Genealogies are emic forms of social representation among many tribes in the Arab world. The formability of these genealogies for the purposes of politics and alliances is a common phenomenon. It becomes particularly obvious if one looks at the case of the Shākir tribe and its main divisions Wāʾilah and Dahm in the region of al-Jawf in northernmost Yemen. A comparison of their tribal genealogies and settlement areas in the tenth century CE, as described by the Yemeni scholar and historian al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī, with their tribal structures and territories in the twenty-first century shows the enormous extent of change to which the Shākir, especially Dahm, have been subject in the past millennium. These changes seem to reflect in part the continuous immigration of external tribal groups to which the fringes of the Rubʿ al-Khālí desert have historically been exposed, and their inclusion into the local societies and thus the evolving genealogy of Shākir. These elements of residential discontinuity and mobility contrast with the more general pattern of territorial continuity and stasis prevailing in the central areas of Yemen. Yet the genealogy of Shākir proved to be more open towards these intrusive groups than towards the original inhabitants of the area itself: in contemporary al-Jawf remain descendants of ancient groups who are considered the aboriginal inhabitants of the area and who were neither given equal status to Shākir nor included into the Shākir genealogy. Seen in this light, the genealogies and semi-legendary traditions of al-Hamdānī’s al-Iklīl also served to evoke a vision of community and of common identities among the heterogeneous societies of South Arabia and to legitimize them as heirs of a country and its history, which in parts was not inherently their own.

Keywords: Al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī; genealogy; tribe; Bedouins; South Arabia; Yemen

The politics of genealogy
Abū Muḥammad al-Ḥasan b. Ahmad b. Yaʿqūb al-Hamdānī (d. 945 CE) belongs to the most outstanding of Yemen’s scholars and historians of the early medieval period. In his works Ṣifat Jazīrat al-ʿArab and the extant parts of al-Iklīl he describes the physical and tribal geography of the southern Arabian Peninsula, its historical monuments and the genealogies (nasab, pl. ansāb) of the South Arabian tribes, thus outlining the salient features of specific South Arabian
identities. His quest for the construction of South Arabian identities was in part a response to the creation of ideologically driven genealogies among the Arabs of the north, such as the genealogical work *Jamharat al-nasab* compiled by Hishām b. Muhammad al-Kalbī (d. 819), which had systematized the tribes of northern Arabia and «united» them under the symbol ‘Adnān, the putative common ancestor of the Northern Arabs. By way of contrast to such endeavours, this also prompted an increased need for genealogical self-identification and self-representation among the Arabs of the South.

When it comes to the roles of genealogies in al-Hamdānī’s oeuvre, Heiss’ elaborate dissertation on «Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung» (1998) in the Ṣaʿdah area is the scholarly standard from where one has to start. On the basis of the information available in al-Hamdānī’s works, Heiss investigates the phenomenon of formability of genealogies taking the example of the sedentary population of the Ṣaʿdah basin, among whom the formability of genealogies served as an important means of conflict resolution and conflict avoidance. In addition, al-Hamdānī’s construction of the political identities of the South Arabian tribes had two core elements. Firstly, the most accurate possible recording of the territory of the South Arabsians and the description of their landscape of historical monuments, which was intended to illustrate the depth of South Arabian history and to attest the equal or even superior antiquity of the South Arabian tribes in comparison to the tribes of the North. Secondly, al-Hamdānī depicts the tribes of southern Arabia genealogically as the descendants of Qaḥṭān, the brother of ‘Adnān and legendary progenitor of the tribes of southern Arabia and symbol of unity of the »original« or »Arabian« Arabs (al-ʿarab al-ʿāribah), whose bloodline accordingly is deemed purer than that of the »spurious« or »Arabicized« Arabs (al-ʿarab al-mustaʿribah) of the North.

Thus al-Hamdānī’s genealogical classifications and memory of the past stimulated the growth of something akin to common identities among the tribes of South Arabia and fathered a type of local historiography that was a combination of topography, cultural history, and genealogy. Al-Kalbī’s and al-Hamdānī’s genealogical works mark the completion of the codification of Arab genealogies. The distinguishing feature of their voluminous genealogical compilations is the attempt to provide the agnatic lineages not only of certain families or tribes, but rather to portray the structure and kinship system of broad regions of the Arabian Peninsula. It is thus clear that these genealogical superstructures in many, if not most cases, are constructs in the service of political ends. Through its dynamics, variability and

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1 *Note on transliteration:* For transcribing Arabic, I have used the system of the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES)* for both written and spoken words. Common words, such as Yemen and Saudi Arabia, are given in an Anglicized version. The Arabic *bin* or *ibn* (»son of«), where it comes between two names, has been given as simply *b.* throughout. Initial *ḥamzah* is unmarked.

Al-Hamdānī conceptualized *al-Iklīl* as an encyclopaedia of knowledge specifically related to South Arabia. It included ten volumes, of which only the first, second, eighth and tenth volumes are extant. For an overview of the various manuscripts and printed editions of *al-Iklīl* and *Ṣifah Jazīrat al-ʿArab*, see Heiss, *Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung*, 21-33.

2 See the commentated edition by Caskel, *Gamharat an-nasab*.

3 Duri, *Historical Writing*, 130-135; Mahoney, *Cultural Heritage*.

4 Caskel, *Gamharat an-nasab*, 1, 19-21, 40; Piotrovsky, *Al-Hamdani and the Qahtanide Epos*.
The continuous ability to change, tribal nasab indeed represents a special case of genealogy. The changeability of tribal genealogies for the purposes of politics and alliances is a common phenomenon throughout the Arab world. Studies on tribal genealogy show that descent lines are in most cases the results of manifold processes of tribal fusion and fission and sometimes even pure constructs. The dynamic character of genealogy and agnatic lineages and its significance for the development of ‘asabiyah («solidarity group» or «esprit de corps») and collective alliances is demonstrated for tribal societies throughout the Arab World, as shown in the pioneering contributions to this subject which assess and contextualize the notion of tribes in anthropological and historical analyses of Arab societies.

Tribal structures and genealogies are seldom stable, but rather dynamic and deformable so that new political constellations, alliances and territorial changes can be facilitated by genealogical alignments. In many cases genealogy follows a politics of »must have been« rather than biological facts.

What I wish to do here is to look into a special case among the tribes of Qaḥṭān described by al-Hamdānī in the tenth volume of al-Iklīl, namely Shākir or al-Shākiriyyūn dwelling in the area of al-Jawf and its environments at the fringe of the vast Rub’ al-Khāli desert. I will discuss the nature of their historic tribal divisions as depicted by al-Hamdānī in the tenth century, as well as the changes Shākir exhibited over the past millennium. The comparison of the tribal structure and settlements of Shākir in the tenth century CE with their contemporary tribal structure and settlements in the twenty-first century shows the enormous extent of change and dynamization of nasab to which Shākir have historically been exposed. It will be shown that to a certain degree the changes in the Shākir’s genealogical representations have been triggered by a continuous influx of immigrant groups from areas elsewhere at the fringes of the Rub’ al-Khāli. Indeed during my fieldwork I experienced that tribal oral tradition in al-Jawf displays a record of immigration including explicit references to external encounters and interdependencies between regional and immigrant »foreign« groups from other areas. Shākir’s frequent encounter with immigrant groups and their ability to absorb them into their nasab is not only a key feature of the past millennium; the consideration of

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5 Tribal genealogy herein differs from the genealogy of the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad, the so-called Ahl al-Bayt or Āl al-Bayt. Although the genealogy of the Ahl al-Bayt also serves the definition of group membership, this membership is immutable and can only be acquired by birth (Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung, 89–90; vom Bruck, Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen, 102–127 and passim). Also many senior lineages among tribal leaders (pl. mashāyikh) and tribal judges (pl. quḍā) maintain impressive family genealogies for some dozen generations. Here the knowledge of genealogies is essential for political reasons (Gingrich, Agrarkalender der Munebbih, 133–136; Weir, Tribal Order, 97–101; Dresch, Tribes, Government, and History, 102, 154 n. 21, 207 and passim; Dresch, Position of Shaykhs, 36–37.

6 On anthropological elaborations of nasab in Yemen, see Bédoucha, Tribu sédentaire et Cercle des proches; Brandt, Khawālīn und Jamāla; Dresch, Tribes, Government, and History, 320–360, and Tribes of Ḥāshid-wa-Bakīl; Gingrich, Agrarkalender der Munebbih, 145–159, Süwwestarabische Sternenkalender, 13–17, Konzepte und Perspektiven; Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung; Wilgen, Al-Hamdānī’s Description of Ḥāshid and Bakīl. On nasab in further (Arab and non-Arab) tribal societies, see Bonte, Egalité et hiérarchie; Caskel, Ḡamharat an-nasab; Conte, Entrer dans le sang; Evans-Pritchard, Nuer; Hamès, Filiation généalogique und Chefferie tribale; Kennedy, From Oral Tradition to Written Record; Landau-Tasseron, Adoption and Status of Allies; Ould Cheikh, Tribu; Peters, Proliferation; Szombathy, Genealogy in Medieval Muslim Societies and Roots of Arabic Genealogy.

