

# *Al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī and his Kitāb ar-Riḥal as a maqāma collection*

JAAKKO HÄMEEN-ANTTILA

## **Introduction**

The field of maqāma studies has long been a neglected one in Arabic literature; when discussing, usually in one or two pages, the genre, most literary histories start abruptly with al-Hamadhānī and then go directly to al-Ḥarīrī, thus leaving aside what I would call 'the early maqāma' i.e. the pre-Ḥarīrian maqāma. The few specialist studies focusing on the maqāma give only a little more attention to writers of early maqāmas other than al-Hamadhānī.

Yet the study of the early development of this genre is fascinating and elucidates the process of how a new-born genre was delineated— and petrified<sup>1</sup>. Many neglected authors call for a close study. One of these is al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī, a writer almost unknown to modern scholarship. Al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī was a contemporary of al-Ḥarīrī and he wrote one work which belongs to the genre of maqāma, even though it was not called so by the author himself. This work, *Kitāb ar-Riḥal*, has unfortunately been lost except for one piece, called by its author a *riḥla*, which has been preserved in anthologies. Before tackling the more general aspects of the author and his place in the development of the genre, I shall begin with a translation of this extant piece<sup>2</sup>.

## **Translation**

The following is from amongst the writings of Abū'l-Qāsim Ibn Muḥammad al-Khwārizmī who called his work *ar-Riḥal*:<sup>3</sup>

(This is) an admonition (*waṣīya*) for every reasonable man, awake and intelligent, learned and refined, who hates being caught by mistakes, keeps himself

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<sup>1</sup> See also Hämeen-Anttila (1994-95), (1997 b) and (forthcoming).

<sup>2</sup> The translation is based on the text in at-Tadhkira al-ḥamdūniya VI:401-411 (siglum: T). Variants in al-Qalqashandī, *Ṣubḥ XIV: 128-138*, are indicated only when relevant (siglum: Q—as the text is quite short, I have regarded it as unnecessary to give the exact page and line). The text of Q is taken—as al-Qalqashandī himself informs us (*Ṣubḥ XIV:128*)— from T and usually when the texts differ, that of Q is clearly inferior. Sometimes it has been necessary to add a few words to the translation to make it more readable: when relevant, these are indicated by brackets. In a few cases I have also added the original Arabic in brackets.

<sup>3</sup> The text of Q is introduced: "This is the text of a *maqāma* [sic] composed by Abū'l-Qasim al-Khwārizmī on the subject of how he encountered an *adīb* known as al-Ḥitī and how al-Ḥitī was left dumbfounded when examined and how al-Khwārizmī beat him. Ibn Ḥamdūn has given the text in his Tadhkira."

clear from tumbling into errors and is too subtle to fall into excesses which lead to shame. (This admonition admonishes him) not to claim to be higher than he is in fact and to stop short of showing all he has, to keep some of his arrows to himself and use but some of his vehemence. He should bargain with his minimal value, hide many of his wares and conceal the finest part of his art, without going to the utmost limit of his abilities. He should associate with people sincerely and kindly. His admiration of what he himself knows should not lead him to hold in contempt others in his company nor to invent lies against someone who opposes or addresses him. (He should heed this admonition), so that his knowledge be more profound than his stories and his contemplation more wonderful than can be seen at first. Thus he will be closer to excuse and farther distanced from disgrace and collapse;

a true man is not one who says he is a man  
but one whom others say to be such.  
Oft have there been claimants without evidence  
who come to shame when it is said: "It belongs not to you."

I got the assistance of modesty against a haughty celebrity. It was like this:

One year<sup>4</sup> I was travelling upstream in the company of some people - there were merchants and pilgrims<sup>5</sup>— and we were going to al-Gharī and al-Ḥā'ir<sup>6</sup>. Finally we came to a wayside village, populous and cultivated. Every single one of us was exhausted and distressed by sitting in the boat, ill and ailing, enfeebled and depressed. We were lamenting, and seasickness had taken hold of us, so we disembarked like prisoners set free, having been bent like a dry raceme of a palm-tree. We were happy to stand up after having been sitting for a long time,

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<sup>4</sup> I read a 'wām with Q (T has *ayyām*) to make up a *tağnīs* with the following 'awāmm.

