The stories of the Prophets by Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafī

Ibn-Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafī

Berlin, 2003

Introduction

urn:nbn:de:gbv:3:5-7096
INTRODUCTION

1. The life and work of Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafi

Little is known about the life of Abū 'abdallāh Muḥammad b. ʿAbdallāh Muḥammad b. Muṭarrif al-Ḵinānī al-Ṭarafi.¹ He was born in 387/997 in Córdoba² and he dedicated himself to the study of religious traditions and, in particular, to variant readings of the Qurʾān (qirāʾāt). Ṭarafi’s teachers were al-Qādī Yūnus b. ʿAbdallāh Abū Muḥammad b. Shaqqāq and, above all, Abū Muḥammad Makkī b. Abī Ṭalīb, who was the most famous of those he came into contact with.³ All the sources point out that he was renowned in qirāʾāt for his skill and his memory. Some pupils and later scholars considered him a reliable scholar and transmitted traditions under his name.⁴ Ibn al-Jazarī is the only source to give any further information about the origin of his nisba: he was imām in the mosque of Ṭarafi in Córdova and he was thus named al-Ṭarafi.⁵ The final piece of information biographical sources give about Ṭarafi is that when he died in 454/1062, he was buried near the Bāb ‘Āmir inside an unknown mosque.⁶

Two works attributed to him demonstrate his interest in qirāʾāt: the Sharḥ qasāʾid fī al-qirāʾāt and a second work titled Kitāb al-Qurtayn, which was

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⁴ See the names in Ibn al-Jazari, Kitāb ghāyat, II, 89.

⁵ – Ibn al-Jazari, Kitāb ghāyat, II, 89; see also Yaqūt, Muʿjam al-buldān, Beirut 1990, IV, 35.

published in Cairo in 1936. The Kitāb al-Qurṭayn is a digest of two books by Ibn Qutayba, the Kitāb mushkil al-Qurʾān and the Kitāb gharib al-Qurʾān. Ṭarafī collected passages from the two works and arranged them according to the order of the chapters of the Qurʾān, without adding anything to Ibn Qutayba’s words.

Biographical sources do not quote either of these works, as is the case with his Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ. Further, his Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ are not mentioned nor quoted in later books. In spite of this, there is no reason to doubt the two extant manuscripts, both of which contain clear and explicit indications that the author was Ibn Muṭarrif al-Ṭarafī. Moreover, the discussion of variant readings in some passages constitutes evidence that the author of this qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ collection was, like Ṭarafī, an expert in questions of qirāʾāt. It should also be remembered that Makkī was one of Ṭarafī’s masters, that Makkī reputedly wrote a tafsīr, and that qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ literature is strictly connected to Qurʾānic exegesis.

Further information can be added to what Nagel collected and to what has been mentioned above. Yāqūt states, in a passage of his Muʿjam al-buldān, that, in addition to the Kitāb al-Qurṭayn, Ṭarafī wrote an abridged version of Ṭabarī’s tafsīr (la-hu ikhtisār min kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān li-l-Ṭabarī). This statement is very important, because Ṭabarī’s tafsīr is the principal source of the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Ṭarafī, and sometimes this collection resembles an abridgement of Ṭabarī’s tafsīr. Yāqūt’s statement could thus be an allusion to the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Ṭarafī. Further evidence also points to a connection between Ṭarafī and the traditions concerning the prophets and, in particular, with one of the major authorities in the field, i.e. Wahb b. Munabbih. As Ibn Khayr states,

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7 – Ed. by ‘Abd al-Hafiz Sa’d ‘Atiyya, Cairo, al-Khānji, 1936 and recently reprinted in Beirut, Dār al-Maʿrifā, n.d. Both Nagel, Die Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 104 n. 4, and Levi Della Vida, “Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola”, 154, didn’t have the possibility to consult this edition. In particular Levi Della Vida, who had a description of this book from another source, regretted he could not read Ṭarafī’s biography included in the introduction by the editor. As a matter of fact he would have had nothing new, because ‘Abd al-Hafīz Sa’d ‘Atiyya reproduced here the biographical description of Ibn al-Jazari’s Kitāb ghāyat.

8 – See before § 1.

9 – See §§ 84, 105, 174, 344. See also the considerations by Nagel, Die Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 104.


11 – Beirut 1990, IV, 35; I am indebted to M. Fierro for this indication.

