

寫給宮廷贊助者的歷史：蘇萊曼·本·阿布都馬立克

在巴拉杜里的《望族世系》之形象與阿巴斯宮廷文化

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摘要

本文探討宮廷文化對於歷史書寫的影響，以巴拉杜里（al-Balādhurī 死於九世紀末之前）的《望族世系》中對於烏麥亞哈里發，蘇萊曼·本·阿布都馬立克（Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik 在位期間：715-717）之描繪為例。本文首先解釋巴拉杜里之生平與阿巴斯宮廷的關係，以釐清巴拉杜里鎖定的讀者群：宮廷菁英。透過比較巴拉杜里所呈現的蘇萊曼與其在其他歷史文本的形象，本文發現巴拉杜里對於蘇萊曼的人格特色有更多的著墨。巴拉杜里對於史料的處理是為了回應其讀者的期待。在九世紀的巴格達宮廷，文學盛行，許多朝臣書寫關於飲食、語言與諫言文學之作品，而這類的主题也可見於巴拉杜里所描寫的蘇萊曼與其他烏麥亞哈里發。換言之，巴拉杜里的《望族世系》不單單是在還原過去，也有啟發與娛樂其讀者之目的。

關鍵詞：巴拉杜里、蘇萊曼·本·阿布都馬立克、歷史書寫、阿巴斯宮廷文化、望族世系

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Writing History under the Patronage: the Representation of Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik in the *Ansāb al-ashrāf* and Its Relation to the ‘Abbāsīd Court Culture

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Abstract**

This paper addresses the impact of the court patronage on the history writing through the analysis of the representation of the Umayyad caliph, Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik (r. 715-717), in the *Ansāb al-ashrāf* (*Genealogies of the Notables*) by al-Balādhurī (d. before the end of the ninth century). This paper first introduces al-Balādhurī with regard to his association with the ‘Abbāsīd court and then identifies the audiences of al-Balādhurī’s *Ansāb al-ashrāf*: court elite. Then, by comparing the *Ansāb*’s reports about Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik with those in the chronicles compiled by relatively independent scholars active in the ninth century, that is, Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (776-854) and al-Ṭabarī (839-923), the present study investigates how al-Balādhurī as a court-patronised littérateur responds to his patron-audiences. The textual comparison shows that al-Balādhurī includes unusual reports, which illustrate Sulaymān’s personal traits such as his eloquence and gluttony, while this kind of material is absent in the chronicles of al-Ṭabarī and Khalīfa b. Khayyāt. This paper argues that al-Balādhurī’s selection of material reflects his tendency to meet the expectation of his audiences. In the ninth-century Baghdad, the literary works produced by boon companions encompass the *adab* themes such as food, drinks, eloquence and mirrors for princes. These themes find the echo in the reports about Sulaymān, Yazīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd b. Yazīd in the *Ansāb*. That is, when al-Balādhurī compiled his work, he included the material that may have been of his patron-audiences’ interest. As al-Balādhurī purpose of writing history is to entertain or edify, rather than merely recover the historical “truth”, the *Ansāb* to some extent ought to be understood in the context of the court culture.

Key words: al-Balādhurī, *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, the ‘Abbāsīd court culture, historiography, Sulaymān b. ‘Abd al-Malik

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Introduction

Ever since its discovery in 1883, the *Ansāb al-ashrāf* by al-Balādhurī constitutes an important supplementary material to al-Ṭabarī’s *Tārīkh* (Becker and Rosenthal, “al-Balādhurī”). However, the text itself has yet received limited scholarly attention as to the purpose and the agenda of the compiler. One of the earliest scholars to discuss the *Ansāb* is Goitein, editor of volume five of the *Ansāb*, who sees “perfect objectivity” in al-Balādhurī as a historian, but his observation is partly based on the fact that al-Balādhurī devotes much attention to the Umayyads: the manuscript on which his edition depends contains 1227 folios; 120 folios are devoted to the descendants of Abū Ṭālib, and little more than 70 to the ‘Abbasids, whereas the Umayyads occupy 454 folios, more than a third of the work (Goitein 5: 11-12). Because al-Balādhurī was *persona grata* to several ‘Abbasid Caliphs, Goitein inquires: “How was it possible for al-Balādhurī, a member of the entourage of the ‘Abbasid Caliphs, to describe the Umayyads not only at such length, but also with perfect objectivity, or as appears from certain pages, even with sympathy?” Goitein continues to account for this “perfect objectivity”: “the ‘Abbasid Caliphs saw in stories about men like Mu‘āwiya, ‘Abd al-Malik, and Hishām... useful precedents in the art of state administration and the conduct of majesty”. Goitein further suggests that the view that Umayyad history, under the influence of the ‘Abbasid court, was misrepresented should be modified (Goitein 5:15-16). Through an argument based on the length of folios, the view that al-Balādhurī is an “objective” historian is

established.

Nonetheless, an argument as such cannot demonstrate “perfect objectivity”. The volume edited by Goitein comprises the history of ‘Uthmān and his family, of Marwān and his family and the caliphate of ‘Abdallāh b. al-Zubayr. It seems that Goitein builds his judgment upon the narratives of these figures and disregards the fact that the narratives of several Umayyad caliphs, when read in the cultural context of al-Balādhurī and his readers, do not offer examples of “state administration and the conduct of majesty” (Su 28-45).

Goitein’s claims find resonance in Sarton (457-458), Zwettler (227-228) and Serjeant (160-162), who unanimously praise the *Ansāb* for presenting a rival dynasty without partisan bias. The view that al-Balādhurī is an objective historian is also shared by ‘Abd al-Ghanī (57) and al-Dūrī, who comments “although al-Balādhurī is closely related to the ‘Abbasids, he is neutral and just, trying to comprise all kinds of *akhbār*, and endeavors to be objective with his sources in a meticulous manner” (58). However, these statements are seldom supported by the textual evidence.

