams and Norgate, 1859-62), 2: 262-64. As we will argue in the section “The mujtathth meter” in Chapter
IV, the mujaitih and khafti meters are also related to the rajaz.

See chap. 2, n. 149.

According to the unexpurgated version contained in the margins of the 1928 Rasāʾ īl, six out of fifty-two maqāmāt are devoid of poetry. They are the Siṣṭan, Mafīrāh (al-Maṣāmah al-Mafīrīyah), Fresh Butter, Advice, Şaymara, and Dīnar (al-Maṣāmah al-Dīnārīyah) maqāmāt. The rest forty-six maqāmāt share the 119 poems. One of the maqāmāt on literary criticism, the Maqāmāh of Iraq, has most poems (19 pieces). The longest poem (24 lines) appears in the Maqāmāh of Bishr.

See the section “The outer form” in Chapter I.

Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres,” 270. The suddenness lies in the fact that the narrator does not give any hint of switching (e.g., without qâla or anshada) to and from such verses.

Etymologically speaking, rajaz is connected with a certain camel disease which causes “a convulsive motion in the hind leg or the thighs.” See Edward William Lane and Stanley Lane-Poole, An Arabic-English Lexicon (London: Williams and Norgate, 1863-93), Book I, pt.3, 1036-37 (quotation from 1036). “In that case, there might be an allusion to the iambic, monotonous and pounding rhythm of these poems.” See Ullmann et al., “Radjaz.”

See the sections “Prose and poetry” in the Introduction and “Divinatory functions” in Chapter II.


“The word iambos is held by some to have meant originally ‘derision’, with particular reference to the public skits with literary genres. For example, Roman poets (e.g., Statius and Claudian) composed written wedding songs

9 “The beginning of the maqāmāh of Aswad also reminds us of the beginning of the Kongzi Xiang Tuo xiang wen shu. In both stories, the senior speaker (Confucius or Isā ibn Hishām) cannot compete with the junior speaker in eloquence.

Ullmann et al., “Radjaz.”

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid. Also see Ebn Nāṣr Ḥmmād al-Cevheri (al-Jawharī), Kitāb ʾl-ḥavāfi (Kitāb al-qawāfī), ed. Kenan Demirayak (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi yayım, 1995), 1. We have mentioned the two riddles of the Maqāmāh of the Spindle in Chapter II. A detailed discussion of the dimeter-rajaz riddle is to be found in the next section.


15 Ullmann et al., “Radjaz.”

16 Abduh, 79; Prendergast, 74.

17 See the section “The staff” in Chapter II.

18 Abduh, 87; Prendergast, 79 (with minor change).

19 See Caspari and Wright, A Grammar of the Arabic Language, 2: 262-63. Also see n. 1 above.

20 Frolov discusses different poetic functions of the archaic rajaz meter in “The Place of Rajaz,” 248-56.

21 Frolov discusses different poetic functions of the archaic rajaz meter in “The Place of Rajaz,” 248-56.

22 Humbach, Gāthās, 1:4-5, 151-86. The “hendekasyllabic verse” of Pahlavi poetry also draws the attention of Gustave E. von Grunebaum who considers it “the precursor of the (Arabic and Persian) mutaqârib.” See Von Grunebaum, “On the Origin and Early Development of Arabic Muzdawij Poetry,” in Journal of Near Eastern Studies 3, No. 1 (1944):9-13 (quotation from 13). “The term ‘Pahlavi’ denotes the Middle Persian language derived from Old Persian, the language of the province of Persis (today Fars) in southwestern Iran. It was spoken during the long period between the third century BCE up to the eighth or ninth century CE.” Most of the extant Pahlavi works “were written or compiled after the Muslim conquest.” See Maria Macuch, “Pahlavi Literature,” in The Literature of Pre-Islamic Iran: Companion Volume I to A History of Persian Literature, eds. R. E. Emmerick and M. Macuch (London: Taurus, 2009), 116-96 (quotation from 116-17).


24 White, The Verse of Greek Comedy, 286 (§ 600).

25 Abduh, 80; Prendergast, 75.

26 This reminds us again of Ji Bu’s story, see the section “Divinatory functions” in Chapter II.

27 Abduh, 139; Prendergast, 111 (with minor change).

28 Frolov discusses different poetic functions of the archaic rajaz meter in “The Place of Rajaz,” 248-56.

29 Frolov discusses different poetic functions of the archaic rajaz meter in “The Place of Rajaz,” 248-56.

30 Frolov discusses different poetic functions of the archaic rajaz meter in “The Place of Rajaz,” 248-56.


32 The Verse of Greek Comedy, ed. Kenan Demirayak (Erzurum: Atatürk Üniversitesi, Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi yayım, 1995), 1. We have mentioned the two riddles of the Maqâmâh of the Spindle in Chapter II. A detailed discussion of the dimeter-rajaz riddle is to be found in the next section.

33 Ullmann et al., “Radjaz.”

34 See Almā Giese, Wasf bei Kuṣāšīm (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1981).

35 Ullmann et al., “Radjaz.” For the Arabic text, see Ibn Sallām al-Jumâli, Ṭabaqât fuḥûl al-shuʿarâ’, ed. M. M. Şâkîr (Cairo: Maṭbaʿat al-maddanî, 1974), 739-42. The wedding, as an important ritual for all the people, is closely connected with literary genres. For example, Roman poets (e.g., Statius and Claudian) composed written wedding songs

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(epithalamia) in hexameter. Also, the Dunhuang manuscripts of popular literature have preserved a dialogue-song between the bride’s party and that of the groom. See Waley, *Ballads*, 189-201.


37 Ullmann et al., “Radījaz.” The usage of quotation is also attested in later works such as ʾUmar ibn ʿAbī Rabīʿah’s (d. c. 93/712) unrestrained ghazah. For an example of ʾUmar’s flirtatious conversations, see Allen, *Heritage*, 175-76.

38 We would like to mention a kind of lewd Vedic dialogue hymn (in the *ānuṣṭubh*-meter) between a king’s wives and priests that is used after the sacrifice of horse in the Aṣvamedha rituals. On the Mahāvraṭa (The Great Vow) Day, which is at the end of the yearlong Gāvāmānaya (Progress of the Cows) ritual and coincides with the winter solstice, a similar bawdy dialogue between a whore (*punicalī/punicalī*) and a student (*brahmacārin*). See Stephanie W. Jamison, *Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife: Women, Ritual, and Hospitality in Ancient India* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), 65-72, 96-98. Also see Michael Witzel, “Saramā and the Panis: Origins of Prosimetric Exchange in Archaic India,” in *Prosimetrum*, 387-409, esp. 398-400.

39 We would like to point out that there are two pieces of linked-verse (lit *lianju shì* 聯句詩) in the “airs” of the Chinese *Shì jīng* that record the conversation between husband and wife. Phrases such as “said the woman” (*nǐ yuē 女曰) and “said the man” (*shì yuē 士曰) are also conventional and give a very lively tone. Unlike the obscene content of al-ʾIjī’s *urjizah*, women in the two Chinese poems encourage their husbands to get up early when the rooster chirps. For the Chinese text, see Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蒋建元, *Shì jīng zhu xi 詩經註釋* (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1991), 235-38 (齊風·女曰鷄鳴), 263-65 (齊風·鷄鳴).


41 Abduh, 165-66; Prendergast, 129.

42 Ullmann et al., “Radījaz.”

43 Ibid.

44 This version is lost. But there are two later Arabic versifications of *Kalīlah wa Dimnah*. See C. Brockelmann, “Kalīlah Wa-dimnah,” in *EF*.

45 Arabic *musammatāt* already existed in the 2nd/8th century. Abū Nuwās (d. 200/815) has a *bastī*-metered wine-poem “which can be read both as a *qaṣīdah* written in regular monorhyme and as a strophic poem with recurring rhyme (*musammatāt*) on the pattern *aaaa bbba ccca* etc.” See G. Schoeler, “Bashshār b. Burd, Abū ʾl-ʿAtāḥiyah and Abū Nuwās,” in *Abbasid Belles-lettres*, 275-99 (quotation from 299).

46 The *muwashshah* is said to have developed in Muslim Spain towards the end of the 3rd/9th century. The rhyme schemes of two simple types of *muwashshah* are *ab ccc ab ddd ab*, etc. and *aaaa bb ccc bb*, etc. See Schoeler, “Muwashshah.” The Ayyubid poet, Ibn Sanāʿ al-Mulk (550-608/1155-1211), wrote a treatise about the structure and prosody of this genre, see Dār al-ṭirāz fī amal al-muwashshahāt, ed. Jawdat al-Rikābī (Damascus: Dār al-ṭārīkh, 1980).

47 The *zaįal* is also said to have originated in Muslim Spain during the 5th/11th century, “under the influence of a specific type of *musammat*.” The most famous zaįalist is Ibn Quzmān (d. 555/1160). A typical rhyme structure of the *zaįal* is *aa bbb a, ccc a*, etc. See G. Schoeler and W. Stoetzer, “Zaįal (a.),” in *EF*.

48 M. Bencheneh, “Muzdawiǧi,” in *EF*.

49 See the section “Three examples” in Chapter II.


51 Trounce informs us that the English tail-rhyme romances have an average length of 2000 lines. “They constitute one of the three broad streams of poetical narrative literature of the fourteenth century in England,” the other two are represented by works of Chaucer and Langland respectively. See ibid.

52 For the purposes of analysis it would not be very difficult to convert each group of the tail-rhyme stanza (11 accents) into a heroic couplet (10 accents).

53 For example, the heroic couplet is comparable to the Persian *mathnawī* which usually have eleven (or rarely, ten) syllables in a line. See J. T. P. de Brujin, B. Flemming, and Munibur Rahman, “Mathnawi,” in *EF*.

54 Hawkes has suggested that the long line of the Category B “looks as if it might have been deliberately created by putting two Song-style lines together.” See *The Songs of the South*, 41. However, it would appear that their relationship can be better explained via using dimeter and trimeter.

55 It also explains why the Category B meter looks like the Latin elegiac couplet, see chap. 2, n. 206.

56 See the section “The needle” of Chapter II.


58 “From our first exponent, Abū ʾl-Najm al-ʾIjī, who died before 132/750, right through into the late fourth/tenth century the *rajaz* metre is closely associated with the *ṭurdiyāt*.” Sometimes the poets also used the *qarīd*-meters and “those most commonly found are *mutaqārīb, tawīl* and *sārī*.” See G. Rex Smith, “Hunting Poetry,” in *Abbasid Belles-lettres*, 167-84 (quotation from 174).
The Maqāmah of the Lion is perhaps one of the most studied Hamadhānī maqāmāt in recent decades. It contains an introduction and three episodes—a structure unlike that of a typical maqāmah. Because of the marginal role of al-Iskandari, the lack of anagorisis in the end, and the sources of its episodes in earlier anecdotal literature, the present text has been suggested to be an early piece. See Hämeen-Anttila, Maqāma: A History of a Genre, 105.

Mattock, “The Early History of the Maqāma,” 1-2, 11-18 (quotation from 2). About the probable impact of al-Bayhaqi’s Kitāb al-mahāsin wa l-maṣārīt to this work, see I. Géries, “al-Maḥāsin wa-‘l-Maṣāwī,“ in EI².

“The garb of doom” can be regarded as the author’s homage to the poet, Abū Dhu‘ayb (d. c. 28/649), who once compared doom (manīyāh) to a lion. See Sharḥ Maqāmāt Badī‘ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, 37, n. 3.

Abduh, 31; Prendergast, 41.

Abduh, 31; Prendergast, 42. The meter is ramāl with a pattern of X U -- -- | X U -- -- | X U -- -- | X U -- | X U -- |. Prendergast, 42, n. 1; Sharḥ Maqāmāt Badī‘ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, 38, n. 1. The image of a full bucket is connected with strength and bravery. Edward Lane quotes a kāmil-metered line as follows: idh arsalīnā mātiḥan bi-dīlā ḥīm / fa mala tuhā ‘alaqan ilā asbāḥāḥ (“[When they sent me drawing with their buckets, and I filled them with blood to their brims]: he says, they sent me seeking to execute their blood-revenges, and I slew many”). See An Arabic-English Lexicon, Book I, pt.4, 1301-2.

Hämeen-Anttila considers this verse also to be a quotation, see Hämeen-Anttila, Maqama: A History of a Genre, 427, n. 10. We will return to these two added lines in the section “Dozens and scores” in Chapter IV.

Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres,” 270. Heinrichs mentions this “strange poetic phenomenon” at the end of his analysis of the poetic modes in al-Harīrī’s Maqāmāt. Heinrichs gives five instances of this “rudimentary” technique from al-Harīrī’s Maqāmāt and three from al-Hamadhānī’s (Prendergast, 42 [al-Lahabī’s line], 43 [Imru’ al-Qays’s (d. c. 550 C.E.) description of horse, see Hämeen-Anttila, Maqama: A History of a Genre, 53, n. 31], 71 [a line describing a house, in the Maqāmāh of Jāhīz]). See ibid., 270, nn. 37, 38. We wish to explain some traits of this mode of poetry within the context of al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmāt, which actually contain twelve more instances (even though the line by Imru’ al-Qays should not be counted as an example of this technique: it forms part of the saj’-description of the Turkic slave and therefore belongs to the tadmīn-category). They are the ending poem of the first episode of the Maqāmah of the Lion, the first poem in the Maqāmah of Adharbayjān (al-Maqāmah al-Adharbayjānīyah), all five poems in the Maqāmah of Jurjān (al-Maqāmah al-Jurjānīyah), all three poems in the Maqāmah of Baṣrah, the first poem of the Maqāmah of the Nājm, and the envoi in the Maqāmah of Kings (al-Maqāmah al-Mulūkīyah), see Prendergast, 42, 51, 53-55, 65-66, 146, 174; ‘Abduh, 32, 44, 47-50, 64-66, 192, 230.

The first case is the first poem in Adharbayjān. It describes the happiness that Īsā ibn Hishām finds in Adharbayjān, see Prendergast, 51; ‘Abduh, 44. Since it is introduced by “And when I reached it,” its deletion would certainly affect the content of the text. Also, this poem is a quotation from a wine poem (khamāryāh) of Abū Nuwās, see Drory, Models and Contacts, 53-54. The second case is the second poem in the Maqāmah of Baṣrah, see Prendergast, 66; ‘Abduh, 65. It seems that both cases can be considered as variants of tadmīn.

See Hämeen-Anttila, Maqama: A History of a Genre, 52. The aforementioned line by Imru’ al-Qays appears three times as tadmīn in the whole Maqāmāt, see Prendergast, 43, 59, 119; ‘Abduh, 33, 55, 151. Instances of tadmīn can also be found in the third way of the first episode of the Maqāmah of the Lion (“he fell on his hands and face,” Prendergast, 42; also see Sharḥ Maqāmāt Badī‘ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, 38, n. 3), and in the end of the Maqāmah of the Maḍīfār (“Now ye men of Hamadhān am I unjust in this?”) Prendergast, 97; see Sharḥ Maqāmāt Badī‘ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, 143, n. 5, and Monroe, Picarresque Narrative, 158, n. 19.

Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres,” 270.

The two Arabic phrases are quoted from the abstract of “Modes of Existence of Poetry in the Arabian Nights” which was presented by Heinrichs at the 219th meeting of AOS (Albuquerque, March 14, 2009). Heinrichs presented several individual cases of tamaththul, as well as their introductory formulae in his article “The Function(s) of Poetry in the Arabian Nights,” in O Ye Gentlemen: Arabic Studies on Science and Literary Culture in Honour of Remke Kruk, edited by Armond Vrolijk and Jan P. Hogendijk (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 353-62, esp. 359-62.


Ibid., 13. Compare the ending poem in Kongzi Xiang Tuo xianwen shu, see Fu, Su qing ya yun, 146-47.

With its saj’-narrative and non-shāhīd ending poem.

Especially by applying different modes of existence of poetry.


For the structure of a typical Hamadhānī maqāmah, see the section “The inner form” in Chapter I.

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Hämeen-Anttila, “The Author and His Sources,” 146-49.

Hämeen-Anttila analyses two anecdotes about begging Bedouins in the Mulah and concludes that they are “intimately connected with the maqāmas” and have “all the main features of the episode of many comic or beggar maqāmas.” They only lack “the formal beginning and ending with the technical features used in them.” See Hämeen-Anttila, Maqama: A History of a Genre, 77-80 (quotation from 80).

Both Zakharia and Hämeen-Anttila note that “the text is introduced by ḥaddathānā al-Ḥasan ibn Muhammad al-Fārsīnī instead of the normal formula” in the Constantinople 1298 edition. See Hämeen-Anttila, “The Author and His Sources,” 144.  

Monroe, Picaresque Narrative, 31-36.

Prendergast, 190. Since the second episode of the Maqāmah of the Lion describes how the group is cheated and menaced by a Turkic slave boy, we detect several common factors between the Lion and the Bishr maqāmah: the killing of the beast and the menace represented by a youth.

It is scanned as U -- UU -- | U -- U -- | U -- U -- | U -- U -- | U -- -- |.

Prendergast, 187-89.

Abdul, 256; Prendergast, 189.

The treatment of animals as companions or even as members of his clan is a particular feature of șu‘lāk poetry, as seen, for example, in al-Shanfar’s famous Lāmiyāt al-‘Arāh.

The fact that the lion poem is quoted in the Rasā‘il assures Hämeen-Anttila of al-Hamadhānī’s authorship of this maqāmah of “anomaly.” “The poem later found its way into anthologies, as if Bishr had been an historical person.” See Hämeen-Anttila, “The Author and His Sources,” 145, 152-53.


“Zoroastrians, like Jews and Christians, were allowed to make wine, and Christian monasteries, which turned remote spots into oases of fruit trees and vines, were favourite resorts for pleasure parties, and their names are frequently encountered in poetry.” See Harb, “Wine poetry (khāmriyyāt),” 228.

Ibid., 223, 230. For an exploration of the wine poetry from the pre-Islamic times to the age that is represented by Abū Nuwās’s works, see Philip Kennedy’s Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry: Abū Nuwās and the Literary Tradition (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

Prendergast, 139-40.

Ibid., 59 (the Maqāmah of Ahwaz), 71 (the Maqāmah of Jāhīz), 82 (the Maqāmah of Sāsān), 103 (the Maqāmah of the Fāmine), 156 (the Maqāmah of Șaymarah).

Abdul, 73-74; Prendergast, 71.

Harb, “Wine poetry (khāmriyyāt),” 221.

The meter is a variant of the kāmil: it can be scanned as UU -- U -- | UU -- U -- | UU -- U -- | UU -- U -- |. See the scheme of kāmil-6 in Stoetzer, “Prosody,” 621.

Abdul, 242-43; Prendergast, 180-81 (we changed “fragrance of the soul” into “sweet basil of the soul”).


Prendergast, 27. ’Abdul, 6.

Yu Jiāxi, Shi shuo xin yu jian shu 世說新語箋疏 (Beijing: Zhonghua shu ju, 1983), 399.

Note the use of first person possessive in the description, namely rāf (my saliva), khaddī (my cheek), ajdāda jaddī (my grandfather’s ancestors), hājīr wa ʿaddī (my separation and aversion).

We are reminded here of al-A‘shā’s narrative wine poetry which includes elements such as the poet’s bargain with the wine-seller, and a description of the wine and the serving-boy. See Harb, “Wine poetry (khāmriyyāt),” 222.

131 Prendergast, 181; ‘Abduh, 243.

132 Philip Kennedy quotes an anecdote from Kitāb al-aghānī (Book of Songs) which suggests that Iblis was the musical muse of Ibrāhīm al-Mawsīlī (d. 188804), the Abbasid musician par excellence, See Kennedy, “Some Demon Muse,” 128. Ibrāhīm al-Mawsīlī “was the first musician to train white slave-girls in the art of singing.” It is also said that he “remained all his life addicted to wine.” See J. W. Fück, “Ibrāhīm al-Mawsīlī, Abū Ishāk,” in EP.

133 Ibid., 59-60, 64-65.

134 Also see the illustration in Al-Maqāmāt al-Ḥarīrīyah, illustrated by Y. Al-Wasiti, facsimile ed., 36a. The illustration is used on the cover of Philip Kennedy’s Wine Song in Classical Arabic Poetry.

135 See chap. 2, n. 293.

136 The oldest preserved Arabic cookery-book is Ibn Sayyār’s Kitāb al-ṭabīkh, which was written in the second half of the tenth century. It contains more than seventy poems, the majority of which are ecphrastic poems.
“quoted in the appropriate sections and very often concluding a chapter.” They are “perhaps the equivalent of the luscious colour photographs of modern cookery-books.” See Van Gelder, Of Dishes and Discourse, 63, 66.


ʿAbduh, 93-94; Prendergast, 82. As is the case with the other two poems in the Maqāmah of Sāsān, this one is in the muḥātṭah meter. See chap. 2, n. 22.


Prendergast, 81; ʿAbduh, 92. Also see the quotation in the section “The veil and the ochre” of Chapter II.

See the Maqāmah of Kūfah and the Maqāmah of the Nāṣirīs.


Ibid., 185-86. “If a guest departed unhonoured from a house, his sins were to be transferred to the householder, and all the merits of the householder were to be transferred to him.” See Sakoontalā; or, The Lost Ring, 212 (n. 25). According to the play, Sakoontalā’s suffering was indeed caused by her neglect of guest reception.

Jamison, Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife, 197 (Mahābhārata XIII, 94).

See the section “Style-breaking” in the Introduction.

Prendergast, 103.

Prendergast, 103; ʿAbduh, 127.

Prendergast, 30; ʿAbduh, 9.

ʿAbduh, 9; Prendergast, 30.

Prendergast, 103-4; ʿAbduh, 127-29.

Professor Lowry reminds me that this could be some kind of pun on Christianity and the Trinity.

Prendergast, 104.

Ibid., 135.

In the end of the Maqāmah of Iblīs, al-ʾIskandārī chants a poem to praise ʿĪsā’s generosity: He scratched not his beard, he wiped not his nose and he did not cough (mā haka liḥyatuh wa lā masakha ‘l-makhāṭa wa lā tanbaha). See Prendergast, 142; ʿAbduh, 185. The Maqāmah of the Dinar also mocks such a coughing host: “O coughing of the host, when the bread is broken (yū tanbahahahu ‘l-mudīff(i) idhā kusira ‘l-raghīff(u)!” See Prendergast, 165; ʿAbduh, 219.

Prendergast, 138, n. 2.

Van Gelder, Of Dishes and Discourse, 28-29.

Ibid., 29.

It is perhaps one of the most studied Hamadhānīan maqāmāṭ in recent years. See Hāmeen-Anttila, Maqama: a History of a Genre, 106-14, esp. 107, n. 26; Monroe, Picaresque Narrative, 145-60; Fedwa Malti-Douglas, “Maqāmāṭ and adab: ‘al-Maqāmāṭ al-Madīrīyya’ of al-Hamadhānī,” in JAOS 105, No. 2 (1985): 247-58; Bray, “Isnāds and Models of Heroes,” 19-20; Van Gelder, Of Dishes and Discourse, 49-51. Malti-Douglas introduces the dichotomy of bakhīl (stingy) and tufaylī (party-crasher) to analyze the structure of this maqāmah.

“Madīrā is a dish of meat cooked in sour milk, sometimes with fresh milk added, and with spices thrown in to enhance the flavour.” See ed(s), “Madīrā,” in EI3.

ʿAbduh, 126.

Monroe points out that “the boorish merchant has actually followed a strictly logical if grotesque sequence.” See Monroe, Picaresque Narrative, 152-55.


Mei Cheng’s “Seven stimuli” and Wang Bor’s “Pavilion of King Terng”, 1-99.

Chu ci ji zhu, 123a-141b; The Songs of the South, 219-38.

Van Gelder, Of Dishes and Discourse, 60-61.


Jamison, Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife, 186.

See the section “The staff” in Chapter II.

See the section “Visions and dreams” in Chapter II.


Ibid., 45-46.

Chaucer, Tales, 28-29, 451-56.

Prendergast, 61. The hero of the sixth maqām of ʿUyūn al-akhbār refuses the big rewards offered by the caliph. See Ibn Qutaybah, ʿUyūn al-akhbār, 2:238.

ʿAbduh, 58, n. 2.

See the beginning of the section “Frustration of a goji” in Chapter II.

His adoption of asceticism in his poetry still arouses suspicion. See ibid., 286-87.

Shi ji, 3208.

“So he shouted at us with a shout at which the earth was almost cloven in sunder and the stars were about to fall…” See Prendergast, 59.

See ibid., 38, n. 5.

For an analysis of the two sermons, see Kennedy, “Nexus of Interests,” 187-94. The recent paper presented by Irfana Hashmi at the 218th annual meeting of AOS (“Problematizing al-Hamadhānī’s Sources in al-Maqāma al-Wa’ziyya”) draws our attention to a longer version of the second sermon preserved in Ibn ’Āsākir’s Ta’rikh Dimashq.

Kennedy, “Nexus of Interests,” 192.

ʿAbdūh, 137; Prendergast, 110.

Kennedy, “Nexus of Interests,” 194.


The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, 1:32.


In the chapter on asceticism in his ʿUyun al-akhbār, Ibn Qutaybah quotes different epithets for hoariness (e.g., khitām al-manāyiya, “nose-reign of death”) and poems concerning it. See Ibn Qutaybah, ʿUyun al-akhbār, 2:324-27.

Andras Hamori, “Ascetic poetry (zuhdiyyāt),” in ʿAbbasid Belles-lettres, 265-74 (quotation from 268).

Ibid., 268.

Ibid., 266.

The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, 1:vi.

The Vedabbha-Jātaka, see The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, 1:121-24; The Jātaka: Together with Its Commentary, 1:252-56; Chaucer, Tales, 456-73.

Hamori, “Ascetic poetry (zuhdiyyāt),” 268. Both Sāliḥ and Abū al-ʿAtāhiyyah were Persian or of Persian descent. As was the case with the prosaist, Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (executed in 139/756), they were accused of practicing Manichaeism (zandaqah).

The moral of the Vedabbha-Jātaka is “covetousness is the root of ruin” (The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, 1:123), which is found in 1 Tim. 6:10 and repeated twice in the Pardoner’s Prologue. See Chaucer, Tales, 451, 454.

ʿAbdūh, 131-32; Prendergast, 105.

See chap. 2, n. 95.

Prendergast, 150-51.


See chap. 2, n. 131.

Prendergast, 111.

See the section “The needle” in Chapter II.
IV  Prosimetra

Overview

This chapter provides a comparative discussion of the prose-verse interplay in various prosimetra. In this regard, it is more form-centered than the previous chapters on “Rhymed Prose” or “Poetry” that surveyed the functions of the hero al-Iskandarī within the context of each category. As mentioned in Chapter I, it is the envoi of the Maqāmāt that leads us to identify the formal similarities shared by prosimetric genres in the Arabic, Chinese, and Sanskrit literary traditions. In this chapter therefore our discussion will start from the envoi, then move back to the episode proper, and finally to the opening formula of the Maqāmāt.

The functions that al-Iskandarī inherits from pre-Islamic soothsayers seem to have been a factor in the coexistence of sajī and poetry. They may also have affected performance and therefrom the structure of maqāmah. The reconstruction of the performance context of the maqāmah needs to involve a careful screening of the available evidence: many verses in the Maqāmāt, for example, are simply prefaced by catchphrases such as “fa qāla” (so he said). While we will be assessing their modes of performance on the basis of examples drawn from other prosimetra, we must at the same time rejoice in al-Hamadhānī’s choice of classical Arabic in his reproduction of ancient
and popular themes. Texts preserved in such a fashion, let alone a collection of fifty-two pieces, must be considered a luxury for researchers into dying or dead prosimetric genres.

The end of the 4th/10th century was an age that witnessed tremendous changes in Arabic literature. The coexistence of orality and literacy may well have played a role in the emergence of the \textit{maqāmah} genre. For al-Hamadhānī’s near-contemporaries, these \textit{maqāmāt} may have been recited as individual pieces, and yet they also simulated the kinds of performance that they were accustomed to attending. For example, the \textit{ramal}-type meters which characterize the envois may signal to us that there is a latent performed aspect to the \textit{maqāmah}, and this possibility is suggested by considering the meters and other cadences employed in ancient Greek and Chinese texts. It is probable that the \textit{maqāmah} genre gradually lost its dual performance media\textsuperscript{1} as later generations became more infatuated with al-Ḥarīrī’s \textit{Maqāmāt}, the full appreciation of which requires a resort to dictionaries and detailed exegeses.