7 Kennedy, From Oral Tradition to Written Record. In some cases the grafting of genealogies reaches such an extent that Szombathy sums up somehow indignantly that »genealogy« seems to be a translation error of the term nasab, suspecting that the term nasab actually means »relations« rather than »genealogy« (Szombathy, Roots of Arabic Genealogy).
findings from archeology suggests that al-Jawf’s history of invasion dates further back to the
time before the beginning of the Common Era. It will be shown that its geographic position
at the fringes of the Empty Quarter perhaps makes this record of immigration more relevant
than in other areas further to the west. In itself, al-Jawf indicates a specific case among a
greater diversity of regional variations which also include fewer records of such immigration
stories. Given the heterogeneity of Shākir tribe, both the stringent genealogies recorded by
al-Hamdānī and his efforts to portray Shākir as the heirs of al-Jawf’s splendid history, thus
resemble constructs of a project which strives to create a vision of community and common
identities in terms of genealogy and lore.

**The Shākir Saga**
The task of providing a picture of Upper Yemen in the early Islamic period is fraught with
difficulties. The primary sources for late antiquity and the early Islamic period of Yemen are
few. To the sources of this era, in addition to the extant works of al-Hamdānī, belongs the
al-’Alawī which deals with the arrival and the life of the first Zaydi imām in Yemen, Yahyá
al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq (d. 911), and his attempts to establish his rule over the Qaḥṭānī tribes in
Yemen’s north.8

Both al-Hamdānī’s and al-ʿAlawī’s works are stylized, but both in different ways. The
*Sūraḥ* describes Imām al-Hādī’s efforts to uphold and extend his sway in the northernmost
parts of Yemen and to spread Zaydi religion and *shariʿah* law among the tribes. The imām
and his followers encountered hostility and opposition in the tribal society of the Northern
Highlands. In the *Sirah* the tribes are sometimes allies, and sometimes they are the adver-
saries of the imām, whose tribal opponents were regarded the enemies of Islam.9 Al-Hādī’s
fourteen-year reign, though propitiously launched, thus resembled one of constant warfare
to restore discipline over rebellious tribes, to halt renewed intertribal hostilities, and to ex-
tend Zaydi influence. The biography of al-Hādī is only the beginning of a long tradition of
Yemeni historiography in which the tribes hardly appear except as they oppose or support a
succession of imāms. Later historiographies, in their zeal to establish the new faith, attemp-
ted to stamp out all vestiges of paganism from South Arabia and everything that had its roots
in the old order, which was to usher in the Dark Ages of the Jāhiliyyah.

In contrast, al-Hamdānī’s account is the first and the last extant work to deal with tribes
in terms of *furūsiyyah* (horsemanship, chivalry, skill at arms). He portrays the descendants
of Qaḥṭān as South Arabian heroes, chivalrous warriors or horsemen (*fursān*), brandishing
their swords, moving about the land and seeking honour in glorious battles and through
poetry. The concept of *furūsiyyah* is the organising theme of the tenth volume of *al-Iklīl*
which deals with the genealogy and segmentation of the tribes of Hamdān. A great number of
horsemen, heroes and noble dynasties appear in al-Hamdānī’s works, the lords of al-Duʿām
(Bakīl) and al-Daḥḥāk (Ḥāshid) being the most prominent.10

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8 Arendonk, Opkomst van het Zaiditische Imamaat.
10 On Upper Yemen’s power structures in the Early Islamic period, see Wilson, *Al-Hamdānī’s Description of Ḥāshid and Bakīl*; and Gochenour, *Penetration of Zaydi Islam*. 
Al-Hamdānī’s writings are illuminated by the last rays of a splendid world which was already exposed to decay. The semi-legendary traditions of the eighth volume of *al-Iklīl* on the historical monuments of South Arabia are a particularly rich repertoire of myths and collective memories. By conjuring the spirits of the past, it mirrors the charmed world of a mythical past: a world of magic places, ruins, peaks and wells inhabited by *jinn*, ancient divinations, supernatural ordeals and magic talismans. Since it was customary among the kings of ancient South Arabia to entomb with the dead their abundant riches, those who went out to the tombs to secure their buried treasures found inscribed tablets in the graves attached to the withered mortal remains of their putative ancestors. Their ancestors spoke to them through these tablets in a language of vanitas and reminded them of the transience of earthly life; the second part of the eighth volume of *al-Iklīl* resembles a meditation on the ephemeral nature of life itself. This may seem morbid at first sight, but the suggestion of vanitas and memento mori themes in *al-Iklīl* is deceptive: at the time of al-Hamdānī the dead forefathers and their mortal remains enjoyed a venerable physical existence far beyond death and connected the living with the glorious past of their country and their dead putative ancestors.

In his *Ṣifah*, al-Hamdānī has handed down a poem by a knight of Hamdān tribe who wrote it, probably towards the end of the pre-Islamic period, about the town of Maʿīn, the ancient capital of the pre-Islamic Minaean kingdom based in the area of al-Jawf. This poem portrays the people of al-Jawf as heirs and protectors of the withered Minaean kingdom and as members of an elite that was chosen to continue its ancient history. What follows is an extract from the poem:

Ours are the best horses in the world
We are wearing shining armour
And carry swords we inherited from ʿĀd
We shall protect the Jawf as long as Maʿīn exists
Down there in the valley, opposite ʿArda!
Should anyone wish to take it from us we shall pursue him
To the heights of Yamāmah and Jarādah
If need we shall sleep with the foxes
And with the foxes in their lair
And a meal we shall prepare
From what is left of their prey. 12

The continuous reference to the interconnection between the living and their dead putative ancestors inspires pride and a feeling of togetherness, in the case of this poem directly harkening back to the prosperity of the Minaean kingdom based in al-Jawf. Numerous other poems and verses tell us of the courageousness and heroism of the chivalrous horsemen of Qaḥṭān pedigree. Yet among all these noble heroes of Qaḥṭānī descent al-Hamdānī identifies Duhmah, the descendants of Shākir b. Bakīl, as the bravest. In his *Ṣifah* in the chapter on the »Marvels of Yemen, which have no equal in other countries«, al-Hamdānī mentions Duhmah separately:

Jabal Baraṭ. Its people are the bravest of Hamdān, protectors of women and defenders of those entrusted to their protection [...] They are called the Quraysh of Hamdān. 13

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Al-Hamdānī’s descriptions of Duhmah encapsulate and exemplify qualities that pertain to the South Arabian horsemen of Qaḥṭān pedigree mentioned in the panegyric poetries by early Yemeni poets.¹⁴ The people of al-Jawf serve as a metaphor for couragelessness and grandeur, embodying timeless qualities which still pertain to the ideals of the tribal societies of Yemen: honour, strength, and the idea of noble protection of the weak. A tribesman is expected to be sharif, gawi, māniʿ; i.e. noble, strong, and able to protect. These attributes are inseparable, and they apply as much to the tribe as to the particular man.¹⁵ Yet in his description of Duhmah, al-Hamdānī does not omit the downside of their heroism, describing Duhmah and Wāʿilah as indomitable avengers whose exaggerated code of honour at times turned into rancorous deeds:

In our time the number of deaths between Duhmah and their sister (tribe) Wāʿilah, both descendants of Shākir, reached 300 men. One noble was killed for another. This happened because of a protégé of Wāʿilah whom Duhmah had killed. They were the fiercest enemy who assailed them.¹⁶

Al-Hamdānī elaborates in his works the genealogies of the Qaḥṭānī tribes of South Arabia who are divided into two major groups, namely the descendants of Ḥimyar (qabāʿ il ḥimyar-iyyah) and Kahlān (qabāʿ il kahlāniyyah). Ḥimyar became progenitor of the major descent groups or confederations of Quḍāʿah and al-Humaysaʿ; Kahlān became progenitor of the confederations of Hamdān, al-Azd and Madḥhij. The descendants of Hamdān further subdivide into Ḥāshid and Bakīl. All these tribes further subdivide extensively. Their perceived common ancestry corresponds to the common visual representation of tribes as »segmentary groups«: tree-like structures, which divide and subdivide in the manner of the branches of a tree, though there is no central and pre-eminent trunk, all branches being equal (Fig. 1).¹⁷

¹⁴ Jāzim and Arbach, Mérites véritables.
¹⁵ Serjeant, South Arabia, 227-228; Dresch, Tribes, Government, and History, 38-74, 117-136.
¹⁶ Al-Hamdānī, Ṣifah, 194-195.
¹⁷ The segmentary model was introduced by Evans-Pritchard with regard to the Cyrenaican Bedouins and further elaborated by Gellner for the Berbers of the High Atlas. The socio-political implications of the segmentary model have been challenged by several anthropologists and are now considered defunct (Caton, Power, Persuasion, and Language; Bonte, Égalité et hiérarchie; Weir, Tribal Order, 3-4 with regard to Yemen; for an overall discussion see Gingrich, Prophet’s Smile and Galactic Polities). Segmentary trees are, however, useful for illustrating the tree-like pattern of the structural organization of a tribe.
Fig. 1: Descendants of Qaḥṭān according to al-Hamdānī (Illustration: Ministry of Culture, Yemen)
Figure 1 depicts the progeny of Qaḥṭān according to al-Hamdānī. Whereas a tree is often used to illustrate the genealogy of individuals and groups, Arab genealogists’ terminology seldom refers to trees but focuses on the visual metaphor of the human skeleton and the human body as the common mode of representing kin groups, such as *baṭn* (pl. *buṭūn*, lit. inner part, belly), *fahdāh* (pl. *afkhādh*, lit. thigh), *faṣilah* (pl. *faṣāʿ il*, lit. lower leg) etc.\(^{18}\) Al-Hamdānī, too, introduces this terminology for tribal segments and subdivisions in *al-Iklīl*, yet he rarely uses this taxonomy in his following elaborations.\(^{19}\) Al-Hamdānī’s terminology for describing tribal structures and affiliations is rather simple and largely confined to the term *baṭn* (in the sense of »tribal segment«) and *banū* (descent group).\(^{20}\) Figure 2 roughly visualizes the major descent lines of Qaḥṭān.

