

Byzantium and the Arabs in the Fifth Century

Irfan Shahid

<http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/med/shahid.html>

Dumbarton Oaks Research Library, Washington, D.C. 1989, p.528ff.

VII. BYZANTINISM AND ARABISM: INTERACTION

Of the three constituents of Byzantinism -- the Roman, the Greek, and the Christian -- it was the last that affected, influenced, and sometimes even controlled the lives of those Arabs who moved in the Byzantine orbit. Some- thing has been said on this influence in the fourth century, and these conclu- sions may be refined and enlarged with new data for the fifth.

1. Christianity presented the Arabs with new human types unknown to them from their pagan and Peninsular life -- the priest, the bishop, the martyr, the saint, and the monk -- and the Arab community in Oriens, both Rhomaic and federate, counted all of them among its members. In the fourth century, it contributed one saint to the universal Church -- Moses, whose feast falls on the seventh of February -- and in the Roman period it had contributed Cosmas and Damian. In the fifth century the Arab episcopate grew in number, both Rhomaic and federate, as is clear from conciliar lists and from the number of Arab bishops compared to those of the fourth century. As a result, the Arab ecclesiastical voice was audible in church councils, and was at its most articulate at Ephesus in defense of Cyrillian Orthodoxy.

2. The priesthood and the episcopate subjected the Arabs to a new form of authority and discipline to which they had not been accustomed. It was a spiritual form of authority, to which even the powerful federate phylarchs and kings were subject, and it thus induced in the Christian Arabs a new sense of loyalty which was supra-tribal, related not to tribal chauvinism but to the Christian ecclesia. This new loyalty was to find expression on the battlefield. The federate troops under their believing phylarchs fought the fire-worshiping Persians and the pagan Lakhmids with a crusading zeal, and they probably considered those who fell in such battles martyrs of the Christian faith.

3. Christianity influenced the literary life of the Arabs in the fifth century as it had done in the fourth. The conclusions on this are mainly inferential, but less so for poetry than for prose. If there was an Arabic liturgy and a biblical lectionary in the fifth century, the chances are that this would have influenced the development of Arabic literary life, as it invariably influenced that of the other peoples of the Christian Orient. It is possible to detect such influences in the scanty fragments of Arabic poetry and trace the refining influence of the new faith on sentiments. Loanwords from Christianity in Arabic are easier to document, and they are eloquent testimony to the permanence of that influence in much the same way that other loanwords testify to the influence of the Roman imperim.

4. By far the most potent influence of Christianity on the Arabs was that of monasticism. The new type of Christian hero after the saint and the martyr, the monk who renounced the world and came to live in what the Arabs considered their natural homeland, the desert, especially appealed to the Arabs and was the object of much veneration. The monasteries penetrated deep in the heart of Arabia, into regions to which the church could not penetrate. Thus the monastery turned out to be more influential than the church in the spiritual life of the Arabs, especially in the sphere of indirect Byzantine influence in the Peninsula. The monastery was also the meeting place of two

ideals -- Christian philanthopia and Arab hospitality. According to Muslim tradition, the Prophet Muhammad met the mysterious monk Bahlra in one of these Byzantine monasteries.

5. The Christian mission to the Arabs, especially if it entailed the translation of some books of the Bible such as the Pentateuch, must have acquainted the Arabs with the biblical concept of their descent from Ishmael. This marked them as a biblical people, gave them a new identity, and, what is more, affiliated them with the first patriarch himself, Abraham. This was not an unmixed blessing to the Christian Arabs, since it carried with it the implication that they were "outside the promise." However, their allegiance to Christianity rid them of this opprobrium, since it affiliated them spiritually with the new people of God. There was, however, a pocket in Arabia where the seed of Ishmaelism was sown, and where it had a different meaning to its Arabs, who apparently harbored no regrets whatsoever that they were descended from Hagar. In the following century the Prophet Muhammad appeared in their midst, and forty years after his birth proclaimed Islam as the true religion of the straight path. In the Koran the first patriarch appears as the founder of pure monotheism, and his son Ishmael appears not as a biblical outcast but as a prophet.