On the other hand, al-Munajjid holds the opposite view that al-Balādhurī does not give the Umayyads the respect they deserve. As a matter of fact, al-Balādhurī even refrains from calling them caliphs, except for ‘Umar b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz, whereas he describes the ‘Abbasid regime as *al-dawla al-mubāraka* (1:36).

Khalil Athamina examines the *akhbār* transmitted by al-Balādhurī in the *Ansāb* from al-Haytham b. ‘Adī and al-Madā’inī in order to uncover the political and sectarian tendencies of each *akhbārī* and their dependent — al-Balādhurī. This conclusion, nonetheless, is speculative, as Athamina admits, because the original texts of al-Haytham and al-Madā’inī are not available (239).

On the other hand, Judd compares the use of al-Madā’inī’s *akhbār* in the *Ansāb* with that in *Tārīkh* of al-Ṭabarī and finds “they each shaped the material in different ways to create narratives that were consistent with their interpretations of the forces driving Umayyad history”(222-225). Judd notices the different representation of the decline of Umayyad history as showed in these two texts, but does not pursue the reason behind the difference.

As a whole, these studies (with exception of Athamina and Judd) on the *Ansāb* more or less focus on al-Balādhurī's objectivity as a historian. Nevertheless, this approach undermines the complexity of the Umayyad characters which al-Balādhurī shapes through redaction of the reports (by means of abbreviation, combination and juxtaposition), as shown in Judd's research. The Umayyad caliphs are presented in both positive and negative aspects and, arguably, as *types* rather than "real" people (Marshall 298-302).

Thus, this study proposes that the Umayyad characters should be construed in the vision of al-Balādhurī's audiences. By recognizing al-Balādhurī's role as the *littérateur* under the court patronage, we can understand his *Ansāb* on its own terms without imposing an interpretative framework (such as Rankean paradigm in the previous studies); further, it is possible to investigate what determines the making of history in the 'Abbāsīd court in the ninth century. To do so, this paper will compare the representation of Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik with that in the chronicles by Khalīfa b. Khayyāt and al-Ṭabarī and then read the reports about this caliph in the context of the court culture. In what follows, section one will first outline the life of al-Balādhurī in order to identify his audiences. Section two addresses the portrayal of Sulaymān in the works of al-Ṭabarī and Khalīfa b. Khayyāt, who can be seen as independent compilers as opposed to the court-patronised ones like al-Balādhurī. Section three analyses the reports about Sulaymān in the *Ansāb* in comparison with those in the compilations discussed in section two. Finally, section four offers an explanation for al-Balādhurī's representation of Sulaymān in the *Ansāb* from the perspective of the audiences of this work. Further, section four outlines the representation of the Umayyad caliphs, Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd b. Yazīd, which, as in the case of Sulaymān, includes the *adab* themes popular among the writings of the courtiers. By comparing how al-Balādhurī portrays the Umayyad caliph, Sulaymān b. 'Abd al-Malik, with the relevant reports in the chronicles of the scholars working independently from the court in the ninth century, this paper shows the impact of court-patronage on the history writing in the case of the *Ansāb* and, furthermore, the complexity of the Arabic historiography.

1. Al-Balādhurī's Life and Audiences

This section gives an overview of al-Balādhurī's life. Based on the primary sources, especially, the anecdotes recorded by Yāqūt, which illustrate al-Balādhurī's interaction with his contemporaries, it is possible to speculate the groups targeted by him as the audiences. Although the *Ansāb* does not have a preface stating the purpose of the compiler or identifying a dedicatee, judging from al-Balādhurī's association with the court, it is likely that the ruling elite constitute his primary audiences.

According to *al-Fihrist* of Ibn al-Nadīm (d. 995 or 998¹), al-Balādhurī was a Baghdadi coming from a *kuttāb* (secretaries, the plural of *kātib*) background: his grandfather worked in Egypt as a *kātib* and himself was a man of letters, a poet notorious for his lampoons and a compiler of numerous works including *al-Buldān al-ṣaghīr*, *al-Buldān al-kabīr*, *Kitāb al-Akhhbār wa-l-ansāb* and *Kitāb 'Ahd Ardashīr*, which was translated from Persian into Arabic in the poetic form (Ibn al-Nadīm 125-126).

Al-Balādhurī's association with the court is mentioned by Ibn 'Asākir (1105-1176): al-Balādhurī once attended the assembly (*jālasa*) of al-Mutawakkil (r. 847-861) and died during the time of al-Mu'tamid (6: 74-76).² In addition, al-Ṣafadī (1296-1363) says that al-Balādhurī was the *jalīs* (attendant of literary saloons) of al-Musta'in (862-866), who promised the former abundant reward (8: 155-157). The primary sources regarding al-Balādhurī's life hardly reveal the time of al-Balādhurī's death. The secondary sources suggest that the year he died is 892, but none of early primary sources corroborates this (Ziriklī 1: 267; al-Naboodah "al-Balādhurī"; Sarkīs 1: 584-585; Zaydān 2: 196; Yusrī 56; Hitti 6). Nonetheless, based on the fact that he was alive during the caliphate of al-Mu'tamid (r. 870-892), it is reasonable to assume that he died before 900 (Yāqūt 5: 99).

Many court elite active in the second half of the ninth century including *kuttāb*

¹ The dates are controversial: Fück "Ibn al-Nadīm".