![Diagram of Qaḥṭān's progeny]

*Fig.2: Progeny of Qaḥṭān (simplified) according to al-Hamdānī*

In the tenth volume of *al-Iklīl*, al-Hamdānī defines Shākir as a descendant of Bakīl, his pedigree being Shākir b. Rabīʿah b. Mālik b. Rabīʿah b. al-Duʿām b. Mālik b. Muʿāwiyah b. Ṣaʿb b. Dawmān b. Bakīl; the brothers of Shākir are Nihm and Shāʿir.\(^{21}\) Shākir begat Amīr, Duhmah, Wāʿilah, al-Ḥārith, and Yashkur. Figure 3 provides an overview of Shākir’s descendants of the first four generations according to al-Hamdānī; in the time of al-Hamdānī some segments of Shākir already included far more generations as are shown in figure 3.

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\(^{18}\) Varisco, Metaphors and Sacred History, 141-144.

\(^{19}\) Heiss, *Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung*, 94-95.

\(^{20}\) The same applies to the genealogical work of al-Kalbī; see Caskel, *Gamharat an-nasab*, 1, 23.

\(^{21}\) Al-Hamdānī, *Ikīl* 10, 237-244.
Fig. 3: Progeny of Shākir according to al-Hamdānī

Al-Hamdānī hands down the names of two sons of Duhmah b. Shākir: Wābish and Thawābah. Wābish begat Ḥayy, Nawf, and Ḥuṭbān, these butūn were called Banū Wābish. Thawābah begat ten sons: ʿUtlah, Judhaymah, ʿAfr, Nasr, Ghurāb, Sāwān, Jaʿdah, Jaḥish, Saʿīd and Ṣafyā. These ten sons became progenitors of descent groups retaining their progenitor’s name: ʿAfr begat the descent group of the ʿUfūr (pl. of ʿAfr), Nasr begat the Nusūr, Ghurāb begat the Ghurābah, Jaʿdah begat the Jaʿūd, and Ṣafyā’s offspring was called Ṣafyāt, etc. Among the descendants of Ḥuṭbān b. Wābish (Banū Ḥuṭbān) al-Hamdānī mentions a certain Qays b. al-Ḥārith, who fought as a horseman (fāris) in the front ranks of the Islamic conquerors against Persia in the battle of al-Qādisiyyah (636 CE); in Yemen itself Duhmah did not play a significant role in the spread of Zaydism in the early medieval period.22 On ʿAmrū b. al-Huṣayn b. al-Nuʿmān of Banū Ḥuṭbān, al-Hamdānī tells us that he was the one who »forged the alliance between them and the Hamdān«.

22 Gochenour, Penetration of Zaydi Islam, 326.
Al-Hamdānī reported that the Duhmah were in constant conflict with their sister tribe, the Wāʾilah. In the tenth century, Wāʾilah also formed a powerful group; the descendants of Wāʾilah were Alghaz, Wāhib (or Wahb), Badāʾ, and Judhaymah: four buṭūn. Wāʾilah was a prosperous tribe of which al-Hamdānī handed us a large amount of descendants: Alghaz begat Ajdaʿ, Shaʿrah, Sawādah, Naḥar, Saḥrah, al-Ḥārith, and ʿUṭr (whose descendants were called al-ʿUṭūr), Rāmī (Banū Rām), Murrah, and (a second) al-Ḥārith.23 The al-ʿUṭūr changed their affiliations and adopted the genealogy of a much younger branch of Wāʾilah, namely Judhaymah b. Zayd b. ʿUmayrah b. Badāʾ b. Wāʾilah; al-Hamdānī does not mention any reasons for this process. Wāhib begat Hamīm, ʿAmr, and Kaʿb. Badāʾ begat ʿUmayrah, Zayd, and al-Qaṣāṣ. Judhaymah begat Rabīʿah and Saḥmah. Al-Hamdānī mentions the names of many other buṭūn, some of them listed by name and praised for their honour (sharaf) and lordship (siyādah). Another person, namely Judhaymah b. Wāʾilah (jr.) b. Rabīʿah b. Judhaymah b. Wāʾilah, went down in history as the man who »provoked the war with the Quḍāʾah«. In contrast to Duhmah, Wāʾilah often played a significant part in the politics of Zaydi affairs.24

The third son of Shākir was Amir b. Shākir, who begat al-Ḥārith, Munabbih, Mālik, ʿAbdullah, Naṣi, Qaʿt and Zarbān. Al-Hamdānī only passes down the descendants of al-Ḥārith b. Amir and of Munabbih b. Amir. Al-Ḥārith begat the Banū ʿAbd, who further descended into the buṭūn of Banū ʿUthmān, Banū Sayf, Banū Mālik, Banū Nimrah and Banū al-Dhawwād. Munabbih begat ʿĀmir, and ʿĀmir begat Akhnas, Naṣr, ʿAbdullāh and ʿAlī; the descendants of ʿĀmir b. Munabbih were called the Banū ʿĀmir b. Munabbih.25 In the ESA period,26 the Amir had been a large and powerful tribe.27 In the tenth century, however, the Amir were obviously in decline; al-Hamdānī mentioned that by his time the Amir were already an extinct part of Shākir (athrā Shākir). In most cases al-Hamdānī refers to Amir in the same breath with Wāʾilah. Indeed the Balad Shākir (the territory of the Shākir) in parts corresponded to the pre-Islamic territory of the Amir.28

The main settlement area of the tribes of Shākir, consisting of Duhmah, Wāʾilah, Amir and al-Ḥārith, were the western and northern parts of al-Jawf and the area between northern al-Jawf and the oasis of Najrān. Al-Jawf is the name of a vast territory whose boundaries are roughly defined to the west by the Baraṭ plateau and to the south by the southern tributaries of Wādī Jawf.29 To the north and east the territory of al-Jawf extends into the Ghāṭ, as the southwestern fringe of the Rubʿ al- Khāli desert (literally, the Empty Quarter) was called at the time of al-Hamdānī. The Rubʿ al-Khāli itself bore the name al-Dānāʾ. The area of al-Jawf is dominated by three Wādis draining into the Ghāṭ: the contiguous Wādīs Khārid and Khaṭbash, the Wādī Khabb, all of them still bearing the same names as in al-Hamdānī’s time.

23 Among the sons of Alghaz, al-Ḥārith is mentioned twice.
24 Gochenour, Penetration of Zaydi Islam, 326.
25 At the time of al-Hamdānī, Munabbih was a common name that has been retained until today. A sub-tribe of the Shahrān is called Munabbih (Philby, Arabian Highlands, 119, 133), as well as a member tribe of the Khawlān b. ʿĀmir (Khawlān Quḍāʾah) in the highlands west of Ṣaʿdah city (Gingrich, Agrarkalender der Munabbih und Südwestarabische Sternenhäkelender).
26 The cultures of pre-Islamic South Arabia are attested for us almost exclusively by Epigraphic South Arabian (ESA) sources, hence the use of ESA hereinafter for the phenomena of these cultures.
27 Von Wissmann, Geschichte und Landeskunde von Alt-Südarabien, 80-206.
28 Von Wissmann, Geschichte und Landeskunde von Alt-Südarabien, 81.
29 The southern border of al-Jawf has no distinctive topographical features, but rather is defined by the border between the tribal territories of Bakil and Madhbiy.
The main settlement area of the tenth-century Duhmah was Jabal Baraṭ, a steep-sided granite plateau (altitude about 2,000 meters) in the extreme west of al-Jawf, which roughly extends 40 km north to south and 60 km west to east. To its east Jabal Baraṭ falls away into broken terrain before the desert begins in earnest. Originally Baraṭ (as well as Kitāf and Nushūr, regions which belong to the settlement area of Wāʿilah) was a personal name: al-Hamdānī identifies Baraṭ, Kitāf and Nushūr as the sons of Karīm b. al-Duʿām al-Akbar, this group also being called Banū Karīm. The combination of place and genealogy by homonymy is not unusual: people or group names can also be place names and therefore have topographical significance. In al-Hamdānī’s accounts the toponyms are almost always derived from personal names, but less frequently vice versa. The personal names used as toponyms commonly refer to the residence of the eponymous group.

As usual when discussing tribal residents of his times, al-Hamdānī presents their affiliations as if – by a certain necessity – going back to an eponymous ancestor, who »gave« his name to his descendants and, thereby, to their territory. However, Heiss has shown that in other regions, notably the Śaʿdah area further to the west, it may also have happened the other way round – i.e. a territorial unit arriving at such a level of coherence that an ancestral name had to be »found« for them that somehow related to the territory in question. Al-Hamdānī obviously was aware that this had happened on certain occasions, as when he refers to »Rāziḥ« as a territorial unit with only a vague indication of an eponymous ancestor.

In the Ṣīfah, in the chapter on the »Marvels of Yemen, which have no equal in other countries«, al-Hamdānī refers to Jabal Baraṭ:

Jabal Baraṭ. Its inhabitants are Duhmah of Shākir b. Bakīl. Its summit is wide, it is considered a country. Its crops are irrigated by abundant rainfall and by irrigation systems, the nawā ʾih. One who was collecting the ʿAlīd tithe told me about 500 parts. [...] The summit of Baraṭ is one of the healthiest and most pleasant parts of Yemen, and one with the most equable climate. It is situated between the Ghāʾīṭ and the Najd.