6. One of the most fruitful encounters of Christianity with Arabism took place in northwestern Arabia, in Hijaz, the sphere of indirect Byzantine influence. The federate tribe of 'Udra lived in this region and adopted Christianity quite early in the Byzantine period. Among its many achievements was a special type of poetry, known as 'Udri or 'Udrite, which was inspired by a special type of love, also called 'Udri. It is practically certain that this type of love and poetry appeared under the influence of Christianity in pre-Islamic times, although it may later have had an Islamic component. It represents the fruitful encounter of the chivalrous attitude toward women in pre-Islamic Arabia and the spiritualization of this attitude through the refining influence of Christianity. Through the Arab Conquests it appeared as amour courtois in western Christendom, whose religion had inspired it in the first instance.

VIII. ARABS IN THE SERVICE OF BYZANTIUM

The sources on the Arabs who were important for the Arab-Byzantine relationship in this pre-Islamic period are neither abundant nor detailed enough to make it possible to draw sketches of the more outstanding among them. For the fourth century, it was not possible to recover the features of more than three figures: Imru' al-Qays, the federate king of the Namara inscription; Mavia, the warrior queen of the reign of Valens; and Moses, the eremite who became the bishop of the federates. For the fifth century it is possible to discuss only four of the figures who served both the Byzantine imperium and ecclesi.

1. Aspebetos/Petrus. The career of this Arab chief was truly remarkable, as he moved through one phase to another. He started as a military commander in the service of the Great King, then became the Byzantine phylarch of the Provincia Arabia, then that of Palaestina Prima, then the bishop of the Palestinian Parembole. The climax of his career was his participation at the Council of Ephesus, where he appears not merely as a subscription in the conciliar list but as an active participant in the debates and a delegate of the Council to Nestorius.

2. Amorkesos. His is an equally remarkable career, and reminiscent of Aspebetos in that he too had been in the service of the Great King before he defected to Byzantium. But unlike Aspebetos he remained a servant of the imperium, not the ecclesia, although he used the latter in his diplomatic offensive. The former chief in the service of Persia entered a second phase of his life when he became a military power in North Arabia, and a third when he mounted an offensive against the Roman frontier which culminated in his occupation of the island of Iotabe in the Gulf of Eilat. Ecclesiastical diplomacy followed his military achievements and resulted in a visit to Constantinople and royal treatment by Leo. He returned, having concluded a foedus with the emperor, which endowed him with the phylarchate of Palaestina Tertia. What is striking in the success story of this Arab chief is his desire to become a phylarch of the Romans in spite of the

power base he had established for himself in the Arabian Peninsula. The lure of the Byzantine connection is nowhere better illustrated than in the career of this chief, who preferred to serve in the Byzantine army than to be an independent king or chief in the Arabian Peninsula. This conclusion, which may be safely drawn from an examination of his career, is relevant to the discussion of the *prodosia* charge trumped up against the Ghassanid phylarchs of the sixth century. All these Arab chiefs gloried in the Byzantine connection and preferred it to their former Arabian existence.

3. Dawud/David. The Salihids were fanatic Christians, and they owe this to the fact that their very existence as federates and dominant federates was related to Christianity -- when a monk cured the wife of their eponym, Zokomos, of her sterility and effected the conversion of the chief. His descendants remained loyal to the faith which their ancestor fully embraced, but of all these Dawud is unique in that toward the end of his life his religiosity increased to the point which possibly made him a monk or an ascetic. He built the monastery which carried his name, Dayr Dawud, and he had a court poet from Iyad and a daughter who also was a poetess. The gentleness induced in him by Christianity, apparently was taken advantage of by a coalition of two of the federate tribes, who finally brought about his downfall. His career presents the spectacle of an Arab federate king who loyally served both the imperium and the ecclesia and payed for this service with his life.

4. Elias. Entirely different in background from all the preceding figures is Elias, the Arab Patriarch of Jerusalem towards the end of the century. While the other three were federate Arabs, Elias was Rhomaic, born in Arabia, either the Provincia in Oriens or the Ptolemaic nome in the limes Aegypti, one of the many Rhomaic Arabs in the service of the imperium or the ecclesia whose Arab identity has been masked by their assumption of either biblical or Graeco-Roman names. His, too, was a remarkable career in the ecclesiastical riss. He started as a monk in the desert of Juda, associated with St. Euthymius, then drew the attention of Patriarch Anastasius, who ordained him priest of the Church of Anastasia in Jerusalem; finally he became the Patriarch of the Holy City, and engaged in a vigorous administration of his patriarchate. He paid attention to both churches and monasteries and laid the foundation of the Church of the Theotokos in Jerusalem, the splendid church completed in the reign of Justinian and dedicated in 543. He was a strong and stern ecclesiastic who was unwavering in his Orthodoxy, to the point of taking on the emperor Anastasius himself. He paid for this by being exiled to Ayla in 516, where he died. It is possible that he was associated with the translation of a simple liturgy and biblical lectionary into Arabic for the benefit of the various Christian Arab communities scattered in the three Palestines which constituted his ecclesiastical jurisdiction.