12 – Fahrasa, ed. by F. Codera and J. Ribera Torrago, Damascus 1963², 295; I am indebted to M. Fierro for this indication.
Ta'rafi was one of the transmitters of Wahb’s translation of the Kitāb zabūr Dāwūd (The Book of the Psalms of David). Ibn Khayr provides another interesting piece of information, when he quotes a qisas al-anbiyā’ collection written by Aḥmad b. Ḥaḍīd and transmitted by his son Muḥammad.13 Nothing further is known about this qisas al-anbiyā’ collection. What is relevant for this research is that the transmitter of this work from Aḥmad b. Ḥaḍīd’s son Muḥammad was al-Qādī Yūnus b. ‘Abdallāh, one of Ta’rafi’s teachers who is also mentioned in relation to the transmission of the Kitāb zabūr Dāwūd.14 Despite the lack of information concerning the Qisas al-anbiyā’ of Ta’rafi, the above mentioned facts constitute evidence that he had been in contact with scholars and works dealing with Qur’ānic exegesis and with the stories of the prophets.

Some words are now needed concerning Derenbourg’s peculiar description of the work in the Escorial manuscripts catalogue. Both the manuscripts of Ta’rafi’s Qisas al-anbiyā’ contain an introduction giving a clear indication of the nature of the work and stating clearly that it is a qisas al-anbiyā’ collection. In spite of this, Derenbourg described the manuscript of Ta’rafi’s work as a “premier tome d’une histoire universelle sans titre”.15 Levi Della Vida was the first to note this strange statement.16 The Escorial manuscript gives no indication of the title of the work, neither at the beginning nor the end, but there can be no doubt that it is a qisas al-anbiyā’ collection. Derenbourg’s statement can be traced back to the old catalogue by Casiri, where the Escorial manuscript is described as “codex... in quo primus Tomus occurrit Historiae universalis, titulum... Mundi Annales”.17 It thus seems that Derenbourg took his description from Casiri without further investigation.

14 – See, for instance, Ibn al-Faraḍi, Kitāb ta’rīkh, I, 31 no. 94, and about his son Muḥammad, see I, 327 no. 1302; the name given here, Aḥmad b. Kh.l.d, is a misreading of the editors. On him see also Dhahabi, Siyar a’lān al-nubalā’, Beirut 1984, XV, 240-1; al-Qādī ‘Iyād, Tartīb al-madārik wa-taqrib al-masālik, n.p. n.d., V, 174-76; Ibn Ḥarīth al-Khushani, Akhbār al-fugahā’ wa-l-muhaddithin, Madrid 1992, 17-19; none of these sources mention the Qisas al-anbiyā’ written by him. I am indebted to Prof. M. Fierro for these references.
16 – “Manoscritti arabì di origine spagnola”, 155.
17 – M. Casiri, Bibliotheca Arabico-hispana escorialensis, Madrid 1770, II, 155: the title in the footnote is given as Ta’rīkh al-‘ālam.
2. Structure and sources of the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Ṭarafi

Nagel dealt at length with the structure and sources of the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Ṭarafi in his comprehensive study, and identified the main features of the work.\(^\text{18}\)

In this chapter the same questions that Nagel discussed will be looked at with the intention of completing his portrait of Ṭarafi.

Ṭarafi states clearly his reason for writing a qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ collection at the beginning of his work: “Prophets and messengers are the best of Adam’s offspring, upon them be peace, they were singled out with excellent virtues and amazing miracles (…). Their stories, their narratives and their traditions are the best one can collect and summarize and the most wonderful one can read or tell (…). I decided to gather the stories of those quoted in the Qur’ān, from the best material the transmitters related and the authorities reported, to copy in this book what happened to them with their peoples at the time of their mission, and to present what every high-minded person should desire to know and be enthusiastic to study and to learn (…). Moreover, I found in the Book of God, to Him glory and greatness, what He related to the Prophet Muhammad, God bless him and grant him salvation, for he copied it and followed its example”.\(^\text{19}\) It was not unusual for such statements to be written when introducing the biographies of the prophets. Also Thaʿlabī included a similar introduction in his work, so that he could set out his purpose. However, as Nagel has already pointed out, Ṭarafi’s predominant edifying purpose is not evident in the stories of the individual prophets, where the usual qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ traditions can be found along with exegetical explanations. Ṭarafi’s work does not differ from the other qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ collections.\(^\text{20}\)