Al-ʿAlawī’s description, as used by van Arendonk, shows that prior to the Islamic period the high plateau of Jabal Baraṭ was a natural fortress beyond the control of external powers. At the time of Imām al-Hāḍī it could be accessed only by few paths. Thus al-Hāḍī had to be content with a punitive campaign to the northern foot of the Baraṭ massif, after which Duhmah allegedly surrendered and promised to pay taxes.

Wāʿilah and Amīr inhabited closely aligned areas between Jabal Baraṭ and the oasis of Najrān where their territory bordered on that of Yām (another tribe of Hamdān stock dwelling in the Najrān region) in the north and east, partly overlapping with Yām’s domains. Wāʿilah were frequently in conflict with their northeastern neighbours, Yām, and their southern neighbours, Duhmah. The territory of Wāʿilah was defined by the Wādīs Amlāḥ, Ruḥūb,
Kitāf, al-Aqīq, al-ʿAṭf (today: al-ʿAṭfayn) and al-Faqārah, all of them draining into the Ghāʾīt, i.e. the Rubʿ al-Khālī. The Wādī Dadkh (at the confluence of its tributaries al-ʿAṭf and al-Faqārah) further to the east belonged to Amir.

In the eighth volume of *al-Iklīl*, al-Hamdānī describes the famous pre-Islamic monuments of al-Jawf which originated from the time of the Kingdom of Maʿīn and most of which were already desolate and abandoned in the tenth century. These include the ancient cities of Maʿīn and Barāqish, both of which are located in the lower extremity of al-Jawf, facing each other at the foot of Jabal Haylān. Al-Hamdānī tells us of changing tribal occupations of these places. The ownership of Barāqish, for instance, changed from the hands of Hamdān to their rivals, Murād (a Madhḥij section). In other cases, such as the castle of Rawthān, settlements were abandoned due to infighting within the same tribe.

Al-Hamdānī praises al-Jawf, which today in large parts resembles a sea of shifting sand, as a fertile region, well irrigated and rich in trees, describing its climate as favourable and fruitful. He mentions »wonderful wells«, including the deep Sarāqah well in lower al-Jawf, then belonging to Murād, whose water was »delicious and very sweet«. In the area of al-Razm he mentions »large fields that produce 20,000 dhahab, and even those that produce 30,000 qaṭīf«. The inhabitants of al-Jawf were also noted as breeders of fine horses, a reputation reflected in Yemen’s horse varieties listed in al-Hamdānī, such as al-khayl al-jawfī and al-khayl al-ʿansī. Today certain tribal groups in al-Jawf still breed horses. Interestingly, these horses are ascribed genealogies of their own, and the histories of their bloodstock are intertwined with those of their owners.

In addition to Shākir various other groups could be found in tenth-century al-Jawf: Arḥab, Nihm, Sufyān and Murhibah for instance, whose centres of settlement were actually elsewhere further to the west, but who were also present in al-Jawf. Notably Nihm controlled areas in central and southern al-Jawf. Madhḥij were present mainly through Murād, at the time of al-Hamdānī, however, not at full strength. In the tenth century, Madhḥij were already a loosely associated federation whose member tribes were living in widely separated areas, in ‘Asīr and Najrān, on the eastern slope, and on the southern plateau of the northern highlands. Murād, the strongest Madhḥij tribe in the early Islamic period, resided entirely

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38 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣīfah*, 168.
41 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣīfah*, 168.
42 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣīfah*, 200-201.
43 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣīfah*, 200.
44 Al-Hamdānī, *Ṣīfah*, 200-201.
45 Brandt, *Goldenes Zeitalter des Jawf*.
46 Arabian tribes, who prize their horses dearly, do distinguish a number of lines and sublines of thoroughbred (ṣīl) horses, although to label the use of these »family-names« as genealogy would be a massive exaggeration. However, the Ḥamdānī bloodstock of the ṣīl Arab horses does not derive etymologically from Hamdān, and some historians argue that the Arab thoroughbred horse originally came from the north of Arabia. Arab legend, however, insists that the Arab horse came from Yemen, possibly taken in a ghazw (raid) by the Muteyrr tribe (Peter Upton, pers. comm., July 2014). Also, al-Kalbī wrote about the Arab horse; his extant works include Al-Khayl (»Horses«), which contains short accounts of famous horses and poems on horses.
47 On processes of tribal fusion of Khawlān Qudāʾah tribes with Madhḥij segments in the Jīzān and ‘Asīr regions, see Gingrich, *Agrarkalender der Munebbih*, 145-159; Südstarabische Sternenkalender, 13-17; Konzepte und Perspektiven.
in the deserts of the eastern slope. Murâd had a high percentage of nomads in its numbers.\textsuperscript{48} Originally they were a Bedouin tribe in northeastern Yemen which dissolved around the sixth century as a socio-political unit, yet remained connected by the cult of Yaghût.\textsuperscript{49}

The coexistence of these groups seems to have been uneasy. Al-Hamdâni refers to a series of famines, droughts and plagues that presumably touched off tribal migrations. The struggle for land and resources forced many groups to leave their home areas and to intrude territories which then belonged to other tribes. Al-Jawf also witnessed constant strife and fighting between the then more sedentary Hamdân groups living there and Murâd which comprised greater proportions of nomadic members. Murâd and Hamdân were engaged in countless battles over supremacy and hegemony in al-Jawf. Undoubtedly these tensions had begun to seriously disrupt the agriculture that had been practiced in the once fertile lands of al-Jawf, and this disruption began to exert social pressures on the Hamdân tribes in al-Jawf to expand or perish. The antagonism between the tribes of Hamdân and Madhîîj pre-dated the decisive battle between them that was fought at the time of the Prophet Muḥammad in 2 H/622 CE in the area of al-Razm in lower al-Jawf, which al-Hamdâni praised for its fertility. The battle of al-Razm appears to have been the last time Madhîîj functioned as a confederation. After they suffered a bitter defeat, Murâd withdrew from al-Jawf to Ma’rib and Ḥarîb and announced their conversion to Islam.\textsuperscript{50}

\textit{Contemporary Shâkir}

A glance at the tribal structure and settlement areas of the contemporary Shâkir reveals that over the past thousand years they were subject to enormous changes. Duhmah became Dahm, and Shâkir became the eponym of today’s moieties Wâ’ilah and Dahm. Amir, al-Ḥârîth and Yashkur, who already had a weak position in the tenth century, are extinct.\textsuperscript{51} The five fifths of historic Shâkir have thus evolved into a system of moieties; a structural symmetry which can be found among many tribal societies of Yemen and beyond.

\begin{center}
\includegraphics{shakir_diagram.pdf}
\end{center}

\textit{Fig. 4: Contemporary Shâkir}

By the twenty-first century, Dahm consists of seven sevenths which are, again, organized in a system of moieties: Abnâ’ Nasr (lit. sons of Nasr, adj. \textit{nasrî}) and Abnâ’ ‘Amrû (adj. \textit{‘amrî}). The \textit{nasrî} tribes are Dhū Ghaylân, Āl Sâlim, Āl Sulaymân and al-Muḥâshimah. The \textit{‘amrî} tribes comprise Āl ‘Ammâr, al-‘Amâlisah, and Banû Nawf. The genealogical nexuses Nasr and ‘Ammû are the points at which the genealogies of the contemporary segments of Dahm «meet»; they are purely genealogical constructs and do not express political alliances.\textsuperscript{52}

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{49} Caskel, \textit{Gamharat an-nasab}, 2, 64.
\footnotetext{50} Caskel, \textit{Gamharat an-nasab}, 2, 62 n.4. For an overview of the references to Madhîîj in the scientific literature, see Smith, \textit{Madhîîj}. On further details regarding al-Hamdâni’s account of Madhîîj see Mahoney, \textit{Political Construction of a Tribal Genealogy}.
\footnotetext{51} The tribal group called al-Ḥârîth settling near Najrân, however, traces its descent to Madhîîj, see Heiss, \textit{Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung}, 157-158; al-Hajrî, \textit{Majmuʿ buldān}, 1: 208.
\footnotetext{52} In this respect, Dahm differs from Khawālīn Qudā’ah whose moieties Yahâniyyah and Furûd simultaneously provide patterns for political alliances (Gingrich, \textit{Agrarkalender der Munebbîh}, 158-166; Brandt, \textit{Khawālīn and Jumā’ah}).
\end{footnotes}
Fig. 5: Contemporary Dahm
Duhmah’s historical moieties, Wābish and Thawābah, are extinct. Thawābah may have sustained themselves in the name of the shaykhly lineage of Dhū Zayd b. al-Maḥlaf of Dhū Muḥammad, one of Dhū Ghaylān’s moieties. Nawf b. Wābish b. Duhmah became the progenitor of Banū Nawf, one of the sevenths of contemporary Dahm. Ḥuṭbān b. Wābish b. Duhmah is said to be still extant as a minor segment of Dhū Ḥusayn, settling to the east of Baraṭ in the Wādī Khabb region. According to tribal tradition another part of Ḥuṭbān emigrated from al-Jawf and fused with the genealogy of Murād (Madhhij). The descendants of Ṭutlah b. Thawābah b. Duhmah are extant, too, appearing as al-Ṭutlah among the sub-segments of Dhū Muḥammad. Both Ḥuṭbān and Ṭutlah morphed from prominent senior descendants of Duhmah into tiny «junior» positions far down in the pedigree.