In this chapter, we will also argue that the overall structure of a Hamadhānian \textit{maqāmah} links this Arabic genre to the Indian genre of \textit{jātakamālā}. The virtues contained in the \textit{maqāmāt} on beggary can be compared to those in the legends about the Buddha’s previous births. The term \textit{maqāmah} originally meant boasts of heroic actions. Al-Hamadhānī’s arrangement of narratives around the words and deeds of an antihero echoes this ancient meaning of the term. At the same time, the \textit{Maqāmāt}’s prosimetric style highly resembles that of the Indian genre of biography (ākhyāyikā). These structural
similarities can be explained if we consider the fact that al-Hamadhānī had traveled to places influenced by Iranian Buddhism.

Envoi

The mujtathth meter

An envoi is the concluding portion of a poetical or prose composition. Roughly speaking, forty Hamadhānian maqāmāt close with an envoi (or a dialogic envoi). This section will discuss some usual meters of al-Hamadhānī’s envois and the importance of meter-choosing to the Maqāmāt’s performability.

We have mentioned the Maqāmah of the Blind in which al-Iskandarī pretends to be a visionless singer begging for money. At the conclusion of the story, the recognized hero denies that he is Abū Fath (al-Iskandarī’s kunyah) but leaves a mujtathth-metered poem to the the narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām:

fa qultu: anta Abū ’l-Fath(i)? fa qāla: lā
anā Abū Qalamūnūn
fī kulli lawnin akūnū
ikhtar mina ’l-kasbi dūnan
fa inna dahraka dūnū
zajji ’l-zamāna bi humqin
inna ’l-zamāna zabūnū
lā tukdhabanna bi ’aqlin
mā ’l-aqlū illā ’l-junūnū

Said I: “Art thou Abū ’l-Fath?” He answered: “Nay; I am Abū Qalamūnūn,
In every hue do I appear,
Choose a base calling,
For base is thy age,
Repel time with folly,
  verily time is a kicking camel.
Never be deceived by reason,
  Madness is the only reason.”

Abū Qalamūn is an iridescent cloth woven in Tinnīs, one of five major tīrāz centers in Fatimid Egypt. Here then a weaver of speech (al-Iskandarī) is comparing himself to a piece of woven fabric; indeed we might go on to suggest that our hero fully deserves to be named after such a “fickle” cloth since his “blindness” is merely a mask.

If we regard a magāmah as a robe of honor, its envoi is no doubt the embroidered tīrāz band which is often highlighted by a different color. How did al-Hamadhānī make his envoi stand out from the main episode?

Al-Jawharī, al-Hamadhānī’s contemporary, presents a fourfold division of meters in his Kitāb al-qawāfī (Book of Rhymes). According to this scheme, thirty-three of al-Hamadhānī’s envois belong to the ramal or majzū (“shortened by one foot per hemistich”) type. The so-called qaṣīd or tāmm (“complete”) meters are mainly used in the envois of five out of six panegyrical magāmāt. Also according to al-Jawharī, the qaṣīd is for “chanting and singing when mounted” while the ramal is characterized by its usage in “social rank disputes, praises and lampoons.”

Among the ramal-type meters, the mujtathth is one of al-Hamadhānī’s favorites; it appears in the envois of another seven magāmāt besides the Blind and Sāsān. As a
matter of fact, all three poems in the *Maqāmah of Sāsān* adapt this meter. We have previously quoted the first poem which is “a litany of *urīdu*-sentences concerning different foodstuffs.” The second *mujtathth* poem in the *Maqāmah of Sāsān* is al-Iskandarī’s eulogy (*madīh*) addressed to a donor; the uncouth speech sounds appropriate for the head of the Banū Sāsān to use when he begs.

At this point we need to pose a question: why does al-Iskandarī choose to include three poems with the same ramal-type meter in the *Maqāmah of Sāsān*, while in the *Maqāmah of Jāḥiz* we find him first reciting an eulogy in َtawīl to ʿĪsā ibn Hishām, then a *mujtathth*-envoi at the point where the former reveals his identity to the latter?

Al-Hamadhānī does not assign his meters randomly. Once al-Iskandarī has donned his disguise, he often speaks in a flowery *saj* or uses grandiose meters. Only when our protagonist is alone with ʿĪsā does he indulge in indecorous “doggerels.” The three *mujtathth* poems in the *Maqāmah of Sāsān* may mean that al-Iskandarī’s true identity is as one of the Banū Sāsān, and as a result he has no need to change the meter after ʿĪsā has recognized him. However it would be unthinkable for our hero, who attends a fancy banquet and acts as a literary critic in the *Maqāmah of Jāḥiz*, to repay ʿĪsā’s bequest with a vulgar praise.

In the early twentieth century, the famous Egyptian poet, Ṭūḥmād Zakī Abū Shādī (1892-1955) maintained that the meters of *mujtathth* and *khaffīf* “have a rhythm resembling that of the language of speech.” Indeed the *mujtathth* meter, as well as the
majzūʿ al-khaṣīf meter (X U -- -- | X -- U -- || X U -- -- | X -- U -- ||), “contains two types of feet, one similar to ramal and the other to rajaz.”¹⁵ The short-long-switching inside rajaz- and ramal-foot leads to the “swinging lilt”¹⁶ of mujtathth (or majzūʿ al-khaṣīf) meter. Likewise, the Greek iambic tetrameter “has a jog-trot swing so vulgar that tragic poets never used it.”¹⁷ The combination of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter¹⁸ can produce the ballad form in English poetry, of which the airs in The Beggar’s Opera (1728) are good examples.¹⁹ Here let us suppose that such a meter of “swing lilt” is common to many traditions of comedy,²⁰ and naturally the question arises as to whether a mujtathth poem in a Hamadhānian maqāmah is meant to be sung (as the airs of The Beggar’s Opera) or chanted (as the agones of The Clouds).

**Agon**

Before answering the question left in the end of the last section, let us take a look at the agon (contest, debate) which is characteristic of most Ancient Greek comedies. In this section, we will compare the structure of Greek agon with that of Arabic munāṣarah to be found in the Maqāmāt. We will also point out to our readers that the core of the Hamadhānian maqāmah is dialogue; most Hamadhānian maqāmāt contain debates or quasi-debate dialogues.

As with its Arabic counterpart (munāṣarah), a Greek agon involves two disputants and a judge.²¹ Such a debate begins with a strophe by the chorus, then the
coryphaeus summons the first speaker by using two formulaic lines that “always set the
metre for the disputant who follows.”22 After the speech of the first disputant, the chorus
offers an antistrophe and summons the second speaker who always has the upper hand. In
some cases, the agon ends with “a decision or award to the victor.”23

If we take the first debate (ll. 949-1104) in The Clouds for example, the
“impudent” iambic tetrameter is used by Wrong Logic, whereas Right Logic adopts the
anapaestic tetrameter.24 The grandiloquence of the anapaest suits Right Logic who “sets
forth the old-time schooling of the heroes of Marathon.”25 In the second debate (ll.
1345-1451), Strepsiades and his son debate with each other in the same iambic tetrameter.
Their speeches, with an obvious farcical touch, coincide well with Wrong Logic’s
propaganda on behalf of “New Education.” In a word, the iambic tetrameter used in The
Clouds marks the satirical aspect of the verse chanted in the debate.26

The form of the Greek debate helps us to understand the poetic dialogues in quite
a few Hamadhānian maqāmāt. For example, the Maqāmah of Wine hosts a dialogic envoi
between ʿĪsā and the recognized muṭrib, al-Iskandarī:

So I said: ‘O Abū’l-Fath! By heavens, it is as though he who recited these lines had
looked upon thee and spoken with thy tongue:--
‘In times gone by, I had wisdom (ʿaql), religion and uprightness,
Then praise God! we sold jurisprudence for the craft of the cupper.
And, if we live but a little longer, God save us.’
(He/It said:) Then he snorted as snorts the vain, he shouted, he grinned and laughed
immoderately and then he said: ‘Is it said of the likes of me, is one like me proverbially
spoken of?"
'Cease from blaming, but what a deceiver thou perceivest me to be! I am he whom every Tahamite and every Yemenite knows, I am of every kind of dust, I am of every place. At one time I cleave to the niche, at another to the location of the wine-shop. And thus acts whoever is wise (man yaʾqilu) in this time.' Said ʿĪsā ibn Hishām: ‘I sought refuge with God from the like of his condition, and I marvelled at the holding back of subsistence from men of his ilk. We enjoyed that week of ours with him and then we departed from him.’

Unlike the two disputants in the Greek debate, ʿĪsā and al-Iskandarī do not have a judge. Neither are their speeches prefaced by songs from the chorus. Al-Hamadhānī’s disputants always voluntarily step forward and give their presentations in order. The judge may deliver a verdict at the end of the debate (as in the Maqāmah of the Spindle) or refrain from arbitration at all (as in the Maqāmah of the Dinar), while the envoi in the Maqāmah of Wine is judge-free since al-Iskandarī is unquestionably the more eloquent of the two, and his regular position as the second speaker conforms with the custom that a Greek debate’s second disputant is always the winner.

Both poems in the quoted dialogue use the ramal-meter. In the first one, ʿĪsā mimics al-Iskandarī’s tone in order to satirize the latter’s selling wisdom (ʿaqil) for base crafts. In the second one, our rogue hero maintains that in this age a truly wise man (man yaʾqilu) should not stick to one place or one profession. Obviously his last line echoes the first line of ʿĪsā. Thus the two poems are linked both metrically and semantically.

Likewise, their dialogue at the end of the Maqāmah of Bukhārā is meant to form a unity. 28 Both ʿĪsā’s invitation to conversation and al-Iskandarī’s refusal are
mutaqārib-metered. Al-Iskandarī even retains the same rhyme (-āmū). As for ʿĪsā, he seems to have anticipated the latter’s reply, in that he specifically applies similar rhymes at ends of both hemistichs. Once the leading phrases (fä qultu “I said” and fā qāla “he said”) are omitted, their lines can be nicely pieced together into a quatrain.

The Greek debate, with its constant appearance in ancient Greek comedies and its similarities to the Arabic genre of munāẓarah, helps us understand the essence of the maqāmah’s dialogic envoi and that of some dialogues (either in verse or saj’) contained in the episode proper. A Chinese popular fu entitled Yake xinfu wen 饒齖新婦文 (Text of the Contentious Daughter-in-law), which was copied in Dunhuang in the early 10th century, hosts similar verbal exchanges. The main part of this fu describes a daughter-in-law as a counterexample of Confucian filial piety. It is her contentiousness that leads to the speech-contests between her and the mother-in-law, first as dialogues set in rhymed prose, then as the concluding poems after she has requested a divorce:

阿家詩曰：
齖齖新婦甚典硯，直得親情不喜見。
千約萬束不取語，惱得老人腸肚爛。
新婦詩曰：
本性齖齖處處知，阿婆何用事悲悲。
若覓下官行婦禮，更須換却百重皮。

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.
The contentious one is so restive that she can annoy any relative. Taming her is mission impossible to in-laws she brings much trouble.

THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW.
I am well-known to be contentious
why is mother-in-law always in distress?
Surely I will obey rules for a woman
after giving you a hundred-fold vexation.33

The daughter-in-law is the eloquent second speaker, rebelling against established etiquette for women (fu li 婦禮). The conflict between her and the mother-in-law is irreconcilable; the former is the tradition-breaker and the latter the tradition-keeper.

We suggest that Yake xinfu wen arranges such a dialogic envoi by convention. Firstly, a fairly complete story is narrated in the rhymed-prose episode which ends with a revealed moral—daughters-in-law should be carefully chosen.34 Secondly, the main text does include rhymed-prose dialogues between the quarrelling women. In Chapter II, we noted the prevalence of avian colloquies in medieval Eurasian literatures. A Dunhuang popular text entitled Yanzi fu 鷯子賦 (Fu on the Swallow),35 which recounts the lawsuit between a swallow couple and a sparrow who forcibly seizes their house, also ends with a poetic dialogue. In the first episode of the bipartite text, the swallow couple and the sparrow reach an agreement via the phoenix’s arbitration. In the second episode the author adds the figure of swan, which, acting as another judge, criticizes both defendant and plaintiff. The dialogic envoi then takes place between the swan and the reconciled swallow and sparrow.

At first sight, the dialogic envois of Yanzi fu and Yake xinfu wen can be omitted without doing harm to the content. Since the two Chinese popular fūs stick to the rule that
a composition must end with a poetic exchange, it is at least possible that they may be
trying to mimic certain kind of theatrical performances. Some Tang romances (*chuanqi 傳奇*) contain large quantities of poetic speech and have been compared by Ren Na to
scripts of Tang drama. Ren also confirms that various types of drama were favored and
indeed flourished during the following, albeit turbulent, Five Dynasties (907-960). Political satires, adjunct plays (*canjun xì*), and monkey shows were among the popular
performance modes of that period. These popular *fus* were reading materials used in
schools established by the Guiyi jun 归義軍, the local warlord government of Dunhuang
from 848 to 1036. Considering that many of the *fus* were copied during the late 9th and
eyearly 10th centuries, it is safe to surmise that their styles might have reflected some
theatrical characteristics of late Tang and Five Dynasties.

But what kind of performance, one might ask, would demand the dialogic envoi,
which is, after all, not a common feature of Dunhuang *fus*? We suggest that a comedic
debate must be vital to such performance, as the Greek comedy is not considered
complete without the debate scene. Ending with a face-to-face poetic debate, the
above-mentioned Dunhuang *fus* seem to break from the third-person narration and add
dramatic vividness by restating the conflict between main characters. It is very likely that,
because of a similar wish to preserve the performed aspect within a fictional narrative,
al-Hamadhānī included his envoi in those *maqāmāt* whose episode proper is not based
upon debate.
Duet and solo

This section will provide a detailed discussion of the *Maqāmāt*’s dialogic envois. Generally speaking, al-Hamadhānī coined three kinds of envois in the *Maqāmāt*: the usual envois for the legends focused on the words of al-Iskandarī, the commentarial ones for the more picaresque pieces, and the panegyrical ones dedicated to donors. The commentarial envoi will be compared with its Sanskrit counterpart at a later point; this section will focus on the usual envois and panegyrical envois that are based upon dialogue.

The *Maqāmāt* collection of al-Hamadhānī is a work extolling the art of speech (*maqālah*). In that debates or quasi-debate dialogues do exist in the majority of Hamadhānian *maqāmāt*, that serves as our guideline in examining various envoi forms within this collection. Firstly, there are envois related to debate. If the duets in the *Wine* and *Bukhārā maqāmāt* mark an initial stage in the curtailed *agon/munāzarah*, then al-Hamadhānī’s usual envoi, which consists of al-Iskandarī’s solo chanted in response to ‘Īsā’s question, can be regarded as a further step towards a tailor-made “elegant ending.”

The fact that both “duet and solo” can substitute for a debate may help us understand why there are quite a few envoi-free *maqāmāt*. For example, al-Hamadhānī does not include envois at the end of the full-fledged debates found in the *Spindle, Dinar,*
or Shām maqāmāt. There is another group of maqāmāt that are closely related to debate. In Chapter II, we compared the Maqāmah of Baghdad to the Chinese duodrama of you. This maqāmah is structurally similar to the Maḏīrah, Fresh Butter, Famine, Advice, and Asylum maqāmāt, in that they are all based on unbalanced dialogues of saj’. In the Maqāmah of Advice, for example, a supposedly aged al-Iskandarī presents a four-part admonition to his son. However the youth, who sits in front of his father throughout the speech, does not utter a word. We should bear in mind that the debate-like format of this group of maqāmāt is not undermined by the presence of a reticent or silent addressee; rather, because of its dialogic structure, such a maqāmah no longer requires an envoi that is essentially equal to a debate.

The Baghdad, Famine, and Asylum maqāmāt all have closing verses. At the end of the Maqāmah of Baghdad, for example, ʿĪsā bursts into two lines as a comment on the trick that he has played on the victim. The commentarial envoi (or rhymed mathal), which is not dialogic, will be compared with its Sanskrit counterpart at a later point. As for the Famine and Asylum maqāmāt, we would suggest that they were composed after a time when al-Hamadhānī had made both the recognition scene and envoi a routine aspect of the narrative logic of his maqāmāt.

A solo verse from al-Iskandarī, which is the most common type of envoi for al-Hamadhānī, accompanies the recognition scene in twenty-one maqāmāt. According to the unexpurgated version contained in the margins of the 1928 Rasāʾil, they are the
As seen in the envoi of the *Maqāmah of the Blind*, such a solo adapts a *ramal*-type meter and often satirizes the unjust Age. The purpose of including these envois is of course to provide an excuse for the frustrated hero.

We need to comment at this juncture on a special prosimetric envoi related to debate. Dhū al-Rummah gives a lampoon on al-Farazdaq at the conclusion of the *Maqāmah of Ghaylan*. Since the goal of this *maqāmah* is “to discuss those who pardon their enemies out of gentleness and those who forgive them out of contempt,” we find that al-Farazdaq (“when he scorns he degrades”) does not see fit to answer the lampoon at all. Therefore the envoi in this particular case neither involves the duet nor is it the answerer’s solo, but rather the questioner’s solo. Besides, the *Ghaylan* is one of the eight Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* that have a finale after the envoi: Dhū al-Rummah is described as a loser after the debate, reminding us of the Greek *agon* which sometimes ends with “a decision or award to the victor.”

Secondly, envois can consist of dialogues that are not debate-centered. This kind of envoi appears in *maqāmāt* with no recognition scene or whose *anagnorisis* does not lead to *peripeteia*. As examples, the envois of the *Shiraz* and *Ruṣāfah maqāmāt* are constructed as mere question and answer, not as debate. The majority of this type of envois center upon dialogues between a willing donor and a grateful donee. In the third
episode of the *Maqāmah of the Lion*, ʿĪsā recognizes al-Iskandarī who is found begging with his children in the market of Ḥimṣ. ʿĪsā wishes to give him some dirhams and therefore repeats his offer in a poem in dimeter-ḵāmil meter. This is the only place in the *Maqāmāt* where the donor’s actual question is put into verse. In contrast, the versification of the eloquent beggar is much more common: in the *Yellow* and *Iblīs maqāmāt*, the donees (an anonymous youth in the former and al-Iskandarī in the latter) both address a eulogy to the generous ʿĪsā.

Again we can note that al-Ḥamadhānī selects the meter for his eulogies with great care. When al-Iskandarī is serving as literary critic (the *Maqāmah of Jāḥiz*), his eulogy of ʿĪsā is composed in the ṣawīl meter, one of Arabic’s favorite meters for qaṣīd-poetry. When he dresses up as a fully armed rider and boasts that his poetry is much finer than his prose (the *Maqāmah of al-Fazārah*), it is also the ṣawīl-metered eulogy (not his sword) that makes ʿĪsā voluntarily surrender everything he owns. When the potential donor becomes Khalaf ibn Aḥmad, the tenet implicit in the phrase “li-kulli maqām maqāl” (every situation has its own [level of] language) causes al-Hamadhānī to end five of the six panegyrical *maqāmāt* (those of Nājim, Khalaf, Tamīm, Nishapur, and Kings) with a qaṣīd-metered eulogy to the Ṣaffārid amīr.

As mentioned in Chapter II, the happy ending to the *Maqāmah of the Nājim* can be viewed as a dream of our frustrated beggar. For ambitious and able men such as al-Nājim, the only satisfactory way out is to seek the rain (generosity) of Khalaf. The
*Maqāmah of the Nājim* contains two panegyrics to the amīr: the first is constructed as al-Nājim’s reply to the rejected patron ʿĪsā, while the second (i.e., the envoi) is the triumphant hero’s boast (*fakhr*) delivered in front of his admiring friends.

The *Khalaf* and *Tamīm maqāmāt* place the panegyrical envoi into a different setting. In these two *maqāmāt* ʿĪsā serves as an official in Basrah and the governor of a Syrian province respectively. As with the patron who trusts the unemployed scribe in al-Tanūkhī’s weaver-story, 53 ʿĪsā relies upon a talented youth of “excellence” and “wisdom.” 54 However the youth complains about ʿĪsā’s unqualified patronage, and his *saj*-reprimand ends with a panegyric in which Khalaf is depicted as being the opposite of ʿĪsā. In the *Nishapur* and *Kings maqāmāt*, however, the virtues of Khalaf are detailed by al-Iskandarī in both *saj* and verse. The panegyrical envois in these two *maqāmāt* are designed as the conclusion to al-Iskandarī’s instructional reply to the ignorant ʿĪsā. We also need to point out that these five panegyrical envois, although set in dialogues, are essentially akin to a short piece of poetry with which al-Iskandarī ends his *saj*-sermon in the episode proper. As for the envoi in the *Maqāmah of Sāriyah*, i.e., the sixth panegyrical *maqāmah*, it not only is shaped as a non-dialogic commentarial envoi, but also contains a panegyric to the amīr Khalaf ibn Aḥmad.

From this discussion of the dialogic envois it becomes clear that they constitute al-Hamadhānī’s major means of conveying satire or eulogy. Roughly speaking, the debate-related envois are mostly satirical while the non-debate ones are mostly
panegyrical. By means of different envois, al-Hamadhānī easily recasts satire (in the *Balkh* and *Kūfah maqāmāt*, for example) into eulogy (the *Yellow* and *Nājim*) even though their main episodes appear similar to each other.⁵⁵ When the pre-Islamic poet chants the highly formulaic *qaṣīdah*, he will often open with the routines of the prelude (*nasīh*) and departure (*rahīl*) before moving on to the main theme (be it *madīh*, *hijāʾ*, or *fakhr*) towards the end of the poem.⁵⁶ In this sense the *maqāmah*, with different feelings evoked by its envois, is not functioning in a way that is all that different from a *qaṣīdah*.

**Luan**

This section will tackle the question as to whether the *maqāmah*’s envoi functions as the *luan* in the Chinese *fu*. As we mentioned in the section “Prosimetra compared” of Chapter I, a *luan* is a verse section to be found in the end of many *fus*. Having earlier introduced the Greek *agon* in order to show that the essence of al-Hamadhānī’s usual envoi is a debate, we will now make use of another feature of the Greek comedy, the hypermeter, to compare it with the Chinese *luan*. This short survey of the Chinese *luan* and the Greek hypermeter will reveal to our readers that the comparability of many prosimetric genres is very likely to be derived from the universality of certain aspects of ritual performance, which comprise firstly a question and answer divination, and secondly a devotional hymn. Therefore a piece of Hamadhānian *maqāmah*, as well as the Chinese *fu* and the Greek comedy, indeed shows an interplay of dialogic and undialogic
elements. Such an interplay, when combined with different modes of expression (i.e., plain prose, rhymed prose, and poetry), plays a great role in determining the prosimetric style of the maqāmah genre.

According to Zhu Binjie 褚斌傑, the great courtly *fus* of Han (漢大賦) can be divided into two types. Type A is marked by a debate-centered dialogic form. A *fu* of this type (e.g., the *Seven Stimuli*) has an introduction (plain prose), main episode (rhymed prose), and a finale (plain prose). Type B does not have a dialogic structure, but is made up of an introduction (plain prose), main episode (rhymed prose), and an envoi which is similar to the *luan* of *Chu ci*. For instance, Yang Xiong’s *Ganquan fu* 甘泉賦 (*Fu on Sweet Springs Palace*) describes “an imperial procession to a Han touring palace where sacrifices to the supreme Han deity, the Grand Unity, were performed.” In contrast to the Category B meter of the main episode, the Category A meter is adopted by Yang Xiong for his *luan*, which can be read as both a blessing and a panegyric addressed to the emperor and kingdom. In the end of the previous section “Duet and solo,” we noted that al-Hamadhānī’s five panegyrical envois are essentially akin to the closing verse to a *saj*’-paragraph. Therefore it is no wonder that this Chinese *luan* would seem functionally similar to the envoi to be found in the panegyrical *maqāmāt* such as the *Maqāmah of Kings*.

For the Han courtly *fus* there is always a need to break the monotony, whether to change the role (main episode) in Type A or to switch the meter (envoi) in Type B.
Therefore the *luan* in Type B courtly *fus* always stands out from the main episode which is set in rhymed prose. We note a similar change of meter in the debate (*agon*) of ancient Greek comedies. In Aristophanes’s *The Clouds*, Right Logic is introduced to the debate by the chorus’s strophe (*ll. 949-958*) and his propaganda on behalf of old-time schooling ends with a climactic anapaestic hypermeter (*ll.1009-1023*). In this long verse that is intended to be delivered in a single breath, Right Logic urges Pheidippides, the son of Strepsiades, to receive old-time schooling of the heroes of Marathon. If we consider this verse as a kind of envoi or epilogue, then Right Logic’s admonition is indeed comparable to Ban Zhao’s advice to her son in the *luan* of *Dongzheng fu*.

At this point we will concern ourselves once more with Qu Yuan’s *Chou si* which is characterized by three codas: *shao ge*, *chang*, and *luan*. This is the only poem in the *Chu ci* collection that has more than one envoi. Hawkes tends to read *shao ge* as small chorus and *chang* as virtuoso solo. In Xunzi’s *Treatise of Fu*, there are also three coda poems following the five dialogic rhymed riddles. The second coda is called *xiao ge* 小歌 (lit. “small song”), whose name and satirical content are compared by Hawkes to those of the *shao ge*. The editor Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (d. 1917) claims that, since the small song is used to restate the meaning of the first and longer coda (*gui shi* 佹詩, lit. “strange poem”), it seems similar to the *luan* of *Chu ci*.

We are going to present some different opinions about these codas and their modes of rendering very soon. At the moment, the structure of the *Treatise of Fu* suggests
that Zhu Binjie’s categorization should not be followed too closely. The dialogic and undialogic fuś may have been combined originally under an integrated mode of performance. An interplay of dialogic and undialogic elements appears in many prosimetric genres in world literature. Stephanie Jamison notes that in Vedic India two priests would engage in riddling dialogue before the sacrifice during Aśvamedha (horse sacrifice) rituals. We would propose that the Chinese performance, upon which Treatise of Fu is based, would similarly comprise firstly a question and answer divination, and secondly a devotional hymn accompanying the sacrifice offered to the besought deity. The comparability of different prosimetric genres that are under discussion in our study is very likely to be derived from the universality of such performances.

Even in Aristophanes’s The Clouds we can find other traces of such performance to be placed alongside the dialogic debates. At the end of the prologos, Socrates mimics the sacrifice of King Athamas, who in Greek mythology had married and divorced a cloud goddess. Therefore it is very probable that Socrates’s prayer to the Clouds, with which the parodos begins, is made to follow the desired sacrifice. Then the summoned goddesses enter the scene and chant two songs (ll. 275-290 and ll. 298-313). This alternation between chanted and sung verses is also attested in the two interludes (sg. parabasis, pl. parabases) of The Clouds.

It is likely that the Greek interlude was originally an epilogue. For example, The Clouds enters the first interlude after the parodos, i.e., after the goddesses answer
Socrates’s prayer and promise to bestow eloquence on Strepsiades. This first interlude begins with a non-antistrophic song (commation). The coryphaeus then speaks as the poet himself\(^{76}\) (in first person), and “complains of the defeat of his earlier Clouds.”\(^{77}\) This segment is termed the parabasis proper. In Aristophanes’s other plays such as the Acharnians, Knights, Wasps, and Birds, the parabasis proper would end with the climactic hypermeter (\textit{pnigos}).\(^{78}\)

Because of its location at the end of divination (cf. \textit{agon}) and devotional hymn (cf. \textit{parodos}), as well as its singing-cum-chanting structure, the Greek interlude may shed some light upon the two sets of coda to be found in Qu Yuan’s \textit{Chou si} and Xunzi’s \textit{Treatise of Fu}. For example, the \textit{shao ge}, \textit{chang}, and \textit{luan} of the \textit{Chou si} may be seen as corresponding to the commation, parabasis proper, and hypermeter respectively. As for the three codas of the \textit{Treatise of Fu}, the \textit{gui shi} might be regarded as a replication of the main speech, the \textit{xiao ge} as commation, and the \textit{Fu for the Lord of Chunshen}\(^{79}\) as the parabasis proper.