Besides this gap between the introduction and contents of the work, the structure of the Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Ṭarafi shows some other peculiarities. The order of the biographies of the prophets is very unusual: Hūd and Śāliḥ’s biographies do not occur between those of Noah and Abraham and, what is even

\(^{18}\) Nagel, Die Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 105-113.
\(^{19}\) § 1.
\(^{20}\) Nagel, Die Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ, 106; Ṭarafi’s introduction misled Thackston, Tales of the Prophets of al-Kisāʾi, xvi, who wrote that Ṭarafi “concentrated on the exemplary moral character of the prophets and stressed prophetic admonitions and moral counsels rather than the historical and legendary sides to their careers”; see also Thackston, “Islamische Mythologie”, 199 n. 2. Levi Della Vida, “Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola”, 154, had already pointed out that Ṭarafi’s work is not different from the other qīṣāṣ al-anbiyāʾ collections.
stranger, Ṭarafi deals with David and Solomon before Moses. This structure indicates that a historical reconstruction of the past from the beginning of the world onwards was not Ṭarafi’s purpose in writing his ṣiṣāṣ al-anbiyā’ collection. His intent was instead exegetical, i.e. to provide further material describing the prophets mentioned in the Qurʾān. This is the reason why Ṭarafi collected, firstly, the biographies of the twenty four prophets mentioned in the Qurʾān, and then, at the end of the work, the seven prophets who were only alluded to, without paying attention to historical sequence. Ṭarafi announced the exegetical character of his work at the beginning when he stated that he had decided “to collect stories of those mentioned in the Qurʾān”, and also, when he stated that “there are thirty-one prophets: the Qurʾān mentions twenty four of them by name and alludes to seven others”. The same exegetical considerations also led Ṭarafi to exclude other characters usually found in ṣiṣāṣ al-anbiyā’ collections, e.g. Harūt and Marūt, Alexander (Dḥū al-Qarnayn), Luqmān or Jīrīs. The Qurʾān does not assert their prophecy and so Ṭarafi does not deal with them in his work.

It should be pointed out however that, as well as excluding these characters, Ṭarafi omits other stories that are usually included in ṣiṣāṣ al-anbiyā’ collections, some of which are even mentioned in the Qurʾān. This is the case, for instance, of the traditions dealing with the plagues, the stories of Korah and Balaam and the story of Jesus’ miracles. Moreover, the legends connected to Seth, the waṣīyya of Adam, the story of Abraham’s visit to Ishmael, the building of the Temple in Jerusalem by Solomon and the traditions concerning Solomon’s death are not mentioned in his work. Ṭarafi does not relate the story of the aṣḥāb al-kahf either, but whereas this might be unusual in a ṣiṣāṣ al-anbiyā’ collection, it is not strange here, because the aṣḥāb al-kahf were not prophets. These omissions and the strange sequence adopted might suggest that the work was unfinished, or that the two extant manuscripts are incomplete, but this is not the case. There are clear references within the text to the internal cohesion of the work and so the suggestion of incompleteness can be rejected. Two sections, one at the beginning and one at the end, are almost identical, and in the final chapter direct references are made to the structure and contents of the work. Another interesting passage points to the internal cohesion of the work: Ṭarafi says,

22 – See § 1 and § 2.
23 – See also Nagel, *Die Qīṣāṣ al-anbiyā*’, 107.
24 – § 2 and § 507.
before dealing with the story of Jeremias, that as he has already dealt with the events of the lives of David and Goliath there is no reason to repeat them.\textsuperscript{25}

As regards the structure of the work, Nagel\textsuperscript{26} has already indicated that at the beginning of every biography there is a short summary of the contents, then the Qur\textsuperscript{2}ân verses dealing with the subject are quoted, followed by traditions that explain and elucidate them. Although the genealogy of the prophets can usually be found at the beginning, this is not a rule. The Qur\textsuperscript{2}ân verses and traditions from different sources (or attributed to transmitters or to the Prophet himself) are followed by brief descriptions of the appearance and age of the prophets. Ṭarafī respects this fixed structure in most of the chapters of his work. The striking point is that this close adherence to the order in the biographies contrasts with the absolute indifference towards \emph{isnāds}. A word must also be said about the apparent randomness of some of the paragraph divisions in the manuscripts, which were apparently made with no attention to the meaning.\textsuperscript{27} While not being able to account for this phenomenon with complete certainty, it is probable that it can be attributed to mistakes made during transcription.