The numerous other groups referred to by al-Hamdānī in the tenth century are extinct. The reasons can be many. Famines, droughts and plagues may have caused extinction to the extent that whole lineages have petered out. Other groups may have moved elsewhere. The «deep fall» of Ḥuṭbān and al-Ṭutlah from the superior levels of tribal segmentation into the minor segments of Dhū Ḥusayn respectively Dhū Muḥammad may be explained by the fact that lineage rumps of groups which are threatened with marginalization have the tendency to fuse with a collateral lineage (and in so doing fuse their resources with those of the adopting lineage), or for a numerically more powerful lineage group to take it over by force. This process has been observed in other tribal societies, such as the Cyrenaican Bedouin. On the other hand, the rise of Nawf is an example for the foreshortening of genealogy, i.e. the process that certain names (here: Wābish) come to be omitted in the structure below the name of the founding ancestor. These processes of «telescoping» (an expression by Evans-Pritchard), i.e. the foreshortening or extension of genealogies, are characteristic genealogical features among many tribes, also observed among the Nuer and the Cyrenaican Bedouin.

In addition to Banū Nawf, six other midsize segments of Dahm have emerged in the last millennium: Dhū Ghaylān, Āl Sulaymān, Āl ‘Ammār, al-ʿAmālisah, Āl Sālim, and al-Mahāshimah, each of them linked with the genealogy of Dahm through the eponym of its respective moiety (Nasr or ‘Amrū). Dhū Ghaylān are reckoned sons of Muḥammad b. Shaʿbān b. Nasr b. ‘Amrū b. Dahm, al-Mahāshimah are reckoned sons of Masʿūd b. Nasr b. Dahm, Āl ‘Ammār are reckoned sons of ‘Amrū b. Dahm, etc.

Today the best known and politically most important segment of Dahm, Dhū Ghaylān with its moieties Dhū Ḥusayn and Dhū Muḥammad, emerged only after the tenth century. Supporting evidence for their formation is thin; the names Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn seem not to be attested until about 1600 CE. Local oral tradition suggests a formation in late medieval times and identifies Ghaylān as a wartime leader of Dahm, who united a part of his tribe in a period of acute conflict with their sister tribe and rival Wāʿilah, forming a stable group which was then referred to as Dhū Ghaylān. In this way these events (i.e. a particular episode of the eternal conflict between Dahm and Wāʿilah) were transformed in both legend and genealogy: genealogy has taken over the function of historiography. Also this principle
of »selective memory« is common practice in regard to tribal genealogies, because, as Caskel put it, the »youngsters« had to know who among their ancestors and relatives had led the major wars and who had been killed by whom, and whose death had to be avenged on whom.59 In this way many ancient heroes and leaders have gone down in the genealogies of their tribes. The addition of certain ancestors is often associated with the omission of others. Bonte has called this basic method of genealogical manipulation »selective amnesia«, i.e. the deliberate omission of less than prestigious ancestors from one’s genealogy and a careful selection of the most illustrious forebears to include in the genealogy, a common manoeuvre that is aimed at maximizing the social prestige that can be accumulated from real or putative descent.60

Because of its inherent contradictions and unclear affiliations, it is always a kind of gamble to fix a tribal structure in writing. The structure of contemporary Dahm features many ambiguities. For instance, the precise segmentary status of Ḥuṭbān and al-ʿUtlāt as components of contemporary Dhū Ḥusayn respective Dhū Muḥammad has proven to be rather elusive. Another example is al-Maʿāṭirah. The position and lineage of al-Maʿāṭirah is disputed and it is almost impossible to reach an agreed upon lineage and structure for al-Maʿāṭirah. Al-Ḥajrī and al-Maqḥafī trace the tribe through Dhū Ghaylān and Dhū Muḥammad.61 Dresch argues that al-Maʿāṭirah functions as a »sixth fifth« of Dhū Muḥammad.62 One of my fieldwork sources told me that al-Maʿāṭirah descends directly from Dhū Ghaylān, thus speaking of themselves as a »brother« of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn. Considered from the genealogical point of view, ʿIyāl Surayḥ (lit. children of Surayḥ) also belong to Dhū Ghaylān, a tribe settling east of ʿAmrān city and normally reckoned a constituent tribe of the Bakīl confederation, and thus omitted in figure 5. ʿIyāl Surayḥ are descendants of Surayḥ b. Ghaylān b. Nasr b. Dahm, the »brothers« of Surayḥ are thus Dhū Ḥusayn and Dhū Muḥammad in Ghaylān b. Nasr b. Dahm.

The remaining segments of present-day Dahm are not mentioned by al-Hamdānī; they were either not yet existent or were added later to Dahm from other, dissolving Shākir genealogies. Yet no evidence could be found (which does not mean that it does not exist) for descendants of the now defunct Amir and al-Ḥārith lineages having fused with the genealogy of other branches of Dahm, a process that regularly took place among other tribes of Qaḥṭānī descent.63 Certainly, some of the other groups of Hamdān pedigree who already lived during the tenth century in al-Jawf (Nihm, Arḥab, Sufyān, Murhibah, etc.) morphed into the genealogy of Dahm. As Dresch pointed out, among Dahm one finds sections with the names of tribes elsewhere.64 Al-Hudhayl, a conspicuous section name in Sufyān, recurs in Dhū Muḥammad; Sufyān’s Abnāʿ al-Marzūq echo al-Marāzīq of Nawf, etc. In both Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn one finds many distinctive family or section names which occur in other tribes.

59 Caskel, Gamharat an-nasab, 1: 35.
60 Bonte, Égalité et hiérarchie.
61 Al-Ḥajrī, Majmuʿ buldān, 1: 111-112; and al-Maqḥafī, Mawsūʿat al-ʿalqāb, 1566-1567.
63 Brandt, Khawlān and Jumāʿah.
64 Dresch, Rules of Baraṭ, 57.
In addition, a considerable part of the groups that do constitute contemporary Dahm can look back on an origin from outside al-Jawf. Local oral tradition has it that numerous tribal groups from Ḥaḍramawt, Shabwah, the inner-Arab Najd and ʿAsir (the latter two today situated in Saudi-Arabia) have migrated into al-Jawf. As locals put it, Dahm do not descend from (la yanḥadir min) a single descent, but go back to more than one tribe. In itself, this pattern of a tribal composite group of plural origins already occurred in al-Hamdānī’s times; the various tribal groups of composite origins were rather the norm than the exception, and obviously in the twenty-first century this still is the case.

These claims are sometimes more, sometimes less precise. To give a few examples: Āl al-Shāyif of Dhū Ḥusayn immigrated from Bīshah (ʿAsir), Āl al-ʿAnsī of Dhū Muḥammad originate from ʿAns b. Madhḥij, and Āl Hamad of Dhū Ḥusayn immigrated from Wādī Ṭuwayq in today’s Saudi Arabia, a large Wādī more or less part of the wider neighbourhood of Qaryat al-Ḥāw, the historic capital of Kinda and Madhḥij. Around Baraṭ it is said that there are numerous families of Dhū Muḥammad and Dhū Ḥusayn who originally came from Najrān, ʿAsir, and other regions, but there seems no agreement on exactly who they are or when they came. All of them are now united under the umbrella of the Shākir genealogy where they occupy a well-founded, albeit fictitious place.

Also Hamdān al-Jawf and its eight tribes al-Faqmān, Āl Kathir, Āl Ḥadījān, al-Ḥirjah, Āl ʿAbīd, al-Khawāṭirah, Āl Zāmil, and al-Shujn, who are now installed in the lower Jawf around al-Jawf’s modern main administrative centre al-Ḥazm, is often identified as a tribe of Dahm. The members of the Hamdān al-Jawf tribe, however, see themselves as an independent tribe of Hamdān pedigree which neither descends from Dahm nor from Shākir, and moreover, neither belongs to Bakīl nor to Ḥāshid. The genealogy of Dahm «meets with Hamdān al-Jawf in Hamdān b. Zayd», as informants put it. Yet by territorial proximity and alliance policy Hamdān al-Jawf is today close to Bakil and in particular to Dahm b. Shākir. According to local sources from this very group Hamdān al-Jawf, too, is a gathering, a conglomerate of groups with and without Hamdān genealogy. Many elements of Hamdān al-Jawf trace their descent to regions further east. The descent of Āl al-Shujn, for instance, goes back (taʿūd ilā) to the Ḥaḍrami Nahd tribe. The Āl ʿAlī and Āl Ṣāliḥ of al-Ḥirjah have roots in Shabwah, and the Āl al-Makki of Āl Zāmil originate from Murād.

Also the genealogy and tribal structure of Dahm’s sister tribe Wāʿilah have undergone radical transformations and resemble only remotely those of the tenth century. The historic fourths of tenth-century Wāʿilah (Alghaz, Wāḥib, Badāʾ and Judhaymah) have morphed into moieties, namely Rijāl ʿUlāh (adj. alhānī, lit. descendants of ʿAlhān) and al-Shaʿrāt (adj. shaʿrī). The linages of Badāʾ b. Wāʿilah and Wāḥib b. Wāʿilah have petered out. The other two eponyms, Judhaymah and Alghaz, have been eradicated by «selective amnesia», yet oral tradition traces the descent of Rijāl ʿUlāh through the lineage ʿAlhān b. Wāʿilah b. Rabiʿah b. Judhaymah b. Wāʿilah b. Shākir, thus linking them with Judhaymah b. Wāʿilah, one of the fourths of historic Wāʿilah. Al-Shaʿrāt, Wāʿilah’s other moiety, are the collective form of historic Shaʿrah, the son of Alghaz, and indeed the contemporary al-Shaʿrāt trace their descent though al-Shaʿrāh b. Alghaz b. Wāʿilah b. Shākir.