² The aforementioned biographical information is largely reproduced by Yāqūt (1179-1229) and Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī (1372-1449). Nevertheless, Yāqūt supplements his predecessors with other sources, for instance, al-Marzūbānī's *Mu'jam al-shu'arā'* as well as the quotation of al-Balādhurī's poetry, see: Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān* 1: 693-694; Yāqūt 5: 89-102.

and viziers fell victims of his lampoons: the vizier Sulaymān b. Wahb and his son, the *kātib* Aḥmad b. Šāliḥ b. Shīrazād, the *kātib* Dalīl b. Ya‘qūb and the vizier Šā‘id (Yāqūt 5: 92-93, 96-97).³ Whom al-Balādhurī lampooned matters, because it informs what kind of audiences was in his mind. The personal grudge between al-Balādhurī and the vizier Ismā‘īl b. Bulbul resulted from a letter or a book (*kitāb*) which al-Balādhurī wrote for the latter hoping for a reward. Ibn Bulbul promised to give him money, but he never did; as a result, al-Balādhurī lampooned him as revenge (Yāqūt 5: 101-102). A trivial anecdote like this does not only inform how al-Balādhurī makes a living by blackmailing with his acrimonious tongue, but also reveal his targeted audiences.

As his poetic production was almost directed at officials and caliphs, it is not unconceivable that al-Balādhurī’s intended audiences were courtiers, *kuttāb* and caliphs. Al-Balādhurī’s *Futūḥ al-buldān*, which might have been abbreviated from a larger book, *al-Buldān al-kabīr*, displays remarkable interests in administrative and economic affairs such as early local government, fiefs, revenue and taxation. To write on such a theme and abbreviate it into a handy and portable size to suit his readers indicates that al-Balādhurī’s ideal audiences were *kuttāb* and caliphs, who were most likely to find the contents useful (Khalidi 67-68). Another anecdote mentioned in *Mu‘jam al-udabā’* can further illustrate this. ‘Alī b. Hārūn b. al-Munajjim relates in his *Amālī* from his uncle, to whom al-Balādhurī relates the following personal experience: al-Mutawakkil ordered Ibrāhīm b. al-‘Abbās al-Šūlī to write a book postponing the taxation to the fifth of Ḥuzayrān (a month in Islamic calendar); accordingly, he wrote his famous book for this purpose and did an excellent job. When ‘Ubaydallah b. Yahyā came, al-Mutawakkil ordered the book to be read out. The book was highly praised by ‘Ubaydallah and other attendants.

³ Not much is known about Aḥmad; he came to Baghdad with al-Musta‘īn, Waṣīf and Bughā in 865 and he went in hiding when Šāliḥ b. Waṣīf arrested Aḥmad b. Isrā‘īl in 869. Nonetheless, he assumed *dīwān al-kharāj* (bureau of taxation) during the vizierate of ‘Ubaydallah b. Khāqān appointed by al-Mu‘tamid. According to al-Munajjid, he assumed the vizierate in 890/891. See: al-Šābī 89-90; Miskawayh 4: 163, 207-212. Al-Munajjid 1: 22. Šā‘id was the assistant of al-Muwaffaq; Al-Dhahabī 2010. Dalīl was the secretary of Bughā the younger; Miskawayh 4: 161. Sulaymān used to be the secretary of Ītākḥ and Ashnās; Al-Dhahabī 1934; Ibn Khallikān 2: 415-418.

Al-Balādhurī, according to his own words, became green-eyed with envy and started to nitpick with al-Ṣūlī's book (Yāqūt 5: 93-94). Al-Balādhurī's jealousy is perhaps aroused by the positive reception of his potential audiences, viz. the caliph and his entourage. As mentioned above, al-Balādhurī translated *Kitāb 'Ahd Ardashīr* into Arabic poem. *Kitāb 'Ahd Ardashīr* is a manual for the education of princes and seems to have enjoyed popularity, given that many texts and fragments have survived through Arabic transmission (Shaked "Andarz"). Translating a Persian mirror for princes into the poetic form is also indicative to the readership — ruling elite. An analogy of this practice can be seen in Abbān b. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd al-Lāḥiqī, who was commissioned by the Barmakids to translate *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a paradigm of advice literature of the 'Abbasid era, into Arabic poetry and undertook another translation of *Ahd Ardashīr* (Ziriklī 1: 27).

In summary, the audiences of al-Balādhurī can be established as the ruling elite including caliphs, *kuttāb* and officials. This does not mean that his works are exclusively limited to this group, as his works are consulted by scholars later on, but it is this group whose preference and interest concern al-Balādhurī in his selection of materials (al-Sharīf al-Murtaḍā 3: 240; 4: 147).

The next section introduces two compilers, Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Ṭabarī, who were comparatively detached from the court and compiled their works for different readers — scholars. As a result, their works show less interest in the anecdotes about the caliphs than the *Ansāb*.

2. Independent Scholars and Their Works: Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Ṭabarī

This section presents two compilers and their portrayal of Sulaymān in their chronicles. It will first introduce these compilers and outline the reports regarding Sulaymān in their works. These two compilers are defined here as independent in the sense that they wrote or compiled their works without seeking reward from a patron amongst the court elite. In other words, their works are compiled for their scholarly interest rather than the needs or the expectation of a certain individual or class. Therefore, their works contain few anecdotes concerning the characteristics of the

caliph.

Khalīfa b. Khayyāt (776-854) was a genealogist, traditionist and historian. It is likely that he was frequently involved in the scholarly activities, *ḥadīth*, *par excellence*, in his home city, Baṣra, but there is no clue to his association with Baghdad or his reception of patronage from the ruling class (Ziriklī 2: 312; Marsham “Khalīfa b. Khayyāt”; Zakkar “Ibn Khayyāt ‘Uṣfurī”; al-‘Umarī 5-30; Ibn Khallikān 2: 243-244). His *Tārīkh* reflects his scholarly interests, which may have distanced him from the court patronage.⁴ The purpose of writing history as stated in his preface is not to get a reward as he does not mention any dedicatee or patron. Rather, history with its literary meaning *ta’rīkh* (recording dates) has a complementary role in fulfilling the religious obligations: “This is a book of *ta’rīkh* and through *ta’rīkh* people know the time of their pilgrimage, their fast, the end of waiting period of their women and the placement of their debts”. Then he quotes a number of prophetic *ḥadīths* and Qur’anic verses to illustrate the importance of *ta’rīkh* in terms of ritualistic performance and legal practice (Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 49-51). Given the above evidence, Khalīfa’s readership is likely to have comprised mainly the Baṣran scholars, specifically, the traditionists.