As regards the question of Ṭarafī’s sources it must first be noted that Ṭarafī does not give \emph{isnāds} or references for most of the material he quotes, and only occasionally includes the name of the first transmitter. But when names are given, they are the most important names of Sunni tradition, like Ibn ‘Abbâs (d. 68/687 ca.), who is quoted most often, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrî (d. 110/728), Mujâhid (d. 104/722) and Qatâda (d. 117/735). To a lesser extent the customary names of the \emph{qiṣāṣ al-anbiyā’} collections, such as Ka‘b al-Aḥbâr (d. 35/656 ca.) and Wahb b. Munabbih (d. 110/728 ca.), can be found. It is perhaps surprising that Ka‘b is quoted only three times. It is also remarkable that the name of ‘Alî b. Abî Ṭâlib (d. 40/661), so often mentioned by Thâ‘labî, occurs only four times in Ṭarafī’s work.\textsuperscript{28} Ṭarafī’s lack of concern for \emph{isnāds} is evident in his use of expressions like \emph{ākharūn} (others) or \emph{qawm}, \emph{ba‘d} and \emph{ghayr} (for ex. \emph{ba‘duhum} e \emph{ghayruhu}), instead of a list of all the transmitters.\textsuperscript{29} Along with this attitude it must be pointed out that only in two places does Ṭarafī show any concern about the

\begin{itemize}
\item 25 – § 473.
\item 27 – See especially §§ 67-70, 127-128, 144-145, 405-413, 429-430, 480-490.
\item 28 – §§ 67, 84, 95, 220; see also Nagel, \textit{Die Qiṣāṣ al-anbiyā’}, 109-110, and in particular p. 110. About the tendency of Andalusī Mālikī to avoid references to ‘Alî, see I. Fierro, “The introduction of ḥadith in al-Andalus”, \textit{Der Islam}, 66 (1989), 87.
\item 29 – §§ 13, 59, 137, 140, 173, 193, 194, 219, 297, 415, 424.
\end{itemize}
formal criticism of his material. In one of these instances Ţaraﬁ says he is quoting “from Ibn al-Kalbī, regarding the pictures of the prophets which in his view were reliable”\textsuperscript{30} while in the other he states he is quoting the tradition with the best isnād.\textsuperscript{31}

In addition to the names of the transmitters, Ţaraﬁ provides some further indications, and the most interesting of these are the quotations of his main sources, i.e. Ṭabarī (d. 311/923) and Ishāq b. Bishr (d. 206/821). In fact, Ţaraﬁ relied mostly upon Ṭabarī’s tafsīr, and complete chapters in his Qisṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ\textsuperscript{2}, like the story of Abraham, are word for word quotations or abridged versions of it. It can be affirmed that more than half of this work is taken from Ṭabarī’s Qur’ānic commentary, but in spite of this strong dependence Ţaraﬁ mentions the name of Ṭabarī only four times.\textsuperscript{32} Instead of mentioning Ṭabarī’s name, Ţaraﬁ refers only the names of the Companions and the Successors who originated the traditions.\textsuperscript{33} Finally, again Ṭabarī is the source of some other traditions which contain introductory expressions like jāʾa fi al-tafsīr..., wa-yudhkar fi al-tafsīr..., fi baʾd al-tafsīr....\textsuperscript{34}

Strangely enough, these vague expressions are not always connected to Ṭabarī, because Ţaraﬁ uses them to introduce some reports and traditions from various other sources. On a number of occasions, when mentioning an indefinite tafsīr, Ţaraﬁ relates traditions similar to those reported in Muqātil b. Sulaymān’s (d. 150/767) tafsīr, with some slight differences.\textsuperscript{35} Some other material, which is introduced with the same expressions, is taken neither from Ṭabarī nor from Muqātil, but from an unknown source, i.e. an unknown tafsīr.\textsuperscript{36} This inconsistency in Ţaraﬁ’s references is evident in two reports where a tradition taken from the Mubtada\textsuperscript{3} of Ishāq b. Bishr comes after the following introductory phrases: wa-jāʾa fi al-tafsīr and jāʾa fi al-tafsīr ṣan Ishāq b. Bishr.\textsuperscript{37}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{30} – § 277.
\item \textsuperscript{31} – § 468.
\item \textsuperscript{32} – §§ 74, 89, 163, 182. See also Nagel, Die Qisṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ\textsuperscript{2}, 110-111, who translates and discusses these passages.
\item \textsuperscript{33} – See also Nagel, Die Qisṣaṣ al-anbiyāʾ\textsuperscript{2}, 111-113; for a comprehensive analysis of the question of Ţaraﬁ’s dependence on Ṭabarī’s tafsīr see the Annotations on the Arabic text.
\item \textsuperscript{35} – See § 64, which is partially taken from Ṭabarī and partially from Muqātil; §§ 204, 389, 442.
\item \textsuperscript{36} – §§ 84, 330, 334, 427, 477.
\item \textsuperscript{37} – §§ 153, 258.
\end{itemize}
It is known that Tabari did not make use of the works of Muqatil and Ishraq b. Bishr, nor did he quote from them, and this ‘tafsir’ cannot be a reference to Tabari. Undoubtedly by referring to an indefinite tafsir, Tarafi is indicating a different, unknown commentary and not simply that of Tabari.