<sup>5</sup> Thus Q; T reads *bayna nāğī wa-zā'ir wa-thāğīr wa-tāmīr* "in a mixed company", from: *nağīra* = *laban wa-tahīn yukhlaṭāni* (Lisān al-'arab, s.v.); "he mixed the *thağīr* of dates ... with other [dates] in the beverage called *nabīdh*" (Lane, s.v.); "he fed people with ... *tamr*" (Lane, s.v.). As a lectio difficilior this might be a possible reading, but I have been unable to find any suitable meaning for *zā'ir*, which, on the other hand, goes well with *tāğīr* in the reading of Q and with the following place names, both of which are objects of *ziyāra*. Thus, one has to prefer the lectio simplicior of Q.

<sup>6</sup> Yāqūt, Mu'ğam al-buldān IV:196 and II:208 describes al-Gharīyān, thus in dual, the two buildings near the tomb of 'Alī, close to Kūfa, and al-Ḥā'ir, the tomb of al-Ḥusayn. Q reads al-'Azī for al-Gharī.

like we were birds from Aqfahs<sup>7</sup>  
 who escape from the fowler's net,  
 with shaken feathers, tufts here and there,  
 happy to get away.

We had barely relaxed and settled ourselves, when there came someone shouting: "Which one of you is Ibn al-Khwārizmī<sup>8</sup>?" He was answered: "That young lad alone over there, reclining." The man came towards me, saluted and said: "The overseer asks you to visit him; please, come right away."

I got up and followed him until we came to a group of men, serene and magnificent, handsome and perfect. They were the nobility of the cities and the eminent notables from Wāsiṭ and Baghdad, Baṣra and the countryside (*as-Sawād*):

You could see revered men wearing turbans,  
 faces like full moons, lionhearted men.

The one who knew me rose to pay me his respects and the others joined him and stood up. For quite a time he kept asking how I was and saluting me. Then they insisted on me sitting in the front but I refused and stayed in the back rows and sat down. They started asking how I had been, questioning about my occupation and property, what had caused me to set out, where I was going and why, how my wife and children were, how were my neighbours and the village:

each was greeting and asking how I was,  
 describing his longing and exalting me,  
 imploring me to stay for many nights,  
 eves and morns with him, without leaving.

Then someone said: "Have you met the essence of our time and its heart, the possessor of excellence and its lord, the well of *adab* and its silver bowl<sup>9</sup>, the master of Iraq and the sun of its horizons?" I replied: "And who might be the man of such tremendous descriptions and unheard-of metonymies?" They answered: "Have you not heard of the Perfect Man of Hīt, the man of fame and repute?"

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<sup>7</sup> For Aqfahs, see Yāqūt, *Mu'ğam al-buldān*, s.v. *al-Aqfāṣ* (I:237).

<sup>8</sup> Al-Khwārizmī in Q; for the name, see below.

<sup>9</sup> *Gharab*; actually the metaphor is not quite felicitous; later in the text the same word is used in its other, and not so elevated, sense (Lane: "the water that drops from the buckets between the well and the watering-trough ... and which soon alters in odour"). One would be tempted to read some hidden irony in here —al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī the Author making the admirer of the Perfect Man of Hīt pronounce unwittingly his verdict on his master, the pool of stagnant wisdom— but this would obviously be far too 20th century. —Cf. also my notes on *hadr* and *bārīda*, below.

If Quss would have lived until  
 his time, and Ibn Sūhān,  
 Ibn Durayd and Abū Ḥātim,  
 Sībawayhi and Ibn Sa'dān,  
 'Āmir ash-Sha'bī and Ibn al-'Alā',  
 Ibn Kurayz and Ibn Ṣafwān,  
 all would vaunt in saying:  
 'He is our lord', whereas he: 'My servants'.<sup>10</sup>

I said to them: "You have done me a favour and wakened my yearn to meet this famous scholar and renowned lord. Winds have brought me the scent from this perfume and the roar<sup>11</sup> of this orator; now, there will be no need for reports after having seen him and I shall leave the nocturnal wandering of the smith because of him and stay till morning<sup>12</sup>, to win some profit and some cool<sup>13</sup> favour, craving for him like for a lost fugitive.