The reports in Khalīfa’s *Tārīkh* regarding Sulaymān show no interest in the personality of the caliph nor contribute much to his image. These reports focus on the historical dates (Khalīfa b. Khayyāt 281, 289-320). There is not a single report portraying the appearance of Sulaymān or his personality.

Muḥammad b. Jarīr al-Ṭabarī (839-923) lived on teaching, providing legal advice and the real estates which he inherited (al-Khaṭīb 2: 549-556). The biographical sources highlight that he never accepted any official employment (Bosworth “al-Ṭabarī”; al-Dhahabī 3366). There are references saying that he compiled a book on jurisprudence for a vizier without accepting any reward (al-Dhahabī 3366). As for his *Tārīkh*, judging from the preface, it does not seem that

⁴ It is noteworthy that the mild asceticism was prevalent amongst the traditionist and scholars in the eighth and ninth centuries; this *Weltanschauung* discouraged this group from seeking patronage or undertaking official posts, see: Hurvitz 91-101. Melchert 425-430. The political quietism amongst the *ḥadīth* scholars, see: Crone 135-141.

this work was dedicated to a patron; rather, it is compiled for scholarly interest (al-Dhahabī 3368; al-Ṭabarī 1: 3-8). Therefore, it is possible to regard al-Ṭabarī, like Khalīfa, as an independent scholar.

The historical events about the caliphate of Sulaymān mentioned by al-Ṭabarī do not differ from those in Khalīfa's *Tārīkh*, but al-Ṭabarī gives more details (al-Ṭabarī 6: 505-546). Nonetheless, al-Ṭabarī includes a section on Sulaymān's *siyar* (conducts). The *siyar* section includes a number of reports. The first report is positive as it describes Sulaymān as the key of goodness (*miftāḥ al-khayr*), who removed al-Ḥajjāj from the post, released the captives and the prisoners, treated the people well and designated 'Umar b. 'Abd al-'Azīz as his successor. A panegyric by Ibn Bīḍ is attached to this report. The second and third reports underscore Sulaymān's penchant for luxurious clothes and his appearance, on which he comments: "I am a king in the prime of his manhood (*anā al-malik al-fatī*)". These two reports both end with Sulaymān's sudden death. The fourth report relates that a slave-maid of Sulaymān improvised a poem reminding her master of his mortality; after hearing the verses, Sulaymān unwound his turban. The fifth and sixth reports mention the associates of Sulaymān, such as Sulaymān b. Ḥabīb al-Murādī, Ru'ba b. al-'Ajjāj and al-Farazdaq. The last report is about a funeral witnessed by Sulaymān. The caliph praised the site of the burial, where he too was buried soon after his sudden death (al-Ṭabarī 6: 546-549).

Except for the first report, which puts Sulaymān in the positive light, the reports about Sulaymān seem to be endowed with the moral: the transience of the worldly pleasure and the unpredictability of death. As a whole, although al-Ṭabarī narrates more information about Sulaymān *per se*, these reports are less illustrative and endowed with a warning against vanity. However, in terms of Sulaymān's personal traits, al-Ṭabarī says little when compared with what is found in the *Ansāb*.

3. Sulaymān in the *Ansāb al-ashrāf*

This section first outlines the reports illustrating Sulaymān's personality and temperament in the *Ansāb*. Then, a comparison between the texts in section two and

the reports in the *Ansāb* is presented as the conclusion of this section.

Sulaymān's biography begins with an overview of his physiognomy and conduct: he was white and curly-haired, praiseworthy and well-behaved; he released prisoners, returned the exiled and upheld justice; before succeeding to the caliphate, he was the governor of Palestine and built the city of al-Ramla. He died in Dābiq, where he was buried (al-Balādhurī 8: 99). Then, al-Balādhurī continues with a cluster of reports illustrating *adab* themes. Eloquence — one of Sulaymān's merits — is demonstrated in his speech characterized by brevity, which is deemed desirable in the discipline of rhetoric (al-Balādhurī 8: 105; al-ʿAskarī 832). His appreciation of beautiful language is revealed in many accounts. For example, a *mawlā* (client) called Sarīʿ is said to have been sent by Yazīd b. al-Muhallab to Sulaymān. Expecting that Sulaymān will ask him to describe the rain but unable to find more than two adjectives, he paid a Bedouin for help (al-Balādhurī 8: 107). This appreciation is further accentuated by his aversion to those who can not speak correct Arabic: when a man came to him seeking justice: “Our father died, our brother violated our rights and took our property (*inna abīnā halaka fa-wathaba akhānā ʿalā māli-nā fa-akhadha-hu*, the correct usage is: *inna abānā..... fa-wathaba akhūnā...*)”. Sulaymān replied: “May God have no mercy on your father, not forgive your brother, and not return your property. Expel him from me” (al-Balādhurī 8: 105). Another report relates that when Sulaymān ordered one of his servants to call Ṣāliḥ, his servant said: “*Yā Ṣāliḥan* (correct: *yā Ṣāliḥu*). Sulaymān replied wittingly with a pun: “I shall deduct a thousand (dirham) from your salary (*anquṣu min ṣāliḥika alifun*; Sulaymān, too, made a grammatical mistake, the correct: ... *alifan*). ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz, standing by him, reminded him at once: “Add an *alif* in your *alif* (*fa-zid fī alifika alifan*)” (al-Balādhurī 8: 104-105). The quotation of verses is not lacking. Part of al-Farazdaq's panegyric dedicated to Sulaymān is mentioned, in addition to the verses of Mūsā Shahawāt (al-Balādhurī 8: 103-104, 106-107).