The other main source is the Mubtada\textsuperscript{2} of Ishraq b. Bishr. Tarafi mentions the name Ishraq b. Bishr twelve times, but, as was the case with Tabari, some other traditions originating in his Mubtada\textsuperscript{2} occur in the Qi\textsuperscript{sa}s al-anbiy\textsuperscript{a} of Tarafi without an indication of the source. A comparison between this material and the extant manuscript of the Mubtada\textsuperscript{2} shows that Tarafi abridged the original version, taking sections from longer traditions. It is difficult to state whether Tarafi himself abridged this material or whether he relied upon an intermediary, and already abridged, version. The expression wa-\textit{dhakara} Ishaq b. Bishr ‘\textit{an jam\textsuperscript{a}c} a asnada al-khabar ilayhim\textsuperscript{3}\textsuperscript{38} suggests that Tarafi took his material directly from Ishaq b. Bishr’s work. At the same time, as has been stated above, the references to a tafsir ‘\textit{an Ishaq b. Bishr}, alert us to the fact that, in all likelihood, there was an intermediary source.

At one point Tarafi mentions another third century author, Bukhari (d. 256/870), who compiled the most important hadith collection\textsuperscript{39}. This reference is quite strange, since it is the only one related to hadiths, whereas Tarafi includes many traditions attributed to the Prophet in his work. This inconsistency cannot be explained, unless we assume that this was the only tradition Tarafi took directly from a hadith collection, while the others were taken from other sources.

Even without Tarafi’s indication, some of the other sources of his work can be identified, such as the Muhabb\textsuperscript{4} of Ibn Habib (d. 245/859) which was the source of the tradition about the sons of Iblis\textsuperscript{40}. In some other places, e.g. the tradition about the sons of Abraham, the source could perhaps be Ibn Habib, but, given the slight differences, it seems probable that Tarafi took this material from another intermediary source who had, in turn, depended on Ibn Habib\textsuperscript{41}. The same can be

\textsuperscript{38} § 48.  
\textsuperscript{39} § 452.  
\textsuperscript{40} §§ 23-25.  
\textsuperscript{41} § 170. This is also true for the two chronologies given at the end of Tarafi’s work: § 508; the two traditions, in the same order and with some slight variations are given by Tabari, \textit{Ta’rikh al-rusul wa-l-mul\textsuperscript{uk}}, ed. by M.A. al-F. Ibrahim, Cairo 1960-67, II, 238 (= ed. M.J. de Goeje et al., Leiden 1879-1901, I, 1072), and Ibn Habib, \textit{Kit\textsuperscript{ab} al-Muhabb\textsuperscript{er}} (repr. ed. I. Lichtenstader, Hyderabad 1942), Beirut n.d., 1-2, but since the final hijri date is different in all the three versions, Tarafi could have taken these reports from an intermediary source.
said for the Kitāb al-ta’rīkh of the Andalusian ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb (m. 238/852), published and edited by J. Aguadé (Madrid 1991). Ṭarafi relates a few traditions which are similar to those ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb included at the beginning of his work dealing with prophets. These common traditions are already attested in Iṣḥāq b. Bishr’s Mubtada’, which was probably a source for both. Only one of Ṭarafi’s passages bears more resemblance to ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb’s version than to that of Iṣḥāq b. Bishr, but this is not sufficient to indicate that his Kitāb al-ta’rīkh was one of Ṭarafi’s sources. ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb’s dependance upon Iṣḥāq b. Bishr, while requiring further investigation, is relevant for another reason: it demonstrates the diffusion of his Mubtada’ in al-Andalus.