These are the four large historical figures in the history of Arab-Byzantine relations in the fifth century. Their careers call for two observations.

(1) They were very different from one another: bishop, phylarch, federate king, and patriarch, but all four were involved in both the imperium and the ecclesia, a reflection of the intimate and inseparable relationship that obtained between the two in the Christian Roman Empire. Three of them were federate Arabs and one was Rhomaic. The four different careers are also a reflection of the wide range of Arab involvement in the life of the empire and of the new opportunities open to them.

(2) Their careers reflect the profound metamorphosis that each of them experienced as a result of the Byzantine connection. Perhaps that of Aspebetos is the most remarkable: from a pagan chief to a Byzantine phylarch, to a baptized one, to a bishop of the Parembolē, to a participant at the Council of Ephesus and a delegate to Nestorius expressing the strong voice of Arab Orthodoxy. Thus his career represents the highest degree of assimilation that a federate Arab could experience.

IX. THE IMAGE

Both streams of Byzantine historiography, secular and ecclesiastical, continue to transmit images of the Arabs in the fifth century. Although the negative image of the fourth century is not dead, there is a marked improvement in that image in both streams of fifth-century historiography.

Ecclesiastical

A new generation of ecclesiastical historians appear in the fifth century, emancipated from the bondage of the Eusebian image of the Arabs as uncovenanted Ishmaelites, outside the promise. These ecclesiastical historians expressed the true spirit of the Christian ecclesia in their vision of the peoples of the limitrophe, including the Arabs. Socrates, Sozomen, and Theodoret remembered the exploits of Queen Mavia on behalf of Orthodoxy and described the progress of Christianity among the Arabs. It is, however, Theodoret who has the most informative passages on the Arabs.

1. *Historia Religiosa*. The passage on the Arab Abbas, who became the he-goumenos of the monastery of Teleda, occurs in this work. The importance of this passage is that it enables Theodoret to reflect theologically on the Arabs as a biblical people, the descendants of Ishmael and ultimately of Abraham, and provides him with occasion to describe the spiritual metamorphosis of Abbas from an unredeemed Ishmaelite outside the promise, to participation in the patrimony of Abraham, to membership in the New Israel, the gateway to the Kingdom of Heaven. The spiritual path of Abbas is that traversed by all the Christianized Ishmaelites.

2. *Curatio*. In this work, "The Cure of Pagan Maladies," Theodoret projects an image of the Arabs in the context of a pagan world peopled by Greeks and barbarians, and tries to argue for the unity of the human species affirmed by Scripture. He reviews the various peoples and tries to discover their respective virtues. When he comes to the Arabs, he grants them "an intelligence, lively and penetrating . . . and a judgment capable of discerning truth and refuting falsehood."

The strong affirmative note sounded by Theodoret is supported and fortified by the ecclesiastical documents of the century, especially those of the two ecumenical councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, in 431 and 451 respectively. The number of Arab bishops, both Rhomaic and federate who participated is remarkable, and they expressed the strong voice of Arab Orthodoxy, first Cyrillian Orthodoxy at Ephesus and then Leonine at Chalcedon. Especially prominent in this expression was Petrus I, the bishop of the Palestinian Parembole, who participated actively at Ephesus and was one of the delegates whom the Council sent to negotiate with Nestorius.

The two evaluations of the Arabs in Theodoret are striking, coming as they do from a distinguished theologian and church historian, and so is the evidence from the Acta of the two ecumenical councils. But even as the image of the Arabs was being improved by the Greek ecclesiastical writers, it continued to suffer at the hands of a Latin church father.