The \textit{luans} of the \textit{Chu ci} and Han \textit{fus} are often put in the first person and thus used to express the personal opinions of poets. As we see in the \textit{Ganquan fu}, \textit{Dongzheng fu}, and \textit{She jiang}, they can be panegyric, didactic, and satiric. Scholars have pointed out that the \textit{luan} of \textit{Zhao hun} also indicates the change of scene,\(^{80}\) which is definitely one of the functions of the Greek interlude. Could the \textit{luan} be seen as the equivalent of the hypermeter? We mentioned that not every interlude ends with a hypermeter, and the same
phenomenon can be seen in the fact that Qu Yuan applies *luan* to just seven of his *Chu ci* poems. On one occasion, the epilogue of a Han *fu* is called *xun*, a term that can be interpreted as meaning “fast” and “high-pitched,” reminding us that the literary meaning of the term *pnigos* is “choker,” for it “was to be recited at one breath, leaving the corypheus speechless.” If our hypothesis is valid, then the Chinese *luan* may originally have been chanted in the same way as the Greek hypermeter verse in the interlude, even after other parts such as the *shao ge* and *chang* were no longer extant.

We also observe here that the Chinese *luan* can be assigned yet another function in a work with an introduction. The structures of the Type-A and Type-B Han courtly *fus* indicate that the poet needs to provide both a beginning and an end. The *luan* of Type B thus emerges as being functionally close to the plain-prose finale of Type A. Thus far we have suggested the existence of similarities between the Greek debate and the usual Hamadhānīan envoi, and that between the Greek hypermeter and the Chinese *luan*. Might we also surmise that a usual envoi of the *maqāmah* takes on a second function similar to that of a *luan*? As we will demonstrate in detail at a later point, each Hamadhānīan *maqāmah* has a prologue. Since an envoi can serve as a conclusion, al-Hamadhānī feels no need to provide a finale for every piece.

### The fisherman’s song

It is known that the Greek hypermeter can be used in both interlude and debate. In
a like manner, the Chinese *luan* can sometimes display features very similar to al-Hamadhānī’s debate-centered usual envoi. In the end of the section “The *mujatathth* meter” above, we left the question as to whether the *maqāmah*’s usual envoi, which is characterized by its *ramal*-type meter and a language level different from that of the *saj*’, is meant to be sung or chanted. In this section we will introduce two Chinese *fus* whose *luans* show that folk songs can be included in so-called elite prosimetra, shedding light upon the different language levels of al-Hamadhānī’s *saj*’ and envoi.

The use of first person in the Greek interlude\(^8^5\) suggests a connection to the prologue of many dramas: Gay’s *Beggar’s Opera*, Kālidāsa’s *Śakuntalā*, and Yūsuf Idrīs’s modern play, *Farāfir* (1964), for example. As with the interlude, the prologue provides a chance for the author to directly address his audience. It is also noteworthy that the parabasis proper may resemble the speech of debate, especially because both can employ hypermeters.

For a poet possessed of originality, undialogic and dialogic speeches are interchangeable. The *Chu ci* collection has two short dialogic pieces: *Bu ju* 卜居 (*Divination for a Dwelling*) and *Yu fu* 漁父 (*The Fisherman*).\(^8^6\) Each “is an anecdote about Qu Yuan of some incident supposed to have taken place during his banishment.”\(^8^7\) The *Bu ju* is constructed as a question and answer divination: the perplexed Qu Yuan goes to the Great Diviner and asks him “which is to be avoided and which to be followed.”\(^8^8\) Because Qu Yuan himself is a well-known diviner and poet, it is out of question for him
to have the leading role in this dialogue or debate. The rhetoric and powerful speech that he employs vividly recalls that of al-Iskandari in the *Maqāmah of the Asylum*, except that the former, which consists of nine formulaic rhyming couplets of questions, ends with an extra satiric coda.89

Wolfhart Heinrichs mentions that al-Ḥarīrī sometimes allots “supererogatory” lines as “a crowning end to a sermon or harangue,” and “the sequence prose-poetry is rarely reversed.”90 Such a phenomenon is also common for the Chinese prosimetric genres concerned in our study. In the *Treatise of Fu*, five allegorical riddles are conveyed in the form of divination, followed by three satiric codas. However, *Bu ju*’s divination does not aim at “playing the elegant tunes in the end.”91 It provides the setting for Qu Yuan to sermonize directly against the upside-down society. The function of the Great Diviner here recalls that of ʿĪsā in the *Maqāmah of Nishapur*: both minor figures serve as questioners and help transform a soliloquy into a duodrama. The Great Diviner’s acknowledgement of failure also recalls the finale of a typical Hamadhānian *maqāmah*.

In many editions of *Chu ci*, *Bu ju* is immediately followed by *Yu fu*. A fisherman, who is sometimes interpreted as a Daoist recluse, finds the poet wandering along the riverbanks and inquires about the reason for his banishment. When Qu Yuan replies that it is “because all the world is muddy and I alone am clear; because all men are drunk and I alone am sober,”92 the fisherman responds with an argument that is found in many of al-Iskandari’s envois:
The Wise Man is not chained to material circumstances, but can move as the world moves. If all the world is muddy, why not help them to stir up the mud and beat up the waves? And if all men are drunk, why not sup their dregs and swill their lees? Why get yourself exiled because of your deep thoughts and your fine aspirations?93

If the author of *Yu fu* is Qu Yuan himself, we may wonder why he incorporates the fisherman figure as an equally or more eloquent dialogue partner. Does the fisherman’s detached attitude represent a plausible way out? Or is the creation of such a rival intended to show the firmness of Qu Yuan’s resolution? According to Sima Qian’s biography of Qu Yuan, *Yu fu* ends with the poet replying that he would rather cast himself into the river than submit his purity to the dirt.94 If the *Yu fu* does end here, then we can surmise that its moral is the same as that of the *Bu ju*, and the fisherman, like the Great Diviner, is a loser in the debate. However the *Chu ci* collection goes on to record an extra paragraph:

漁父莞爾而笑，鼓枻而去，乃歌曰：”滄浪之水清 (qing < *tshjeng) 兮，可以濯吾纓 (ying < *reng)。滄浪之水濁 (zhuo < *drok) 兮，可以濯吾足 (zu < *tsjok)。“遂去不復與言。

The fisherman, with a faint smile, struck his paddle in the water and made off. And as he went he sang:

“When the Cang-lang’s waters are clear,
I can wash my hat-strings in them;
When the Cang-lang’s waters are muddy,
I can wash my feet in them.”

With that he was gone, and did not speak again.95

Without the above-quoted paragraph, *Yu fu* is definitely Qu Yuan’s “Justification in the
Face of Ridicule” and his statement of resolution. But the fisherman’s smile reminds us of our old acquaintance, al-Hamadhānī’s al-Iskandarī. At the conclusion of the *Maqāmah of Wine*, al-Iskandarī snorts, shouts, grins and laughs when ‘Īsā reproaches him for his base occupations. As seen in the text of the *Yu fu*, Qu Yuan is not an eccentric like the fisherman. The former cannot understand the latter’s flexibility, just as ‘Īsā again and again criticizes al-Iskandarī for his lifestyle. For the fisherman, it is Qu Yuan’s unchangeable nature that is responsible for his banishment, not the king’s blindness. If the fisherman really is a Daoist and follows the natural way of things, he has no intention of forcing the poet to accept his values. The two rhyming couplets that he leaves are marked as a song; when we think of the trio—al-Iskandarī, al-Nājim, and al-Ṣaymarī, its message is clear. If the waters of Canglang are muddy, the frustrated hero should retire and wait patiently for them to become clear again. This song of *Yu fu* is also followed by a finale that, in my view, implies that the fisherman is successful in this debate.

Whether or not the quoted passage was added later by a Daoist-minded editor, the fisherman’s verses show that the envoi can be a real song. Since this envoi’s moral and structure are both similar to those of al-Hamadhānī’s usual envois, we are left to wonder whether al-Iskandarī can also leave the scene with a song. Towards the end of the Eastern Han period (25 C.E.-220 C.E.), a *fu* writer Zhao Yi 趙壹 ends his *Ci shi ji xie fu* 刺世疾邪賦 (*Fu on Satirizing the World and Detesting Its Evils*) with an imagined dialogue between a guest of Qin and a scholar of Lu. The main text of the *fu*, as its name
suggests, involves the author’s vehement criticism of the dark politics of his time. Both the guest of Qin and the scholar of Lu are introduced as readers of his critical comments. The former then recites a satiric poem which is followed by the latter’s song. If we omit the names of two characters, then both poem and song can be read as codas presented by the poet himself.

Another thing that we can learn from the *Ci shi ji xie fu* is that both poem and song use the same five-character meter. Their language is relatively simple as compared with the main text of the *fu*. The five-character meter is believed to have originated in folk songs of the Han dynasty. As a matter of fact, the song of Canglang is also recorded in the *Book of Mencius* as a boy’s ditty. Its scheme (*tum tum ti tum tum xi: tum tum tum tum tum*) seems to be a mixture of the quadrisyllabic *Shi jing* style, the *sao*-style, and the embryonic five-character style. We have noted that the heralds of Zhou and Qin were dispatched by rulers to collect “expressions of various eras 代語, children’s ditties 童謠, songs 歌, and skits 戲” from the masses. Citation or forgery of folk songs in anecdotes (*Yu fu*), the *fu* (*Ci shi ji xie fu*), and philosophic works (*Mencius*) may well have accorded with the admonitory function of those heralds. This function also explains the unity in a piece of prosimetrum of the rhetorical main text and the less ornate folk song. This fact can even shed some light upon the different language levels of al-Hamadhānī’s *sajʿ* and envoi. A Hamadhānian envoi usually serves as an outlet for frustration or admonishment; it is chanted by the beggar hero before he exits the scene.
Since a piece of *maqāmah* is constructed as Ḥisā ibn Ḥishām’s record of al-Iskandari’s words and deeds, Ḥisā’s function is quite comparable to that of a Chinese herald. Therefore a register of language different from that of the *saj* can give to the *envoi* a sense of objectivity and naturalness.

**Qāla**

Many verses in the *Maqāmāt* are introduced by the catchphrase *fa qāla* (so he/it said). Some *maqāmāt* are even noted for their so-called “redundant” *qālas*. This section focuses on the functions of *qāla* and discusses its significance for a text that simulates a performance.

In the first debate of Aristophanes’s *The Clouds* Right Logic describes the ancient system of education. The heroes of Marathon were not only trained by the gymnastic-master, but also “should march in good order through the streets to the school” of the kithara-master. The kithara-master taught the students “to learn by rote a song,” “raising to a higher pitch the harmony which our fathers transmitted to us.”

In Chapter II, we touched on the importance of music for Hebrew prophets and Chinese blind musicians. Ezek. 33:32 depicts the prophet as one “who sings love songs (*shir*) with a beautiful voice and plays well on an instrument (*meṭiv nagggen*).” The biblical Hebrew verbal root *n-g-n* means to “touch (strings), play a stringed instrument.” Similarly, Chinese blind musicians were supposed to pluck the *qin* and *se*.
while reciting poems and imperial genealogies, in that they can also be compared to the Greek epic-singers who “accompanied themselves on the kithara.”

Playing a stringed instrument was a prerequisite for prophets, annalists, epic-poets, and educators. According to Zhou li, the grand director of music was responsible for teaching young aristocrats various forms of musical conversation: to cite a parable (xing 興), to admonish by drawing on historic examples (dao 道), to recite from memory (feng 諷), to recite with tone and rhythm (song 誦), to pose a question (yan 言), and to answer a question (yu 語). These six forms of expression may have originated with a modulated singing voice so that they were clearly defined as “musical.” Their performances were very likely accompanied by musical instrument(s). One can imagine that a young aristocrat of Zhou was supposed to master these forms of expression in order to admonish the king and discuss various issues in his political career.

The above translation of the six forms has made use of the commentary of the Eastern Han scholar, Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127 C.E.-200 C.E.), who discriminates between them by designating them as different genres. During the reign of Emperor Wu of Western Han, a lumberer named Zhu Maichen 朱買臣 (d. 115 B.C.E.) was promoted to senior official for being able to recount the Spring and Autumn Annals and recite the Chu ci. The Han shu also records that Zhu used to recite (song 誦) books while walking along the road, but his embarrassed wife often forbade him to “sing” (ge ou 歌嘯). Such professional recitation probably sounded like singing in the eyes of uneducated layman; if
we take the case of the Greek kithara-master into account, then Zhu Maichen’s musical recitation of annals and poetry could have been learnt orally and needed a good deal of oral practice. The reason behind Emperor Wu’s promotion of Zhu Maichen is probably the same as that behind the caliph Mu’awiya’s appreciation of Ubayd. In both cases the ruler believed that such recitations were crucial to good governance.

At the same time, musical recitations are vulnerable to change and oblivion. This explains why nowadays we have such a small vocabulary for modes of performance (spoken, recited/chanted, sung). Just as Zheng Xuan of the Eastern Han had to resort to genres in order to distinguish forms of expression, James Kugel invokes song and proverb when expounding the biblical high style.

The need to reconstruct the metrical format of a work concerning musical recitations can result in commentaries. According to John Williams White, Aristophanes’s original collection of plays contained musical notes, which “were probably soon eliminated from the copies offered for sale by the trade.” Around the first century C.E., Heliodorus annotated Aristophanes’s works with the diple (double paragraph) in order to indicate the change of mode. For example, when reading the annotated first interlude of The Birds, we are led to understand (with our limited vocabulary of modes of performance) that the commation is sung in the Aeolic rhythm, the parabasis proper in the form of recitative in anapaestic tetrameters, and the hypermeter is also recitative in anapaestic hypermeters. Heliodorus also uses the lineola (single paragraph) and the
coronis to introduce a new speaker and to allude to certain facts of the scenic action respectively.¹¹⁹

These Greek textual symbols can be compared to the Chinese yue 曰, which frequently appears in the texts of the prosimetra concerned in our study. In two of Xunzi’s dialogue-riddles, for example, the response is not introduced by naming the superior, but by a mere yue (he/it said).¹²⁰ Similarly, the epilogue of Qu Yuan’s Bei hui feng 悲回風 (Grieving at the Eddying Wind) substitutes the usual formula luan yue 亂曰 (the luan reads) with yue.¹²¹ It has been suggested that yue is the semeiosis employed to indicate certain paratextual features such as music, singing, speaking, and even dancing.¹²²

As a matter of fact, forty-three Hamadhānian maqāmāt include the formulaic phrase, “qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām” or “qāla,”¹²³ which, in the wake of our above discussion of Greek and Chinese symbols, should not be simply translated as “ʿĪsā ibn Hishām said” or “he/it said.” In most cases, the formula denotes the end of an eloquent speech, whether it is couched in verse or ornate saj’. Using the Maqāmah of Balkh as an example, we may note that qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām appears once at the end of al-Iskandari’s saj’-riddle concerning the gold coin, and again at the end of the rogue hero’s eulogy (madiḥ) of ʿĪsā. The phrase “qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām” does not lead directly to ʿĪsā’s reply, but rather to the donor’s interior monologue (“Then I knew it was a dinar that he demanded”) and then his reaction (“Then I gave him the dinar and said to him…”) respectively.¹²⁴ It seems clear therefore that “qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām” functions in a symbolic fashion rather than as a
real action on the narrator’s part.

The Maqāmah of Fresh Butter has two “redundant” qālas that are put in brackets by ʿAbduh. The first one appears after the plain-prose introduction and before the stingy Bedouin host starts his saj ’-description of the date. In this case therefore, the formula does not end but rather serves as an introduction to an ornate piece of saj’.125 A similar phenomenon is found in the Chinese fu. As Zhu Binjie informs us, the Han courtly fūs often have a plain-prose introduction and a rhymed main episode. Some fu writers prefer to insert a “redundant” qi ci yue 其辭曰 (its speech goes126) in between to mark the switch.127 In the Maqāmah of Fresh Butter it seems that the function of the first qāla is analogous to that of qi ci yue in a Chinese fu.

There are six “redundant” qālas and one qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām in the Maqāmah of Wine. The first qāla marks the transition from the general introduction to the specific happening on “one night (baʿḍ layālī).”128 Other qālas appear when the location or time changes, a new character is introduced, or a speech is ended.129 The frequency of this “redundant” qāla in the Maqāmah of Wine is very unusual. For example, qāla is not required when there is already a lammā (when):

(qāla) wa lammā massatnā ḥālunā tilka daʿatnā dawāʾī ʿl-shatūra(ti) ilā ḥāni ʿl-khammāra(ti).

(He/It said:) ‘When we felt the effect of that our predicament, mischievous inclinations led us to the inn of the female vintner.130
As a counter-example, the *Maqāmah of Adharbayjān* contains a similar transition of location / time which is not introduced by qāla:

\[
\textit{fa bayna anā yawman fi baʿdi aswāqīhā idh...}
\]

Now one day while I was in one of its streets, there suddenly…\(^{131}\)

In short, the appearance of the “qāla” phrase does lead the *Maqāmah of Wine* to stand out from some less “dramatic” maqāmāt, although the formula seems to make an editor such as Ṭāhir uneasy.\(^{132}\) Perhaps the redundant “qāla” in the Hamadhānian *Maqāmāt* was originally meant to be used as a symbol. It also seems possible that the longer phrase, “qāla ‘Īsā bnu Hishām,” had been developed from the shorter qāla.\(^{133}\)

Besides the existence of these “redundant” qālas, the fifty-two Hamadhānian maqāmāt found in the margins of the 1928 edition of the *Rasāʾil* make use of symbols of the sun with rays (☼) to distinguish the end of a rhyming colon of saj. Asterisks of the same function are found in the 1873 Beirut-edition of the *Maqāmāt al-Charīrī*.\(^{134}\) We should emphasize here that a maqāmah is often vocalized, a feature that the genre shares with the Qurʾān. For a work which is meant to be recited, such symbols served to facilitate understanding and memorization in an age with no punctuation marks. The 1928 edition of the *Rasāʾil* also applies indentation to mark the verses of the *Maqāmāt*.\(^{135}\) Therefore the Arabic text in this edition clearly distinguishes plain prose (with no sun symbol or indentation), saj (with sun symbols), and poetry (with indentation).
**Kharjah**

The *Maqāmāt* include many other instances of the use of “qāla” which need to be understood as involving real actions. These qālas (or qultu, qālat, qulnā) can lead indiscriminately to direct speeches of plain prose, saj’, and poetry. In this section we once again confront the question as to how to interpret the envoi’s mode of rendering.

In the Arabic melic genre named *muwashshah*, the final lines (*kharjah*, lit. “exit”) often consist of a real or fictitious quotation, introduced by formulae such as “I sang, said; he/she/it sang, said.” The prosody of *muwashshah* remains a controversial topic, and the linkage of the *muwashshah*’s meter to Arabic ḍarūḍ system (rather than Andalusian metrical forms) is by no means clear or settled. According to Gregor Schoeler, one adherent of the quantitative theory, the main body of a *muwashshah* is composed in classical Arabic by adapting Khalīlian meters such as ramal, khafīf, and mujtathth, together with “modified Khalīlian metres and combinations of feet that do not exist in the Classical kaṣīd poetry in the same way.” In contrast, the kharjah is mostly put in vernacular Arabic, “or Romance mixed with vernacular Arabic” and “very rarely pure Romance.” Ever since Samuel M. Stern discovered the Romance *kharjahs* in 1948, they have been recognized as “the oldest known secular lyrics in any Romance language.” Folk songs, whether as the embryo of Chinese five-character poems or of Romance secular lyrics, indeed provide important materials for littérates.
We mentioned earlier\textsuperscript{143} that the fisherman’s song of Qu Yuan is also recorded in the \textit{Mencius}. Likewise, the \textit{kharjah} in Arabic \textit{muwashšahāt} can be produced with “recycled” materials.\textsuperscript{144} If we regard a whole Hamadhānian \textit{maqāmah} as being analogous to a piece of \textit{muwashšah}, then the envoi may indeed be comparable to the \textit{kharjah} specifically in regard to the trait of repetition. For instance, the envoi of the \textit{Maqāmah of Jāhiz} says:

\begin{verbatim}
Iskandarīyatu dārī
law qarra fihā qarārī
lākinna laylī bi-Najdin
wa bi l-Ḥijāzi nahārī

Alexandria is my home,
if but there my resting-place were fixed,
But my night I pass in Nejd,
in Ḥijāz my day.\textsuperscript{145}
\end{verbatim}

Both its wording and meter (\textit{muṭathth}) reappear in the \textit{Maqāmah of Knowledge}:

\begin{verbatim}
Iskandarīyatu dārī
law qarra fihā qarārī
lākinna bi l-Shāmi laylī
wa bi l-`Irāqi nahārī

Alexandria is my home,
if but in it my resting-place were fixed.
But my night I pass in Syria,
in Iraq my day.\textsuperscript{146}
\end{verbatim}

In \textit{Dār al-ṭirāz fī `amal al-muwashšahāt} (The House of Embroidery concerning the Crafting of \textit{Muwashšahāt}), the Ayyubid poet Ibn Sanā` al-Mulk (d. 608/1211)
compiles an anthology of 34 Andalusian strophic poems. Ibn Sanāʾ’s choice of “Dār al-ṭirāz” as the book title links the words muwashshah to a piece of ornate fabric, thus echoing our earlier comparison in this chapter of the envoi to the ṭirāz band. Besides recyclability there is another feature that the muwashshah’s kharjah shares with the maqāmah’s envoi. We have already noted that five of the panegyrical maqāmah make use of the qaṣīd-typed meters for their envois. In a panegyrical muwashshah, the usually vernacular kharjah would give way to “formal grammatical inflections” whereby the name of the patron is to be mentioned. For example, Ibn al-Labbānah (d. 507/1113) praises the Banū ʿAbbād in the 12th muwashshah of Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk’s anthology. The last bayt and the fushā-kharjah are as follows:

\[\text{Nobility is yours and you are from a noble family.} \]
\[\text{All see the attainment of favours they hope for through you,} \]
\[\text{So there are many who sing in the situation:} \]
\[\text{“Banāʾ ʿAbbād, because of you we are enjoying festivals} \]
\[\text{And weddings. May you live forever for the people’s sake!”} \]

In the above example we note the pattern of 4+7 syllables in both the bayt and the kharjah. Ibn Sanāʾ al-Mulk’s anthology contains ten muwashshahāt that can be ascribed to the poet al-Aʾmā al-Tūṭīlī (the blind man of Tudela), who likes to arrange
corresponding number or pattern of syllables in lines of bayt and qufl. The dividability of the number twelve again and again reveals its magic: we encounter the syllabic patterns of 6+6, 8+4, 8+3, 5+8, 6+7, 5+5+5+5, 12+12. In the first muwashshah for example, a line of bayt has 6+6 syllables, while a line of qufl has four cola of 6+6+6+6 syllables with a rhyming pattern of abab. However its kharjah is as follows:

\[
\begin{align*}
qad ra'aytuka 'ayyān \\
aysh & 'alayka satadrī \\
sayafīlu 'l-zamān \\
wā satunsī dhikrī \\
\end{align*}
\]

“I did see you.
What’s up with you? You know
Time will pass
And you will forget me.”

The qad of the first colon and the aysh of the second can be interpreted as redundant syllables and may have represented grace notes in a piece of music. At this juncture we need once again to invoke the envoi of the Maqāmah of the Blind which is quoted at the beginning of this chapter: al-Iskandarī’s response to ‘Īsā’s question is introduced by a lā which does not count in the scansion, suggesting that the lā in question may function in a manner similar to that of the redundant syllables in a kharjah.

According to Schoeler, “the convention of closing a poem with a quotation existed already long before the origin of the muwashshah; numerous wine poems in Abū Nuwās (all, to be sure, in ḫaṣīd form) end with the poet putting the last line or hemistich
into the mouth of a singer or songstress.”\textsuperscript{160} The verb akhraja has already been related to 
hikāyah-performances,\textsuperscript{161} and its active participle (mukhrīj) is used in modern standard 
Arabic for “director” (of film, drama, etc.). When the muwashshah made the quotation a 
fixed element of the kharjah, it was in essence reproducing a kind of performance in the 
mode of melic poetry. A muwashshah can be as polythematic as a qaṣīdah. The kharjah, 
with its position as the last qufl, often serves to emphasize the poem’s message.\textsuperscript{162} 
Contrary to the cynical satires of al-Iskandarī in al-Hamadhānī’s envois, most kharjahs in 
Ibn Sanā’ al-Mulk’s anthology focus on love or praise. For instance, the previously cited 
kharijah of Ibn al-Labbānah quotes actual people, thus giving a sense of naturalness and 
facticity to the eulogy of his patrons. By way of contrast, on other occasions quotations 
are placed into the mouths of animals\textsuperscript{163} or even personified battle (hayjā’).\textsuperscript{164} In this 
regard the panegyric-washshāḥ functions like a Chinese herald, except that it is only 
positive views and opinions culled from the masses that he delivers in his poetry.

The closing quotation also has a long history within the Chinese literary tradition. 
It can been found in the fisherman’s solo or the dialogue of the Ci shi ji xie fu, and also 
applies to some Dunhuang popular fūs that may be related to theatrical activities of late 
Tang and Five Dynasties. In the year 1046 C.E., Fan Zhongyan 范仲淹 (d. 1052 C.E.) 
composed his famous prose-work, Yueyang lou ji 岳陽樓記 (Record of the Yueyang 
Pavilion). Its structure is very close to that of the Type-B fū (in Zhu Binjie’s definition), 
with the transformation of an envoi into a dialogue. In the next to last sentence, he
imagines an ideal gentleman who says, “One should be the first to worry about his country and people and the last to enjoy himself,” thus revealing the moral after a very ornate description of the pavilion. While many of his contemporaries were surprised to read dialogue in a prose-work celebrating the reconstruction of a building, the critic Yin Zhu 尹洙 (d. 1047 C.E.) pointed out that Fan Zhongyan had employed the style of *chuanqi* (*chuanqi ti* 傳奇體). We would add here that the dialogic form is by no means the sole province of the *chuanqi*; Fan Zhongyan may also have been inspired by the codas of the *Treatise of fu* in order to present the thesis. As an aspiring statesman, he changes the satirical tone of Xunzi’s codas, but insists on his preference for the interests of his country and people. The fisherman in the Chinese tradition and al-Iskandarī in the Arabic both “move as the world moves” in order to overcome inevitable frustration. In contrast, Fan Zhongyan advises his demoted colleague to abandon completely any thought of personal sorrow or happiness. This is his response to the many ups and downs of one’s career.

In this long section entitled “Envoi,” we first quoted the theory of al-Jawharī to point out that the *ramal*-type meters which characterize the Hamadhānian envois are especially suitable for carrying out “social-rank disputes.” By introducing the debate (*agon*) of ancient Greek comedy, we came to understand that the usual *envoi* of the *Maqāmāt* may indeed be based upon *munāzarahs* or quasi-*munāzarah* dialogues. Furthermore, the comparison of the Hamadhānian envoi with the Andalusian *kharjah,* as
well as with the fisherman’s song of Qu Yuan, showed the strong musicality and performability of al-Iskandarī’s exit lines. Although music had been an important branch of education for admonishers in various traditions, musical recitations are vulnerable to change and oblivion, which is partly proved by our limited vocabulary for modes of rendering. The many “redundant” qālas in the Maqāmāt-manuscripts demonstrate that some maqāmāt look very similar to the texts that simulate a performance. It is beyond the ability of the readers nowadays to reconstruct the envois’ modes of rendering even with the hints of meter-scansion and with symbols such as qāla and indentation.

**Back and forth**

**Sermons**

Following the above comparative discussion of the Maqāmāt’s envoi, we move to the sequences of prose-poetry and poetry-prose in the episode proper. Up to this point, we have discussed al-Hamadhānī’s sudden switch from sajʿ to poetry and his closing verse to a sajʿ-sermon. These phenomena often take place in the maqāmāt that focus on al-Iskandarī’s repartee in front of audiences. In this section named “Back and forth,” we will firstly analyze the interesting prose-poetry sequence of the second sermon of the *Maqāmah of the Exhortation* and trace its counterparts in other Arabic prosimetra related to religious homilies. Moreover, this sermon reveals some common features of popular
preaching in Arabic and Chinese traditions, and could represent an early stage of prose-poetry alternation coined by al-Hamadhānī. Secondly, we will point out that the sudden switch to poetry in the Jurjān and Baṣraḥ maqāmāt could have represented a later stage of alternation. Thirdly, we will provide a new reading of the unique poetry-prose sequence in the Maqāmāh of Qazwīn by means of a comparison of the Chinese popular lecture (sujiang) that was influenced by Buddhism.