Moreover, some further traditions quoted by Ṭarafi can be found in other works which may have served as sources. Indeed it seems unlikely that Ṭarafi would have depended on Ṭabarṭ and Iṣḥāq b. Bishr’s writings for the greater part of his work and then have used so many different sources for a few remaining traditions. It is much more probable that he took all of this material from one or two intermediary sources.

Ṭarafi does mention other indefinite sources. At the beginning of certain traditions, without giving any name of transmitter, he states he is quoting mufassirīn wa-aṣḥāb al-akhbār, or other exegetical material traced back to

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42 – ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-ta’rīkh, 41-42 no. 83 and Ṭarafi, § 186.
43 – See ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, Kitāb al-ta’rīkh, 39 no. 75 end: after the quotation of Qur. 40:11 it is said: wa-badat al-bad’a (?) fi al-samā’ wa-baqiya gaws quzah wa-kānat āyāt al-amān min al-gharq (“the bad’a appeared in the sky and it was the rainbow, the sign of safety from the Flood”). This traditions is a verbatim quotation from Iṣḥāq b. Bishr, Mubtada’ al-dunyā, Ms Huntingdon 388, 103b-104a. The word al-bad’a makes no sense, it should be corrected in al-nad’a or al-nud’a that means arch/bow (I am indebted to M.J. Kister for this reading). The manuscript of the Mubtada’ by Iṣḥāq b. Bishr is not very clear: it has ʿalā then it gives al-nad al-gaws. Even if ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb does not mention the name of Iṣḥāq b. Bishr, all the later sources trace back this report to him, but failing to read the word al-nad’a in the right way. See Ṭarafi, § 77: al-naz’ā; Suyūṭī, al-Durr al-manṭūr fī l-tafsīr al-ma’thūr, Beirut 1983, IV, 426: al-yad; Ibn ʿAsākir, Ta’rīkh madīnat Dimashq, fac. ed., Amman n.d., XVII, 662: al-badhdh. These are the other passages in ʿAbd al-Malik b. Ḥabīb, and mentioned also by Ṭarafi, probably taken from Iṣḥāq b. Bishr: Kitāb al-ta’rīkh, 39 no. 75 = Mubtada’, 103b and Ṭarafi, § 85; 41 no. 83 = Mubtada’, 116a and Ṭarafi § 179.
44 – See, for instance, §§ 334, 335, 338, which are similar to traditions in the Ṭabaqāt of Ibn Saʿd; some material could instead have been taken from ‘Umāra b. Wathima; see for instance §§ 445-446.

45 – § 63.
jamā‘a min ahl al-tafṣīr, 

§§ 213.

ba‘d al-mufassirīn, 

§§ 214, 263, 354, 440.

qawm min ahl al-tafṣīr, 

§ 352.

and ahl al-tafṣīr.59 In another place Tārafi states he is citing Tābāri and from jamā‘a min ahl al-‘ilm.50 This last expression clearly indicates transmitters and not other authors, since he later writes: wa-qāla jamā‘a min ahl al-‘ilm min al-ṣaḥāba wa-l-tābi‘īn.51 The same can be said for the expression ba‘d al-‘ulamā‘.52 As well as exegetical works, mention is made also of historical works: naqalat al-akhbār wa-jumlat al-mufassirīn,53 or jā‘a fi al-khabar/al-akhbār,54 or qāla ba‘d naqalat al-akhbār.55 Finally there is evidence that Tārafi also made use of traditions going back to experts in genealogy: dhakara al-nassābīn.56

The preceding description of the structure and sources is sufficient to enable a preliminary evaluation of the work to be made. It can be inferred that the qīṣaṣ al-anбиya‘ literary genre had reached a wide diffusion in al-Andalus where many important manuscripts dealing with the topic had been copied and circulated widely. This was the case with the Kitāb bad‘ al-khalq of ʿUmāra b. Wathīma and the works of his father Wathīma,57 as well as with some other collections dealing with the prophets, such as the Qīṣaṣ al-anbiya‘ of Ḥīrī.58 Works such as these and the Mubtada‘ of Iṣḥāq b. Bishr probably prompted the diffusion of popular traditions and legends in connection with the stories of the prophets, with the typical influence of Shi‘ī beliefs.59

