

(the next) three months so that it looks as if they had only worn their bottines for three months, fearing that the soles of their bottines wear thin or develop holes.”

Abū Ishāq Ibrāhīm b. Sayyār al-Nazzām tells a story of a Marwazī, his neighbour, that he used to wear neither bottine nor sandal till the dry *nabaq* (*Zizyphus spina-christi*)¹⁰⁵ was over because of the many stones (of it) on the road and market-places. (He went on) “Once he saw me (when) I (had) sucked sugar canes and collected those the juice of which I had sucked to throw them away, and said: ‘If you haven’t a *tannūr*’¹⁰⁶ or children give them to someone who has a *tannūr* and children (to feed). Be careful not to let yourself get accustomed to this habit in the days you still have a small household for you never know what children are coming to you.’ ”

The Story of the Habitués of the Mosque¹⁰⁷ of the Basrah Folk

Habitués of the Mosque, friends of mine, said: “In the Mosque there gathered people who make a doctrine of economy in expenditure and growth of money, those who amass and refrain from spending it. With them this doctrine became like kinship that unites together in mutual affection and alliance that unites in mutual support. When they met in their circles they used to discuss this subject with one another, debate with each other and study it together, seeking to derive profit (thereby) and pleasure from discussing it.”

A shaykh of theirs said:

“The water of my well, as you know, is salty, brackish; the donkey won’t go near it, camels won’t swallow it, date-palms (irrigated) by it die. The river is a long way off from us and the trouble and inconvenience of fetching sweet water is a burden to us. Some of it we used to mix (with sweet water) for the donkey but he turned sick from it and refractory with me. So after that we took to giving him sweet water, unmixed. I and the ewe¹⁰⁸ often used to wash in sweet water, afraid something like what happened to the donkey’s belly might afflict us, and that pure sweet water went to waste. Then a door of prudent management (*iṣlāḥ*)¹⁰⁹ opened itself in front of me—I took myself to the ablution place and on one side of it I

105. The small “apples” of this tree are eaten.

106. A barrel-shaped pottery jar about three feet high with a hole in the foot through which fuel is inserted. Flat dough rounds are inserted from the open top and slapped against their sides, to which they adhere and cook.

107. The Masjidiyyūn, Habitués of the Mosque, used it as a kind of club. The Basrah mosque was frequented by a mixture of types, poets, story-tellers, ordinary folk, and seemingly a special group of “misers” (*bakḥil*). Their conversations and discussion ranged over a variety of subjects, practical, literary, religious.

108. The “ewe” is a circumlocution for “my wife” which Arabs do not say in public. Cf. “old woman” (*‘ajūz*), *infra*.

109. See Appendix 2.

dug a pit, plastered and polished it till it was as if it were hollowed out of a rock, and into it I directed the runway of the (ablution) water. So now, when we wash ourselves, the water runs into it, pure, nothing mixed with it. Were it not for religious devotions the skin of someone after defecation would be more disposed to stink than the skin of someone ritually impure.¹¹⁰ The amounts of perfume for the skin are just the same, the water is just as it was; also the donkey shows no distaste for ablution water nor are we forbidden to water him with it. I am not aware of any (holy) book forbidding it, or custom (*sunnah*) prohibiting it. For some days we have enjoyed the advantage of this and relieved (our) persons and property of a burden. Folk said: 'This comes through the good fortune (granted by) Allah and His grace.' "

25 A shaykh addressed them, asking:

"Did you hear of the death of Mīryam al-Ṣanā? She was one of those women who practise economy, a person of prudent management." "Tell us about her!" they said. "There is many an amusing anecdote about her", he replied, "and a full account of her would be a long one but I shall tell you one of the stories about her and that will do." "What is it?" they asked, and he went on:

"She married off her daughter, then a girl of twelve, tricking her out with gold and silver, dressing her up in Mervian¹¹¹ silk, silks of various colours, floss-silk, silk interwoven with wool and she hung up draperies coloured (red) with bastard saffron, and pounded up perfume, thereby acquiring considerable prestige for her in the eyes of her (own) relations¹¹² and raising her esteem with her relations-in-law. So her husband said to her: 'How did you manage this, Mīryam?' 'It comes from Allah!' she said. 'Stop talking in generalities', said he, 'and produce the explanation! *Wallāhi* you didn't own money in the past nor have you more recently inherited any. You don't behave deceitfully about yourself or your husband's money—unless you have chanced upon a treasure? How ever did this thinking come about? You *have* relieved me of a burden and saved me this great expense.' 'You must know', she said, 'that, from the day I bore her until I married her off, I used to take out in my two hands some of the flour from each bread once a day, and when this amounted to a *makkūk*¹¹³ measure I sold it.' 'Allah has approved of your idea and He set you on the right path,' said her husband. 'Allah has indeed blessed him with good fortune to whom you have been a source of comfort¹¹⁴ and He has blessed him to whom you were allotted mate. In this and like circumstances the Apostle

110. After sexual intercourse.

111. Merv in Khurāsān was famous for its cotton and silk manufactures exported far and wide. In 'Abbasid times a state manufactory (*tirāz*) was established there. Specimens of Merv textiles have been discovered.

112. In Iraq the *khatan* can be someone married to your daughter or sister, and a bridegroom (Wadī'ah Najm).

113. In the 10th century the *makkūk* of Basrah and Wāsiṭ weighed six kilograms (Hinz) but weights and measures in general vary greatly.

114. *Sakan* means something in which one trusts to have ease. It is applied to a wife or children.

of Allah said:¹¹⁵ “A few she-camels plus a few she-camels make a herd of camels.” I certainly *do* hope that your son will grow up inheriting your upright nature and worthy conduct. My pleasure in this (quality) in you is no less intense than my pleasure at this pleasing temperament which, through you, Allah has ensured will be found in my posterity.’ ”

The folk rose as a body to (take turns at carrying) her bier and they pronounced blessings over her. Then they went back to her husband to offer him condolences on his loss and to share with him in his grief.

Then one of their shaykhs launched forth, saying:

26 “(Good) folk don’t despise small things, for the beginning of any large thing is small and when Allah wills / to magnify a small thing He magnifieth it, and to make a few multiply, He maketh them multiply.¹¹⁶ Are treasures aught but a dirham alongside a dirham and is the dirham aught but a *qīrāt*?¹¹⁷ Are a mass of sand and the water of the sea not the same? Were not the monies of treasures only amassed by a dirham from here and there? I have seen a junk merchant who acquired real estate of one hundred *jarībs* in the land of the Arabs. Indeed many a time I’ve seen him selling a *qīrāt*’s worth of pepper and a *qīrāt*’s worth of chick-peas and I know that he received only a *ḥabbah* profit on that pepper and a couple of *ḥabbahs* on a pepper stalk, and he went on gathering up large dirhams from small ones until they came to (enough) for him to purchase a hundred *jarībs*. ”¹¹⁸

Then he went on: “For some days I complained of my chest from a cold I had caught. Folk recommended me to take sugary *fānīdh*,¹¹⁹ while others indicated a cream¹²⁰ made of starch, sugar, almond-oil, et cetera. I found it a lot of bother and I disapproved of the expense, hoping to return to good health. While I was struggling through the days a blessed person said to me: ‘Get yourself an infusion of bran and sip it hot.’ I did sip it and sure enough it turned out to be very good and stave off hunger. That day I didn’t feel hungry or have any appetite for the midday meal till noon. Then I didn’t finish with the midday meal and washing my hands till I came near late afternoon. So since the timing of my midday meal had come so close to my dinner I did without dinner and realized the right course I should follow.

115. This Tradition is not in the canonical collections but figures as a proverb in early literature.

116. Reminiscent of Qur’ān, vii, 86, “When you were few and He made you many”.

117. In Iraq was ideally and in practice one-twentieth of a *mithqāl*/dinar and ideally five but generally three *ḥabbahs*.

118. In modern Iraq (1908) the *jarīb*, the area taken up by 100 palm trees, was in Basrah approximately 0.92 acres (Lorimer, *Gazetteer*, one-and-a-half acres). The junk merchant, probably not of Arab descent and of low class, seems to be acquiring land from the Arab conquerors’ descendants, a sort of landed aristocracy.

119. *Fānīdh*, Persian *bānīd*, a sweetmeat made of sugar, barely flour and manna (*taranjubīn*), the latter mostly found in Khurāsān.

120. Reading with Wadī’ah Najm *ḥarīrah* for *kharīrah*, “sorte de bouille qui correspond assez aux crèmes européennes” (Dozy, *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*, (Paris, 1967) 263), but see note 1089.