A group of Hamadhānian maqāmāt, which focus more on the repartee of al-Iskandarī than on his ruses or actions, often take place in locations such as the market, mosque, riverside, or at an assembly or banquet. At the beginning of the Maqāmāh of the Exhortation we discover that ʿĪsā walks to an open space where a crowd has gathered around a hoary man who is standing there admonishing them. The second part of the preacher’s admonition involves a sermon inside a sermon, beginning thus:

wa qad sami tu anna ʿAlīya bna ʿl-Ḥusayni kāna qāʾīman yaʾizu ʿl-nāsa wa yaqūlu:

I have heard that ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn was standing admonishing the people and saying:

The semi-insnād (wa qad sami tu anna) transforms this hoary preacher, al-Iskandarī, into a transmitter (rāwī) of a report from the Shīʿī imām, ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn (d. c. 94/712). The following text, which constitutes two thirds of this maqāmah, is made up of nine zuhd (asceticism)-fragments with prose-poetry alternation. In the first segment, we read:

yā nafsu ḥattāma ilā ʿl-ḥayāti rukūnuki wa ilā ʿl-dunyā wa ʿamāraithā sukūnuki amā
O soul, how long wilt thou rely upon life, and depend upon the world and its building up? Hast thou not taken warning from those of thy ancestors who have passed away, from those of thy friends whom the earth has covered up, from those of thy brethren whom thou mourn, and from those of thy fellows who have been transported to the house of decay? In the bowels of the earth are they after having been upon its back. Their virtues decaying and forgotten therein. Their houses are emptied of them and their enclosures are void, And the Fates have driven them deathwards. They have left the world and what they had collected therein, And under the earth the pits have embraced them.  

‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn’s collection of prayers (Al-Ṣaḥīfah al-kāmilah al-sajjādīyah) contains a section entitled “His supplication when someone’s Death was Announced to him or when he Remembered Death.” It is composed in prose and lacks, as do his other prayers, the prose-poetry alternation to be found in the Maqāmah of the Exhortation, leading us to guess that al-Hamadhānī is presenting his readers with a touching sermon of his own creation. Kennedy notes that the nine poetic fragments may form “parts of a single poem” since they employ the same ṭawīl meter and -irū rhyme. If such is the case, the original poem is evenly divided by saj-passage of similar lengths. What is more, the first line of each stanza depends on the preceding prose, thus suggesting the
syntactic interdependence of poetry and prose. 178

Besides the Exhortation, both the Jurjān and Baṣrah maqāmāt host a distinct prose-poetry sequence. As opposed to the aforementioned sermon that emphasizes the zuhd-theme, the speeches of al-Iskandarī in the Jurjān and Baṣrah maqāmāt actually form two narratives that explain the reason for his begging in front of the potential donors. The poetic fragments in each of the two maqāmāt are independent verses triggered by various emphases found within the sajʿ segments. As part of the earlier discussion 179 of the meaning of the term maqāmah, we quoted from the first poem in the Jurjān. The two lines by Zuhayr ibn Abī Sulmā are adopted by al-Hamadhānī in order to accentuate al-Iskandarī’s self-praise presented in the preceding sajʿ-­passage. 180 The four poems that follow also seem to result from “an excess of emotions.” 181 They break away from the focus of the narrative and describe al-Iskandarī’s constant journeying, the praiseworthiness of his former donor, and the sad situation of his child and himself. Al-Iskandarī, through the agency of creator al-Hamadhānī, often selects from his stock of poetry the most picturesque verses and eloquent similes:

'alā annī khallaftu umma mathwāya wa zughlūlan lī:
kā annahu damūjīn min fiḍdatin nabahun
fī malʿabīn min ʿadhārā ʿl-ḥayyī mafṣūmū

But I have left behind the mother of my abode and my little one:
As though he were a precious armlet of silver,
broken and thrown down on the playground of the maidens of the tribe. 182
The five poems in the *Maqāmah of Jurjān* may have different content, meter, and rhyme, but they are combined into a coherent and convincing speech which has as its primary goal to loosen the strings of money purses.

In both the *Baṣrah* and *Jurjān maqāmāt*, al-Iskandarī begins his speech with a self-introduction. Even with a similar beginning and prose-poetry sequence, the *Maqāmah of Baṣrah* exhibits quite a few variations, resulting in a poetic impression that differs from that of the *Maqāmah of Jurjān*. In the above quoted poem, the child (zughlūl) of al-Iskandarī is likened to a broken and abandoned silver armlet on the playground. By contrast, the first of the three “emotional” poems in the *Maqāmah of Baṣrah* compares the burdensome children (zaghlūl) with serpents that hitch a ride with beggars when they travel. What is more, al-Iskandarī proceeds to chant a poem full of high pitched satire that ascribes all his sufferings to social inequality:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{wa } & \text{'l-faqr } \text{fi zamani } \text{'l-li} \text{ā} \\
\text{mi } & \text{li-kulli dhī karamin } \text{'alāmah} \\
\text{raghiba } & \text{'l-kirāmu ilā } \text{'l-li} \text{ā} \\
\text{mi } & \text{wa tilka ashrātu } \text{'l-qiyāmah}
\end{align*}
\]

And poverty in the day of the mean,  
Is every noble man’s badge.  
The noble incline towards the mean,  
And this is one of the signs of the last day. \(^{184}\)

Since the *Maqāmah of Baṣrah* lacks a recognition scene and an envoi, al-Hamadhānī deliberately lets his hero chant such a satirical poem to end the episode proper.
Can we find the prose-poetry sequence in Arabic religious homilies other than the *maqāmāt*? In our discussion of the etymology of *maqāmah*,¹ we have noted ten pious homilies (sg. *maqām*) contained in Ibn Qutaybah’s *ʿUyūn al-akhbār*. Among these ten *maqāms*, there is only one with an embedded piece of poetry. It involves Khālid ibn Ṣafwān (d. 135/752) and the Umayyad caliph Hishām ibn ʿAbd al-Malik (r. 105-125/724-743).¹⁶ Khālid the companion tells a story about a Persian king who at first was arrogant because of his property but, after being admonished that mundane wealth and power are impermanent things, became a monk. The tale ends with a three-line *khaff*-metered evidentiary poem (*shāhid*) from the poet ʿAdī ibn Zayd,¹⁷ which, in a very simple style, encapsulates the message of the preceding prose passage.¹⁸⁸

Such a prose passage accompanied by a piece of evidentiary verse can certainly be linked to the *ayyām* narratives. In this particular case the theme of asceticism also suggests a close similarity to the *A 1001 Nights* tale of *The City of Brass* (*Madinat al-nuḥās*). In that tale Mūsā ibn Nuṣayr (19-98/640-716 or 717), the Umayyad governor of the province of Ifrīqiyyah, finds seven tablets at the city-fortress, six of them engraved with prosimetric admonitions.¹⁹⁹ The theme of lamentation over the fate of once-powerful nations and people (*ubi sunt*) creates a very similar repetitiveness that we also find in the second sermon of the *Maqāmah of the Exhortation*. In *The City of Brass* each time Shaykh al-Ṣāmūdī reads/translations the prose and poetry inscribed on the tablets in ancient Greek, Mūsā weeps (*bakā*)—exactly the same reaction as the Caliph Hishām
upon hearing Khālid’s story. In the first Ḥarīrian maqāmah, the rogue al-Sarūjī dresses up as a pilgrim and preaches to a weeping crowd,¹⁹⁰ and we can note that his sermon also consists of prose crowned with a piece of zuhd-poetry. The fact that Mūsā in The City of Brass, Hishām in the maqām, and the weeping crowd in the first Ḥarīrian maqāmah were all actually enjoying the admonition leads us to suggest its functional similarity with Greek tragedy—since both can accomplish the catharsis of pity and fear.¹⁹¹

Sujiang

This section provides a discussion of the Chinese sujiang 俗講 (popular lecture), “a religious service that may include various types of liturgical and exegetical texts.”¹⁹² We will explore the qualifications of preachers, procedures for carrying out such a popular lecture, and the similar prose-poetry or poetry-prose sequences to reveal the secrets behind the popularity of the aforementioned Arabic admonitions.

The Chinese term sujiang first appears in mid-⁷th century C.E.¹⁹³ Sujiang can be related to jing dao 經導 (sūtra-chanting and exegesis) which are two skills employed by Buddhist monks of the Six Dynasties, aimed at converting the common people.¹⁹⁴ Generally speaking, the Master of jing (jing shi 經師) would translate and sing the gāthā (jī 僧, “stanzas”) and stotra (zan 讚, “eulogies”), while the Master of dao (dao shi 導師) was able to explain the meaning of sūtra, as well as quoting avadāna/nidāna (yinyuan 因緣, “Causation and Occasion”) and upamā (piyu 警喻, “exemplum”).¹⁹⁵ Moreover, a
dao shī should ideally be possessed of a loud voice, eloquence, literary talent, and erudition (shēng bian cai bo 聲辯才博);¹⁹⁶ his exegesis may well have been prosimetric (chang shuo 唱說, “chante-fable”). A Buddhist dao shī¹⁹⁷ thus puts us in mind of al-Iskandarī, whose ability to deliver many a tailor-made sermon in front of different audiences is similarly highlighted by Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554 C.E.) when he praises the biantai 變態 (metamorphosis, transformation) of the dao shī.¹⁹⁸ For today’s readers of the Hamadhānian maqāmāt, the short pieces betray a fairly wide range of interests and focuses (the bawdy Maqāmah of Shām, the ascetic Maqāmah of the Exhortation, the picaresque Maqāmah of Moṣul, the slapstick Maqāmah of Baghdād, etc.). The principle of li-kulli maqām maqāl and the changeability of the entertainer have provided common ground for medieval Arabic and Chinese popular preaching.

Generally speaking, Chinese sujiang during the Six Dynasties and Tang took place in temples and were signaled by striking a bell in the morning.¹⁹⁹ Preachers would probably stop at sunset and urge the audience to return the next day. At the beginning of al-Hamadhānī’s Maqāmah of Isfāhan, ʿĪsā hears the call-to-prayer and wishes to take advantage of public prayers.²⁰⁰ It is in this maqāmah that al-Iskandarī presents an eloquent speech, winning him dirhams that “poured upon him.”²⁰¹ Similarly, Tang popular lecturers were great fund-raisers.²⁰² The issue of a ban on popular preaching in 731 C.E.²⁰³ informs us that many Chinese itinerant monks and nuns preached for the sake of “moneye, wolle, chese, and whete,” to cite the confession of Chaucer’s Pardoner
in his prologue.\textsuperscript{204}

Mair translates the passage detailing the steps for carrying out a \textit{Vimalakīrti Sūtra} lecture which were recorded in a Dunhuang manuscript as follows:

The service, which is conducted chiefly by a Master of the Dharma (\textit{fa-shih} 法師) begins with a recitation of the “Sanskrit” (\textit{fan} 梵). The Bodhisattva is invoked twice and then the “seat-settling [text]” (\textit{va-tso} 押座) is chanted. Various stages of the sūtra lecture itself are described, including an “ornamentation” (\textit{chuang-yen} 莊嚴, \textit{alaṃkāra}) and the invocation of the Buddha. After the sūtra lecture is finished, the ten “perfections” (\textit{shih po-lo-mi-to} 十波羅蜜多, \textit{pāramitā}) are explained. Hymns praising the Buddha are chanted and vows are made. The Buddha is once again invoked and vows are made to transfer the merit of the service to others, after which the congregation disperses.\textsuperscript{205}

Moreover, the master often has a helper, called \textit{du jiang} 都講 (\textit{canto-ācārya}\textsuperscript{206}), who at different points of the lecture is requested by the former to sing aloud a sūtra passage.

The dichotomy of \textit{fa shi} and \textit{du jiang} of Tang is comparable to that of \textit{dao shi} and \textit{jing shi} in the Six Dynasties. In many Dunhuang manuscripts on the \textit{Vimalakīrti sūtra},\textsuperscript{207} there are musical notations such as \textit{yin} 吟 (cantillate), \textit{ce} 側 (slant), and \textit{duan} 斷 (break) that mark the verse portions of the texts,\textsuperscript{208} and catchphrases such as \textit{bai} 白 (plain prose), \textit{shi} 詩 (poetry), and \textit{jing} 經 (scripture) that differentiate modes and contents.

From the procedures just quoted we learn that before the lecture proper a \textit{fa shi} would compose a seat-settling text (often a song in seven-character meter\textsuperscript{209}). He then comes to \textit{hui xiang} 迴向 (transfer of merit, \textit{parināmanā}) and \textit{fa yuan} 發願 (vows) after invocations and exegesis of the sūtra lecture. The \textit{sujian} left its impact upon many Buddhist and non-Buddhist literary texts found in Dunhuang.\textsuperscript{210} The Chinese popular
literature thus influenced is not in any way constrained by the rules and can exhibit many variants on the religious form. For example, the seat-settling text of the po mo bian 破魔變 (Destruction of the Demons) consists of two seven-character poems separated by a prose passage. Both its poetry and prose expound upon the same “ubi sunt” theme that is to be found in the second sermon of the Maqāmah of the Exhortation. The Chinese preacher then gives a long prayer for blessings before moving on to the text proper.

In a word, the text proper of a Chinese popular lecture is preceded by the seat-settling text and the prayer of blessings. Thus we recall the seemingly unusual poetry-prose sequence in the Maqāmah of Qazwīn. It is a fact that ʿĪsā often attends al-Iskandarī’s lectures as a latecomer. But in the Qazwīn, he does not miss the beginning—the beggar plays the drum in order to gather the Muslim raiders around him. Al-Iskandarī first sings a long sarīʿ-metered poem that introduces him as a Byzantine Christian convert to Islam. Then in the following sajʿ-passage, he repeats the hardships of fleeing from “the enemy’s territory” to “the guarded domain of the faith,” and wishes to help the Muslim raiders and pray for them:

wa li-kullin minnī sahmānī sahmūn udhallīquhu liʾl-liqāʾ (i) wa ākkarū ufawwīquhu biʾl-duʿāʾ (i) wa arshuqu bihi abwābāʾ l-samāʾ (i) ʿan qawsiʾl-ẓalmaʾ (i).

For each one from me there will be two arrows, one of which I will sharpen for future recompense, and the other I will notch with prayer and with it from the bow of darkness shoot at the gates of Heaven.

ʿĪsā’s narration of the beggar’s speech ends here. However it is definitely within the
balīgh’s ability to entertain the raiders with the colorful storytelling (riwāyah) or mimicry (ḥikāyah)214 as one could infer from a Chinese sujiang, such as the text proper of the Po mo bian.215

Al-Hamadhānī may have used the poetry-prose and prose-poetry sequences to represent different stages of a sermon. The prose-poetry sequence that we encounter more often in the Maqāmāt is also a common feature of the Chinese sujiang. Mair detects two basic patterns of Dunhuang prosimetric narratives: “In the first pattern, the verse is an integral component of the narrative structure; it helps to carry the story forward.” “The second pattern introduces most of the essential narrative content in the prose passages and utilizes the verse chiefly to recapitulate or embellish. Here the verse serves to emphasize certain aspects of the actions or heighten the emotions of the actors.”216 In his analysis of the poetry in the Akhbār ʿUbayd, Heinrichs similarly differentiates “action poems” and “commentary poems.”217 The verses in the Jurjān and Basrah maqāmāt, and ʿAlī ibn al-Ḥusayn’s sermon seem to fit into the categories of both the second Dunhuang pattern and Heinrichs’s “commentary poems” very well.

Sometimes, the second pattern of Dunhuang narratives is marked with a verse-introductory formula.218 For example, in the Baxiang bian 八相變 (Eight Manifestations of the Tathāgata) we find a prose passage that delineates the auspicious signs after the birth of Prince Siddhārtha.219 The storyteller immediately adds the formula “At that time, what words did he say?” (當爾之時, 道何言語) before moving on
to two stanzas which not only highlight the signs, but serve as proof of what is told in the preceding prose.\textsuperscript{220} We have earlier discussed the dichotomy of fa shi and du jiang. Could the former be using such a formula to invite the latter to sing the stanzas? Even if the story is narrated by a single performer, the existence of the formula helps break the monotony of one man’s speech.

The Chinese formula also calls to mind a specific trait found in the \textit{Akhbār 'Ubayd}. Heinrichs suggests that the ayyām genre of narrative “grew out of the dialogue situation of the samar (musāmara), the evening entertainment or conversation.”\textsuperscript{221} In the \textit{Akhbār 'Ubayd}, Mu‘āwiya functions not only as the curious audience, but also as the interlocutor who elicits most of the commentary poems, using formulae such as: “Has any poetry been composed about that? (\textit{a-qīla fī dhālika shī ’rūn})” “And ’Ubayd would invariably answer ‘Yes’ (never: ‘Sorry, I don’t recall any’), whereupon the caliph would command: ‘Let me hear it then!’”\textsuperscript{222} On the one hand, the Chinese formula is simpler than the simulated dialogue between Mu‘āwiya and ’Ubayd. On the other, the introductory catchphrases to poetry can be completely omitted as seen in the end of the \textit{Vajracchedikāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra} (The Diamond Sūtra), and in al-Iskandari’s sermons in the \textit{Exhortation}, \textit{Jurjān}, and \textit{Baṣrah maqāmāt}. In these texts the borderline between dialogue and narrative is indeed hazy.

The prose-poetry sequence in the \textit{Maqāmah of the Exhortation} seems to be tighter than those of the \textit{Jurjān} and \textit{Baṣrah maqāmāt}. In one of the Chinese \textit{Vimalakīrti sūtra}
lectures, a line of sūtra is followed by four couplets, and this alternation can repeat several times.\(^{223}\) However the full-fledged Dunhuang narratives rarely host such an even and frequent alternation. Sūtras (lit. “thread” or “string”) are pithy aphoristic compositions “that could be committed to memory.”\(^{224}\) The text of the Chinese Vimalakīrti sūtra (not the sūtra lecture) is mostly in prose and contains a few verses. When Chinese preachers performed it in front of audiences, they might first add verses to the prose, and the prose was later refined in order to maintain an aesthetic balance with the poetry.\(^{225}\) We suggest that the prose-poetry alternation in some Hamadhānian maqāmāt had experienced a similar development, for we detect two stages of alternation in the Maqāmāt collection. While the second sermon in the Maqāmah of the Exhortation may be seen as representing a supposedly early stage of alternation (as in the Vimalakīrti sūtra lecture), the speeches in the Jurjān and Baṣrah maqāmāt, with their lengthy narrative saj’, may belong to a later stage of alternation where the prose and poetry form a dynamic unity: “the poetry cannot really be understood without the prose, and the prose is not considered trustworthy and true without the poetry to corroborate it.”\(^{226}\)

**Garland of stories**

**Thus have I heard**

We noted in Chapter I that the word maqām(ah) originally meant boasts of heroic
actions. It also began to denote religious sermons during the 3rd/9th century. Our previous section involves the group of Hamadhānian maqāmāt that focus on the repartee of al-Iskandarī. The prose-poetry and poetry-prose sequences to be found in their episode proper could well have imitated the steps for carrying out a popular lecture. Our beggar al-Iskandarī is not only the sermonizer, but also the antihero in quite a few picaresque maqāmāt that describe his ruses and deceitful actions. In this regard, al-Hamadhānī’s interpretation of maqāmah has parodied its original meaning as well.

In this section, we will discuss the techniques that al-Hamadhānī uses to string together the episodes on the words and deeds of al-Iskandarī. One of his tools is the identical opening isnād (a chain of transmitters). All types of Hamadhānian prologues are based upon the isnād plus an introduction or frame. We will compare them to prologues in the relevant Buddhist literary genres. After employing the Buddhist principle of “Causation and Occasion” to analyze two double-episode picaresque maqāmāt, we will show that the overall scheme of a typical maqāmah is comparable to that of a Pali jātaka (birth story) which is a story with a frame. Furthermore, we will introduce the Sanskrit Jātakamālā (Garland of Birth Stories), with its glorification of the Mahāyāna Perfections (pāramitā) and the flowery prosimetric description, as a close parallel to the maqāmah genre. Considering the fact that the relevant Buddhist genres all recount the words and deeds of Gautama Buddha, we will turn to the Indian genre of biography (ākhyāyikā) and compare its way of marking different episodes in a collection (i.e., a deft alternation of
prose and poetry) to that of the Hamadhānian maqāmah. Moreover, we will present the Chinese huaben as the East Asian narrative genre that was influenced by the Buddhist popular lecture. In the course of our analysis, we will draw attention to some structural and thematic similarities between the Chinese huaben and the Arabic maqāmah.

Each Hamadhānian maqāmah starts with the isnād: ḥaddathanā Ḥisā bnu Hīshāmin qāla (Ḥisā ibn Hīshām related to us and said). This is a rule followed in the whole collection, even if it appears a little awkward in pieces such as the Maqāmah of Shaymarah. The isnād is the maqāmah’s homage to the genres of khabar (anecdote) and ḥadīth (report). At the same time, the unity of the transmitter of the account (rāwī), even if fictitious, could be compared to the Buddhist formula “Thus have I heard” (Skr. evam mayā śrutam; Pali. evam me sutam) with which many a sūtra commences.

“The Buddhist introductory phrase is traditionally ascribed to Ānanda when he compiled the sūtras at the Council of Rājagṛha.” After drawing the parallel Jaina phrase (“It was heard by me, venerable sir, thus taught by the Blessed One”), John Brough suggests that the Buddhist formula is also intended as direct personal testimony. With its power of asseveration, “Thus have I heard” is a very handy tool for grouping together a large corpus of the speeches and deeds of Gautama Buddha.

In the second sermon of the Maqāmah of the Exhortation, al-Iskandarī does start to quote ‘Alī ibn al-Ḥusayn by using a phrase (wa qad samī’tu anna…), which closely resembles the Buddhist introductory formula. We do not know whether or not
al-Hamadhānī consciously linked the opening phrase, the prose-poetry sequence, and the speech of a Shīʿī imām into a clearly indicated “maqāmah,” but it does occur to us that the action of “hearing” emphasizes the speech aspect (maqāl) which is vital to the origins of both maqām and maqāmah.

Moreover, both the Indian and Arabic introductory formulae imply that the speeches they introduce are presented in front of an audience. We have highlighted the importance of dialogic form to the Maqāmāt’s saj’-speech and envoi. Since the typical isnād is “Īsā ibn Hishām related to us and said,” it can be suggested that a group of anonymous listeners (“we”) have posed a question beforehand. Although the full formula is abbreviated and only the answer remains, the isnād is still an effective means of linking a whole collection of stories.

The mechanism used in the Hamadhānīan isnād is echoed in the few frames of the Maqāmāt. For example, the main episode of the Maqāmah of the Maḏīrah is related by al-Iskandarī at the request of the co-banqueters. We also realize that the second isnād of the Maqāmah of Ṣaymarah (“Said Muḥammad ibn Ishāq, popularly known as Abū’l-‘Anbas of Ṣaymarah”) is immediately followed by the first part of frame. These two maqāmāt sit comfortably within the same frame of reference in that the (first) isnād is identical. Whereas the identification of an isnād plus frame might seem “redundant,” it is actually a very common feature of Buddhist sūtras. A Dunhuang lecture text even distinguishes the three parts of the Diamond Sūtra as follows: firstly, evaṃ me sutam plus
the first part of the frame; secondly, sutra proper; and thirdly, the second part of frame.\textsuperscript{236}

Besides the linkage of dialogue and the introductory phrase derived from it, there is another convenient way whereby a hodgepodge of materials can be bound together. According to Zhu Binjie, the quotation (\textit{yulu ti} 語錄體) stands for the earliest known prose genre of Chinese literature.\textsuperscript{237} The \textit{Shu jing}, for instance, records three speeches of King Pangeng 盤庚 (r. c. 1401-1374 B.C.E.) who persuaded his people to move the capital with him.\textsuperscript{238} Another chapter of the \textit{Shu jing} is based upon a dialogue between Yu 禹 and his minister Gaoyao 舜陶.\textsuperscript{239} These chapters are accompanied by uniform abstracts that may have been added by compiler(s) in order to group the speeches and events of various eras. Zhu also notes that some pieces of Confucius’s \textit{Analects} begin with an introduction in the third person which briefly informs readers where and why the conversation has taken place.\textsuperscript{240} Such an introduction seems to be recorded together with Confucius’s speeches, a kind of binding that is comparable to both the introduction in Han courtly \textit{fus} and the “general introduction” in Hamadhānian \textit{maqāmāt}. For example, at the beginning of the \textit{Maqāmah of the Blind} we read:

\begin{quote}
\textit{ḥaddathanā ʿĪsā bnu Hishāmin qāla: kuntu ajīzu fī baʾdi bilādi ʿl-ahwāz(i) wa quṣārāya lafżatun sharīdun aṣīdūhā wa kalimatun baʾlíghatun astaʿīdūhā fa addāniya ʿl-sayrū ilā ruqʿatīn fāṣīhatin mina ʿl-balad(i) wa idhā hūnāka qaʾwmun mujtamiʿūna...}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
ʿĪsā bnu Hishām related to us and said: I was passing through one of the towns of Ahwaz when my supreme object was to capture a stray word, or add to my store an eloquent expression. My journeying led me to a vast open space of the town where lo! there was a company of people gathered around...\textsuperscript{241}
\end{quote}
Before demonstrating the eloquence or ruses of the hero, al-Hamadhānī is able to arrange many types of prologues in his maqāmāt: firstly the isnād plus the first-person, mostly-saj' introduction (found in the Blind and another thirty-five maqāmāt\textsuperscript{242}); secondly the isnād plus the first-person, plain-prose introduction (the Asylum, Exhortation, Ḥamdān, Spindle, Fresh Butter, Nājim, Knowledge, Dinar, Yellow, and Sāriyah maqāmāt); thirdly the isnād plus the frame (the Maḍīrah, Ghaylan, Ruṣāfah, and Şaymarah maqāmāt); and fourthly the isnād plus the third person, plain-prose introduction (the Advice and Bishr maqāmāt). Although the last two types cover merely six maqāmāt, all of them appear in the two earliest manuscripts of the Maqāmāt.\textsuperscript{243}

Prologues in the relevant Buddhist literary genres can also take a few forms: “Thus have I heard” plus frame (the Diamond Sūtra); a keyword-like quotation, a prose-abstract, and frame (the Pali Jātaka); a short prose-abstract, the non-canonical tad yathānuśrūyate,\textsuperscript{244} and a prosimetric general introduction of the jātaka proper (Āryaśūra’s Jātakamālā); a motto, tad yathānuśrūyate, and the prosimetric introduction (Haribhāṭṭa’s Jātakamālā). As an example we can examine the prologue of the Makhādeva-Jātaka,\textsuperscript{245} the Pali jātaka about the grey hair:

\begin{quote}
“Lo! these grey hairs.”\textsuperscript{246}—This story was told by the Master while at Jetavana about the Great Renunciation, which has already been related in the Nidāna-Kathā.

On this occasion the Brethren sat praising the Renunciation of the Lord of Wisdom. Entering the Hall of Truth and seating himself on the Buddha-seat, the Master thus addressed the Brethren:—“What is your theme, Brethren, as you sit here in conclave?”

“It is naught else, sir, than the praise of you own Renunciation.”
\end{quote}
“Brethren,” rejoined the Master, “not only in these latter days has the Tathāgata made a Renunciation; in bygone days too he similarly renounced the world.” The Brethren asked the Blessed One for an explanation of this. The Blessed One made clear what had been concealed from them by re-birth.

The monastery (vihāra) of Jetavana where the Buddha spent quite a few rainy seasons and delivered his discourses appears after “Thus have I heard” in the beginnings of many sūtras. We should note that the Buddha is seated in the jātaka, as were the Chinese masters of sujiang and the Abbasid sermonizers of seated homily when they admonished audiences. However it would appear that the speeches delivered by a seated preacher need not differ much from what he presents while wandering and standing in front of people. It is probably by the same token that the maqāmah was used by al-Hamadhānī to include speeches delivered by al-Iskandarī in seated position as well.