1. Jerome, who inherited his image of the Arabs from Eusebius, continued to write about them as unredeemed Ishmaelites, a concept from which, as a biblical scholar and exegete, he could not liberate himself. There was another reason behind Jerome's fulminations against the Arabs. He had lived in the monastic community of the desert of Chalcis and later at Bethlehem. Both were subject to Saracen raids that spelt ruin to monasteries, especially at Bethlehem which was actually occupied by the Saracens. Consequently, he fell back on biblical texts which enabled him to refer to these Saracens as *servorum et ancillarum numerus*. His older contemporary, St. Augustine, followed in the steps of those who had written on heresies in the East, and naturally the Arabs appear in his *De Haeresibus* (sec. 83).

2. On the other hand, another Latin author, Rufinus, spoke in complimentary terms of the Arabs in his *Ecclesiastical History*, as upholders of Orthodoxy. Indeed, he heralded the new generation

of ecclesiastical historians in the East -- Socrates, Sozomen and Theodoret -- who were sympathetic to the world of the barbarians, including the Arabs. But the voice of Rufinus was drowned out by those of the two immensely influential ecclesiastics of the West, Jerome and Augustine, and consequently the image of the Arabs remained dim in the West even before they reached it in the seventh century as conquerors of North Africa and Spain.

Secular

As Rufinus opened a new chapter in the history of the image of the Arabs in ecclesiastical historiography, so did Synesius in secular historiography:

1. In one of his letters, written in 404, Synesius praises the courage of the Arabs, soldiers who had been withdrawn most probably from the *Ala Tertia Arabum* in the *limes Aegypti* to fight in Pentapolis. In another passage in the same letter he describes the despair of the passengers on the stormtossed ship that was sailing to Pentapolis and lauds the attitude of the Arab soldiers who were prepared to fall on their swords rather than die by drowning. He even grows lyrical and refers to them as "by nature true descendants of Homer."

That a Greek who was nursed in a tradition that viewed mankind in terms of Greek and barbarian should be so emancipated and, what is more, refer to the Arabs as descendants in spirit of the Homeric heroes is surely extraordinary and calls for an explanation. His city, Cyrene, had no Arabs in it and so there was no friction between his community and the Arabs; as a Neo-Platonist he may have remembered that some important Neo-Platonic figures, such as Iamblichus, were Arab; his anti-German sentiments, which he expressed while he was at Constantinople around 400, may have inclined him toward the Arabs, who had saved Constantinople from the German Goths in 378 after Adrianople; and finally, his literary models on the Arabs, most probably, were authors such as Diodorus Siculus, who spoke well of the Arabs, rather than Ammianus, of whom he was probably unaware.

2. Not only in the works of a Neo-Platonist but also in official imperial documents, the image of the Arabs appears reasonably bright and no longer that of raiders of the frontier or traitors to the Roman cause, undesirable as allies or as enemies. In one of the *novellae* of 443, Theodosius and Valentinian instruct that the *limital dues* should not abstract anything from the *annona* of the *foederati*, especially the Saracen ones. This could only imply that the central government was happy with their performance and loyalty to the state. The date of the *novella*, coming so close after the end of the Second Persian War of the reign of Theodosius II, suggests that the Arab *foederati* had performed creditably in that conflict. Their performance was consistently satisfactory on the battlefield. The *prodosia* theme elaborated by Procopius in the sixth century was without any foundation and the satisfaction of the *imperium* was to find expression in the seventh, in the victory bulletin which Heraclius addressed to the Senate after his victory at Nineveh.

3. This bright image in the secular sources was somewhat dimmed later in the century when Malchus of Philadelphia, himself most probably a Rhomaic Arab, wrote and almost neutralized what Synesius had said about the Arabs. In a long and detailed fragment on the emperor Leo in the penultimate year of his reign, Malchus relentlessly criticized the emperor for his relations with the Arab chief Amorkesos, and by implication gave an uncomplimentary picture of the Arabs even though they became *foederati* of the empire.

The background of this attack on the Arabs, especially as it was voiced by one of them, is as complex as that which inspired Synesius to draw his picture of the Arabs in bright colors. Four main reasons may be detected behind Malchus' hostile attitude. First and foremost comes *Kaiserkritik*. The historian was not an admirer of the emperor, and expressed his disapproval of Leo's administration by criticizing his Arab policy. Malchus also wrote as a concerned *Rhomaios* and an analyst of Roman decline. For him, the barbarians had brought about the downfall of the

empire in the West in 476. Leo had depended on another group of barbarians, the Isaurians, and now he was also employing the services of the Arabs, represented by Amorkesos. Malchus wrote not in his native Provincia Arabia, but in Constantinople and under Anastasius. He was an assimilated Rho-maios, like others who came from the Provincia and are hardly recognizable as Arabs. Hence he acquired the ethnocentricity of those who belonged by birth to the Graeco-Roman establishment and voiced their racism with a vengeance. Finally, it is possible, judging from his phraseology, that he was writing with a literary model in mind -- Ammianus, whose anti-Arab outbursts, expressed in vivid and graphic phrases, have riveted the attention of posterity, endured throughout the ages, and with staggering tenacity retained their hold on those who have dealt with the image.