“So I said to the old woman: ‘Why don’t you prepare bran for our family every morning? An infusion of it clears the chest and feeding on it provides nourishment and staves off hunger. Then afterwards you dry the bran and it returns to the way it was, so you can sell it, when gathered up, for the same as the original price, and we shall have profited by the difference between the two states.’ ‘I trust’, she said, ‘that through this cold, Allah will have combined together many benefits for you through what He disclosed to you in this bran, in which lie both the health of your body and soundness of your means of livelihood.’

“I am not in the least doubt that this advice was part of the good fortune (granted by Allah).”

“You have spoken truly,” the folk said. “Such (good fortune) is not acquired through wise judgement but can only be divinely inspired.”

Then another shaykh addressed them and said:

“I used to meet with a lot of bother over flint and tinder because, when their edges get broken / and rounded, flint stones become blunt and don’t strike sparks properly but produce a sound without kindling fire. Sometimes rain and raindrops dripping (on the tinder) make me act over-hurriedly, sometimes too the stone (against which the flint is struck) would have been wearing away the edges of the flint till it leaves it (curved) like a bow. So I used to buy marcasite¹²¹ at far too high a price and rough flint at a painful cost. Furthermore I had to pay for the work on the flint and there is a bother in dealing with the bit of cotton tinder, for (cotton) has an evil smell. Tinder is not produced from dyed or dirty rags, linen, or worn-out clothing. I used to buy (cotton) at the dearest price. A few days ago I discussed with desert folk and bedouin Arabs the way they ignite fire, using *markh* and ‘*afār* wood.¹²² My friend al-Thawrī¹²³ who is, as you are aware, one of those correctly informed persons, maintains that (dry) racemes of date clusters will do instead of all those, and he instructed me as to how they are dealt with. I fetch them from my land at no cost and now the servant girl kindles the fire and gets it to flare up with date-racemes only.”

Said the folk: “Today many useful lessons have come our way. It was because of this that the ancients said: ‘Consultation fertilizes minds!’ ”

Then one of their shaykhs launched forth, saying:

“I have seen no one like Mu‘ādhah the ‘Anbarī¹²⁴ woman for putting things in their (appropriate) places and discharging her duties to the limit.”

“What is the case of this Mu‘ādhah?” said they, and he continued:

“In the past year a cousin of hers on her father’s side gave her an animal to be

121. White iron pyrites, crystallized forms used in jewellery.

122. The pith of a plant. *Leprodedia pyrotechnica* (*markh*) is used by some Arabs when making fire by rubbing sticks together. ‘*Afār* wood is used for the same purpose.

123. Abū ‘Abd al-Rahmān al-Thawrī, a wealthy landowner of Basrah, a cultured man and merchant, only known from al-Jāhiz’s writings. He was a habitué of the Ibn Ghurbān Mosque at Baghdad and noted for *bukhl*.

124. ‘Anbar, probably one of the tribes of Tamīm.

slaughtered (for the Feast). Now I noticed she was dejected, sad, pensive and downcast, so I said to her: 'What's the matter with you Mu'ādhah?' 'I am a widow woman', she replied, 'with no one to look after me and I don't know how to cope with the meat of slaughtered animals, for those who used to cope with one and deal with it properly have passed on. I am afraid some of this sheep may go to waste for I don't know how to put all the parts of it to their proper uses. I know that Allah did not create anything in this (sheep) or anything else without some use, but mankind is frail for sure. I am not afraid of letting a little go to waste but for the fact that it involves a (whole) lot going to waste.'

28 " 'As for the horns, how to deal with them is well known, namely that they be treated as hooks and nailed onto one of the / ceiling joists (to serve for) hanging up date baskets, camel saddles with their gear and anything at risk from mice, ants, cats, cockroaches, snakes, et cetera. As for the guts, they can be used for the cotton-carding bow and I am much in need of this. As for the skull, the jawbones and the rest of the bones, the way to deal with them is that, after the flesh has been stripped off them, they be broken up, then cooked and the grease rising to the top used for the lamp, dipping bread in, savoury dough (*'aṣīdah*), etcetera. Then these bones are taken to be used for fuel—and folk won't ever see a cleaner fuel and finer flame than (these bones give). Since they are like this they are quicker in (bringing) the pot on, because so little smoke is produced by them. As for the hide—the skin itself forms a bag and the wool has innumerable uses. As for the dung and droppings,¹²⁵ once dried they make excellent fuel.'