However, what al-Balādhurī expatiates on most is Sulaymān's gluttony. As a matter of fact, the number of reports about Sulaymān's gluttony reaches ten in his 20-page biography. He was miserly about food and unwilling to share it with others

(al-Balādhurī 8: 108). His appetite was not satisfied unless by ten flakes of bread, two giant lambs and two fleshy chickens in one meal (al-Balādhurī 8: 109). When performing pilgrimage, he ate the kidneys of 84 Medinan lambs and 84 roasted birds (*jarmāzaja*) before having lunch with the rest of his companions (al-Balādhurī 8: 109-110). During the pilgrimage, he visited al-Ṭā'if and was invited to the house of Ibn Abī Zuhayr. Sulaymān ate 170 pomegranates from his orchard, a lamb, six chickens and loads of raisins; all of these were just his pre-meal. Sulaymān's seven-day tour in al-Ṭā'if was a disaster to his host (al-Balādhurī 8: 110).

His voracity was not harmless. While Sulaymān was indulging in food, someone shouted for justice: "Commander of the Faithful! Your agent in some place mistreated me". Nevertheless, he replied: "You lied. You son of a bitch (*Lā umma laka*)", and resumed eating. When he finished the meal, realizing that he had mistreated the man, he upheld justice for him (al-Balādhurī 8: 111-112). Gluttony is also the cause of his death. When Sulaymān was in Dābiq, a Christian man came to him with two baskets, one of eggs and the other of figs, as presents. Sulaymān ate them all and a platter of mulled bone marrows (al-Sayyār 106). Having overeaten, he fell sick and died before long (al-Balādhurī 8: 111). Another report accounting for his death says that after eating the fat of kidneys of four kids (*jadī*), a platter of bone marrows and other things, he had sexual intercourse with a slave-girl and felt painful heat of fever in which he died (al-Balādhurī 8: 112-113). Although al-Balādhurī does not himself make any comment on Sulaymān, he does cite the words of al-Manṣūr, who said: "Al-Walīd was insane, Sulaymān was gluttonous and only cares about his genitals and abdomen; only Hishām was the leader of the people" (al-Balādhurī 8: 114-115).

In comparison with the reports included in the works of Khalīfa and al-Ṭabarī, it is clear that the *Ansāb* has more reports illustrating Sulaymān's personal traits: a caliph of averagely good behavior but not without flaws. Al-Balādhurī's selection reflects a number of themes: poetry, eloquence of speech and food, which are not found in the other two texts. These themes are not uncommon in the belle-letters in the ninth and tenth centuries, but they are not substantially conducive in terms of

history or genealogy, on which the *Ansāb al-ashrāf* is structured. Nonetheless, it is possible to explain why al-Balādhurī includes numerous anecdotal reports on the ground of his association with the court and the expectation of his audiences.

4. Al-Balādhurī as a *Nadīm*: the Audiences at the Court and *Nudamā*'s Literary Productions

As mentioned in section one, al-Balādhurī was the boon companion (*nadīm*) of at least two caliphs, al-Mutawakkil and al-Musta'īn, and his ideal audiences comprised mainly the court elite. As al-Balādhurī compiled his work under patronage or hoping for it, the representation of Sulaymān can be understood as his response to the interest of his audiences. This section will examine the themes on which the boon companions compiled. The information is based on a section dedicated to the works of *nudamā*' and *julasā*' (boon companions and attendants of literary salons) in Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist*. Before looking at Ibn al-Nadīm's *al-Fihrist*, this section will first discuss two teachers of al-Balādhurī: Abū 'Ubayd al-Qāsim b. Sallām and al-Madā'inī (Ibn 'Asākir 6: 74). These two figures are mentioned here because, although they are not known as *nadīm* (boon companion, pl. *nudamā*'), they worked under the patronage and thus their literary productions more or less reflect the themes, which attracted the patrons in the ninth century. After reviewing these popular themes, this section will explain the inclusion of the unusual reports about Sulaymān, particularly, his gluttony, and their reception from the perspective of al-Balādhurī's audiences.

Abū 'Ubayd (774-838) was a prolific author and a polymath proficient in jurisprudence, the Arabic sciences and *ḥadīth*. He was under the patronage of 'Abdallah b. Ṭāhir (798-844/845), to whom he dedicated many of his works (Ibn Khallikān 4: 60-63). It appears that many of his works reflect philological interests, such as *Meanings of Poetry, Proverbs and Obscurities in Prophetic Traditions*. Interest in the Arabic sciences was prevalent amongst the ruling class, given that eloquence and erudition in the Arabic language (poetry and prose) were the basic requirements to enter the 'Abbasid court (Ibn Qutayba, *Adab* 9-12). In addition, the

caliphs and the ruling elite often had grammarians as tutors for their children or their companions (al-Anbārī 63-64). Al-Ma'mūn is said to have generously rewarded al-Naḍr b. Shamīl for correcting his misuse of a single word (al-ʿAskarī 104-107). The discussion on the slip of the tongue, grammatical errors and philology was arguably prevalent amongst the intellectuals and privileged class. For example, al-Jāḥiẓ (776-868/869), a contemporary of al-Balādhurī, who had dedicated a number of works to the ruling elite, displays a remarkable interest in the eloquence, inarticulacy and stammer in his *al-Bayān wa-l-tabyīn* (I: 23-98).