The prose-abstract of the Makhādeva-Jātaka is supposed to be recounted by the default narrator Ānanda, one of the Brethren in the frame who will act as the barber in the jātaka proper. It calls to mind the vishkambha (introductory monologue or dialogue) in Sanskrit plays, as if the frame that follows and jātaka proper constitute an act in a play named “The Buddha’s Life.” Following the jātaka proper, the second part of the frame reveals the positive result of the Buddha’s preaching:

After repeating his statement that he had similarly renounced the world in bygone days, the Master at the end of his lesson preached the Four Truths. Some entered the First Path, some the Second, and some the Third. Having told the two stories, the Master shewed the connexion between them and identified the Birth, by saying:—“In those days Ānanda was the barber, Rāhula the son, and I myself King Makhādeva.”
The major difference between the frames of the *Makhādeva-Jātaka* and the *Diamond Sūtra* is that the former has an extra cast of characters in the end. Such a cast of characters also appears in the *Sūtra of the Wise and the Foolish* (*Xianyu jing* 賢愚經), a Chinese *Jātaka* collection compiled in 445 C.E.²⁵⁴ A chapter of the *Xianyu jing* retains “Thus have I heard” at the beginning, and proceeds directly to the frame without an abstract. But its prologue is much more complicated than that of the *Diamond Sūtra*: the first half of its frame is often quite detailed and can be read as a story independent of the *jātaka* proper, if not actually eclipsing the latter altogether.²⁵⁵

**Causation and Occasion**

“Causation and Occasion” (*yinyuan*) is the Chinese translation of the Buddhist concept of *avadāna/nidāna*, which means a contributory cause or condition. “Causation and Occasion” is also the name of a popular Dunhuang literary genre which is characterized by its framing and cause-and-effect structure. In this section we will use this Buddhist concept in analyzing two double-episode picaresque *maqāmāt*. We will suggest that such a bipartite *maqāmāh* is evolved from a frame story.

In the *Makhādeva-Jātaka*, the Buddha tells of the birth story in order to stress his “Great Renunciation.” The *Vedabbha-Jātaka*, which displays a similar narrative logic to Chaucer’s the Pardoner’s Tale,²⁵⁶ shows that a disciple has been obstinate “in bygone times also.”²⁵⁷ The *jātaka* genre can thus be seen as the Buddha’s tool for eulogy or
satire; like the eloquent persuader in the *Seven Stimuli* or ‘Iṣmat in the *Maqāmah of Ghaylan*, the Buddha always voluntarily presents the enframed story as a way of proving the truthfulness of the frame.

The *Xianyu jing*, also named a sūtra of *avadāna/nidāna* (yinyuan, “Causation and Occasion”), emphasizes the reasons for life’s rewards or punishments. For example, the *jātaka* proper of the “Prince Mahāsattva Gives His Body to the Tigress” explains why in the first half of the frame the Buddha saves the two sons of an unknown old woman.²⁵⁸

There is an obvious similarity between the *Makhādeva-Jātaka* and the *Maqāmah of Ghaylan*—where the enframed story told by ‘Iṣmat is used to provide an example of the statement that al-Farazdaq pardoned his enemy out of contempt. In the case of the *Maqāmah of the Maḏīrah*, the contrasting descriptions of the tasty dish and al-Iskandarī’s strange reactions to it, coupled to the puzzled fellow dinner-guests who demand an explanation and then, after listening to al-Iskandarī’s explanation, swear never to eat the dish, calls to mind the *jātakas* in the *Xianyu jing*. The presence of the *maqāmah*’s storyteller (‘Iṣmat and al-Iskandarī) in both the frame and enframed tale also suggests a similarity with the role of the Buddha, whose casting legitimates his experience or witnessing of many events during the *jātis* (births).

The independence of the *Xianyu jing*’s frames, as well as the “Causation and Occasion,” can further shed light to the structure of two Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* that have double episodes: the *Armenia* and *Moṣul*. Both *maqāmāt* begin with ‘Īsā’s introduction,
in which he tells how he and al-Iskandarī were robbed by “the children of the desert,” thus providing, it would seem, an excuse for their subsequent picaresque experiences.

The first episode in the Maqāmah of Armenia tells how the penniless al-Iskandarī manages to obtain bread and milk by pretending to have contaminated the food. In the second episode, the company travels to another village where a boy voluntarily offers them a large bowl of milk for nothing. It turns out that a mouse has fallen into its container, and so that it has been offered “as alms to travelers.”

Īsā comments that “this is the reward for what we did yesterday (hādhā jazāʾ u mā biʾl-amsi faʾalnāhu),” while al-Iskandarī consoles him by reciting a mujtathth-metered envoi suggesting that the hardy (al-shahm) should be prepared for both good and bad on the road.

Here al-Hamadhānī is able to depict both cause (mā biʾl-amsi faʾalnāhu) and result (jazāʾ) within such a short narrative; in the end the picaros are offered really contaminated food. There may also be an implicit disapproval of people who no longer remember the Bedouin virtue of hospitality, in that the boy is punished when the angry al-Iskandarī smashes his milk bowl. Here we can note that, within Hanan’s definitions, the picaresque Arabic maqāmāt can be placed into his category of “lighter satire.”

Atrocious villains such as the cannibalistic Kalmāshapāda, who are also subject to “Causation and Occasion,” do not exist in the Maqāmāt.

The two episodes of the Maqāmah of Moṣul also portray the ups and downs of a picaresque career. We have noted previously that, in its second episode, al-Iskandarī...
pretends that he can divert a flood by means of a prayer. After the duo manages to escape the village during a super-long genuflexion in prayer, al-Iskandarī chants a mujtathth-envoi as follows:

\begin{align*}
\text{lā yub ʿidi ʿl-lāhu mithli}\, & \\
\text{wa ayna mithliya aynā}\, & \\
\text{li ʿl-lāhi ghafulatu qawmin}\, & \\
\text{ghanimtuḥ bi ʿl-huwaynā}\, & \\
\text{iktaltu khayran ʿalayhim}\, & \\
\text{wa kiltu zūran wa maynā}\, &
\end{align*}

May God not put far from Him the likes of me,
But where is the likes of me, aye where?
How marvellous was the stupidity of the people,
Which I took advantage of with ease!
I received from them the full measure of good,
While I weighed out to them nought but fraud and falsehood.\textsuperscript{264}

Its theme, as seen in ʿĪsā’s closing comment of the \textit{Maqāmah of Baghdad}, is a satire on “the stupidity of people.” Such a commentarial envoi is directed to the audiences so that they should beware of tricksters. For the same practical reason, al-Hamadhānī portrays various kinds of thieves and their artifices in his \textit{Maqāmah of Rusāfah}. Clearly al-Hamadhānī is not creating the picaresque \textit{maqāmāt} in order to praise such a lifestyle. The picaro’s success is never guaranteed: in the first episode of the \textit{Maqāmah of Mosul}, for example, al-Iskandarī tries to “revive” a dead person, but ends up being soundly thrashed when people realize his “fraud and falsehood.”

Generally speaking, a Hamadhānian \textit{maqāmah} does not include more than two
episodes. While “Causation and Occasion” may be guiding principles used by al-Hamadhānī in composing the Armenia and Moṣul maqāmāt, the two episodes of the farcical Maqāmah of Ḥulwān are clustered around a single theme: that of shaving. Failing to get a proper shave in both episodes, the unlucky ʿĪsā becomes frustrated and chants a commentarial envoi, in which he vows never again to shave his head, a vow that is indeed comparable to the sajʿ-vow which concludes the Maqāmah of the Maḍīraḥ. Although both vows (nadhr) seem to be trivial, they are lessons that have been painfully gleaned from the episodes in question. In this regard, Arab audiences depicted in the maqāmah are merely acting like the Buddha’s disciples who always show their spiritual advancement after listening to a sūtra lecture.

The “Causation and Occasion” structure, the commentarial envois, the vows, and the linkages between episodes may indicate that a double-episode maqāmah is evolved from a story with a frame. Hämeen-Anttila divides a typical Hamadhānian maqāmah into “isnād,” “general introduction,” “link,” “episode proper,” “recognition scene,” “envoi,” and “finale.” Naturally there arises the question as to whether the parts before and after the episode proper are also related to a frame. At least, the twin characters, ʿĪsā and al-Iskandarī, assume the same student/teacher relationship as that of Ānanda and Buddha. Except for the episode proper, ʿĪsā is assigned an active role, one that is especially prominent in the prologue (isnād plus general introduction). He is also the indispensable first disputant in debates during the recognition scene. Although the finale appears in only
eight typical *maqāmāt*, it is the point at which ‘Īsā expresses his feelings for the hero after witnessing the latter’s actions and speeches. Both the recognition scene and finale perform the same function as, respectively, the cast of characters and the result of preaching at the end of a Pali *jātaka*. Within the context of such a comparison it is clear that ‘Īsā’s responsibilities are greater than those of Ānanda: al-Iskandarī does not have to reveal his own identity as the Buddha does in the *jātakas*.

**Perfections**

This section discusses the “perfections” (*pāramitā*) according to which the Sanskrit *jātakamālā* arranges the episodes. Likewise al-Hamadhānī unites his *Maqāmāt* collection by following the principle of virtues (sg. *fāḍl*), which is not hidden within their theme of beggary.

Strictly speaking, the Buddha was still a bodhisattva (“Buddha-to-be”) in the *jātaka* proper. The bodhisattva can take the form of a king (*Makhādeva-Jātaka*), a pupil (*Vedabbha-Jātaka*), or even a hare, deer, or ape. Although the Buddha’s avatars at many births are different, his actions and speeches, without exception, help audiences to understand truths of the religion.

We have previously introduced Āryaśūra’s *Jātakamālā* (the *Garland of Birth-stories*), which is regarded as a paradigm of *gadyakāvya* (prose-poetry). Āryaśūra’s imitator, Haribhaṭṭa, also composed a *Jātakamālā* with thirty-four chapters.
Both Jātakamālās were composed as a glorification of the Mahāyāna Perfections (pāramitā), i.e., giving (dāna), morality (śīla), forbearance (ksānti), striving (vīrya), meditation (dhyāna), and wisdom (prajñā). For instance, Āryaśūra’s “Story of the Tigress,” mentioned in the aforementioned Xianyu jing story, illustrates the perfection of giving.272 As a matter of fact, Āryaśūra’s first decade is solely devoted to giving, the second to morality, and the third to forbearance.273 However Haribhaṭṭa’s Jātakamālā has a more balanced design for all six perfections.274

It is easy to imagine that the Bodhisattva, whose perfections are carefully depicted, is the main character in the jātakamālās. However in the jātakas such as Vedabbha-Jātaka, he simply serves as a witness to the event. Besides the language and treatment of details,275 another difference between the Pali Jātaka and the Sanskrit Jātakamālā is that the latter displays a fairly standardized, pāramitā-concerned formal structure.276 Normally a jātakamālā story begins with an abstract (prose or verse) which indicates a certain perfection of the Bodhisattva. After the non-canonical tad yathānuśrūyate, it reaches the general introduction which can be divided into the following subsections: firstly, a “prose depiction of the particular conditions under which the Bodhisattva was born or is living”; and secondly a “set of verses describing his prominent qualities.”277 A phrase (e.g., atha kadā cid, “so one day”) is used to lead into the main story, a particular description of the Bodhisattva’s perfection. Its epilogue, which is similar to the second half of frame in a Pali jātaka, admonishes the audiences by
once again confirming the perfection.

A similar structure can be identified in the *Maqāmah of the Lion*. From considering this *maqāmah* in conjunction with those just discussed, we may detect some structural similarities between the *maqāmah* and the *jātakamālā* genres. Let us now examine the prologue to the *Maqāmah of the Lion*:

\[ haddathanā ʿĪṣā bn Hishāmin qāla: kāna yablughunī min maqāmāti ʿl-Iskandarīyi wa maqālātih(i) mā yasghā ilayhi ʿl-nafūr(u) wa yantafidu lahu ʿl-ʿusfūr(u) wa yurwā lanā min shiʿrih(i) mā yamtaziju bi-ajzāʾi ʿl-nafsī riqqatān wa yaghmuḍu ʿan awhāmī ʿl-kahanatī diqqātān wa anā asʿalū ʿl-lāḥa baqāʾah(u) ḥattā urzaqa liqāʾah(u) wa atāʾaṣja min quʿādī himmatihi bi-hālatih(i) maʾa ḥusni ʿalatih(i) wa qad daraba ʿl-dahrū shuʿinahu bi-asdādin dānah(u) wa halumma jarran ilā an ṭtafaqat lī ḥājatun bi-Ḥimṣa.... \]

ʿĪṣā bn Hishām related to us and said: There used to reach me of the maqāmāt and sayings of al-Iskandarī such as would arrest the fugitive and agitate the sparrow. Poems of his have been recited to us whose refinement pervades the soul in all its parts, and whose subtlety is hidden from the imaginations of the kāhins. And I pray God to spare him so that I may meet him and marvel at his indifference to his condition in spite of his art and fortune. Fortune had made her benefits remote by placing barriers between him and them and continued to do so till I happened to have some business in Ḥims.\[278\]

This prologue does not begin with an indication from ʿĪṣā that he has arrived at a certain place for a particular reason, but rather with a general introduction depicting al-Iskandarī’s eloquence and lack of luck. The phrase “halumma jarran ilā an (and so on till)” links the prologue to the first two episodes which depict ʿĪṣā’s rough journey to the city of Ḥims. At the beginning of the third episode, ʿĪṣā finds al-Iskandarī begging with his two children in the open space of its market. When al-Iskandarī chants a poem of
khafif-meter, ’Īsā recognizes him. The beggar prefers to receive twenty loaves of bread rather than twenty dirhams from ’Īsā, so that the latter comments that “there is no device against ill-fatedness.”279 If we link the prologue and third episode to each other, it is obvious that the latter gives a specific example of the beggar’s qualities (eloquence and bad luck) which are duly recapitulated in ’Īsā’s conclusion in the third episode. Such a structure does provide a reminder of the aforementioned jātakamālā story. In both cases, the qualities of the hero are highlighted in the narrative sequence of generalization-specification-conclusion.

This kind of prologue in the first episode of the Maqāmah of the Lion,280 in which a general introduction of the main character is provided, may have predated the other first-person prologues since the Lion is probably one of the earliest in the Maqāmāt collection. Later al-Hamadhānī tends to detail ’Īsā’s disposition in the general introduction (e.g., the Maqāmah of Kūfah), his quest for eloquent speech (e.g., the Maqāmah of Balkh), his travels (e.g., the Maqāmah of al-Fazārah [al-Maqāmah al-Fazārīyah]), or his purpose in journeying (e.g., the Maqāmah of Adharbayjān) after solidifying the recognition scene and the envoi.

In Chapter II we drew attention to the virtues (sg. faḍl) of admonishers such as al-Iskandarī, Xunzi, the madman of Gargantua and Pantagruel, and the performers of the collection of A 1001 Nights. It would seem that most societies encourage people to do good (al-amr bi’l-ma’rūf) and shun evil (al-nahy ‘an al-munkar); it is thus possible to
identify Muslim virtues, even in the context of the lighter satire employed in the
Maqāmāt, corresponding to the Buddhist perfections.281

At this point we will list the virtues found or implied in the Maqāmāt in order to
explore the possibility that a comparison of these Muslim virtues with the Buddhist
perfections may provide evidence of thematic connections between the maqāmah and the
jātakamālā. First of all, the ascetic (zuhd) motif of the Maqāmāt can be easily related to
the Buddhist perfection of morality (śīla). Just as dāna-pāramitā is vital to the two
Jātakamālās, so is generosity (karam) another important theme in the Hamadhānian
maqāmāt. Al-Iskandarī’s panegyrics not only depict Khalaf ibn Aḥmad as the ideal donor,
but also characterize ʿĪsā himself in the same guise, since, faced with requests, “he
scratched not his beard, he wiped not his nose and he did not cough” (as in the Maqāmah
of Iblīs).282 On the contrary, the miserly are humorously caricatured in the series of
maqāmāt on the topic of food (the Maḏīrah, Famine, and Fresh Butter maqāmāt).

Wisdom is another of al-Hamadhānī’s favorite themes, one that is closely
associated with generosity. Al-Iskandarī’s divinatory functions, not to mention his
accomplishments in sajʿ and poetry, are clearly the very symbols of the hero’s wisdom. A
typical maqāmah often links al-Iskandarī’s knowledge to ʿĪsā’s generosity, implying that
the author’s eloquence is only waiting for the donor’s reward. In the Buddhist tradition,
dāna is divided into āmiṣadāna (giving of material objects) and dharmadāna (giving of
the law or teaching),283 and so, with reference to the anonymous bier-bearer in
al-Hamadhānī’s *Ahwaz maqāmah* and the hoary preacher in the *Exhortation maqāmah*, we come to realize that both are purveyors of insightful, gratis teaching. Although our rogue hero is not crafted as a donor but rather as either a donee or stingy host, he always begins by satisfying the donor’s curiosity about “stray words and eloquent expressions” or else treating the audience to a whole array of depictions of delight.

Because of al-Hamadhānī’s own scholarly background, he may decide to embed direct praise of knowledge (ʿilm) within al-Iskandarī’s preachings. In the *Maqāmah of Knowledge*, for example, al-Iskandarī provides a rhymed manual on the acquisition of knowledge. His exaltation of scholars in both the *Exhortation* and *Quest maqāmāt* also hints at the awkward fact that in al-Hamadhānī’s time the pursuit of adab (polite letters) did not necessarily lead to material success. The envoi of the *Maqāmah of the Blind* complains about the unclear boundary between reason (ʿaql) and folly (ḥumq). On many other occasions, al-Iskandarī advises Īsā that in an upside-down age the wise should resort to guile. The rogue’s tactic can be compared to the worldly wisdom (nīti) which is often cast into śloka-maxims in the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*. However the doctrines of nīti are not to be followed by the Bodhisattva, the enlightened being.284

Among the *Maqāmāt*, the *Amulet* may be seen as providing a possible correspondence with the Buddhist perfection of forbearance (kṣānti).285 During a horrible nighttime sea-journey, the calm rogue hero sells a number of amulets “whose possessor will not drown.”286 When the ship arrives safely at shore, he chants a *ramal*-metered
envoi to ʿĪsā:

wayka lawlā ʾl-ṣabru mā kun
tu mala ’tu ʾl-kīsa tibrā
lan yanāla ʾl-majda man ḍā
qa bimā yaghshāhu ṣadrā....

Woe, to thee! were it not for patience I had not
filled my purse with gold.
He will not obtain glory who is impatient
at what befalls him….287

The quality of patience is al-Iskandari’s key to gold and glory. The rogue’s success and the envoi that he recites advise people to develop a spirit of forebearance (ṣabr), something that is more useful than amulets. In fact, quite a few references to ʿĪsā’s impatience are to be found in the Maqāmāt.288

Just as a single jātakamālā can extol several perfections,289 an individual maqāmah does not limit itself to one theme. For example, we can roughly detect all six perfections in the Maqāmah of Ṣaymarah: the generosity of the newcomer al-Ṣaymarī, the [im]morality of the Baghdad upper class, the forbearance of the bankrupt hero, and his meditation, striving, and wisdom, all of which help him once again to accumulate the wealth he has lost and carry out his revenge.290 Indeed, the Maqāmāt provide their own interpretations of virtues.291 Although al-Iskandari is never the perfect man (al-Insān al-kāmil), his words and deeds contain morals that do not differ all that much from those found in the Buddhist perfections. These morals are just what an admonisher such as
al-Hamadhānī wants to impart to his audience, even by means of the entertaining *maqāmāt*.

**Painter**

In his preface to the *Jāṭakamālā*, Haribhaṭṭa regrets that “the dirt of inadequate praise” has long obscured his speech.²⁹² He wishes to purify his mind, speech, and achieve “something wholesome” by describing the Buddha’s previous incarnations. In this context it is interesting to note that he compares himself to both a painter (*citrakāra*)²⁹³ and “one [who] illuminates a picture-gallery (*citrabhavana*) by the light of a torch.”²⁹⁴ “A preacher of the dharma,” with his superb descriptive skills, is able to transfer the “nectar” (benefits) of the *jātakas* to his thirsty audience. In this section, we will draw a few examples from al-Hamadhānī’s *Maqāmah of Jāḥiz* and Āryaśūra’s *Viśvantarajātaka* to show the similar descriptive skills (e.g., the mixture of different meters/modes) used in both the Arabic *maqāmah* and the Sanskrit *jāṭakamālā*. We will also provide some explanation of the popularity of the *maqāmāt* illustrations, whose vividness matches that of the verbal description.

When Āryaśūra redacts the *Ruru-Jāṭaka*,²⁹⁵ he appends at the beginning a long prose depiction of flora and fauna in the forest. With regard to both linguistic precision and orderly enumeration, it can be compared to the passage on carving the wooden frame of ritual bells to be found in the *Zhou lǐ*,²⁹⁶ and the hoopoe’s monody in Aristophanes’s
The Birds (ll. 227-262). We have already discussed the popularity of the description (wasf) theme in both Arabic saj’ and poetry (especially the urjūzah). Poets composing in classical Sanskrit are equally adept at depiction in prose or verse. In “The Story of Viśvantara,” the princess Madrī gives a lovely portrayal of the penance grove to cheer her banished husband:

Nor do I think the forest-life to be unpleasant at all. Do but consider it well. Removed from wicked people, haunted by deer, resounding with the warbling of manifold birds, the penance-groves with their rivulets and trees, both intact, with their grass-plots which have the loveliness of inlaid lapis lazuli floors, are by far more pleasing than our artificial gardens.

The first passage in prose serves as an introduction to the second, a quatrain in the vasantatilakā meter (4*14 syllables). After another short link (api ca deva), Madrī gives a more detailed description that is developed in four stanzas of anuṣṭubh (2*16 syllables) meter and two of triṣṭubh (4*11 syllables) meter. Her coherent and eloquent depiction fills the prince “with a great desire to set out for the forest.”

When speaking of the play Śakuntalā, Monier-Williams comments that the most memorable scene is “the departure of Śakoontalā from the hermitage,” which is followed by Kanwa’s advice to his daughter. Daṇḍin’s Daśakumāracarita (The Ten Princes) includes a description of an interesting cockfight in a chapter (Pramaticarita) where a beautiful maiden is vividly portrayed. Whether in a didactic jātakamālā, a long play, or a novel-like kathā (story), description is the Indian poet’s stock-in-trade for
attracting the audience and earning fame and glory.

At this point we need to cite from the *Maqāmah of Jāhiz*, since it provides a similarly skillful description. This *maqāmah* takes place at a banquet and demonstrates the “sudden switch to poetry” noted by Heinrichs:

\[
\begin{align*}
fa\ afdā\ bi-nā\ 'l-sayru\ ilā\ dārin \\
turikat\ wa\ 'l-ḥusna\ ta\ 'khudhuhū \\
tantaqī\ minhu\ wa\ tantakhībū \\
fa\ 'ntaqat\ minhu\ ṭarā\ 'ifāhū \\
\text{wa}\ 'stazādat\ ba\ 'da\ mā\ tahābū \\
quad\ furisha\ bisāṭuhū\ wa\ busīṭat\ annāṭuhū\ wa\ mudda\ simāṭuhū\ .\ .\ .\text{thumma}\ 'akafnā\ 'alā\ \text{khiwānīn}\ quad\ mulī\ at\ biyāḏuh(u)\ wa\ nawwarat\ riyāḏuh(u)\ wa\ 'ṣṭaffat\ jīfānuh(u)\ wa\ 'khtalafat\ alwānuh(u)\ fa\ min\ ḥālikin\ bi-izā'ihi\ nāṣī'(un)\ wa\ min\ qānin\ tilqā'ahu\ fāqi'(un).
\end{align*}
\]

So we proceeded and reached a house, completed and left alone with beauty from which it selected and chose what it would. And it had chosen from it its choicest charms, and requested more to give away. whose carpets were spread and whose coverings were unfolded and whose table was laid... Then we clave to a table whose vessels were filled, whose gardens were in flower, and whose dishes were arranged in rows with viands of various hues, opposite a dish of something intensely black was something exceedingly white, and against something very red was arranged something very yellow.\textsuperscript{305}

Al-Hamadhānī uses the poem to summarize the house’s beauty, then reverts to *saj*’ to give details of its furniture and ornaments. This kind of summary-detail or poetry-*saj*’ sequence also appears in the *Maqāmah of Wine*.\textsuperscript{306} Although al-Hamadhānī’s description does not depend upon the same adroit selection of different meters as Āryaśūra shows in picturing the serene life in the forest, their similarity is undeniable and draws attention to
another aspect of the connections between the *maqāmah* and the *jātakamālā*. Each unit of the quoted description (the house, guests,\(^{307}\) and table) is introduced in plain prose and marked with different groups of rhymes, an already familiar technique used by al-Hamadhānī.\(^{308}\) In the section “Duet and solo” above, we noted that al-Hamadhānī’s *Famine, Maḍīrah, Fresh Butter,* and *Advice maqāmāt* can be read as a series of unbalanced dialogues. For example, in the *Maqāmah of Fresh Butter*, the main speaker gives us in order the descriptions of dates, bread, and roasted kid. Each section of his description begins with the formulaic “what is your opinion, O young men” and ends with “do you desire it.” In that *Jātakamālā* the princess Madri’s description is also supposed to be an unbalanced dialogue between her and her husband Viśvantara, so that she uses links such as “*api ca deva* (also, my lord).”

Since the description is often static when compared with the overall flow of the narrative, the poet is allowed more space in order to display his skill in both prose and poetry to elaborate on a favorite theme. In the *Maqāmah of Jāḥiz*, Īsā does not provide the usual general introduction but enters the episode proper directly. The quoted segment of description has to some extent filled the vacuum left by the absence of the travelogue. Another “sudden switch to poem” at the beginning of the *Maqāmah of Adharbayjān*\(^{309}\) suggests that al-Hamadhānī may have intended to insert a depiction of Adharbayjān after the travelogue and before the link. The three “redundant” *qālas* at the beginning of the *Maqāmah of Wine*\(^{310}\) may also suggest the possibility of interrupting the narrative flow in
order to furnish some details of drinking (probably in verse).

Sometimes the switch of modes and speakers is mimicked in segments of oral performance within the Arabic tradition (such as the *Nights* and the *muwashshah*). Thus stock phrases such as *qāla fīhi baʿdu wāsifīhi* (as one describer has said concerning it)\(^{311}\) and *famā yakhlū man yunshīdu fī ḥālih* (so there are many who sing in the situation)\(^{312}\) are likely to be found. As mentioned in the earlier section “Sujiang,” the Chinese popular preacher may have used the formula (“At that time, what words did he say?”) to indicate where his assistant should sing the stanzas. The *bian* storytellers of Tang are also known to have employed picture-scrolls in their performances. The verse introductory formula (“Please look at the place where XX [occurs], how does it go?”) in the transformation texts indicates that the performers would point to “a specific spot on their paintings when narrating the event it depicts.”\(^{313}\) Modes of musical and pictorial expression can be closely connected with each other in such an oral description.

Let us now examine an important aspect of the *maqāmah* genre, namely that there are many illustrated manuscripts of al-Ḥarīrī’s *Maqāmāt*. Richard Ettinghausen notices three major themes of Arab painting in pre-modern ages: the theme of royalty and dominion, the scientific theme, and speech which “represents the Arab theme *par excellence*.”\(^{314}\) As attested in Roman art, the theme of speech is mostly represented in Arab painting by means of gestures. The double finispiece of a 13\(^{th}\)-century manuscript of al-Mubashshir ibn Fātik’s *Mukhtar al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsin al-kalim* (“Choice Wise
Sayings and Fine Statements,” composed in 440/1048-9) shows twelve figures with “fervent expressions, powerful gestures and tense postures,” scenes that might well have been depictions of munāzarah (literary debate). Likewise the early 13th-century illustrated manuscripts of al-Harīrī’s Maqāmāt and Ibn al-Muqaffa’s Kalīlah and Dimnah portray talking persons and animals, reminding us of the disputants in the Greek debate and performers of the Syriac dialogue poems in Oriental churches.