"Then she said: 'I still have to find a way of using the blood. I know of course that Allah, mighty and glorious is He, forbade only eating and drinking of "blood that has been shed"¹²⁶ and that there are places where it is allowed and not prohibited. If I do not manage to find that out so that it can be placed where some use can be made of it, it will become a brand over my heart, a mote in my eye and a recurrent worry to me.' "

He continued: "It wasn't long before I saw she had brightened up and smiled so I said: 'The door of the idea of what to do about the blood must have opened up to you!' 'Yes,' she said. 'I remembered I have in the house some new Syrian cooking pots and they say that nothing tempers and strengthens them better than smearing them with warmed blood and grease so I am relieved that everything has fallen into place.' "

"Then," he added, "I met her six months later and I said to her, 'What were the sun-dried strips of meat from that (sheep) like?' 'My father be ransom (with respect) for you!' she said (in astonishment). 'The season for eating sun-dried meat hasn't arrived yet. I still have the fat, fat tail, sides, bare bones, et cetera, to live on. Everything has season.' "

125. *Farth* is the dung in the intestine, as opposed to *ba'r*, droppings.

126. Qur'ān, vi, 145.

The fellow with the donkey and sweet water picked up a handful of pebbles and threw them on the ground (in admiration). "You don't realise you are an extravagant person", he said, "until you hear tales about the virtuous."

29

*The Tale of Zubaydah b. Ḥumayd*¹²⁷

From a greengrocer by the door of his house Zubaydah b. Ḥumayd the banker and money-changer borrowed two dirhams and a *qirāṭ*. When, after six months, he paid it back, he paid (him) two dirhams and three *ḥabbahs*¹²⁸ of barley. The greengrocer was angered and said: "Allah forfend! You are owner of a hundred thousand dinars and I am (merely a greengrocer) not possessing a hundred coppers (*fiḥs*). I live by my toil alone and putting by a *ḥabbah* or two. A camel driver shouts at your door, and a porter,¹²⁹ but doesn't get near you, and your agent isn't there. I paid you ready money, four dirhams and four barley grains—and after six months you pay me back two dirhams and three grains of barley!" "You're crazy!" replied Zubaydah. "You lent to me in summer and I paid you back in winter. Three (wet) winter grains are heavier than four dry summer grains. I haven't the least doubt that you've got extra!"

Abu 'l-Iṣṣbagh b. Rabī'¹³⁰ told me in these words:

"I went in to see him a day after he had beaten his serving lads and said to him: 'What's this painful berating and ill-naturedness for? These are just serving lads and are entitled to due respect, proper treatment and upbringing, for they're only children—they need something other than this!' 'You don't know,' he replied, 'that they ate up all the digestive mixture (*juwārishin*)¹³¹ I had in the house.' So I went out to the chief of the serving lads and said (to him): 'Confound you! Why did you take the *juwārishin* and whatever did you want with it?' 'May I be made ransom for you (sir),' he answered. 'I can't speak to you for hunger unless I (sit) leaning (against something)—the *juwārishin*—what would I do with it? Himself never fills his stomach and doesn't need *juwārishin*. We know of a full stomach only from hearsay—from people's mouths. What would we do with *juwārishin*?'"

30

With his serving lads he was most insistent on keeping water free of impurities, keeping it cool and wrapping cloths round (the water jars), for his friends and

127. Perhaps Ibn Ḥamid/Ḥumayd b. al-Qāsim al-Ṣayrafi, a slave merchant in the time of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Manṣūr. Zubaydah was also a banker/money changer (*ṣayrafi*).

128. See note 117 *supra*. The *qirāṭ* was evidently four *ḥabbahs* in value. The barley-corn (*sha'irah*) means the *ḥabbah*, lit. grain, seed.

129. To get paid for their services.

130. His name is Dhu'ayb, a Basran of the Ribī tribe of Hudhayl, one of the "lads of Basrah, a wanton wit" (al-Hājiri). The libertine poet Abū Nuwās has a line in praise of him.

131. *Juwārish(āt)* a Persian word. Dawūd al-Anṭāki, *Tadhkirah*, Cairo, 1340, i, 103 gives some recipes, "to put the stomach right".