65 Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung, 125-164.
66 The Kinda are a tribe of South Arabian origin. Some Kinda groups migrated around the seventh century CE from Ḥaḍramawt to the western part of Yemen, Central and North Arabia, and Egypt; cf. Olinder, Kings of Kinda; Cas-kel, Gamharat an-nasab, 1. 33; 2. 47-53; Bamyeh, Nomads of Pre-Islamic Arabia. On Qaryat al-Ḥāw see al-Ansari, Qaryat al-Ḥāw.
67 Dresch, Rules of Baraṭ, 57.
All branches shown in this structure further subdivide extensively. Local sources among Wāʿilah indicate that the descent groups Rijāl ʿUlah and Shaʿrāt are the result of intra-tribal fusions and fissions. Banū Wāhib for instance, a segment of the contemporary Shaʿrāt, are identical with Banū Wāhib of historical Wāʿilah, Wāhib thus actually being the uncle of Shāʿir and not his son. These shifting affiliations are not unusual; Arab genealogies feature many examples of these adjustments and re-alignments of ancestors and tribal divisions for the sake of changed alliances (taḥālifāt) within a tribe.68

Also the structure of contemporary Wāʿilah offers plenty of surprises. For instance, among Wāʿilah one can find several exceptions to the rule that the agnatic lines of descent are never interrupted by women. However, one of the moieties of Rijāl ʿUlah bears the name of a woman: Āl Fāṭimah. Oral tradition has it that Fāṭimah was one of Buqām’s two wives. The sons of Buqām and his first wife formed the Banū Buqām segment. The sons of Buqām and his second wife Fāṭimah (Maqāsh, Bāsān, ʿAmrū) became a separate lineage called the Banū Fāṭimah or Āl Fāṭimah. The principle of maternal ancestry appears several more times among Wāʿilah. Āl Dāyil b. Fayṣal of Āl Abū Jabarah in the extreme east of Wāʿilah territory are one of Wāʿilah’s senior shaykhly lineages. They belong to the supreme judicial authorities (sing. marāghah) of Bakīl in customary law (ʿurf).69 The incumbent shaykh of this lineage does not only bear the title Ibn Dāyil b. Fayṣal, but also the byname (laqb) Ibn al-Qāyfiyyah. Oral tradition identifies

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68 Caskel, Gambharat an-nasab, 1. 69; Brandt, Khawlān and Jumāʿah.
69 Brandt, Inhabiting Tribal Structures.
Qāyfiyyah as a daughter of a sharif\(^{70}\) from al-Jawf who had married into the Dāyil b. Fayṣal shaykhly lineage. According to tradition, the father of Qāyfiyyah had been killed by the neighbouring Yām tribe, with which Wā’ilah historically maintain as precarious relations as with Dahm.

Interestingly, some tribal sources also reckon the ancient eponyms Duhmah and Wā’ilah having been women. In contrast, al-Hamdānī refers to them as men (i.e. sons of Shākir).\(^{71}\) According to oral tradition, Duhmah and Wā’ilah were the wives of Shākir. In fact, the masculine form Wā’il appears frequently in al-Hamdānī’s genealogical compendium, whereas the feminine form Wā’ilah only appears in the case of Shākir. Caskel points out that these ancestral women can be found almost exclusively at higher levels of genealogies, where they barely could be known personally to their descendants.\(^{72}\) Such ancestral women usually come from other tribes, because «open» marriage policy towards other groups and tribes and alliances with other tribes were often cemented by marriage, causing considerable growth in the size of a tribe.\(^{73}\) The woman’s name is retained in the genealogy in order to strengthen solidarity with the other tribe. If, then, half-brother differentiation or full sibling unity is to be shown genealogically, the obvious way in which this can be done is to use a maternal name in the genealogy. This can be effected by clustering the groups around the name of the mother, thereby making the two clusters of groups stand in the relationship of paternal half-brothers. Thus the appearance of ancestresses in nasab reinforces alliances with other tribes while simultaneously it does not deny patrilineality; on the contrary, it serves in a sense to reinforce it.

Today the Balad Shākir is both far larger and more homogeneous than in the tenth century. Wā’ilah have expanded to include also the former territory of Amīr. Wādi Daḵakh, which formerly belonged to Amīr, is now called Wādi Āl Ābū Jabārah and inhabited by Wā’ilah’s homonymous segment Āl Abū Jabārah of Rijāl ʿUlah. The main settlement area of Dahm has expanded enormously and comprises now the largest part of al-Jawf. Beginning in al-Jawf’s extreme northwest area at the Baraṭ plateau, a combination of Dhū Muḥammad and closely aligned al-Maʿāṭirah constitutes the majority of Baraṭ’s residents; another enclave of Dhū Muḥammad can be found in lower al-Jawf within the settlement area of Dhū Ḥusayn. The territory of Dhū Ḥusayn is enormous and stretches from the border line with adjoining villages of Dhū Muḥammad at Baraṭ to the southern edge of Wādi al-Jawf and an indeterminate distance eastward into the vast space of the Empty Quarter. Dresch notes that further eastward still, Dahm make extravagant claims about what their territory might cover and if one asks where the furthest borders of Dahm are, then one is sometimes told Qatar.\(^{74}\) More real-

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\(^{70}\) I.e. a member of the Ashrāf tribe. The Ashrāf tribe claims direct descent from the Prophet Muḥammad. Despite maintaining a degree of independence from the tribal environment within which they live, the Āl Ashrāf nonetheless maintain many of the structural characteristics of a conventional tribe (vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen*, 141-142).

\(^{71}\) Many other names referred to by al-Hamdānī in regard to Wā’ilah’s medieval tribal structure, such as Nawf, Sha’rah, Sawādah, Nahār, Sahrah, etc., could also be women.

\(^{72}\) Caskel, *Ğamharat an-nasab*, 1. 52-53. See also Peters, *Proliferation*, who observed that the Bedouin of Cyrenaica claim that they are all descendants of a unique ancestress. In this case female names can be used to show a greater notion of cohesion than the mere use of male names, and the significance of a female name placed at the apex of the Cyrenaican genealogy is that it is the symbol of full-brother unity at the highest political level.


\(^{74}\) Dresch, *Rules of Baraṭ*, 43.
historically, the meeting point of Dahm as a whole with Āl Murrah (the Yām section) and Ṣayʿar (a Saudi desert tribe of Kinda pedigree) is near Sharūrah, just north of today’s Saudi-Yemeni border at the longitude of central Ḥaḍramawt.

Banū Nawf reside in a vast area which begins only a few kilometres east of al-Ḥazm, al-Jawf’s main commercial and administrative centre, and covers the entire southeastern (lower Khabb wa al-Shaʿf area) and eastern al-Jawf. Al-Mahāshimah controls a territory in the northern Khabb wa al-Shaʿf area near Yemen’s border with Saudi Arabia. The settlement areas of the four midsize tribes Āl Ṭammār, Āl Saʿlim, Āl Sulaymān and Āl ʿAmālisah are located in eastern Ṣaʿdah governorate north of the Bāraṭ plateau. Āl Ṭammār and Āl Saʿlim are two smaller enclaves a few miles south and southeast of Ṣaʿdah city in the Ṣaʿdah basin which is dominated by the Sahār tribe of the Khawlān b. ʿĀmir confederation (Khawlān Quḍāʾah). Al-ʿAmālisah and Āl Sulaymān form a buffer zone north and northeast of Jabal Bāraṭ between the territory of Dhū Muḥammad and Wāʿilah.

In the tenth century, Sufyān had a strong presence in northern al-Jawf but were then displaced due to a conflict with Dhū Ḥusayn. Tribal oral tradition has it that »once upon a time« (fī yawm min al-ayyām) Dhū Ḥusayn abducted a shepherdess of Sufyān. In turn Sufyān, led by Ḥaydar, the eponymous ancestor of today’s shaykhly lineage of Sufyān’s Ruḥm moiety, attacked Dhū Ḥusayn. In the ensuing battles, Sufyān killed 112 of Dhū Ḥusayn, whereas Dhū Ḥusayn killed seventy of Sufyān, among them Sufyān’s wartime leader Ḥaydar. Thus the death of forty-two victims still had to be avenged by Dhū Ḥusayn on Sufyān (wa min hunā' baqiya li-Dhū Ḥusayn ithnān wa ʿarbaʿūn qatīl tāʿīr ʿind Sufyān). Sufyān then withdrew from northern al-Jawf and entrenched themselves, so that none of them would be killed in the name of revenge, and Dhū Ḥusayn took the territory of Sufyān in al-Jawf as material compensation for the unavenged death of forty-two of their members.

Today only a few other groups outside the genealogy of Shākir are dwelling in al-Jawf. The largest are Hamdān al-Jawf, who are centred around al-Ḥazm and are closely associated with Dahm. In addition two smaller enclaves of the Asḥrāf tribe are settling in lower-al Jawf, their main settlement area being located in the Maʿrib area further to the south.