A Ḥarīrīan Maqāmāt illustrator such as al-Wāṣīṭī might not wish to compete with the author when it came to the vividness of description. His understanding of the genre, which probably involves the combination of maqālah and maqāmah, demands that the pictures focus on the theme of speech. His preference for a depiction of the audience scene rather than the content of speech also reveals a specific difference between paintings that are to be used as the “simulated context” and those intended for use in the actual oral performance. Ettinghausen assumes that, when a flowering of popular arts (such as shadow plays and puppet theater) occurred in the latter part of the twelfth century, they “may very well have treated subjects related to the Assemblies of al-Harīrī;” “in turn, these productions served as inspiration for a large body of manuscript illuminations, especially for the famous Maqāmāt.” As a result, the illustrations can actually accentuate the performability of a work that is otherwise unlikely to be orally performed. The development of the speech theme in the Ḥarīrīan Maqāmāt illustrations should thus be understood, like “the phrases, devices, and techniques” of the text that
simulate different modes involved in performance, as an indication of the *maqāmah* genre’s link to a variety of art forms.

**Dozens and scores**

In this last section of “Garland of stories,” we will explore the techniques for integrating short pieces of prosimetric narrative into large collections. Examples will be drawn from the Arabic *maqāmah*, the Sanskrit *campū*, the Chinese *huaben* and chaptered novel. We will argue that a uniform prosimetric style is important to mark the beginning and end of chapters.

With the aid of vivid descriptions in romances, Śakuntalā’s innocent girlfriends can immediately tell that the heroine suffers from lovesickness. In the preface to one of his collections of *huaben* (vernacular story), Feng Menglong (1574-1646 C.E.) tells how a small boy forebears the pain of a finger cut after hearing that Guan Yu (d. 220 C.E.), the great hero of the *Roman*ce of the Three Kingdoms (*Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義), was able to drink and play go during arm surgery. Feng is thus arguing for the importance of vernacular stories, whose edifying potential can be roughly compared to that of the Buddhist *avadānas*.

Hu Shiying 胡士瑩 divides a typical Chinese *huaben* story into six parts: title (*ti mu* 頭目), introductory verse (*pian shou* 篇首), explanation of the verse (*ru hua* 入話), prologue story (*tou hui* 頭回), story proper (*zheng hua* 正話), and envoi (*pian wei* 篇尾).
尾). The title consists originally of either the name of a main character, or that of an object, or the locale, but it later evolves into a short abstract of seven or eight characters. The prologue story contains one or more independent stories whose contents are complementary or antithetical to the story proper. As for the introductory verse and the commentarial envoi, they are held to be derived from the sūtra lecture’s seat-settling text and its seat-dissolving text (jiezuō wén 解座文) respectively.

According to Hu Shiying, the popular lecture (sujiang) of the Tang era was an important source for storytelling (shuohua 說話). Therefore a Chinese huaben, although the majority of which were intended for private reading, may have mimicking the steps for carrying out a Buddhist lecture. It is thus not surprising that a Chinese huaben is structurally similar to the Buddhist jātaka and the jātakamāla.

As a matter of fact, the Maqāmāt contain an Arabic pair equivalent to those of the Chinese prologue story and story proper. Returning yet again to the Maqāmah of the Lion, we note that its first and second episodes can be read as an archetype of Ḥūdā’s travelogue included in the “general introduction.” The three descriptions to be found in the first episode have been introduced previously. After the combat with the fierce lion, the people traveling in the tired and thirsty caravan encounter a young Turkic slave who guides them to a mountain spring. The description of the handsome slave beside the water creates a peaceful and serene mood, only to be shattered by the ensuing bloody scene in which he kills several members of the party with arrows. We find a crescendo of
tension in both episodes which, involving a similar dichotomy of prey and predator, carry the moral that treacherous human beings are much more dangerous than animals.

The first two episodes of the *Maqāmah of the Lion*, which respectively tell of the combats with the lion and the Turkic slave, can thus be regarded as equivalent to those of prologue story and story proper. Moreover, the verses in the *Lion maqāmah*’s first episode seem similar to the Chinese *huaben*’s repertoire of poetry, except that the *huaben* often requires catchphrases such as those found in the quotations of poetic parallels (*tamaththul*) in *A 1001 Nights*. We might add that the closing verse of the first episode of the *Lion maqāmah* may be seen as providing a natural division of the two episodes. A distinctive phenomenon of some *huabens* is that the storyteller/author leaves a seven-character couplet at the end of one section and uses it as spoiler for the next one.

The three episodes of the *Maqāmah of the Lion* may also reflect a conflict faced by al-Hamadhānī during the formative phase of the *maqāmah* genre, one that involves two choices: whether to recount stories with different heroes and plots, or to tell a series of stories grouped around the same character(s). In either case, al-Hamadhānī can utilize both original and recycled materials and transform them, by using a uniform prosimetric style, into chapters of a longer composition. The first choice would result in a work similar to Feng Menglong’s *Gujin xiaoshuo*, whose initial success determined that Feng would later compose another two forty-session (*hui 回*) collections. The insistence on the
fixed form of a session and a fixed number of sessions, which might be functionally useful for oral performance (the storyteller) or for creating simulated context (the editor/author), obviously does not conform with the generic notion of a novel in the so-called modern sense. It was in late Yuan 元 (1271 C.E.-1368 C.E.) and early Ming eras that such customary loyalty to traditional forms led to the appearance of the full-length vernacular chaptered novel (zhanghui xiaoshuo 章回小說).

One famous Ming chaptered novel, the *Journey to the West* (*Xi you ji* 西遊記), is thought to have drawn its inspiration from the *Da Tang Sanzang qujing shihua* 大唐三藏取經詩話 (Tale Interspersed with Poetry on Tripiṭaka of the Great Tang Dynasty Retrieving the Buddhist Sūtras), which can be dated to the Tang and Five Dynasties. Mair has drawn our attention to the use of *chu* 處 (narrative locus) in 11 out of its 15 extant chapter titles. He further suggests that *chu* and *shi* 時 (time), which are often found in the *bianwen* pre-verse formula, “may refer to the episodes of a narrative pictorially, sculpturally, or verbally represented.” The *Shihua* has a regular cast of characters (Tripiṭaka and his disciples), but its chapters do not have the fixed form that is seen in the later *huaben* or chaptered novel. The most distinguishing feature of the *Shihua*, which is pertinent to our discussion of the *Maqāmāt*, is that each of its chapters has an envoi. For instance, the second chapter has a dialogic envoi between the monkey and Tripiṭaka. The eighth chapter even ends with a trio. It is notable that the envois of the *Shihua*, as is the case with those in the Hamadhānian *maqāmāt*, are derived from
dialogues as well as commentaries. For a work that lacks chapter titles or introductory formulae (e.g., *evam mayā śrutam*), the regular appearance of the envoi can be understood as performing the function of dividing markers for chapters.

In many literary traditions, a biography often stands for a large collection of short narratives that focus on the words and deeds of a certain figure. Therefore dividing markers for the chapters of a biographical work are also a desideratum. It is known that Daṇḍin and Rudraṭa (9th century C.E.), probably influenced by Bāṇabhaṭṭa’s (7th century C.E.) *Harṣacarita* and *Kādambarī*, revised Bhāmaha’s definitions of ākhyāyikā (chronicle or biography) and kathā (tale), the two branches of the Sanskrit gadyakāvya.

Sushil Kumar De is thus led to summarize the structure of Bāṇa’s first work as follows:

> The *Harṣa-carita* begins with twenty introductory stanzas in the śloka or anuṣṭubh metre, concluding this preliminary part with a verse in *jagatī*...After this comes the prose story, of which eight *ucchvāsas* remain...With the exception of the first, every *ucchvāsa* begins with a pair of stanzas, which give an indication of what is to follow. The metres of these verses are fairly uniform, consisting generally of āryā, with the single exception of a stanza in the śloka-metre in Ucchvāsa iii.

The *Harṣacarita* recounts the deeds (carita) of the Indian emperor Harṣavarman (r. 606-647 C.E.), a Mahāyāna Buddhist convert in a Hindu era. It is known that Haribhaṭṭa’s *Jātakamālā* also includes an āryā-metered abstract in the beginning of each chapter. As divine offerings can move from altars to aristocratic tables, it is not surprising that a Buddhist king would be pleased to be described with the kind of tropes and forms found in a *Jātakamālā*. At the same time, the glorification of a great figure’s lineage, birth, and
exploits was a deep-rooted Indian tradition, reflected in the epics of Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa and in autobiographies such as the Bāburnāmah.

When short episodes were combined into longer compositions that were to be orally performed or inspired, there was always a need to mark the beginning and end of a session. Thus far we have introduced quite a few Buddhist works. The canonical evam me sutaṁ (“Thus have I heard”) was to be developed into the non-canonical tad yathānuśrīyate (“It is traditionally heard as follows”) when authors such as Āryaśūra and Haribhaṭṭa composed the Sanskrit jātakamālās which are marked with a unified structure and an ornate style. The jātakamālās of Āryaśūra inherited the prose abstract from Pali jātakas, while the legends of Haribhaṭṭa further converted the introduction into the āryā-motto, which is also a feature to be found in the Harṣacarita. At the end of the ucchvāsas in the two jātakamālās and the Harṣacarita, there are closing lines which functioned as their titles and numbers. For example, we read “Here ends the fourth chapter—entitled The Exposition of The Emperor’s Birth—of the Harṣa-Carita composed by Čṛī Bāṇa Bhāṭṭa.”

In another work named after carita, i.e., Aśvaghoṣa’s poem Buddhacarita, every canto ends with one or two stanzas in a meter distinct from the main body of the text. This is in accord with Daṇḍin’s description of the epic in cantos (sargabandha mahākāvya). Unfortunately Dharmarakṣa 暗 無 譏 (d. 433 C.E.), the Chinese translator of the Buddhacarita, adapts the five-character meter for all twenty-eight cantos,
thereby eliminating the natural closure created by the use of different meters.

After this short survey of the Indian genre ākhyāyikā, some connections can be made between the maqāmah genre and biography. The term maqāmāt was used around al-Hamadhānī’s time in Persian literature to “refer to the Lebenslauf of notable persons.” Our discussion of the Indian genre of biography may also provide some insight into an 11th-century Jewish literary work that is related to the maqāmah’s antecedent, the faraj genre. The work concerned is the Hibbur yafeh me-hay-Yēšu’ah (An Elegant Composition about Deliverance), the Judeo-Arabic version of al-Faraj ba’da al-shiddah (Relief after Adversity). It consists of a prologue and thirty-four chapters. William Brinner has indicated that the Hibbur yafeh is a collection of tales of Biblical and post-Biblical sages. Such a tale is “known as maʿăšeh (plural maʿăšiyot), literally “deed,” and the collection of tales as sefer maʿăšiyot, “book of deeds, or tales.” The thirty-four chapters, the maʿăšeh, and the exposition of “Causation and Occasion” to be found in many of its chapters, naturally lead us to suggest that the Hibbur yafeh and the jātakamālā are related in terms of origin, although the former does not focus on the deeds of a single character.

There is another common feature among the several genres discussed in this chapter, i.e., the prologue of modesty. Nissim ben Jacob ibn Shāhīn’s prologue to the Hibbur yafeh is constructed as a reply to his depressed son-in-law. He wishes to encourage him with the Gentile genre of relief after adversity (faraj), but he also
modestly acclaims that “I have no skill in this craft nor experience therein.” In his famous preface to the *Maqāmāt*, al-Ḥarīrī not only acknowledges al-Hamadhānī as the originator of the *maqāmah* genre, but also exaggerates the inimitability of the latter’s style. It is known that the opening stanza of Haribhaṭṭa’s introduction to the *Jātakamālā* is a praise of the Buddha’s exploits. Haribhaṭṭa then shows his great admiration of the predecessor Āryaśūra, the latter’s matchless work, and how the benefits of extolling the virtues of the Buddha encouraged him to present his own *Jātakamālā*. It is interesting that all three latecomers (Haribhaṭṭa, Nissim, and al-Ḥarīrī) resorted to such a stereotyped introduction to their narration of “deeds,” whose great benefits are going to spread not only to audiences but also to the author himself.

**Conclusion**

More than thirty years ago, Richard Bulliet discussed the Naw Bahār (*nava vihāra*, i.e., New Buddhist Monastery) place names in modern Iran, of which the two westernmost ones are situated north of Hamadan. Another four or five are scattered along the route from Sabzvar and Nishapur to Herat. It is also known that the Būyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib ibn ʿAbbād once composed a letter “at a place called Naw Bahār a few miles outside the city of Rayy.” Bulliet uses these names as proofs of Iranian Buddhist heritage and relates it to Khālid b. Barmak’s (d. 165/781-782) phenomenal rise to power. He notes that “old Buddhist monasteries in Iranian territory retained a reputation as
educational centres for centuries after they had lost their purely religious identification."³⁵⁷ For us, the locations of the Naw Bahārs vividly recall al-Hamadhānī’s travels (in quest of education and career) from Hamadan to Herat.³⁵⁸ As the Arabic Kitāb Bilawhar wa-Yūdāsaf and the Chinese Baxiang bian can be shown to have a good deal in common,³⁵⁹ it may not be surprising to discover structural similarities between the maqāmah and the jātaka/jātakamālā. In Chapter I we drew particular attention to al-Hamadhānī’s competence in Persian. If Ibn al-Muqaffa’ of the 2nd/8th century translated the Pahlavi Pañcatantra into the Arabic Kalīlah wa Dimnah,³⁶⁰ and Miskawayh, al-Hamadhānī’s contemporary, translated from the Pahlavi wisdom (andarz) literature,³⁶¹ it is not unlikely that al-Hamadhānī was able to include some residue of Iranian Buddhism in a new genre of classical Arabic literature.

As we approach the end of this very long chapter, it is necessary to give a short review of our analyses of the envoi, the prose-poetry sequence, and the overall structure of a Hamadhānian maqāmah. At the end of the last chapter, we asked whether the maqāmah’s envoi functions similarly to the luan in the Chinese fu, or to the śloka-maxim in the Sanskrit Pañcatantra, or perhaps to some other literary equivalent. In this chapter we noted that the Maqāmāt’s envois can be either dialogic or commentarial. The dialogic envois are further divided into debate-related ones (usual envoi) and non-debate ones (mostly panegyrical envoi). The maqāmah’s important theme of literary debate (munāzarah) provides a link to the agon (debate) of the Ancient Greek comedy. After
analyzing the structure of Greek *agon* and that of Arabic *munāzarah* to be found in the *Mqaṭmāt*, we pointed out that al-Hamadhānī’s usual envoi is originally a debate. The *maqāmah*’s finali is also comparable to “a decision or award to the victor” with which ends some Greek *agon*es. The Chinese *luan* is the verse epilogue of many *fūs*. Since it gives a bravura finish to the main episode which is set in a different meter, it is comparable to the *pnigos*-hypermeter of the Greek comedy’s interlude. Since five of al-Hamadhānī’s six panegyrical envois seem to have evolved from a short piece of poetry with which al-Iskandarī ends his *saj*-sermon in the episode proper, we suggested that these panegyrical envois are functionally similar to both the Chinese *luan* and the Greek hypermeter.

Another focus in our analysis of the envoi is its mode of performance. Al-Hamadhānī may have dictated (*amlā*) the text of the *maqāmāt*, and the archetypal *maqāmah* from which he created or at least “literarized” the genre may also be linked to different media. A short discussion of the ancient Greek and Chinese system of musical education provides corroboration of our supposition that al-Iskandarī can be identified as a singer in some *maqāmāt*. By introducing the Greek diple and the Chinese *yue*, we may regard the “redundant” *qāla* and *qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām* in the *maqāmāt* as markers of mode-changing. Therefore we cannot rule out the possibility that the *maqāmah*’s envois (and some other poems) deliberately simulate songs. The fact that the envoi is a quotation and that its favorite meters (*mujtathth*, *khāfīf*, and *ramal*) are echoed in the melic genre of
muwashshah that was developed in Muslim Spain towards the end of 3rd/9th century further supports such a possibility.

Moving from the envoi to al-Iskandari’s sermons in the episode proper, we drew attention to the theme of asceticism (zuhd) and to possible Indo-Iranian antecedents in prose-poetry sequences found in one maqām and the tale of The City of Brass in A 1001 Nights. We then introduced the Chinese sujiang of the Six Dynasties and Tang as an example of the assimilation of imported Buddhist techniques in popular lecturing. The seat-settling text of the Po mo bian might explain the seemingly unusual poetry-prose sequence to be found in the sermon of the Maqāmah of Qazwīn; the formulaic introduction to commentary poems in both the Baxiang bian and the Akhbār ‘Ubayd also provide evidence of the relation between lecture and dialogue. The evidentiary verse (shāhid) that appears in the end of an ayyām story is comparable to the śloka-abstract in a Pañcatantra tale, since they recapitulate the message contained in the main narrative. While it is certainly clear that both the shāhid and the śloka-abstract are different from the maqāmah’s usual envoi, even so they might suggest a functional linkage to the vows included at the conclusion of the Madīrah and Ḥulwān maqāmāt and to the commentarial envois in the Baghdad, the Moṣul, and the Armenia maqāmāt.

We have noted the disadvantage involved in using a literary text to preserve an oral performance. In various literary traditions of the East, the text sticks to the reconstruction of the whole set of performance details even in an age when people are
less likely to listen to or observe the story-teller. Their fidelity to the completeness of the structure may account for the longevity of genres such as the Arabic maqāmah, the Sanskrit campū, and the Chinese huaben and chaptered novel. As we have shown in the third part of this chapter, these prosimetric genres have many things in common regarding their overall schemes and descriptive techniques.

The identical opening chain of transmitters (isnād) was al-Hamadhānī’s tool for marking his maqāmāt as a collection, and it also served as the starting point for a comparison of the structure of a maqāmah and those of Buddhist genres such as jātaka (birth story) and jātakamālā (garland of birth stories). The Buddhist concept of “Causation and Occasion” was used in the analysis of both the Armenia and Moṣul maqāmāt. The perfections (sg. pāramitā) that were presented in order as part of the Jātakamālās also guided our search for the “virtues” (sg. faḍl) of the maqāmāt. When al-Hamadhānī decides to focus on the words and deeds of a single character, his maqāmah can be read as a parody of the Islamic Ḥadīth, and it also establishes, in both structural and descriptive aspects, connections with Indian works of biography such as the Buddhacarita and Harṣacarita.

1 Cf. the Indian pair of śrāvyakāvyā and dṛṣṭyakāvyā discussed in the section “Genre translation” in the Introduction.
2 See the section “The staff” in Chapter II and the section “The dinar” in Chapter III.
3 `Abduh, 81; Prendergast, 75.
4 Although the Persian loanword tīrāz often means “fashion” or “shape” in modern standard Arabic, it was used to specify ‘embroidery’ or ‘decorative work’ (ʿalam) on a garment or piece of fabric” when the Umayyads took over the tīrāz systems from the Sasanians and the Byzantines. See Yedida K. Stillman, Paula Sanders, and Nasser Rabbat, “Tīrāz (a., pl. ṭuruz ),” in EI2. The Islamic imperial workshops (dār al-tīrāz) produced many luxury textiles and robes of honor (khilʿah), which usually bore the names of Muslim rulers, blessings, and place-names of origin.
The majjāthic meter appears in 9 envois. Seven other meters share the rest twenty-two ramal-type envois: ramal (7 envois), majzū  al-kāmil (6), khaff (3), mutaqaābir (3), hazaj (2), sariʿ (1), majzū  al-basītī (1), and munsariʿ (1).

The six panegyrical maqāmāt are the Nājım, Khalaf (al-Maqāmāh al-Khalafiyah), Nishapur, Kings, Sāriyāh (al-Maqāmāh al-Sāriyāh), and Tāmīn (al-Maqāmāh al-Tāmīnīyāh) maqāmāt. It is the Maqāmāh of Sāriyāh that adapts the majzū  al-kāmil in its envoi. Besides the panegyrical maqāmāt, there are still two maqāmāt that may use qasīd-type envois: the Maqāmāh of Rūṣūfī (javīl) and the Maqāmāh of the Yellow (it adapts the kāmil-5 meter which seems to straddle the line between the ramal-type and qasīd-type meters).


They are the Isfahan, Jāhiz, Moṣīl, Hamdān, Armenia (al-Maqāmāh al-Armānīyāh), Knowledge (al-Maqāmāh al-Imānīyāh), and Poetry maqāmāt.

See the section “Guest and host” in Chapter III.

One of its couplet reads: “My tooth desires meat; / Therefore coat it with bread” (qadi ʾshṭahā ʾl-lahma dirigī / fa ḥādhū bi l-khabej jałdā). See Prendergast, 83; ʿAbdūh, 94.

Shmuel Moreh, Modern Arabic Poetry 1800-1970: the Development of Its Forms and Themes under the Influence of Western Literature (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 167. Abū Shādī was the leader of the Apollo school of contemporary Arabic poetry, see ibid., 162.

Ibid., 175. Both the rajaz and ramal meters are put in the same metric circle by al-Khalīf ibn ʿAḥmad, see G. Weil, G. M. Meredith-Owens, “Arūd,” in ʾEf. We noted the resemblance of Arabic rajaz-trimeter and Greek iambic trimeter in the section “Eleven syllables” in Chapter III. The minor ionic dimeter (U U -- -- | U U -- -- |) of Greek comedy can also be compared to the ramal-dimeter (majzū  al-ramal). See Caspari and Wright, A Grammar of the Arabic Language, 2:262, 267. We get a ramal-foot by simply inverting the second and third syllables (interior anaclasis) of a rajaz-foot.

Nāṣīr-i Khusrāwl, Make a Shield from Wisdom, 13.

Aristophanes, Clouds, 66.

The iambic meters in English poetry is not measured by dipodies, but by podies. Therefore the English iambic trimeter/tetrameter contains three/four iambics. Moreover, the English iamb is not formed with a short syllable and a long one, but an unstressed syllable and a stressed one.

John Gay, The Beggar’s Opera, ed. Peter Elfed Lewis (Edinburgh: Oliver & Boyd, 1973). The Beggar’s Opera satires the underworld of London. “The origin of The Beggar’s Opera is usually believed to be Swift’s suggestion, made in a letter to Pope dated 30 August 1716, that Gay should write ‘a Newgate pastoral, among the whores and thieves there.’” See ibid., 1. This Augustan play is divided into three acts and 13+15+17 scenes. Some scenes do not have air while others can have more than one. The most common rhyming scheme of its airs is ababcdcd.

It is a fact that the first majjāthic-poem of the Maqāmāh of Sāsān shares materials with Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim.

The chorus acts as the judge in The Clouds. In another of Aristophanes’ plays, The Frogs, it is Dionysus who judges between Euripides and Aeschylus, see The Comedies of Aristophanes, trans. W. J. Hickie (London: George Bell and Sons, 1907), 2:573-612.

Aristophanes, Clouds, 176.

Ibid., 175.

Socrates employs the chanted anaepaestic tetrameter in his prayer to summon the Clouds (ll. 263-274). See the section “The sources” in Chapter II.

Aristophanes, Clouds, 176.

Ibid., 65-66. Forman suggests that when the disputants chanted verses, the chorus was “probably standing and not dancing.” See ibid., 175.

Prendergast, 181-82. The transliterations are added according to ʿAbdūh, 244-45. Note that (1) we put “He/It said” in brackets, since its Arabic text (qāla) is put in brackets by ʿAbdūh; (2) the quotation marks are accordingly modified.

See the section “The inner form” in Chapter I.

Abdūh, 85. The Maqāmāh of Ḥilīs also hosts poetic conversation represented by Ṣarī’s nānīyāh and ʾĪsā’s sīnīyāh.

This dialogue can be regarded as a muʿāradah (emulation), see A. Schippers, “Muʿāradha,” in ʾEf. It also reminds us of not only the lianjn shi of the Chinese Shi jing (see chap. 3, n. 39), but also the same-rhyme poetic exchange which could have been originated in the 5th century C.E. (see Yang, Qielan ji, 124-25; Wang, Buddhist Monasteries, xiii-xiv, 140-41).


According to Fu Junlian 伏俊璉, two of its three copies are dated to 921 and 925 respectively. Fu Junlian, “Dunhuang fù ji qi zuozhe xieben zhu wenti 敦煌賦及其作者、寫本諸問題,” in Nanjing shifan daxue wenxueyuan xuebao 南京師範大學文學院學報, 2003, No. 2, 166-75 (at 174).

Fu, Su qing ya yun, 167. The English translation is ours.
and Grammar,” in “The dimeter” in Chapter III.

Some of them do lead to a piece of poetry which may function as a kind of commentary (the 專家編著 與 the related genre called 黃徴 [Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998], 917-28, 949-89.

The Chinese bianwen shows a regular use of versified dialogues and soliloquies (not dialogic envois). In Chapter Two of T’ang Transformation Texts, Mair discusses the two groups of bianwen texts according to his narrower and wider definitions respectively. He also touches upon cases that represent loose usages of the term bianwen and the related genres. One text in the second group (“The Causal Transformation on a Maiden in the Women’s Palace of King Bimbisāra [Named ‘Intends to Create Merit’ Who Is Reborn in Heaven for Having Given Her Support to a Stūpa’] 須婆沙羅王後宮經女功德意供養塔生天因緣變) and another text of the related genre called yuanyi 總起 (“The Conditional Origin of the Ugly Girl” 醜女緣起) host the dialogic envois. See Dunhuang bianwen jingjiesheng yinyuan jijiao 辦文講經文因緣輯校, comps. Zhou Shaojiang 周紹良, Zhang Yongquan 張涌泉, Huang Zheng 黃徵 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1998), 917-28, 949-89.

The Maqāmah of al-Fazārah ends with a hāzaj-metered lampoon chanted by ʿĪsā. Following this suggestion concerning the Maqāmah of Ghaylan, we can imagine that either the present version is not complete or al-Iṣkandarī does not bother to answer the lampoon in this case.

They are the Sījistān, Ghaylan, Bukhārā, Al-Aswad, Iraq, Nāşim, Khalaf, and Wine maqāmāt.

In the section of Chapter I entitled “Imlā’ vs. inshā’,” we mentioned the sharing of material in the two pairs of maqāmāt, the Balkh and Yellow, and the Kīfah and Nāşim.

Prendergast, 148.

For the Category A and B measures in the Chinese literary tradition, see our sections “The sources” in Chapter II and “The dimeter” in Chapter III.

Anapaestic hypermeter ‘is a tetrameter that has run ‘overmeasure’ (ἐπιμέτρον) by repeating again and again the
rhythm of the 1st dimer.” See Aristophanes, Clouds, 65.

62 The Comedies of Aristophanes, 1:159. The chorus then sings a ten-line antistrophe (ll.1024-1033) which not only praises Right Logic’s wisdom and eloquence, but also incites Wrong Logic to fight back with “something new.” Wrong Logic’s advocacy of the “New Education” ends with an iambic hypermeter (ll. 1089-1104).

63 Forman notes that such hypermeter “usually stands as a coda to a series of tetrameters, giving the scene a bravura finish.” See Aristophanes, Clouds, 66.

64 Wen xuan, 2: 176-79.

65 Chu ci ji zhu, 81b-83a; The Songs of the South, 168-69, 187-88. Also see our section “The sources” in Chapter II.

66 For Hawkes, the iuan may possibly be sung as well. See The Songs of the South, 187.

67 Ibid.

68 For a note on gui, see Knoblock, 3:359, n. 21.

69 Kunzi ji jie, 482.

70 Jamison, Sacrificed Wife/Sacrificer’s Wife, 72-73. We included a more detailed description of the dialogues in Vedic rituals in n. 38 of Chapter III.

71 These prosimetric genres can be direct or indirect descendants of such proto-genres. As a result, the traces of the proto-genres should be searched in epics, dramas, lyrics, fictions, annals, religious scriptures, etc. For example, the Avesta includes the Jāzās, twenty-one hymns devoted to divinities. It also makes use of the dialogic form as shown in the Gātñas (especially Yasna 44) and Vīdēvādā (Zoroastrians’ law code, which is also a liturgical text to be recited in combination with the Yasna). See Almut Hintze, “Avestan Literature,” in The Literature of Pre-Islamic Iran, 1-71.