46 – § 213.
48 – § 352.
49 – §§ 299, 376, 417, 473.
50 – § 89.
51 – § 133.
52 – § 308.
53 – § 187.
54 – §§ 264, 326.
55 – §§ 392, 490.
56 – §§ 151, 160; see also § 177: qawm min al-nassābīn.
57 – See Levi Della Vida, “Manoscritti arabi di origine spagnola”, 163 n.1: Borgian manuscripts show the diffusion of the works of ʿUmāra and his father Wathīma in Spain.
58 – Al-Ḥīrī (Ps.-Wahh), Qīṣaṣ al-anbiya‘, Alexandria, Ms Baladiyya B 1249; about this work see Nagel, Die Qīṣaṣ al-anbiya‘, 149-54,168-69; and J. Pauliny, “Ein Werk Qīṣaṣ al-anbiya‘” von Abī ʿAbdallāḥ Muḥammad ibn Saʿīd al-Ḥīrī al-ʾAḥbārī”, Asian and African Studies, 6 (1970), 87-91; see also the anonymous Qīṣaṣ al-anbiya‘ (Kitāb al-majā‘īs ‘alā ‘ilm al-ta’rīkh), Berlin, Ms Staatsbibliothek, Or. quart. 1171, 137b-188b.
59 – See Nagel, Die Qīṣaṣ al-anbiya‘, 161.
The Qisāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Tarafi take a different direction: his work gives a sacred history of the prophets which adheres closely to Sunnī exegetical tradition. With this purpose Tarafi relied upon the best Sunnī exegetical source, the tafsīr of Ṭabarānī, and on the Mukhtār of Ishāq b. Bishr, whose diffusion and authority made this an essential reference work when dealing with qisāṣ al-anbiyāʾ, even though there may have been doubts about some of its contents. Notwithstanding Tarafi’s purpose, the use of this material from Ishāq b. Bishr, together with other traditions from unknown sources and Tarafi’s interest in onomastics, shows that legends of popular origin about the prophets could not be completely omitted from qisāṣ al-anbiyāʾ collections.

3. The edition

The Qisāṣ al-anbiyāʾ of Tarafi have been preserved in only two manuscripts, both of which I have used in this edition:

(1) Ms Biblioteca Vaticana, Borgiano 125, ff. 47-133;

• cm. 25.5 x 19; copy dated 777/1375; elegant Maghrebi writing; 24 lines per page; mostly vocalized; titles are written in red; ff. 69-71 are extraneous to the text; lacuna between ff. 119b and 120a, probably missing 3 folios, corresponding to §§ 417-437.61

(س) Ms Escorial 1700, ff. 1-131;

• cm. 20 x 14; copy not dated; Maghrebi writing; 18 lines per page; rarely vocalized; final section missing, probably only one folio.62

Given the close relationship between the Escorial and the Vaticana manuscripts, it is necessary to point out that the Arabic text published here is based upon the latter. The Ms Escorial deviates from the Ms Vaticana in only a few cases, and it can be stated that the Escorial manuscript does not contain


significant variations. For this reason the *apparatus criticus* consisting of the footnotes is not only devoted to the corrections deemed necessary and to the exemplifications of the rare differing versions in the manuscripts, but also to the signalling of their orthographical peculiarities. The Annotations on the Arabic text in English include references to the sources of the book of Tarāfī and parallel passages from the other main sources related to the subjects treated or discussed. A bibliography listing the works and sources quoted follows these Annotations.

Finally, some practical information introducing the edition:

1) Ms Vaticana is indicated with the letter (۱), while Ms Escorial is indicated with the letter (١);

2) everything in the edition of the text that is included within round brackets is an editorial addition to facilitate reading: this is the case for the numbering of the traditions, the titles of the chapters and the foliation of the Ms Vaticana;

3) the footnotes to the Arabic text only mention variants and peculiarities of the manuscripts; each comment regarding sources and contents occurs in the Annotations on the Arabic text following this introduction.

4. Orthographical features of the manuscripts

The two manuscripts show a close relationship and undoubtedly belong to the same line of transmission. A close analysis demonstrates beyond doubt that Ms Escorial is a direct copy or derived from a line of transmission originating with Ms Vaticana. This is demonstrated by some of the mistakes in Ms Escorial which have their origin in an imperfect reading of Ms Vaticana. In § 32, Ms Escorial reads *khābayn* instead of *nābayn*, since the form of the *nūn* in Ms Vaticana is imperfect; in § 48 the bad transcription of the *wāw* of *al-ва‘ila* in the Ms Vaticana causes the Ms Escorial to read a *dāl*; the same happens in § 110 because of the illegible manner in which the word *yābis* was written in the Ms Vaticana so that it becomes *yābīm* in Ms Escorial; in § 265 the badly written *yaqūmu* in Maghrebi writing – i.e. with only one dot for the *qāf* – of the Ms Vaticana becomes *ypadīmu* in Ms Escorial. The relationship between the two manuscripts is further evidenced by the corresponding *lacunae*, since the rare blank spaces in the lines appear in the same passages. 63