These territorial demarcations should not detract from the fact that it is not always possible to define the territories of tribal groups in al-Jawf. As one of few tribes in Yemen, Dahm today comprises a significant proportion of nomadic members who have a different system of territories and borders in comparison to the sedentary tribes further to the west, i.e. their tribal territories are not made up of exhaustive and exclusive section-territories. In many places in al-Jawf a distinction between sedentary and nomadic groups is impossible. Steffen in his survey of al-Jawf in the 1970s encountered fully sedentary farmers, permanently migrating cattle breeders (Bedouins) and all kinds of organizational forms between these two elementary life styles. Even within one single tribal segment there were different divisions, some of which were fully settled, some semi-Bedouin and other Bedouin. According to Steffen, the average percentage of Bedouins in al-Jawf was 25%, in some areas such as the Wādī Khabb 40%, among Dhū Zayd of Dhū Muḥammad even 80%. No statistics are available for Wāʿilah; al-Ḥajrī, however, also refers to some segments of Wāʿilah as badū.

75 Al-Ḥamdānī, Sīfah, 110.
76 Boundary disputes between the Sufyān and segments of Dhū Ghaylān are still active; see Dresch, Tribes, Government, and History, 259, 321, 338.
77 Steffen, Yemen, 2. 121-124, 198.
78 Al-Ḥajrī, Majmuʿ buldān, 2. 477.
**Entanglement and rejection**

The formative process of Shākir mirrors the genealogists’ findings that it is not always descent that shapes the political and territorial relations of tribes and tribal segments, and that frequently descent and genealogy are rather the vocabulary through which such relations are expressed, regardless of, and often in contradiction to, known biological facts. Bonte has called these types of non-genealogical solidarities prevalent in tribal communities which are expressed in genealogical terms »parenté élective«. Heiss has further analysed the ways in which these forms of genealogical reasoning functioned according to al-Hamdānī, how they could be manipulated, altered or elaborated according to new constellations, and how they served specific needs and interests.

In addition to this quite common feature, however, the formative process of the Shākir tribe features two special and interrelated characteristics. Firstly, the enormous changes to which parts of Shākir’s tribal structure, genealogy and territory have been subjected since the tenth century, and secondly, the notably large number of immigrant groups who fused with the genealogy of Shākir (especially Dahm).

The relation between these phenomena can better be understood if we look back beyond the tenth century, upon the history of Yemen’s pre-Islamic kingdoms. The society of the South Arabian kingdoms of the ESA period differs in important respects from that of the tenth century. The evidence from the inscriptions of the pre-Islamic South Arabian societies suggests that descent and lineage were of little importance to the bearers of the ESA cultures: its communities were first and foremost territorial units and farming populations in which long elaborate pedigrees were unknown. Dostal outlines a »dynastic« source of genealogical unilineality as rooted in pre-Islamic South Arabian rulers’ dynastic ambitions towards legitimizing continuity. According to Dostal, the evolution of patrilineal genealogy takes place at the same time as the consolidation and development of institutions of centralized governance during the last centuries before the Common Era, and thus would appear to be an endogenous process. Dostal argues also that the spread of monotheistic religions may have played its part in the development of such a high level of patrilineality, as their norms are based on the concept of patrilineality which helped to consolidate that level of patrilineal ordering of kinship which had already been attained.

Others, in contrast, assume that the system of patrilineal genealogical representation has been imported by nomadic »Arabs« to Yemen: intrusive tribes from inner-Arabia and the outskirts of the vast Rub’ al-Khāli desert, to whose onslaught the South Arabian kingdoms were increasingly exposed since the last centuries before the Common Era. Initially the ancient South Arabian kingdoms could absorb and exploit the Arabs’ boldness and pugnacity for their own purposes; from the middle of the first millennium CE, however, the intrusive Arabs deployed a force that contributed to the decline of the already ailing South Arabian kingdoms. These intrusive Arabs may have brought with them the nasab tradition which

79 Bonte, Egalité et hiérarchie.
80 Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung.
81 Beeston, Kingship in Ancient South Arabia, 258; Robin, Hautes-terres du Nord-Yémen, 1. 71-73; Höfner, Beduinen, 62.
82 Dostal, Transition from Cognatic to Unilinear Descent Systems, 47-62.
83 Höfner, Beduinen, 60-68; Caskel, Gamharat an-nasab, 1. 20; Robin, Pénétration des Arabes.
84 Robin, Pénétration des Arabes.
had been previously unknown in this form in Yemen, and which was gradually taken over, in varying degrees, by the domestic population. Thus between the ESA period and that of al-Hamdānī a major change in social organization (or »culture shift«, as Beeston called it) had taken place, the shift from shaʿb to qabilah, a shift from an idiom of territory to one of shared descent. This more or less continuous invasion resulted in »bedouinized« parts (ʿarab) and non-«bedouinized« parts (ahmūr, i.e. »Ḫimyarites«) of Ḥamdān; as far back as the sixth century Shākir were, together with Ḥajūr, Yām, Wāḍiʿah, Dālān, ʿUdhar, Khārif, Arḥab, Murhibah and Nihm, reckoned ʿarab.85

This uniform nasab tradition, however it was brought about, did not comply with many of the components of Yemen’s population. In many regions of Yemen territoriality remained a basic principle since large parts of Yemen’s tribal system, as compared with many others in the Middle East, remained characterized by an apparent longevity of toponyms and territorial boundaries as opposed to the respective resident population, many of them emigrated from or migrated into these territories quite frequently.86

We can, however, perceive a noticeable difference between the sedentary tribes of central and western Yemen and tribes of al-Jawf. The eastern location of Shākir at the fringe of the Rubʿ al-Khālī desert and the gateway of ancient trade and travel routes between South and North Arabia makes the record of immigration among them more relevant than among groups further to the west. The considerable number of immigrant groups that have joined Shākir since the tenth century, in particular Dahm, suggests that the historic movement that drove nomadic desert tribes to al-Jawf did not stop in the tenth century but rather continued long after it. The genealogical and territorial changes we have observed among Shākir tribes were thus in parts the result of internal developments and regroupings (according to Dresch’s »Rubik’s cube« pattern) and in parts the consequence of the continuous penetration of external groups from elsewhere into al-Jawf and other areas at the fringe of the Rubʿ al-Khālī, a process similar to that which Dussaud has carefully analysed on the Syrian side.87

Thus al-Jawf seems to indicate a specific case among a greater diversity of regional variations, which also include fewer records of such immigration stories and territorial changes. The impact of immigrants on the tribal society of Shākir and their genealogy, structure and territoriality appears to have been greater than on the tribes to the more westerly areas in the central, rugged highlands of Yemen. The rugged terrain of the interior highlands of Yemen has been a factor contributing to the stability of the tribal areas. Wilson argues in his exploration of Ḥāshid and Bakīl in the central parts of the highland plateau - roughly between the city of Sana’a in the south and Khaywān in the north - that substantial traces of the pre-Islamic tribal order continued to exist well into the Islamic period, and also over the past ten centuries Wilson found little evidence of major tribal movements in that area; his overwhelming impression was one of remarkable continuity and minimal change, even if tribal affiliations have from time to time altered or developed.88 Dresch, too, stresses the importance of structural continuity and territorial fixity for most of the tribes of Hamdān in the central highlands; yet he also noted the exception to this rule in al-Jawf.89 In other areas of the cen-

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85 Caskel, Gamharat an-nasab, 2. 47.
86 Dresch, Tribes of Hāshid-wa-Bakīl, 9-10; Weir, Tribal Order, 2; Gingrich, Multiple Histories.
87 Dussaud, Pénétration des Arabes.
88 Wilson, Al-Hamdānī’s Description of Ḥāshid and Bakīl, 96.
89 Dresch, Ḥāshid-wa-Bakīl and Tribes, Government, and History, 324.
entral highlands, such as among the member tribes of the Khawlān b. ʿĀmir (Khawlān Quḍāʾah) confederation, the changes between the tenth and the twenty-first centuries can often also be explained as results of intra-tribal fusions and fissions, although here also were larger movements of tribes and tribal segments, movements that have left their traces in the collective memory and the genealogies of the tribes. This explains why many present day tribes of the central highlands of Yemen claim always to have been where they now are. In the central highlands there is little rhetoric whatsoever of conquest or major displacement, and disputes over borders, for example, are mostly spoken of as a »renewal« of lines that already existed. In short, even during al-Hamdānī’s time and throughout the centuries that have passed since then, in these central areas a remarkable territorial continuity and stasis prevails that is contrasted by stronger elements of residential discontinuity and mobility.

Certainly in the way that the affiliations of tribal groups changed hands one also can see other factors, for example politics (in fact, struggles for power) intruding on the formal alignments of tribal groups. At the time of al-Hamdānī parts of Yemen were dominated by a number of rulers and chieftains who had risen to power as ʿAbbāsid control over Yemen had diminished. In the Ṣaʿdah area the first Zaydī imām, al-Hādī ilā al-Ḥaqq Yaḥyā b. al-Ḥusayn founded the Zaydī dawlah and a dynasty which was to rule in parts of Yemen until 1962. In other areas, in which the authority of these dynastic rulers was not felt, tribal leaders held sway. In the decades and centuries after al-Hamdānī numerous dynasties throughout Yemen gained power, competed with each other and controlled dominions of varying size: the Ziyādids, the Yuʿfirids, the Ṣulayḥids, the Ayyūbids, Rasūlids, Tāhīrīds, etc. Historically Yemen witnessed Abyssinian, Persian and Ottoman invasions and finally the expansion of Wahhābīs at its northern borders. Yet many of these political currents and struggles certainly had a greater impact on the central parts of Yemen than on the somewhat »peripheral« area of al-Jawf, since for long periods of history al-Jawf was in some ways remote and politically closer to the Najrān oasis and valley, a region of great historical importance, than to the central parts of Yemen. It would, however, hardly be surprising if parts of al-Jawf also became caught up eventually in the currents and counter-currents of political competition, and if the interventions of these powers and the resulting conflicts, alliances and oppositions contributed to further reshuffles among tribal categories in al-Jawf.