72 The prologos, parodos, agon, and parabasis, together with “a series of farcical scenes” and “a final banquet or wedding,” make up the six-part structure of the Greek Old Comedy (c. 5th century B.C.E.). See “Old Comedy,” in Encyclopædia Britannica, academic edition, online version. John Williams White notes that the parodos, agon, and the parabasis were its three “primitive elements.” See White, The Verse of Greek Comedy, 313 (§ 665).

73 The Comedies of Aristophanes, 1:128.

74 “Athamas,” in Encyclopædia Britannica, academic edition, online version.

75 A complete parabasis consists of seven parts: commation, parabasis proper, pnigos, strophe, epirrhema, antistrophe, and antepirrhema. “The first three are single parts and were probably all rendered by the first corypheus.” “The strophe and antistrophe were sung respectively by the first and second half-choruses.” “The epirrhema...probably were rendered in recitative by the leaders of the two half-choruses respectively.” See White, The Verse of Greek Comedy, 314-15 (§ 668). For a study of Aristophanes’s parabases, see Philip Whaley Harsh, “The Position of the Parabasis in the Plays of Aristophanes,” in Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 65 (1934): 178-97.

76 Not as the goddess, as happens in the parodos.

77 Harsh, “Parabasis,” 182.

78 Ibid., 181-83. No doubt, such a parabasis proper is structurally very similar to Right Logic’s speech.

79 We use here Knoblock’s (3:204) name for the third coda.


81 For Sima Qian’s edition of Jia Yi’s Diao Qu Yuan fu 弁屈原賦 (Fu on Mourning for Qu Yuan), see Shi ji, 2492-96.

82 Huang and Sun, 63.

83 White, The Verse of Greek Comedy, 314-15 (§ 668).

84 By using “prologue,” we intend to subsume both the “isnād” and “general introduction.”

85 Take the first interlude of The Clouds for example, the corypheus speaks in first person in the parabasis proper (ll. 518-562), epirrhema (ll. 575-594), and antepirrhema (ll. 607-626).


87 The Songs of the South, 203.

88 That is, how can he put an end to his condition of exile.

89 The meter of this coda, as in many iuans, is of Category A. Hawkes’s translation of the Bu ju misses one rhyming field couplet of Qu Yuan’s rhetoric speech. We translate it as follows: “Is it better to remove weeds and plough a field strenuously, or to associate with the nobles in order to become famous?” (寧誅錐草茅以力耕乎將游大人以成名乎)

90 Heinrichs, “Prosimetrical Genres,” 267. The first Harātīan maqāmāt, the Ṣan ā’ (al-Maqāmah al-Ṣan ’ānīyah), records such a prosimetric sermon delivered by al-Sarūjī. See The Assemblies of al Harātī, 1: 109-11; Maqāmāt al-Charārī, 19-22. In al-Hamadhānī’s panegyrical maqāmāt the heroes also seem to be adept at closing a paragraph of saj -speech with verses, see the Nāṣīm, Khalaf, Kings, and Tamīm maqāmāt.

91 See the section “Needle” in Chapter II.

92 The Songs of the South, 206.

93 Chu ci ji zhu, 110a (we have reconstructed the Old Chinese pronunciations after consulting Baxter’s A Handbook of Old Chinese Phonology); The Songs of the South, 204.

94 Shi ji, 2486.

95 Chu ci ji zhu, 110b; The Songs of the South, 207.

96 See the section “The eccentric” in Chapter II.
neither 

nor simulate a performance for a reader would regard them as essential.” See Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 120-21 (quotation from 121).

A performer would probably not need such markers. “On the other hand, an author who was attempting to duplicate or simulate a performance for a reader would regard them as essential.” See Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 120-21 (quotation from 121).

Knechtges renders the phrase as “the piece reads,” see White, The Verse of Greek Comedy, 384 (§ 830).

The duple “always marked the beginning of the pnigos and that of the following strophe” in an interlude. See ibid., 391 (§ 852).

The first qāla is called qāla Ḥūshām, and the interpolated qāla Ḥūshām is bracketed in the version contained in the 1928 Rasā’il. Abduh tends to regard the longer formula, which may seem to be as redundant as the shorter one, as an echo of the introductory inšād (chain of authority) and thus a vital constituent of the original text. In this way, there is only one bracketed qāla Ḥūshām in the whole edition of his. See Abduh, 44 (Maqāmah of Kings); Prendergast, 51.

Al-Wāṣīṭī’s illustrated manuscript does not have such symbols at the end of rhyming cola.

Indentation is a practice also adopted by Heliodorus, see White, The Verse of Greek Comedy, 385-86 (§ 834).

A typical muwashshah embeds five stanzas (with separate rhymes) within a structure consisting of six pairs of lines (with a common rhyme). As we noted earlier, the rhyme scheme of a simple muwashshah is ab ecc ab ddd ab...

According to Ibn Sanā’ al-Mulk, such a stanza is called a ḍayt and a part of the lines a qūfī. The first qūfī is called maḥla (introductory lines) and the final one kharjāḥ. If a muwashshah lacks a maḥla (qadr’), it is known as “bald” (qadr’).

Ibn Sanā’, Dār al-ṭirāz, 42; Schoeler, “Muwashshah.” The formulae are contained in the final stanza.

Generally speaking, scholars have regarded the prosody of the muwashshah as “stress-syllabic,” “quantitative,” or something in between (“in the sense that the long quantity of syllables in Classical Arabic prosody is replaced by their
stress”). For Schoeler, the “compromise solution” does not differ much from the quantitative theory. See Schoeler, “Muwashshah.”

139 Schoeler, “Muwashshah.”
140 Ibid. Later kharjahs could also be in fāshā Arabic.
141 In an article published in 1948, Stern “had presented 20 Romance khardjās that were characteristically culled from Hebrew muwashshahs.” See ibid.
143 See the section “The fisherman’s song” in this chapter.
144 Compton, Andalusian Lyrical Poetry, 7, 130 (n. 5).
145 Abduh, 77; Prendergast, 73.
146 Abduh, 203; Prendergast, 153. Al-Hamadhānī is known to have quoted verses of Abū Dulaf al-Khazrajī in the envoi of the Maqāmah of Poesie, see Bosworth, Underworld, 1:79 (n. 111).
147 One of his muwashṣāhs (a muwashshah poet) is al-Aḥmad al-Tufīfī, see chap. 2, n. 154.
149 See the beginning of the section “The mujtāthth meter” in this chapter.
151 Ibn Sanā’, Dār al-ṭīrāz, 76; Compton, Andalusian Lyrical Poetry, 21. We changed “So the one who sings does not leave in his former condition” into “So there are many who sing in the situation.” The scheme of the final stanza and the kharjah is: U -- U | U -- U U -- -- || U -- U | U -- U -- -- || U -- -- | -- -- U U -- -- || U -- -- | U -- U |
152 Nos. 1, 2, 5, 14, 22, 28, 30, 31, 32, 34.
153 The only exception is no. 32, which has patterns of 6+10, 5+9, and 15+15.
155 Similarly the rhyming patterns of abab and aabb appear in the majority of the sixty-nine airs to be found in John Gay’s Beggar’s Opera.
156 For change of layās into aysāh, see Compton, Andalusian Lyrical Poetry, 131, n. 3.
157 We have changed “What’s wrong with you” into the more colloquial “What’s up with you.”
158 We mentioned in Chapter II that tags such as “verrayment” and “I gesse” were used by Chaucer in order to ease the rhyming in a stanza. With the knowledge of the redundant syllables in a muwashshah, we might suggest that Chaucer could have been imitating performance of medieval English popular romances, rather than running short of rhymes.
159 Zhu Binjie mentions similar interpolated words or sounds in the performance of the Tang quatrains (jueju). See Zhu, Wenti gaijian, 223-24. Mair also makes use of this point in his argument of the musicality of heptasyllabic verses of the bianwen, see Mair, Tun-Huang Popular Narratives, 23.
156 Schoeler, “Muwashshah.”
157 Moreh, Live Theatre, 131-36.
158 Schoeler mentions that kharjahs with erotic content can be found even in panegyric muwashshahāt, see Schoeler, “Muwashshah.”
159 Ibn ʿUbādāh’s (of late 11th century C.E) celebration of the union of al-Muʿtaṣim of Almeria and al-Muʿtaṣid of Seville ends with a doves’ song. See Ibn Sanā’, Dār al-ṭīrāz, 95; Compton, Andalusian Lyrical Poetry, 32.
160 Ibn Sanā’, Dār al-ṭīrāz, 98; Compton, Andalusian Lyrical Poetry, 34.
161 Ren, Tang xinong, 889. Ren Na suggests that chuandai could denote the Tang romance or a kind of theatrical genre known to the Song litterateurs. As a matter of fact, chuandai was used to designate several hundred plays of the “southern style” of the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) times as well. See Cyril Birch, “Chuan-ch’ü 嬰奇 (romance),” in The Indiana Companion to Traditional Chinese Literature, ed. comp. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1986), 353-56.
162 Li Yu 李煜 (937-978 C.E.), the last ruler of the Southern Tang (南唐) Kingdom, was a talented writer of ci 詞 (a melic poetic genre that was popular in late Tang and Song). His masterpiece entitled Yumeiren 娘美人 (“Poppy”) actually ends with a dialogue among an anonymous questioner and the poet himself. Huajian ji 花間集, the famous ci-collection composed around 940 C.E., also contains several examples of closing dialogues or questions.
163 Especially the Fu for the Lord of Chunshen. The introduction of the Yueyang lou ji indicates that Fan Zhongyan composed this article in order to comfort and encourage his friend Teng Zongliang 勝宗諒 (d. 1047 C.E) who was demoted two years before and was in charge of the rebuilding of the pavilion.
164 See the sections “The lion” in Chapter III and “The fisherman’s song” in this chapter respectively.
165 For the first sermon of the Maqāmah of the Exhortation, see the section “Grey hairs” in Chapter III.
166 Abduh, 132; Prendergast, 105.
167 ‘Abbās ibn al-Ḥusayn was the fourth imām of the Twelver Shiʿah. His famous laqab (nickname) was Zayn al-ʿĀbidīn, “ornament of the worshippers.”
168 Abduh, 132. The meter of the poem is ṭawīl.
Prendergast, 105-6. We have added the indentation to the original, and also changed “thy brethren who have been smitten” into “thy brethren whom thou mourn” after consulting Kennedy, “Nexus of Interests,” 192.

The collection was very popular in the Muslim world. For its text and English translation, see The Psalms of Islam, trans. William C. Chittick (London: The Muhammadi Trust of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, 1988).

Ibid., 131-32.

Kennedy, “Nexus of Interests,” 192.

Ibid., 193.

See the section “Four hundred maqāmāt” in Chapter I.

Prendergast, 53; ʿAbdūh, 46-47.

Heinrichs, “Prosimmetrical Genres,” 270.

ʿAbdūh, 49; Prendergast, 55.

Prendergast, 53, 65.

ʿAbdūh, 66; Prendergast, 66 (“generous” is changed by us into “noble”).

See the section “Four hundred maqāmāt” in Chapter I.

Ibn Qutaybah, ʿUyun al-akhbār, 2:341-42.

We have briefly mentioned this Arab Christian poet in the section “Grey hairs” in Chapter III. “His life was spent partly at the Sāsānīd court at Ctesiphon (al-Madāʾin), where he was secretary for Arab affairs to Chosroes Parwīz, and partly at the Lakhmīd court at al-Hīra, where he was a courtier and councillor of al-Nūmān III, whom he had helped to the throne.” See F. Gabrieli, “ʿAdī b. Zayd,” in EF.

Hearing this tale, the Caliph immediately bursts into tears (bakāʾ), as does the Persian king in the story itself. The Caliph later asks that Khalīd be rewarde.


The Assemblies of al Ḥārīrī, 1:108; Maqāmāt al-Ḥārīrī, 18-19.

Aristotle, Works, 2:684.

Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 149.

Ibid., 148.


Huijiao 慧皎 (497-554 C.E.), Gaoseng zhuan 高僧傳 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1992), 497-522.

Ibid., 521.

A dao shi named Tanguang 景光 is said to have mastered the five classics, poetry, fu, mathematics, and divination before he converted to Buddhism (行意嗜五經詩賦, 及算術卜筮, 無不貫解). See ibid., 513.

Ibid., 521. Huijiao lists four different types of audience (monks, kings and nobles, common people, and [uneducated] mountain people). A capable dao shi should change both the language and content of his sermon in order to arouse their interests. The similarity between the dao shi and al-Iskandārī provides another possible explanation of the coexistence of ornate saj and “doggerels” in a maqāmāt.

Pan Chonggui 潘重規, Dunhuang bianwenji xinshu 敦煌變文集新書 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1994), 805.

Prendergast (56, n. 3) explains that in Islam public prayer has greater merit than private.

Prendergast, 58.

Xiang, “Tangdai sujiang kao,” 293.


Chaucer, The Canterbury Tales, 455.

Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 148-49 (the transliteration is of the Wade-Giles Romanization system). The steps to carry out a Buddhist popular lecture service in Tang dynasty has been discussed by Xiang Da. See Xiang, “Tangdai sujiang kao,” 294-97.

Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 31.

See Dunhuang bianwen ji xiang jing ying wen yu yuan ji jiao, 273-492.

Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 30.

Dunhuang bianwen ji xiang jing ying wen yu yuan ji jiao, 1051-68.

“It is more in agreement with the chronological and evolutionary development of Chinese popular literature to say that the historical and other non-Buddhist transformation texts were an extension of a religious form into the secular realm than to say that Buddhist priests consciously used secular storytelling as a drawing card for their religious lectures.” See Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 149.

Dunhuang bianwen ji xiang jing ying wen yu yuan ji jiao, 806-7.

Prendergast, 80.

ʿAbdūh, 90; Prendergast, 80-81.

The qīṣā (story) and the khwāṭīm (ending verses) were two parts of a seated homily, as proposed by the famous ʿAbbāsid preacher (wāʾ iḍ) Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1097). See Qutbuddin, “Khutba,” 203, n. 122.
It focuses on how Buddha resisted the temptations of the three beautiful daughters of Mara. Their conversation reminds us of the dialogue between a whore and a student on Mahāvratā (The Great Vow) Day. In the Po mo bian, “we frequently encounter such tags as ‘the damsel’ and ‘the Buddha’ followed by direct discourse (usually in verses), as though this text were meant to serve as the script of a play” (Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 26).

Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 7.

Richards, “Manuscripts,” 95-96.

In February 2007 Professor Michael Hahn informed me, with regard to the prose-poetry sequence in Buddhist discourses. Indeed, speech and dialogue are important to a large number of world epics (as examples, the Iliad, Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa), philosophical texts (e.g., Plato’s dialogues), religious scriptures (e.g., the Jewish Gemaraḥ and the Zoroastrian rivaiṣṭ), historical and political documents (e.g., the Chinese Shu jing), etc.

The Maqāmāth of Shāytramārāth has another isnād immediately after the first one.

To be exact, there are two variants of the isnād: the Maqāmāth of Ghaylan begins with haddathānī Isā bnu Hishāmin qāla (‘Īsā ibn Hishām related to me and said) and the Maqāmāth of Adharvāyjan with qāla Isā bnu Hishāmin (‘Īsā ibn Hishām said).

The Maqāmāth of Shytrāmārāth begins with a similar frame, except that it lacks the second half of the frame as shown in the end of the Maqāmāth of the Madīrāth.

Zhu, Wenti gaišun, 468. Zhu also points out that the name of yulu was not used until the Tang era (471).

The Shū Kā: The Religious Portions of the Shīh Kā: The Hsiāo Kā, 103-12; Shangshu zhengyi, 223-45. Pangeng blends coercion and persuasion into an effective speech that draws heavily on oracles and implications of divine punishment. The stern decisiveness of his tone links them to the famous khutbahs of the pre-Islamic and Islamic times. For the Arabic khutbahs, see Qutbuddin, “Khulba,” 223-67.

The Shū Kā: The Religious Portions of the Shīh Kā: The Hsiāo Kā, 53-56; Shangshu zhengyi, 102-11. Yu was the mythical Chinese king who was to succeed Shun, whom Gaoyao also served.

Abduh, 78; Prendergast, 73-74.

The Poetics, Date, Balkh, Si̇stān, Kūfah, Lion, Adharabayȧn, Jurjān, Isfahan, Akhwāz, Baghdad, Basrah, Al-Fāzārah, Jāhiz, Bukhārā, Qazwīn, Sāsim, Ape, Moṣul, Amulet, Famine, Shām, Al-Aswad, Iraq, Shiraz, Ḥulwān, Ibīs, Armenia, Khalaf, Nishapur, Poetry, Kings, Tamīn, Wine, and Quest maqāmāt.

Richards, “Manuscripts,” 95-96.

It is traditionally heard as follows,” see Brough, “Thus Have I Heard…,” 426.

We have quoted this jātaka in the section “Grey hairs” in Chapter III.

The Pali jātakas do not have the stock phrase “Thus have I heard” to mark the beginning of a story. However we may regard the keyword-like quotations as titles.

Tathāgata is a title of the Buddha when he refers to himself. “The most generally adopted interpretation is ‘one who has thus (tatha) gone (gata)’ or ‘one who has thus (tatha) arrived (agata),’ implying that the historical Buddha was only one of many who have in the past and will in the future experience enlightenment and teach others how to achieve it.”


“It is said that in the early years the Buddha and his monks wandered during all seasons, but eventually they adopted the practice of remaining in one place during the rainy season (in northern India, mid-July to mid-October). These shelters evolved into monasteries that were inhabited throughout the year.” See “Buddha,” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, academic edition, online version.


“Sakuntalā; or, *The Lost Ring*, xxxii. The vishkambha is performed by one or more of the dramatis personae. Around the first century C.E., Āsvaghoṣa composed the Sanskrit mahākāvyya-style *Buddhacarita* (Acts of the Buddha) which has twenty-eight cantos. There is also an interesting prosimetric Buddhist narrative called *Maitreyasamiti* (Meeting with Maitreya, the future Buddha). The Tocharian A fragments of the *Maitreyasamiti-Nātaka* (The Drama of Meeting with Maitreya) were discovered in 1906. One of its Uighur versions (*Maitrisimit*), with an introduction and twenty-five acts, is dated to the 8th and 9th centuries C.E. See Geng Shimin 戚世民, “Gudai Weiwuer yu fujiao yuanshi juben <Mile huijian ji> (Hami xieben) yanjiu 古代維吾爾語佛教原始劇本《彌勒會見記》（哈密寫本）研究,” in *Zhongguo Tujue yu yanjiu lunwen ji* 中國突厥語研究論文集 (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1991), 20-37. Also see Mair, *Painting and Performance* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1988), 40-41.

The *Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, 1:32. The prose-poetry sequence is common in the Buddhist sūtras. For example, the sūtra proper of the Diamond *Sūtra* simply ends with a stanza. In a Pali *jātaka*, if there is no poetry inside the *jātaka* proper, the second half of its frame contains a conclusion stanza chanted by the Buddha (e.g., the *Vānupatthā-Jātaka*, see ibid., 1:9-11). The lack of poetry in the frame of the *Makhādeva-Jātaka* is in accord with the existence of the king’s *sloka*, which we have quoted in the section “Grey hairs” in Chapter III. The Pali *jātaka* also reminds us of the Sanskrit *Pañcatantra*. Generally speaking, a *Pañcatantra* story has a formal structure as follows: the first half of the frame, consisting of a *sloka*-abstract and the audience’s question; then the story proper; then the second half of the frame which either recapitulates the moral in a new proverb or *sloka*-maxim, or else repeats the introductory *sloka*-abstract. For a more detailed introduction of the *Pañcatantra*’s structure, see *Pañcatantra: The Book of India’s Folk Wisdom*, trans. Patrick Olivelle (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1997), xiv-xvi.


For example, see “The Householder: Tasila,” in *The Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish*, 213-16.

Chaucer, *Tales*, 456-73. Also see the section “Grey hairs” in Chapter III.

The *Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births*, 1:121.

The *Sutra of the Wise and the Foolish*, 13.

Prendergast, 144. The second episode bears strong resemblance to “The Miser and the Loaves of Bread” in *A 1001 Nights*, see Burton, 6: 137-38. Professor Joseph Lowry drew my attention to the Islamic *fīqh*-problem of “*idhā wagā at al-fār fī al-saam* (if a mouse falls into the oil).” It is often held by jurists that you could use the oil for lighting lamps but not eating. Thus the boy’s decision to give the milk as alms is a violation of Islamic law.

Prendergast, 144: ‘Abduh, 189.


See chap. 2, n. 171.

See the section “Divinatory functions” in Chapter II.

‘Abduh, 103; Prendergast, 88.

The exceptions are the *Lion* and the *Bṛṣṇi*, two maqāmāt connected with the tradition of the hunt poem (*tardiyaḥ*). Interestingly, these two maqāmāt either end with a vow (*Bṛṣṇi*) or a *matal* (*Lion*), which can substitute the commentarial envois.

“Long since did Maḍhirah sin against the noble and prefer the base to the good (*qadīman janati ‘l-maḍhiratu ‘alā ‘l-ahrārī) wa qaddumatī ‘l-arādhiha ‘alā ‘l-akhyārī(i).”’ See Prendergast, 97: ‘Abduh, 117.

Note that *Iśā* acts as a minor character in both episodes of the *Maqāmah of Huwān*.

Besides being “a decision or award to the victor,” the finale of a typical maqāmah works in much the same way as the minor figure’s vows in the *Maṭṛah* and *Huwān* maqāmāt and his concluding commentaries (whether in verse or prose) in the *Lion*, Famine (before al-İskandari’s death), *Fresh Butter*, *Ibīs*, Poetry, *Sāriyah*, and *Bṛṣṇi* maqāmāt.

See the section “Genre translation” in the Introduction.


Haribhāṭa probably lived in the 5th century C.E. His *Jātakamālā* “can be studied in its entirety only from its Tibetan version” made in the 12th century. Haribhāṭa’s composition exceeds that of *Aryaśāra* “by 50 per cent in length.” See Hahn, *Haribhāṭa in Nepal*, 1, 7-9.


For the structure of *Aryaśāra’s Jātakamālā*, see Carol Meadows, *Arya-Śāra’s Compendium of the Perfections: Text, Translation, and Analysis of the Pāramitāśāmīsa* (Bonn: Indica et Tibetica Verlag, 1986), 14-20; Hahn, *Haribhāṭa in


See the section “Genre translation” in the Introduction.

For Haribhatṭa’s treatment of prologue and epilogue in a jātakamālā story, see Hahn, Haribhatṭa in Nepal, 15-18.

Ibid., 19.

‘Abduh, 29-30 (with the change of ijzā’ into ajzā’ after consulting Sharḥ Maqāmāt Badi‘ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, 35); Prendergast, 40-41 (with the change of “wizards” into “kāhins”).

Prendergast, 46.

The prologue of the Maqāmah of Shiraz is a similar case.

In his Al-Milāl wa‘l-nihal, Muhammad ibn ’Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 548/1153) “gives the list of ten sins enumerated by the Buddhist tradition, and then the list (a little Islamicised) of the ten types of virtuous behaviour which should be acquired.” See Guy Monnot, “Sumaniyya,” in Encyclopædia Britannica. Also see the section “Faith” in Encyclopedia Brittanica, academic edition, online version.

Prendergast, 42.

Prendergast, 14-15.

The Jātakamālā: Garland of birth-stories of Arāyūśāra, 250. For Arāyūśāra’s criticism of nīti, see Meadows, 9-10.

Patience (ṣabr) is regarded as a virtue (jamāl) by Muslims, cf. Qurʾān 12:18, 83. Al-Tanūkhī emphasizes ṣabr in his preface to al-Faraj ba’d al-shiddah. He also quotes Qurʾān 94 in its first chapter.

Prendergast, 99.

‘Abduh, 120; Prendergast, 99.

Īsā is advised to be patient during a maqāmah performance (the Exhortation). His impatience is caricatured in the Isfahān and the Wine Maqāmāt. It seems that impatience always sticks to the minor figure of the duodrama; al-Iskandarī is also described as being impatient in the Maqāmah of the Madīrāh.

Meadows, 18-19.

Meadows mentions (19) that dāna, šīla, and ksānti are especially for householders, while vīrya, dhyāna, and praṇānā are especially for monks. We note that the first and second triad of perfections are divided by al-Saymārī’s departure from home, i.e., his transformation from a householder to a wanderer.

At this point, it also seems necessary to briefly compare the five or six pillars (sg. rukn, pl. arkān) of Islam to the six Mahāyāna perfections. We could link almsgiving (zakār) to the perfection of giving, and spiritual effort (ijāhād) to that of striving. The profession of faith (shahādah), pilgrimage (ḥajj), and worship (salāt) are frequently mentioned in the Maqāmāt. Al-Iskandarī even encourages his son to fast (ṣawm) in the Maqāmah of Advice.

Hahn suggests that Haribhatṭa was a convert to Buddhism. See Hahn, Haribhatṭa in Nepal, 4-6. In that preface, Haribhatṭa also paid homage to his predecessor Arāyūśāra, as al-Ḥarīrī did to al-Hamadhānī several centuries later.

Mair discusses the citrakār, a group of Bengali painter-beggar, in Painting and Performance, 87-89.

Hahn, Haribhatṭa in Nepal, 3-5.


See the section “Ritual and description” in Chapter II.

The Comedies of Aristophanes, 1: 315-16.

It is Arāyūśāra’s adaptation of the Vessantara-Jātaka, the last and longest jātaka in the Pali Canon. See The Jātaka or Stories of the Buddha’s Former Births, 6:246-305.


The vasantatilakā is a fixed syllabic meter. Each verse can be scanned as -- -- U --, U U U, -- U U -- U -- --, see Hopkins, The Great Epic of India, 193.

Kern, 57. It literally means “Also, my lord.”

The Jātakamālā: Garland of birth-stories of Arāyūśāra, 80.

Śaṇkuntalā; or The Last Ring, xxvi-xxvii.

Dandin’s Dasha-kumara-charita; The Ten Princes, 143-56.

‘Abduh, 73-74; Prendergast, 71.

See the section “The wine song” in Chapter III.

The description of the guests has been quoted in the section “The wine song” of Chapter III.

Cf. the wasf of the beggar’s appearance and performance (the Maqāmāh of the Blind) quoted in Chapter II, and the wasf of feast (the Maqāmāh of the Famine) in Chapter III. In many Han courtly fūs, linkages of plain prose are inserted before each section of rhymed prose. See Zhu, Wenti gailun, 82.

Prendergast, 51. Also see the section “Qāla” in this chapter.
The relative priority of Bhāmaha and Daṇḍin is still a point highly disputed...we accept the priority of Bhāmaha on the premise that he is less concerned with system than Daṇḍin.” See Gerow, Indian Figures of Speech, 26 (n. 40).


The āryā is a stanza of two verses, “each verse containing eight groups of morae, the group of four morae each.” An example of its scansion is -- --, U -- U, -- --; U -- U, U U U U, U -- U, U U --, U | -- --, -- U |, -- --; U -- U, U U --, U |, -- --, U ||. See Hopkins, The Great Epic of India, 193, 354.


Hahn, Haribhāṭṭa in Nepal, 16, 53-170.


Ibid., 131. That said however, the autograph is not found in the Jātakamālas.

Asvaghosa, The Buddhacarita or Acts of the Buddha, translated and edited by E. H. Johnson. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, 1972, c1936). The stanza(s) is followed by a closing line that indicates the title and number of the canto.

Daṇḍin’s Kāvyādārśa, 35-36.
The connection of the maqāmah genre to the faraj genre has been pointed out by Beeston in 1971. See Introduction, n. 38.

Brinner compares the “deeds” to the Latin gesta, see Nissim, Elegant Composition, xvi. For the English translation of the Latin work, see Gesta Romanorum, trans. Charles Swan and Wynnard Hooper (London: George Bell & Sons, 1906).

See the outline of the contents found in Nissim, Elegant Composition, xxviii-xxix.

Arie Schippers once noted that “[t]he Arabic Faraj genre is probably of Jewish origin,” see Arie Schippers, “Some Remarks on the Women’s Stories in the Judeo-Arabic Al-Faraj ba’d al-shidda by Nissim ibn Shāhin (990-1062),” in O ye Gentlemen, 277-89 (quotation from p. 278, n. 4). However we would suggest that both the Arabic and Jewish genres may have consulted a similar source.

Nissim, Elegant Composition, 3.