Al-Madā'inī's works are miscellaneous and contain a wide range of subjects, some of which appear to have been for entertainment: *Book of Eating*, *Book of Pederasts*, *Book of the Stupid*, *Book of Singers*, *Book of the Etiquette between Brothers*, *Book of Selected Verses* and *Book of Rare Tales* (Ibn al-Nadīm 113-117). Though the life of Abū al-Ḥasan al-Madā'inī (752-circa 840) is obscure, it is known that he was once invited to the caliph al-Ma'mūn and related some stories about 'Alī b. Abī Ṭālib (Yāqūt 14: 126-127). Moreover, it is mentioned that al-Madā'inī was on intimate terms with the famous *nadīm*, Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī (767-850), in whose house he died (Yāqūt 14: 129-130). In fact, Ishāq appears to have been al-Madā'inī's patron, who "filled his sleeves with dinars and dirhams" (al-Khaṭīb 13: 517). It is likely that some of al-Madā'inī's works were meant for his patron, Ishāq. The above titles of his works reveal the general interest of patrons, namely, the etiquettes, anecdotes, unusual stories and reports, food, music, poetry and language. These topics are also common amongst the works of boon companions.

Boon companions were generally people of artistic and intellectual talent. Their expertise ranged widely: poetry, literature, astrology, medicine, tribal sagas and reports of various themes. They were selected from the most gifted people to accompany the ruling class (caliphs, viziers, and even *nudamā'* themselves) and were offered permanent positions at court. There are indications of boon companions invited to court during the Umayyad period, but it was in the 'Abbasid court that boon companions constituted an important group and the institution of the *nadīm* developed exacting requirements in etiquette and ceremony (Chejne 327-329). The

main function of the boon companion is to “possess an ample fund of stories and strange tales both amusing and serious, and be able to tell them well” or to entertain their patrons by other talents (Nizām al-Mulk 89). Ibn al-Nadīm records a number of boon companions and their works; some of them were al-Balādhurī’s contemporaries, whether he had direct contact with them or not.

Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm and his father, Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī, were both famous boon companions. It is likely that al-Balādhurī had personal contact with Ishāq, as he is also one of al-Balādhurī’s informants in the reports about poets (al-Balādhurī 10: 190). Ishāq was a boon companion, who won the admiration of several caliphs (from al-Rashīd to al-Mutawakkil) mainly through his musical gift and astute nature (Fück “Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm al-Mawṣilī”). As a musician, Ishāq’s major works focus on music, songs and singers; the other works cover different themes, like boon companionship (*al-munādama*), drinks, rare anecdotes (*nawādir*) and reports about poets (Ibn al-Nadīm 157-160).

Another *nadīm* family al-Balādhurī definitely knew is the Munajjim family. It seems that al-Balādhurī and the Munajjim family probably remained on amicable terms. As mentioned in section one, Yāqūt quotes from *Amālī* of ‘Alī b. Hārūn b. al-Munajjim (890/891-963/964) a report about the encounter between al-Balādhurī and Ibrāhīm al-Ṣūlī, in which the former indirectly praised ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Munajjim. ‘Alī b. Hārūn acquired the information from his uncle (Yāqūt 5: 93-94). This uncle is likely to be Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī, who was one of al-Balādhurī’s students, according to Ibn ‘Asākir (6: 74). Yaḥyā’s father, Abū al-Ḥasan ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā al-Munajjim (died during the reign of al-Mu‘tamid), was a boon companion of al-Mutawakkil (*viz.* a colleague of al-Balādhurī) and the caliphs after him. ‘Alī b. Yaḥyā had compiled a *Cookbook*, *Book of the Reports about Ishāq b. Ibrāhīm* and *Book of Poetry and Islamic Ancient Poets*. The student of al-Balādhurī, Yaḥyā b. ‘Alī, compiled *Book of Reports about Poets Living in the Umayyad and ‘Abbasid Periods* and his brother, Hārūn b. ‘Alī, had several works on poetry and poets. The aforementioned ‘Alī b. Hārūn b. al-Munajjim was a *littérateur* and boon companion, authoring *Book of Difference between Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī and Ishāq in Music* (Ibn

al-Nadīm 160-161).

Other contemporaries of al-Balādhurī who had been in the entourage of caliphs and the ruling elite are listed as follows. Ibn Bāna, an intimate friend of al-Mutawakkil, authored works on songs and music. Al-Šīnī compiled *Book of Songs* for al-Mutawakkil. Jaḥḥa (d. 937-938), a lute player, compiled *Cookbook*, *Merits of the Dish Sikbāj* and *Book of Lute Players*. Ibn Khurdādhba (820-912), a boon companion of al-Mu‘tamid, authored a *Cookbook*, *Book of Pleasure and Pastimes* and *Book of Drink* (Ibn al-Nadīm 162-165). Abū Bakr al-Šūlī (d. 946), the nephew of Ibrāhīm b. al-‘Abbās al-Šūlī — a contemporary with whom al-Balādhurī was acquainted — was the *nadīm* of al-Muqtadir (r. 908–932), al-Rāḍī (r. 934–940) and al-Muktafi (r. 944–946). He was also a famous littérateur, compiler and an excellent chess player (another talent appreciated in the ‘Abbasid court). Most of his works address the poetry and the reports about poets. Abū al-‘Abbās al-Šaymarī, a well-known buffoon of al-Mutawakkil and al-Mu‘tamid, wrote a number of works including *Book of the Lover and Beloved* (Ibn al-Nadīm 167-169).

There are more names and works related to boon companionship in *al-Fihrist*, but it is sufficient for the purpose of this study to review those who might have been known to al-Balādhurī. A summary of their works shows that several themes seem to have been popular at court, such as poetry and poets (modern and ancient), music and musicians, cookbook, food, beverage and romance (‘*ishq*). Furthermore, many members of the ruling elite had also contributed to the literary production of these themes, for instance, Ibrāhīm b. al-Mahdī (779-839), who was a famous poet, gourmet, and musician, having compiled a *Cookbook* and *Book of Music* in addition to numerous poems, and Ibn al-Mu‘tazz (861-909), whose *Kitāb al-Badī‘*, *Ṭabaqāt al-shu‘arā’* and *Dīwān* are still extant today (Ibn al-Nadīm 129-130).