In spite of the negative image that secular and ecclesiastical historiography, represented by Malchus and Jerome projected, the image of the Arabs experienced a marked improvement. Toward the end of the century, in the reign of Anastasius, there arose another group of foederati, who possibly became involved from the beginning in Monophysitism. This completely blackened the image of the Arabs in the sixth century during which both secular and ecclesiastical historiography combined to project a most uncomplimentary image which damned them as traitors to the imperim and heretics to the eclesia. Thus the fifth century is the golden period in the history of the Arab image, unlike the fourth and the sixth, during which it was tarnished mainly by sharp friction with the central government on doctrinal grounds. The coin of Arab identity looked good on both of its sides. To the imperim the Arabs appeared as faithful guardians of the Roman frontier; to the eclesia they appeared as conforming Orthodox believers.

The Arab Self-Image

The significance of two ecclesiastical historians, Sozomen and Theodoret, is immense for the Byzantine perception of the Arabs in the fifth century. In addition to the improved image that their works provide, they also, especially Theodoret, have preserved data on the Arabs which strongly suggest that the Arabs of this period perceived themselves as descendants of Ishmael. Whether this perception was indigenous among the Arabs or adventitious, having reached them from the Pentateuch either directly through the spread of Judaism in Arabia or mediated through the Christian mission, is not entirely clear. Its reality, however, is clear and certain, and the idiom of Theodoret even suggests that their perception was mixed with pride in the fact of their descent from Ishmael.

This is the important new element that appears in the fifth century and adds a second mirror to the one that reflects the Byzantine perception of the Arabs. In this new mirror, Ishmael is rehabilitated. He is no longer a figure that embarrasses the Arabs through certain biblical associations but a revered ancestor of whom they are proud. This image became a most important element in Arab religious life in the seventh century, which witnessed an even more complete rehabilitation of Ishmael. In the Koran, Ishmael appears not as the pater eponymous of the Arabs but as the son of the First Patriarch; Abraham, and a prophet. The precious passage in the *Historia Religiosa* of Theodoret proves beyond doubt that the eponymate of Ishmael is rooted in the pre-Islamic Arab past and that it goes back to at least the fifth century.

EPILOGUE

The Sallhids endured for almost a century in the service of Byzantium. They represent the golden period in the history of federate-imperial relations. Unlike the Tanukhids and the Ghassanids, the Sallhid doctrinal persuasion was that of the imperial government in Constantinople. Consequently federate-imperial relations were not marred by violent and repeated friction such as vitiated these relations in the fourth and sixth centuries.

The Salihids fought for Byzantium on the Persian front and distinguished themselves in the two Persian Wars of the reign of Theodosius II. It is also practically certain that they participated in Leo's Vandal Expedition, taking part in the battle of Cape Bon, during which their numbers must

have been thinned. This is the most plausible explanation for their ineffectiveness in the defense of the limes Arabic around A.D. 470. Finally, the law of generation and decay which governed the rise and fall of Arab polities before the rise of Islam caught up with them. Powerful Peninsular groups such as the Ghassanids and the Kindites had hewn their way through the Arabian Peninsula and had reached the Roman frontier. The Sallhids, already weakened considerably by their participation in the Vandal War, could not withstand the impact of the combined force of the two new powerful tribal groups. They succumbed in the contest for power and the Ghassanids emerged as the dominant federate group in the sixth century.