In general, as is clear from the notes to the Arabic text, Ms Escorial contains frequent inaccuracies in the writing than the Ms Vaticana. The only substantial difference between the two manuscripts seems to be that in the paragraph

divisions. In the edition of the text I have almost always followed the divisions in Ms Vaticana, but the divergences between the two manuscripts are significant. In particular Ms Escorial contains more divisions and they are located in different places to those in the Ms Vaticana. In other cases, divisions present in Ms Vaticana are omitted in Ms Escorial.

As regards the orthographical features, both the manuscripts share most of the peculiarities which, it must be premised, are of a kind quite common in the medieval manuscript tradition.

A quite common feature is the alternate use of *scriptio defectiva* and *scriptio plena* in the way some words are spelt. This is the case of the names of some prophets and characters: Eve (Ḥawwā/Ḥawwāʾ), Isaac (Ishaq/Ishāq), Abraham (Ibrahīm/Ibrāhīm), David (Daʾud/Daʿūd/Dawūd), Solomon (Sulaymān/Sulaymān), Aaron (Harūn/Hārūn), Zechariah (Zakariyyā/Zakariyyāʾ). The same feature also appears in the spelling of dhalika/dhālīka and hadhā/hadhā, such as happens with the alternation of defective and complete spelling in words like *ilāh*, lākin(na) and *samāwāt*. Significant also is the example of the word *kitāb*, which is often written *k.t.b.*, but in some cases bearing the sign of a small *alif* over the line. Another feature regards the *scriptio plena* of short vowels. A relevant example is the writing of the long vowel in verbs with a third radical *yā* or *wāw* in the case of form *lam* + jussive, for instance *lam yabqā* instead of *lam yabqa*.

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64 – In §§ 34, 36, 38, 249, 266, 308, 410, 480.
68 – In § 90; cf. also §§ 122, 124, 157, 207, 224, 256. On this see Hopkins, *Studies*, 85.
The writing of the hamza is definitely not uniform. The most typical examples of this kind are the writing of words like mi'a (hundred) and Isrā'īl. Some other peculiarities relate to the writing of some letters. A case in point is the writing of the alif. The presence/absence of alif al-wasl in the writing of ibn is not always in accordance with the rules of Classical Arabic. Another case to be evidenced is the spelling of yā (vocative) as ya connected to the next word beginning with alif. A recurring contraction is also that of the negation of the imperfect, for instance la-akhrju instead of lā akhrju. Alif fasila frequently appears in cases where it would be unusual in Classical Arabic, such as in the third person singular of the imperfect of the verbs wāw as third radical. Alif fasila also appears, though not frequently, after the word banū.

A very frequent feature of the manuscripts is the alternation in writing of tā' marbūta and tā' tawīla, and of alif maṣūra and alif māmūdā. Attested are also the alternations dḥāl/dād, dād/thā, dād/ẓā and kāf/qāf. Maghrebi origin of the two manuscripts is further attested by nanṣūrū instead of nanṣuru, or naqtulūhu instead of naqtuluhu.

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69 – See the notes to the text, also in connection to the writing of words such as shay', ra'ā, or for ex. the names of the angels in § 136. On the question, see Hopkins, Studies, 19f., and concerning the various forms of the numeral mi'a, 118-9.


71 – On this see Hopkins, Studies, § 27d, 10d; Blau, A Handbook, 35 § 26.

72 – See § 56, passim. The contrary is attested for ex. in §§ 248, 339; on this see Blau, A Handbook, 32 § 15.


74 – See for ex. §§ 9, 263.


77 – See, in order, §§ 66: dḥāl instead of dād, § 188: dād/thā', § 248: dād/ẓā', § 404: a kāf/qāf, and § 214: qāf/kāf, such as §§ 499, 500: Antaqiyya instead of Antakiyya. The shift sād/sin could be attested in some passages where the fa-sayyara (§ 170) and fa-taṣirān (§ 468) of the original sources upon which Tarafi relied are instead spelt fa-sayyara, fa-taṣirān; cf. also § 110.