90 Gingrich, Agrarkalender der Munebbih, 145-158; Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung; Brandt, Khawālīn und Jumāʿah.
91 For instance, the migration of a part of Khawlān from the Ṣirwāḥ area to the Ṣaʿdah basin (Heiss, Landnahme der Ḥawlān und Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung, 107-122; Brandt, Khawālīn und Jumāʿah) and the migration of Madhḥij groups to Jīzān and ʿAsīr (Gingrich, Agrarkalender der Munebbih, 145-159, Südwestarabische Sternenkalender, 13-17, and Konzepte und Perspektiven). Also the contemporary Rāziḥ of Khawlān Quḍāʾah imagine themselves as being a land of people descended mostly from immigrants seeking work in agriculture or trade in the fertile Rāziḥ region (Weir, Tribal Order, 52-53), a conception which may, however, also constitute a distant echo of the Khawlān’s grand migration from Ṣirwāḥ to Ṣaʿdah during the pre-Islamic Period.
92 Dresch, Tribes of Ḥāshid-wa-Bahil, 11.
93 Gingrich, Multiple Histories.
94 Gochenour, Penetration of Zaydi Islam; Smith, Early and Medieval History of Ṣanaʾī and Political History of the Islamic Yemen.
95 Smith, Political History of the Islamic Yemen, 129-139 and Medieval History of Ṣanaʾī; 49-67; Serjeant, Modern History of Ṣanaʾī, 68-107.
96 Tuchscherer, Imams notables et bédouins; al-Marih, Najrān.
Only one group has not been included into the genealogy of Shākir. This group is locally referred to as *manūʿ* or *qabā ṭ il al-wasaṭ*. The *manūʿ* live scattered among several segments of Dahm; their exact number is unclear. In Baraṭ many suppose that *manūʿ* until fairly recently made up a third of the Baraṭ plateau’s settled population.

The *manūʿ* are sedentary farmers and sharecroppers and subdivide into numerous groups which are loosely aligned with the tribal structures of the host group on whose territory they live. Unlike other low-status groups such as butchers or musicians, *manūʿ* are reckoned tribesmen, yet not of full but rather subordinate tribal status. Dresch observed that *manūʿ* cannot make undertakings to escort or protect others in their own name. Local sources from the Baraṭ region mentioned to me that the *manūʿ* neither interfere in Dahm’s meetings, nor do they play a role in Dahm’s contracts or participate in Dahm’s wars.

Although the *manūʿ* are reckoned tribesmen and attach to the structure of Dahm they remain genealogically apart; locals speak of *ʿadam intisābi-him ilā Dahm*, i.e. their non-accession to the genealogy of Dahm. They remain apart from Dahm without having an independent genealogy of their own. Local tradition regards the *manūʿ* as the descendants of the indigenous sedentary population of al-Jawf, who had been settling in al-Jawf even before the installation of the Duhmah. The by-name (*laqūb*) which refers to all of them is Banū Hilāl (i.e. not »noble« Arabs of Qaḥṭānī stock). The word is that a large part of them left Yemen and took part in the Muslim Conquests of the early Islamic period. Dresch, in contrast, was told that the *manūʿ* may have been left behind in Yemen at the great migration which followed the collapse of the Maʿrib dam. Both versions make sense, because the penetration of external groups in al-Jawf would certainly not have had the same magnitude if the vast irrigated foothills bordering the desert areas did not decline: many people who inhabited these regions before the Common Era indeed formed a shield against them. Supporting evidence for the formation of the *manūʿ* is thin; yet it appears as if the *manūʿ* have their origin in the distant past of the ESA period, in which a tribe or a group did not need to know it’s very origin and thus the extent of its »consanguinity« with other groups and tribes. With due caution, the *manūʿ* can be regarded an anachronism, a vestige of the major change in social organization – the »culture shift«, as Beeston (1972) called it – between the ESA period and that of al-Hamdānī, i.e. the shift from *shaʿb* to *gabilah*, the shift from the idiom of territory to the idiom of shared descent.

Some of the *manūʿ* are quite wealthy and in theory they could enter into marriage relations with Dahm, but in practice this hardly happens. Tribesmen of Dahm may marry women of the *manūʿ* but they refuse to give their females to them. The non-exchange of women indicates

98 Robin, *Pénétration des Arabes*.
99 An interesting comparative case is the difference in status between the *sādah* (sing. *sāyid*) and the tribes. The *sādah* are an immigrant community living in tribally oriented areas, and genealogical rigidity seems to have been an appropriate strategy to enable the *sādah* to survive as a coherent group (Puin, *Yemeni hijrah Concept of Tribal Protection*, 484). But although the *sādah* sustain their exclusive status within these parts of Yemeni society through the principles of patrilineality and endogamy, endogamy is practiced much more stringently regarding the sharīfahs (female descendants of the prophet); for *sādah* it is quite legitimate to marry tribal women, and their offspring will then be in turn of *sāyid* stock. For marriage patterns between tribes and *sādah*, see Serjeant, *South Arabia*, 227, 238-239; Gingrich and Heiss, *Ethnographie der Provinz Sa‘da*, 19; Gingrich, *How the Chiefs’ Daughters Marry*; Mondy, *Domestic Government*, 48, 173-175; vom Bruck, *Islam, Memory, and Morality in Yemen*, 131-162.
the absence of equality between Dahm and the manūʿ, i.e. the manūʿ are not reckoned fully ḥalāl by Dahm. Heiss has elaborated in regard to groups without common genealogy among the historic Khawlān Quḍā’ah based in the Sa’dah area that the word ḥalal (in addition to being known from the religious-legal sphere meaning »allowed«, e.g. the meat of ritually slaughtered animals) can also have the meaning of equivalence between people and tribal groups, an equivalence that manifests itself in the possibility of entering into mutual marital relationships, which are an important prerequisite for the fusion of genealogies.100 Dahm tribesmen justify the absence of mutual marital relationship with manūʿ by saying that manūʿ, albeit tribesmen, are »weak« (mustadaʿ) both in numerical terms and in terms of power, i.e. the manūʿ cannot provide the same protection (of family members, in-laws, guests, protégés, etc.) like a full tribesman of Dahm.

The genealogical exclusion of the manūʿ is remarkable because as a rule of thumb, we have seen, small and weak tribal groups were frequently accepted as allies by larger, presumably stronger ones. These groups were fully integrated in Dahm’s nasab and society; in fact they disappeared into the host group (Dahm) and eventually came to be viewed as the host’s agnates. Yet in the case of the manūʿ their perceived weakness is often cited as a reason for the fact that the manūʿ – in contrast to the lineage rumps of other tribal groups which were threatened with marginalization or even extinction – did not fuse with collateral lineages of Dahm and could not manage to adopt Dahm genealogy in order to become a coequal part of the dominant group’s tribal law and status. In consequence the manūʿ retained their separate identities for centuries. Such cases of differentiation within the same tribal status group are rare, but they occur; cases are documented among the historic Khawlān Quḍā’ah in Yemen, Quraysh in Hijāz, and for Ṣulubbah in Northern Arabia.101 Among these groups the social class-system is so firmly rooted that it is not even possible for Islam to carry through its demands for its abolition.102

In the eyes of Dahm, manūʿ do not embody – whether rightly or wrongly is questionable – those qualities for which al-Hamdānī and the early Arab poets praise South Arabia’s horsemen of Qaḥtānī origin. Manūʿ do not belong to this class of heroes, who were accruing honour and glory as rider-warriors on horseback (also horses being an animal that appears and spreads rather late in Yemen103). As we have seen, a tribesman is expected to be sharīf, qawī, māniʿ, i.e. noble, strong, and able to protect the weak, and Duhma/Dahm perfectly encapsulate and exemplify these qualities. In fact up to our time these attributes are the blueprint for the tribal status and honour of the tribesmen of Dahm, who were still dreaded during the 1960s civil war in Yemen for being the »toughest fighting material in the Yemen [...], generally feared for their lawlessness and rapacity«.104 And Dahm are not just any host tribe, according to al-Hamdānī they belong to the most prestigious and strongest tribes of Qaḥtān. Al-Hamdānī himself compared Duhmah with Quraysh in Mecca. Al-Hamdānī’s language of honour and chivalry is therefore both inclusive and exclusive, it provides responses to the questions »Who we are?« as well as »Who is not like us?« and, relatedly, »Who does not belong to us?«

100 Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung, 132.
101 Heiss, Tribale Selbstorganisation und Konfliktregelung, 92; Landau-Tasseron, Status of Allies; Dostal, Evolution of Bedouin Life, 14.
102 Dostal, Evolution of Bedouin Life, 14.
103 Robin, Pénétration des Arabes, 88.
104 Schofield, Boundary disputes, 707.
It is, however, intriguing that a considerable part of Shākir – and of Dahm in particular – do not seem to be the original inhabitants of the country, of which heroes and heirs they are praised by al-Hamdānī. At the time of al-Hamdānī the Duhmah were already a product of massive immigrations of tribes from elsewhere, a constant flux of populations, which still continued far beyond the tenth century. Seen in this light, the Qaḥṭān symbol of unity as well as the genealogies, panegyric poetries and semi-legendary traditions of al-Hamdānī’s *al-Iklīl* served to evoke a vision of community and common identities among the heterogeneous societies of South Arabia and to legitimize them as heirs of a country and its splendid history, which in parts was not inherently their own.

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