Although no longer supreme in federate history in Oriens, the Sallhids remained an important political and military fact in the structure of the federate shield. Their history is divisible into the following phases:

(1) 502 to 529, when they constitute one of the federate groups in Oriens, who obeyed their own phylarchs and the dx of the province to whom they were ultimately subordinate;

(2) 529-580, when they were most probably subordinate to the Ghassanid supreme phylarch, who was installed in that position by Emperor Justinian around 529, and must have continued in that subordinate relation- ship until ca. 580, when Ghassanid-Byzantine relations soured considerably and the Arab phylarchate of Oriens was decentralized;

(3) 580 to 610, during the period of much eclipse for the Ghassanids, when the power of the Sallhids may have been revived or at least made independent of the former, since one of their phylarchs appears fighting with the Byzantines in 586 during the siege of Mardm. Not much is known about them after this period until they appear fighting together with the other federates against the Muslim Arabs. The last mention of them during the Muslim Conquest of Oriens occurs in connection with the capitulation of Chalcis. The Muslim commander asks them to accept Islam, but they refuse.

Unlike other federate groups such as the Iyadis, the Salihids remained staunch Christians throughout the Muslim period. This explains why they attained no prominence in Islamic times. Usama ibn Zayd was the exception: he served four Umayyad caliphs in important administrative roles, his durabil- ity in their service being testimony to his talent. After him the sources are silent on the Sallhids, who dispersed in various parts of the Fertile Gescent and possibly affiliated themselves with other tribes. They appear in one of the verses of Islamic times as an example of dispersion and evanescence worthy of the classical lament of the Arab poet: "ubi snt qi ante nos in mundo fere?"

The other tribes of the federate shield took part in the defense of the limes orientalis and in the Persian Wars. They also protected the caravans that moved along the arteries of international trade in north and northwestern Arabia. The Sallhids did not control these tribes as the Ghassanids were to do in the sixth century. The Arabic sources record feuds among these federate tribes. Two of them, Kalb and Namir, united against the dominant group Sallh, brought about the downfall of the Sallhid king Dawud, and must have weakened the power of Sallh, thus contributing ultimately to the victory of the Ghassanids over them and the emergence of a new federate supremacy, the Ghassanid, which controlled most or all of the other tribes of the federate shield in Oriens for almost half a century.

In addition to their military role, these federate tribes made some impor- tant contributions to Arabic culture in pre-Islamic times. The names of Iyad, Kalb, and 'Udra stand out in connection with the rise of the Arabic script in Oriens in the fifth century and of a new type of love and love poetry, called 'Udrite in Arabic, which represented the confluence of the pre-Islamic chivalrous attitude with Christian ideals of chastity and continence.

All these federate tribes fought on the side of Byzantium in the period of the Arab Conquests. After the crushing defeat at Yarmuk in 636, they dispersed and their history as foederati came to an end. Some of them emigrated to Anatolia, some stayed on in Oriens, now Arab Bilad al-Sham, and formed part of the Umayyad ajnad system. While the Sallhids remained staunchly Christian, some of the other federate tribes accepted Islam, which enabled them to participate actively in the shaping of Islamic history.

Before they made their Byzantine connection, these tribes had moved in the restricted and closed orbit of the Arabian Peninsula. In all probability they would have continued to move in that orbit, and history would not have taken notice of them and their achievements. It was the Byzantine connection that drew them into the world of the Mediterranean and gave an international dimension to their history. One of the three constituents of Byzantium, Christianity, terminated their isolation and peninsularism by making them members of the large world of Christendom and its universal ecclesia.

Islam was to do what Byzantium had done but in a more substantial way. It made the tribes assume a more active role in shaping the history of the Mediterranean world in both East and West. In the East they formed part of the ajnad, participated in the annual expeditions against the Byzantine heartland, Anatolia, and took part in many sieges of Constantinople. In the West some of them settled on European soil, but their more important role in Spain was cultural. One of these tribes, Iyad, produced the talented family of the Zuhrids, known to medieval Europe as physicians and to Arabic scholars as composers of strophic odes. The influence of another, 'Udra, crossed the Pyrenees, and either gave rise to, or formed one ingredient in, the rise of that attractive type of love known to medievalists as amour courtois. Few readers of the medieval literary works that this type of love inspired realize that they are owed to an Arabian tribe which in the fifth century defended the southern approaches to the limes orientalis of Byzantium as a tribe of the outer shield. And it is mainly to the well-known lyric of the German-Jewish poet with its haunting couplet that modern Europe owes its vague recollection of that Arab tribe of the fifth century which inspired the rise of this love and gifted it with its own name:

*Und mein Stamm sind jene Asra,
Welche sterben, wenn sie lieben.*