These motifs are likely to have had an impact on al-Balādhurī’s selection of material, because they were what his audiences expected. Although the *Ansāb* is a compilation structured around lineage, the knowledge of *nasab* (genealogy) itself was one of the qualifications needed by a learned man desiring a place in the court. Ibn Qutayba explicitly states in his *al-Ma‘ārif*: “...an assembly (*majlis*) is not

gathered with right guidance unless the following topics are involved: the discussion on the prophets, kings, scholars, genealogy, past time or tribal sagas (*ayyām al-‘arab*)...”; Ibn Qutayba further stresses the importance of this discipline by giving an example about a man who embarrassed himself in front of al-Ma’mūn for being ignorant of the genealogy (1-2). In other words, given that al-Balādhurī was a *nadīm* and his *Ansāb* focuses on one of the highly regarded sciences in the court assemblies, it is not implausible that al-Balādhurī compiled this work not only to provide his audience or patron with the knowledge of the *nasab*, but also to relate amusing stories to entertain them as his *nadīm* colleagues did in the literary saloons.

Building upon the aforementioned themes, which were prevalent and presumably well received by the patron or audiences in the court, the motifs found in the reports about Sulaymān in the *Ansāb* are explicable. To meet the expectations of patron-audiences, al-Balādhurī includes the reports related to language and literature, since the eloquence and erudition of elegant language are an indispensable part of the court culture.

The stress on gluttony is less common since no caliph in the *Ansāb* is so intertwined with food as Sulaymān.⁵ Gluttony, although not a grave sin, is distasteful in many aspects. A *ḥadīth* in *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* goes: “A believer eats in one intestine (is satisfied with a little food), while an unbeliever eats in seven intestines (eats too much)” (Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *Fath* 9: 447-451). Indeed, this idea connecting voracity with impiety or vulgarity is well attested in literature compilations of the ninth and tenth centuries. For the elegant people (*ẓurafā’*), the first taboo of table etiquette is greed and voracity (al-Washshā’ 167-168). Moreover, it is believed that an overstuffed person is incapable of performing his religious duties, like praying and fasting, since the desires of the stomach, sex and cowardice are all hindrances to a believer (Ibn Qutayba, *Uyūn* 3: 214, 217-218).

Apart from the moral implication regarding the gluttony, this cluster of reports can also be deciphered from a dietetic viewpoint. The ‘Abbasids (at least, the

⁵ Al-Wāthiq is also known for the gluttony, but the relevant reports are far less illustrative than those about Sulaymān; see for instance: Ibn ‘Abd Rabbihi 8: 13.

privileged class) were gourmets and had created an exquisite culinary culture. Their penchant for cuisines resulted in an elaborate system of dietetic rules based on the Galenic humoral theory. Each foodstuff is given the humoral qualities correspondent with the four elements (fire, air, water and earth) and their properties (dry, hot, cold and moist). For instance, chickpeas are hot while lentils are cold and dry. When a chef prepared food, he was expected to be familiar with the humoral qualities of eaters and the humoral powers of food so that the dishes would be beneficial and healthy (Ibn Sayyār 67-68, 117). These dietetic rules were strictly observed by the upper class (caliphs, their family members, viziers, the wealthy and even musicians). The ‘Abbasid caliphs and their viziers heavily depended on their physicians for nutrition-related matter. Hārūn al-Rashīd’s physician, Jibra’īl b. Bakhtīshū, was authorized to forbid the caliph from eating any dish that was harmful to his health (Ahsan 117-118).

When compiling Sulaymān’s anecdotes, al-Balādhurī might have had these dietetic rules in mind, not only because he, as a boon companion, must have been familiar with the practices of caliphs and viziers when they had a meal, but also due to his association with courtiers who compiled cookbooks, viz. ‘Alī b. Yahyā al-Munajjim and Abū Ishāq al-Ṣūlī (Ziriklī 1: 45). This may explain why al-Balādhurī mentions what Sulaymān exactly ate in detail. What and how Sulaymān ate had connotations which reminded al-Balādhurī’s audiences of the advice of physicians and this kind of *akhbār* was likely to have struck a chord with the ruling elite. For example, the kidneys of 84 Medinan lambs he consumed during the pilgrimage are “slow to digest, do not generate good blood and are not nourishing” (Ibn Sayyār, 106-107). In other words, Sulaymān was obsessed with junk food. Sexual intercourse after a meal might also have been something his audiences would have frowned at, because their physicians advised: “Laying down after a meal is immensely beneficial because the body has a chance to rest and food to digest fast” (Ibn Sayyār 518-519).

These anecdotes about Sulaymān have entertaining and edifying functions and, as a result, this Umayyad caliph is transformed from a historical personage to a

cultural type endowed with literary and cultural connotations from the perspective of al-Balādhurī's audiences. This transformation is attested in *al-'Iqd al-farīd*, where Ibn 'Abd Rabbihi mentions Sulaymān together with other gluttonous figures such as Muzarrid (8: 13-16). That is to say, the representation of Sulaymān in the *Ansāb* is a result of al-Balādhurī's attempt to edify or entertain his patron-audiences. The part about Sulaymān is not the only example of the influence of the court culture and audiences on the *Ansāb*, as the popular themes mentioned above are also found in the biographies about the Umayyad caliphs, Yazīd b. 'Abd al-Malik (r. 720–724) and his son, al-Walīd (r. 743–744).