Āryṣāra praises the Buddha’s exploits in all four introductory stanzas of his Jātakamālā.

Cf. the Mahāyāna notion of pariṇāmanā (transfer of merit) mentioned in the section “Sujadhaṇ” in this chapter. The introduction of the Hamī Mattrisimit contains the pariṇāmanā written in the name of the patron, see Geng, “Mile huijian ji,” 29.


See the sections “Hamadhān,” “Rayyy,” and “Nishapur” in Chapter I.

See n. 219 above.

Mary Boyce suggests the existence of a dichotomy of foreign written prose and native minstrel-poetry in the Pahlavi literature. Foreign prose narratives were introduced into Pahlavi in late Sasanian period. Among them there is the Hellenistic romance Wāmiq wa Ṭhrēś, “coming probably from Syriac”; and from India came “Kalīla wa Dimna, the Tūṭī Nāme and the Sīndbād Nāme.” She further suggests that “the total absence of verse-texts” among the Arabic translations of Ibn al-Muqaffaʿ and his fellows could reflect the native tradition “in which prose alone was written.” See Mary Boyce, “The Parthian gōsān and Iranian Minstrel Tradition,” in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 1/2 (1957): 10-45, esp. 35-36.

See Macuch, “Pahlavi Literature,” 164, n. 147. Although we are unable to detail the possible impact of Pahlavi literature to the genesis of our maqāmah genre, a glimpse of several Pahlavi titles may be helpful: Kārnāmag ī Ardaxšīr ī Pāhagān (“The Book of the Deeds of Ardshir, Son of Pabag”), Ayāḏgār ī Zarērān (“The Memorial of Zarēr”), Draxt ī āsōrīg ud buz (“The Babylonian Tree and the Goat”), and Mādayān ī Jōšt ī Fryān (“Book of Jōšt of the Fryāns”)
Conclusion

The *maqāmah* is an Arabic narrative genre that appeared towards the end of the 4\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} century. Its originator, Bādīʿ al-zamān al-Hamadhānī, is alleged to have dictated more than four hundred *maqāmāt*. However the extant manuscripts do not contain more than fifty-two independent narratives about the words and deeds of his beggar hero, Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Iskandarī.

The term *maqāmah*, together with its cognate *maqām*, indicates “acts of heroism” in classical Arabic poetry. During the 3\textsuperscript{rd}/9\textsuperscript{th} century, its connotation began to move from “deeds” to “words,” focusing on edifying addresses delivered before a distinguished audience. In many a Hamadhānian *maqāmah*, the narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām reports his meeting with a disguised al-Iskandarī who sermonizes and begs in public. Thus al-Iskandarī’s connections with the medieval beggar (*mukaddī*), storyteller (*qāṣṣ*), and popular preacher (*wāʿīz*) have been previously noted.\(^1\) At the same time, al-Hamadhānī did not forget to parody the *maqāmah*’s original meaning: in his collection there are several pieces that describe the itinerant antihero’s ruses and deceitful actions and therefore suggest a link to the picaresque novel. What is more, the received corpus includes six panegyrical *maqāmāt* devoted to one of al-Hamadhānī’s patrons.

From the very beginning, the *maqāmah* genre has shown a remarkable thematic diversity. Besides the sermon, it covers other genres and sub-genres such as description,
poetry in various forms, travelogue, advice, dialogue, debate, and literary criticism, a list that offers great freedom to al-Hamadhānī’s successors in the following millennium. In his study of the prosimetric genres of 19th and 20th century Arabic literature, Dwright Reynolds mentions the maqāmah genre alongside the folk epic (sīrah) and emphasizes the maqāmah’s inspiring power for modern Arabic drama, novels, and short stories.3

The versatility and longevity of this unique Arabic narrative genre can be explained by analyzing the prosimetric style that al-Hamadhānī devised for his Maqāmāt. Within a comparative context such an analysis can also provide new perspectives for a consideration of the maqāmah’s genesis. Al-Hamadhānī did not create the genre ex nihilo. Arabic literature had previously produced prosimetric genres such as historical (ayyām) and anecdotal (akhbār) narratives. The placement of evidentiary verses (shāhid) at the end of an ayyām narrative is a feature as distinctive as the maqāmah’s envoi. The phenomenon of “genre translation” (transfer of material) has been utilized by scholars of Arabic literature who have tried to locate the predecessors of some Hamadhānian maqāmāt in anecdote collections.4 Furthermore around al-Hamadhānī’s time there also appeared a prosimetric mime-script (Ḥikāyat Abī al-Qāsim) that shares quite a few passages with the Maqāmāt. The maqāmah’s similarity to such genres (ayyām, akhbār and hikāyah) can be understood on another level. It is known that a genre may emerge whenever a formal differentiation is associated with a functional one. Thus in the Introduction we proposed the transfer of form/function,5 believing that a combined study
of the *maqāmah*’s form and function can both accentuate its uniqueness and facilitate our search for continuity among certain genres in the Arabic literary tradition.

The Hamadhānian *maqāmat* have two major features that roughly correspond to the genre’s formal and functional differentiations: the alternation between rhymed prose (*sajʿ*) and poetry, and the creation of a fictitious eloquent beggar. *Sajʿ* was the highly popular mode of literary expression from the 4th/10th century onwards, “especially in the class of administrative secretaries to which al-Hamadhānī belonged.”6 Al-Hamadhānī’s choice of this highbrow mode of expression in the *Maqāmat*, as well as this formalistic trend that was enhanced by his successor al-Ḥarīrī, contributed greatly to the genre’s popularity among educational circles, regardless of its theme of beggary (*kudyah*). *Sajʿ* as a literary style can be traced back to pre-Islamic soothsayers whose proverbial eloquence had long been believed to be jinn-inspired. In the opinion of Dmitry Frolov, classical Arabic verse (*qaṣīd*) was developed from *sajʿ* via the *rajaz* meter,7 whose primitive iambic rhythm was another noted specialty of the soothsayers. With these facts in mind, we focused in Chapter II (“Rhymed Prose”) on al-Iskandarī’s divinatory functions that were likely inherited from soothsayers. Therefore it was not at random that al-Hamadhānī employed *sajʿ*, one of their trademark styles, to narrate stories about a beggar. Rather, al-Iskandarī’s mastery of *sajʿ* echoes his divinatory functions. What is more, we introduced Chinese rhymed prose (*fu*) into our discussion in order to show that Arabic *sajʿ* and Chinese *fu* have similar fields of application (such as description, annals,
duodrama, and travelogue), and many Chinese *fu* writers were eloquent, itinerant, and frustrated admonishers, thus resembling our hero al-Iskandarī. In a word, the versatility of a genre is very likely to be decided by the multi-functions of its practitioners.

An eloquent person (*balīgh*), in al-Hamadhānī’s definition, is able freely to switch from one mode of expression to another. In Chapter III (“Poetry”) we drew attention to al-Iskandarī’s favorite iambic meters, for these “doggerels” can reveal as much information as *saj*‘ does in regard to his connections to soothsayers. Guided by an analysis of the *rajaz* meter, we related the monorhymed distich (*qaṣīdah*), the rhyming couplet (*muzdawij*), and the strophe (*musammaṭ, muwashshaḥ*, and *zajal*) to each other. It is very likely that al-Iskandarī, as the soothsayers’ heir, masters all these different poetic forms. The *maqāmah* genre came into being after the so-called *bādī’* (innovative) movement that, having first decorated poetry with a larger repertoire of literary tropes, spread its influence to prose writing. Thus al-Hamadhānī, who was competent in both modes, adapted many poetic tropes and themes to the *maqāmah*’s prose. The divination-related themes such as riddle and debate are characterized by a flexible form (both *saj*‘ and verse), which partly determined the use of a prosimetric style in some *maqāmāt*. We also identified the poetic themes of hunting, drinking, eating, and asceticism as found in the *Maqāmāt* and argued that al-Hamadhānī’s ideal of a polythematic structure results in a functional similarity between the *maqāmah* and *qaṣīdah* genres.
Chapter II highlighted al-Iskandari’s status as an admonisher, whose many comments convey an air of frustration or satire. Arabic literary history witnessed generations of admonishers, including prophets, philosophers, poets, preachers, annalists, scribes, jesters, actors, dramatists, and writers of fiction. These admonishers more or less resemble the pre-Islamic soothsayers who were masters of both modes of expression and performers of multiple functions. The prosimetra these admonishers produced, of which the *Maqāmāt* serve as excellent examples, often retain a divinatory, admonishing or satirical function. The transfer of material found in the *maqāmah*, *ayyām*, *akhbār*, and *ḥikāyah* can easily be understood if we bear in mind the link between admonition and prosimetra. The *maqāmah*’s continuing ability to inspire writers of modern Arabic fiction and drama may also be explained since the practitioners of these Arabic genres can all be included in the above-mentioned list of eloquent admonishers.

Such a link is not found only in Arabic literature. Chapter II located some clearly relevant examples in the Chinese tradition as well. Using the cases of the poet Qu Yuan, the philosopher Xunzi, the annalist Sima Qian, and the court jester Dongfang Shuo, we pointed out that an admonisher serving or ruled by the monarch is less likely to express his opinions as freely as an ancient shaman does. He may use indirect, allegorical or comical criticism, or simply express frustration and pessimism about the age in which he lives. In the section entitled “Aim of the study” we mentioned that Menipean satire has a style called *spoudaiogéloion* (“serio-comical”), one that Mikhail Bakhtin considers an
authentic predecessor of the novel. The Latin tradition also seems to corroborate this general link between admonisher and prosimetra, whose validity in world literature underlies the prosimetra’s great popularity in history.

Doors of comparison are now open. Once noted, the prevalence of admonishers and their connection to shamans/soothsayers enabled us to study the maqāmah’s style by investigating prosimetric genres of other traditions. The comparability of different prosimetric genres may well be derived from the universality of certain aspects of ritual performance, comprising firstly a question and answer divination, and secondly a devotional hymn. Many of the prosimetra compared in this study show an interplay of dialogic and undialogic elements, and contain a performability rarely changed even under literacy-dominant circumstances. In Chapter I, we touched upon a possible difference between Hamadhānian and Ḥarīrian Maqāmāt, i.e., the former could have relied upon an oral mode of presentation (imlāʾ), while the latter were written (inshāʾ) and their full appreciation requires a resort to dictionaries and exegeses. It is also a fact that the Ḥarīrian Maqāmāt inspired many illustrated manuscripts which were used by art historians in analyses of Arab painting. Richard Ettinghausen assumed that these illustrations had drawn inspiration from shadow plays and puppet theater when a flowering of popular arts occurred in the latter part of the twelfth century. It is quite clear that, because of its intrinsic performability, a prosimetric genre such as the maqāmah shows direct links to other media.
Prose and verse interact in a prosimetrum containing an apparently “simulated context”\textsuperscript{13} of oral storytelling. By analyzing the overall structure of the \textit{maqāmah}, we detected some signs of the proto-performance. As with the \textit{qaṣīdah} genre, the \textit{maqāmah} is noteworthy for its orderly and relatively fixed structure. A typical Hamadhānian \textit{maqāmah} can be schematized into “a chain of transmitters (\textit{isnād}),” “general introduction,” “link,” “episode proper,” “recognition scene,” “envoi,” and “finale.” By comparing selected genres from ancient Greek, Chinese, and Indian literatures, our fourth chapter (“Prosimetra”) provided a detailed analysis of the \textit{maqāmah’s} envoi, episode proper, and opening formula. We not only reconstructed the \textit{maqāmah’s} performance context, which may have been affected by al-Iskandarī’s divinatory functions, but also linked the Arabic genre’s genesis to possible Indo-Iranian and Greek antecedents.

Generally speaking, al-Hamadhānī coined three kinds of envois in the \textit{Maqāmāt}: the usual envois for the narratives focused on the words of al-Iskandarī, the commentarial ones for the more picaresque pieces, and panegyric ones dedicated to donors. By introducing discussion of the debate (\textit{agon}), interlude (\textit{parabasis}), and hypermeter (\textit{pnigos}) encountered in Greek Old Comedy, we demonstrated that al-Hamadhānī’s usual envoi is based upon debate, while the panegyrical envoi, being a non-debate dialogue, seems to have evolved from a speech with a closing coda. Chapters II and III have emphasized the importance of the debate theme to the \textit{Maqāmāt’s} prose and poetry.\textsuperscript{14} A typical Hamadhānian \textit{maqāmah} relies upon the debate-centered envoi in order to convey
the comical/satirical message. The finale, which only appears in eight *maqāmāt*, represents the decision or award to the debate-victor, al-Iskandarī. We also notice that the *Maqāmāt* contain several pieces whose episode proper consists of full-fledged debate or an unbalanced dialogue of *saj‘*. Such *maqāmāt* often involve divination-related themes such as trial, food, and advice. Because of their dialogic structure, this group of *maqāmāt* no longer requires an envoi that is essentially equal to a debate.

As for the commentarial envois, as well as the vows (*nadhr*) included at the conclusion of some *maqāmāt*, they are comparable to both the evidentiary verse that appears in the end of an *ayyām* story and the *śloka*-abstract in a *Pañcatantra* tale. They are not dialogic, but rather express the lessons that the audience is supposed to gain from the story. Neither is the debate theme a necessary element of their host *maqāmāt*.

In the first part of Chapter IV (“Envoi”), we also referred to the diple (double paragraph) of Greek drama and the *yue* of Chinese *fu*, enabling us to consider the “redundant” *qāla* and *qāla ʿĪsā bnu Hishām* in the *Maqāmāt* corpus as markers of mode-change.15 We pointed out the possibility that the Hamadhānian envois (and some other poems) are intended as lyrics of the hero al-Iskandarī, who in one *maqāmah* is clearly identified as the musician/singer (*muṭrib*).16 The fact that the Hamadhānian envoi is a quotation, and its favorite meters (*mujtathth*, *khafīf*, and *ramal*) are echoed in the melic *muwashshah* genre that was developed in Muslim Spain towards the end of the 3rd/9th century further supports such a possibility.17 Two poetic examples cited from the
Chinese tradition provide evidence that folk songs can be included in so-called elite prosimetra.\textsuperscript{18} It seems to be a habit of admonishers in both the Arabic and Chinese traditions to collect “expressions of various eras, children’s ditties, songs, and skits”\textsuperscript{19} from the masses and to convey them to rulers or readers. Thus al-Hamadhānī’s practice of ending his \textit{maqāmah} with “doggerels” that contain al-Iskandārī’s satirical remarks and stand in stark contrast to the flowery saj’ of the episode proper has clear antecedents.

In the second part of Chapter IV (“Back and forth”), we discussed the prose-poetry and poetry-prose sequences to be found in the episode proper of four \textit{maqāmāt} that contain the theme of asceticism (\textit{zuhd}) or beggary. We firstly mentioned the prose-poetry sequence to be found in other Arabic prosimetra that are related to religious homilies of possible Indo-Iranian provenance. After introducing the procedures for carrying out a Chinese Buddhist popular lecture (\textit{sujiang}) in the Tang dynasty, we suggested that both sequences can be seen as belonging to a whole presentation of a sermon delivered by al-Iskandārī. Such alternations of prose and poetry are very likely to have been determined originally by ritual requirements. Moreover, the qualifications of Chinese preachers are echoed in al-Iskandārī’s loud voice, eloquence, and erudition, as well as his ability to present many a tailor-made discourse to suit the needs of different audiences. Al-Iskandārī’s lucrative sermons manage to arouse pity and fear, a feature comparable to the catharsis in Greek tragedy. These sermons form a clear contrast to his light-spirited debates to be found in the usual envoi or episode proper.
Al-Hamadhānī, the admonisher behind al-Iskandarī, uses his *maqāmah* to host a wide range of themes that may seem to his readers to be either humorous (*hazl*) or serious (*jidd*). The ability to instruct through entertainment is a mark of *adab* (polite letters). In the whole collection of *Maqāmāt* the narrator Ḥūsān ibn Hishām confirms that there are virtues (sg. *fadl*) implicit in al-Iskandarī’s eloquent speeches; such speeches include the religious sermon, linguistic entertainment, criticism of poetry, advice to youth, and even anti-Muʿtāzilah comment etc. As for the picaresque *maqāmāt* in which al-Iskandarī earns his bread by deceitful ruses rather than by words, they still manage to leave in their envois a reminder of tricksters and a criticism of stupid people.

These picaresque *maqāmāt* are often made up of double-episodes, with commentarial envois or vows, and echoing the group of frame *maqāmāt*. In the third part of Chapter IV (“Garland of stories”), we drew attention to the principle of “Causation and Occasion” used in these non-typical *maqāmāt* and the Buddhist *jātaka* (birth story) and *jātakamālā* (garland of birth stories) collections. By comparing the opening formula and other techniques involving the grouping of episodes around the words and deeds of a central figure, we suggested the existence of additional structural similarities between the *maqāmah* and these Buddhist genres. One of these similarities is the abundant use of framing. Besides the particular frame *maqāmah* and the picaresque one, even a more “typical” *maqāmah* can be roughly schematized into “the first half of the frame,” “the episode proper,” and “the second half of the frame,” as also found in a Pali *jātaka*.21
Moreover, we compared the representation of virtues and the descriptive skills (e.g., the mixture of different meters/modes) in both the Arabic *maqāmah* and the Sanskrit *jātakamālā*. It is known that the Sanskrit *jātakamālā* arranges the episodes by following a rigorously ordered scheme of the “perfections” (*pāramitā*). Likewise the principle of virtues (sg. *fadl*) can be regarded as a tool that allows al-Hamadhānī to unite the whole collection of *Maqāmāt*, whose admonitory function is sometimes hidden within the theme of beggary.

In the last section of “Garland of stories,” we discussed other methods available to allow small pieces of narrative to be assembled into large collections. We adduced Chinese vernacular stories (*huaben*) in order to compare their structural features with those of a possibly early *maqāmah*. A story may contain two complementary or antithetical episodes divided by a poetic line. Such a verse may act as the title of the second episode when the two episodes become independent stories. We then drew attention to a major difference between the organization of many *huaben* collections and that of the Hamadhānian *Maqāmāt*, i.e., the former recount stories with different heroes and plots, while the latter tell a series of stories grouped around the same character(s). In an earlier section of Chapter IV (“*Agon*”), we selected several Dunhuang popular *fus* that end with poetic dialogues. Most of these *fus* were copied during the late 9th and early 10th centuries, which is the same time period as that to which the *Tale Interspersed with Poetry on Tripitaka of the Great Tang Dynasty Retrieving the Buddhist Sūtras* (*Da Tang
Sanzang qujing shihua) can be ascribed. The Shihua focuses on an adventurous journey undertaken by a fixed set of characters. All of its chapters are decorated with envoi. What is more, the character chu (“place”) contained in the chapter title “may refer to the episodes of a narrative pictorially, sculpturally, or verbally represented.” It is a fact that twenty of the 52 extant Hamadhānian maqāmāt are named after cities. The obvious theme of travel that is involved accords with al-Iskandarī’s identity as the itinerant admonisher. His frequent travels also enable us to meet representatives of people from different walks of medieval Islamic life. However the description of places is rarely attested in these maqāmāt, and neither does any specific setting seem important to the development of their plots. Inspired by the function of chu in the Shihua, we suggest that the place names in the titles of the maqāmāt may have constituted a residual “simulated context” of performance.

When short pieces of prosimetric narratives are grouped into large collections, titles, beginning stanzas, and envois can all function as dividing markers for chapters. In this sense, the maqāmah has much in common with the Sanskrit genre called carita (deeds). As we mentioned in the beginning of this conclusion, the original meaning of maqāmah/maqām is “acts of heroism.” Besides the Arabic maqāmah and the Sanskrit carita, the emphasis on grouping small narratives within the theme of “deeds” is also noticeable in the Jewish maʿāšeh and the Latin gesta.

As we approach the end of this concluding chapter, we would like to restate some
important points identified in this study on the *Maqāmāt*. Firstly, the Hamadhānian *maqāmah* has a very unique prosimetric style. In his exploration of Arabic prosimetric genres, Wolfhart Heinrichs shows the continuity involved in the provision of evidentiary verses in *ayyām* stories, historical narratives (e.g., the *maghāzī* and *fiṭūḥ*), and technical literature (e.g., grammar, lexicography, literary criticism, and Qur’ānic exegesis). He also remarks that “the preponderant mode of existence for poems in the *Arabian Nights*” is *tamaththul* (quotation of a poetic parallel). The Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* also contain examples of these “commentary poems,” but the most conspicuous form of their poetry is the usual envoi which belongs to “action poems” and can be broken down into a dialogue or debate. This kind of envoi also allows the Hamadhānian *maqāmāt* to stand out from those earlier anecdotal narratives that mix *saj* and poetry. Bearing in mind our earlier discussion of plagiarism, the *maqāmah*’s prosimetric style is a good indication of al-Hamadhānī’s literary novelty. To the best of our knowledge, the use of such prosimetric style in fictional narratives is only otherwise attested in some Dunhuang popular *fūs*. However the development of Chinese language in the following centuries, a trend that is marked by the separation of rhymed prose and fiction writing, did not allow those scattered *fū* pieces to evolve into a lively and independent genre like the *maqāmah*. While we have analyzed the *maqāmah* by introducing many prosimetric genres both inside and outside the Arabic literary tradition and have to some extent managed to locate its precedents in the Indo-Iranian and Greek traditions and its
analogues in the Chinese and Sanskrit literatures, we should still admit that al-Hamadhānī created a unique prosimetric style which reflects Arabic’s particular course of development from the 4th/10th century onward.  

Secondly, the versatility of the maqāmah genre is very likely adjudicated on the basis of the multiple functions that the beggar hero inherits from pre-Islamic soothsayers. Before al-Hamadhānī’s time, writers like al-Jāḥiz, al-Bayhaqī, and Abū Dulaf had talked about rogues and tricksters. It is also suggested that al-Ṣāḥib Ibn ʿAbbād’s (an early patron of al-Hamadhānī) interest in lowlife figures stimulated our author to compose the Maqāmāt. In the maqāmah named “Sāsān,” al-Iskandarī does not change the ramal-type meter that he uses before and after the anagnorisis. This could imply that his true identity is one of the Banū Sāsān, specialists in begging and swindling during the medieval Islamic era. At the same time, the maqāmāt show that he is a very special beggar, someone who time and again amazes us with extraordinary eloquence and divinatory functions. Al-Iskandarī has served as augur, sung satire against his opponent, delivered long prayers, produced and solved riddles, and acted as medicine man; even his doubles (ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and Shaykh Abū Murrah) are able to judge debate and show the way to locate lost camels. It is al-Iskandarī’s divinatory functions that lead us to detect his connections with other masters of language who could claim to be heirs of the pre-Islamic soothsayers. Although the Hamadhānian maqāmāt center upon the theme of beggary, it is natural to find him (or his doubles) acting in duodramas, singing wine songs
in taverns, criticizing the leading Arab prosaists and poets, describing the physical traits of horses, and chanting hunting poems in sīrah-like stories. His satirical comment on the Muʿtazilites, caricature of corrupt qādis, and praise of knowledge and ideal patrons also betray the author’s own perspective from time to time. As a matter of fact, the theme of beggary is used by al-Hamadhānī as an umbrella to include all these seemingly different but technically related subjects.

Thirdly, the core of the Hamadhānian maqāmah is dialogue. Scholars often use “pious harangue” to explain the connotation of maqām(ah) before al-Hamadhānī composed his legends. A look at the ten maqāmat (sg. maqām) contained in the 3rd/9th-century ʿUyūn al-akhbār makes it clear that they are built upon the dialogue between an ascetic and an audience, and the latter will repay the former at the end of the sermon. One of al-Iskandarī’s favorite disguises is as the popular preacher (wāʾiẓ). Although poetry did not play a great role in real-life preaching, al-Hamadhānī applies both “action poems” and “commentary poems” in his hero’s sermons. In our analysis of the maqāmah’s theme of asceticism, we pointed out the practice of ending a saj ’ sermon with a piece of poetry, and that of going back and forth between saj ’ and poetry. The episode proper of a typical maqāmah may derive from the maqām-sermon to which al-Hamadhānī gives a special prosimetric style. Two other constituent elements of the maqāmah reflect the importance of dialogue. One is the usual envoi which is a debate made of a saj ’-question and a verse-answer. The other one is the beginning isnād which
implies a dialogue situation of a session between the narrator ʿĪsā ibn Hishām and an anonymous audience (“us”). In this way, the narrator’s existence is vital to the completeness of a maqāmah though he never actually appears in the main text of some pieces. The isnād and the full-fledged framing in four maqāmāt may even indicate the maqāmah’s structural similarity with an ayyām story, which “grew out of the dialogue situation of the samar (musāmara), the evening entertainment or conversation.” As a matter of fact, we can detect a three-fold effort to preserve the characteristic of public presentation in a Hamadhānian maqāmah: al-Iskandarī’s sermon, ʿĪsā ibn Hishām’s narration, and al-Hamadhānī’s dictation of his maqāmāt.

Finally, we need to consider another question: should we regard the maqāmah as a drama script since we have confirmed its performability and analyzed its prosimetric style by drawing analogues from various performing arts? We have highlighted al-Iskandarī’s close ties with actors (sg. ḥākiyah) and his being identified as a singer (muṭrib) in order to suggest the envoi’s mode of rendering. The dialogic trait that is characteristic of the genre also may have led artists to produce illustrations reminiscent of shadow plays and puppet theater. However, following Wolfhart Heinrichs, we do not regard the maqāmah itself as a dramatic performance. The genre appears fairly late in Arabic literary history, and thus it naturally absorbs traits from previous genres such as the ḥikāyah. That said, the prosimetric maqāmah possesses an intrinsic performability that is probably rooted in the universality of certain aspects of ritual performance. If we
limit our reading of the maqāmah to that of a dramatic script, we will be unable to explain its functional and structural similarities to other genres such as the qaṣīdah, ayyām, and akhbār. After all, the combination of divinatory functions and prosimetric style is common to the works of generations of admonishers. The 4\textsuperscript{th}/10\textsuperscript{th} century witnessed a gradual shift from an orality-dominated to a literacy-dominated Arabo-Islamic culture. The only clear indication of the maqāmah genre’s orality is al-Hamadhānī’s alleged dictation of the four hundred legends, possibly to a learned circle. Because of the genre’s very special prosimetric style, it became increasingly suited to private reading. By al-Ḥarīrī’s time it had finally developed into an entertainment for book-holding readers, with the marks of mode-changing lingering on as “simulated context.”

1 Brockelmann et al., “Maḳāma,” in EJ.
2 Ibid.
4 See the section “Genre translation” in the Introduction.
5 See the section “Style-breaking” in the Introduction.
6 Brockelmann et al., “Maḳāma,” in EJ.
8 See the section “The dimeter” in Chapter III.
9 See the section “The chengxiang” in Chapter II.
10 See the section “Luan” in Chapter IV.
11 See the section “Imlā vs. inshā” in Chapter I.
12 See the section “Painter” in Chapter IV.
13 See chap. 4, n. 316.
14 See the sections “Munāẓarah” in Chapter II and “The dimeter” in Chapter III.
15 See the section “Qāla” in Chapter IV.
16 See the section “The wine song” in Chapter III.
17 See the section “Khurjah” in Chapter IV.
18 See the sections “The chengxiang” in Chapter II and “The fisherman’s song” in Chapter IV.
19 Knechtges, “The Liu Xin/Xiang Xiong Correspondence on the Fang Yan,” 312.
20 Brockelmann et al., “Maḳāma,” in EJ.
21 See the section “Causation and occasion” in Chapter IV.
22 Mair, T’ang Transformation Texts, 84.
24 Ibid., 270-1.
See the section “Style-breaking” in the Introduction.

See the section “Agon” in Chapter IV.

See the section “Al-Jāhiz criticized” in Chapter I.


See the sections “Grey hairs” in Chapter III and “Back and forth” in Chapter IV.

His panegyrical envoi is also dialogic, and de facto close to the crowning “action poems” of the episode proper.

Therefore even the commentarial envoi can be regarded as al-Iskandari’s address to the anonymous audience.

See the section “Thus have I heard” in Chapter IV. The four *maqāmāt* have “redundant” *isnād* as well.


See the sections “Riwāyah and ḥikāyah” in Chapter I, “You” in Chapter II, “The wine song” in Chapter III, and “Qāla,” “Kharjah” in Chapter IV.

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