In the biography about Yazīd, lengthy accounts about his sing-girls, Sallāma and Ḥabbāba, are related. The former, known as Sallāmat al-Qass, is connected not only with the *'udhrī* love story but also with the music, as presented by al-Balādhurī (8: 254-256). While the chaste love is highly commendable in the eyes of the 'Abbāsīd elite and the platonic relationship between the ascetic al-Qass and Sallāma is drawn as one of examples of this chastity in *Kitāb al-Muwashshā* (al-Washshā', 52-54), her contribution, direct or indirect, to the classical Arabic music is well remembered by the 'Abbāsīds. The poem composed by Ibn Qays al-Ruqayyāt for Sallām was sung by Mālīk b. Abī al-Samḥ, as noted by al-Balādhurī (8: 256). This piece of work was also adapted and sung by other famous singers like Ibn Surayj, Ḥunayn al-Jabarī and Daḥmān; as a matter of fact, many poems dedicated to Sallāma were adapted into songs and sung by many classical musicians (al-Iṣfahānī 8: 14-18, 26).

As for Ḥabbāba, the most beloved partner of Yazīd, al-Balādhurī underscores Yazīd's infatuation with Ḥabbāba, whose demise traumatised the caliph to the extent that Yazīd refused to bury her body, which he kept watching, smelling and kissing till she began to decay and smell (8: 257-260). The sorrow sickened the caliph, who died soon after Ḥabbāba (al-Balādhurī 8: 261-263). Al-Balādhurī's digression on the two singing-girls encompasses the themes such as romance, love and music, and highlights the interests of his audience. The similar observation can be concluded from the part about Yazīd's son, al-Walīd.

Apart from al-Walīd's notorious indulgence in pleasure and wine, the *Ansāb* expatiates on the caliph's love for Salmā and poetry. Al-Walīd's wife was the daughter of Sa'īd (a great-grandson of 'Uthmān b. 'Affān), who was divorced when al-Walīd saw her beautiful sister, Salmā. Nevertheless, his proposal to Salmā was rejected by her father. Al-Walīd thus composed many poems for Salmā and ordered his singers to sing his verses (al-Balādhurī 9: 127-129). After coming to throne, al-Walīd's only wish is to marry Salmā, but, when al-Walīd finally could marry Salmā legally, their marriage ironically did not last long before Salmā's death (al-Balādhurī 9: 150-153). Al-Walīd's romance with Salmā and his famous story of pretending an oil peddler to visit Salmā as well as a number of poems dedicated to her are all included by al-Balādhurī (9: 138-149).

Additionally, numerous reports in the *Ansāb* illustrate his addiction to wine and music as well as his patronage to his boon companions, including a number of Medinan singers and poets such as Ma'bad, Ibn 'Ā'isha, al-Aḥwaṣ, Ash'ab and Abū Kāmil (al-Balādhurī 9: 156-164). Alongside these accounts al-Balādhurī juxtaposed the verses, especially those by al-Walīd. Al-Walīd's contribution to the "modern poetry (*al-shi'r al-muḥdath*)", especially the wine poetry, is well noted by the 'Abbāsids. According to al-Iṣfahānī, "many al-Walīd's wine poems were appropriated by (modern) poets; his verses were either inserted in their works (*adkhalūhā fī ash'ārihim*) or readapted (*salakhū ma'āniyahā*). Abū Nuwās especially exemplifies this..." (al-Iṣfahānī 6: 225). Al-Iṣfahānī's observation is no peculiar to the literati in al-Balādhurī's time, as many works compiled in the ninth century address the issue of *sariqa* (Ibn Qutayba, *al-Shi'r* 581; Toorawa 67, 93-101). Al-Balādhurī himself is also a poet closely connected to the leading literati and the court; therefore, it is plausible that the numerous poems mentioned in al-Walīd's biography have a broader connotation and reflect the literary savvy of the 'Abbasid elite. As in the case of Sulaymān, the image of the other Umayyad caliphs also supports the argument that al-Balādhurī's unusual inclusion of anecdotal information, which is usual in the court context, is an illustrative example of the influence of patron-audiences on the making of history.

Conclusion

This paper begins with the discussion of the previous studies on the *Ansāb*. These studies look at this work in a simplistic view on the ground that al-Balādhurī is either an objective historian or not. As these scholars presuppose that al-Balādhurī compiled in order to recover the historic truth *per se*, their conclusions are less informative of the compiler's agenda and do not to explain the seemingly hilarious representation of Sulaymān. Section one introduces the biography of al-Balādhurī and ranges his audiences, most of whom belonged to the ruling elite. As a work dedicated to the ruling class, the *Ansāb* is conceivably imbued with the popular themes which may effectively win the appreciation of his ideal patron-audience, like the works compiled by courtiers, boon companions and compilers seeking patronage. Therefore, unlike the historical works by Khalīfa and al-Ṭabarī, which are compiled for the scholarly community, as explained in section two, the *Ansāb* contains vivid descriptions on Sulaymān's temperaments and a variety of themes featuring eloquence, poetry, food and its dietetic implication. The selection of materials in al-Balādhurī's *Ansāb*, as illustrated in section three and four, reflect a different approach adopted by the compilers who worked for the interest of the court elite.

Due to this patron-client relationship, studying the *Ansāb* on the presupposition that al-Balādhurī was an objective historian is neither conducive nor accurate. As this paper shows, external factors such as audiences had significant influence on the representation of Umayyad caliphs. Furthermore, the Umayyad characters in al-Balādhurī's compilation were probably viewed as literary types instead of historical personalities. Hence, if recovering historical fact is not the only goal of al-Balādhurī in compiling the *Ansāb*, what then constitutes his "objectivity" as many anecdotes are perhaps meant to entertain or edify the audience? This paper, by examining the influence of patronage and court culture, illuminates al-Balādhurī's agenda in his compilation. Through the textual comparison and the analysis of the reports about Sulaymān, Yazīd and al-Walīd, this study also shows the interplay between al-Balādhurī and his patron-audiences.

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