Where would I go and what would I want more  
 after I have reached what I wanted and sought for?  
 I have found knowledge at your door,  
 near by; what more merit would I look for?  
 Go and make your pilgrimage to 'Alī,  
 I shall make mine to al-Ḥitī and belles-lettres.  
 What do I care, whether they say: 'al-Khwārizmī  
 has done badly' or 'well'."

They said: "Verily, you have done well and found what you were after.

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<sup>10</sup> Orators and scholars ranging from pre-Islamic times till the 10th century: Quss ibn Sā'ida, pre-Islamic orator; Ṣa'sa'a ibn Sūhān Abū 'Umar al-'Abdī, Umayyad orator, d. about 680 (aṣ-Ṣafadī, Wāfi XVI:309); Ibn Durayd al-Azdī, d.933, (GAS VIII:101-105); Abū Ḥātim as-Siġistānī, d. 869 (GAS VIII:93-96); Sībawayhi, d. about 796 (GAS IX:51-63); Abū 'Abdallāh al-Ḥusayn ibn Ahmad ibn Sa'dān, d. 992-993, vizier of Ibn 'Aḍudaddawla and a short timed patron of at-Tawḥīdī, (Bergé 1990, p. 122); 'Āmir ibn Sharāḥīl Abū 'Amr ash-Sha'bī, Kūfan scholar, d. 721, (GAS I:277), stories about him in, e.g., al-Marzubānī, Nūr al-qabas, p. 237-251; Abū 'Amr ibn al-'Alā', d. about 770 (as-Suyūfī, Bughya II:231-232); 'Abdallāh ibn 'Āmir ibn Kurayz al-'Abshamī, d. about 680, conqueror and governor of Khurasan (aṣ-Ṣafadī, al-Wāfi XVII:229-230); Khālid ibn Ṣafwān, late-Umayyad orator, d. 752, (Hämeen-Anttila 1994).

<sup>11</sup> *Hadr* may not be the best word to choose in this context.

<sup>12</sup> Allusion to the proverb *idhā sami'ta bi-surā l-qayn fa-'lam annahu muṣabbiḥ* (see, e.g., al-Maydānī I:67-68).

<sup>13</sup> Again a somewhat less than felicitous choice of words; *bārid(a)* is more often used in the sense 'silly'.

For a long time we have been unfolding your priceless words and hoping to meet you, we have been telling each other about you and been waiting to have you as our guest. We have often mentioned you in his presence and magnified your worth. His interest in you has awaked and his curiosity has risen. We have been praying to God that He would assemble you two in our presence, and that you would see each other, eye to eye, that the dust of your footsteps would mingle with his, that your current would run to meet his and your mind would blend with his, so that we would know which one of you is the winner in the race, which the loser, which is the hawk, which the nightingale, and it would become obvious which has got the marrow and which but aching sinews, for the two of you are, in the words of the poet:<sup>14</sup>

the twin *khattī*-spears, both made of  
brown, straightened and hard wood.  
The earth is afraid that two like them would tread upon it:  
when such men are with us, we may choose between peace and war."

I answered them<sup>15</sup>: "You have swerved from justice and misplaced your recognition. Your analogy is far off the mark, and you have messed things up: how far a man of thirty is from a man of eighty, how far a foal in his third year from a strong full-grown stud, how far a weak colt from a seasoned courser, a mule of scarce use from an experienced and trained horse?"

The foal in his third year, when tied together  
with strong full grown camels, cannot keep up with their pace.<sup>16</sup>

(I am but) a foster son of dales and marshes, the inhabitant of reedhuts and shacks, grown up among Nabatean peasants and base boors, a mixed lot and a vile mob, in a region, where I would cry: 'Oh, how alien I feel!' if I would go past its walls or cross its bridges. If I would see a foreign face, I would cry: 'Daddy!' I do not know any language except Nabatean<sup>17</sup>, I have had no teacher except my father, and I live amidst people who are not used to travel and who have never sat on the back of a horse or a camel, who never have left their walls,

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<sup>14</sup> By a man of Ṭayyi' (ar-Rabī' ibn 'Umāra), concerning the two sons of Ziyād ibn 'Abdallāh ibn Sufyān, see Aghānī XVII: 119.

<sup>15</sup> Q reads *fa-qāla* and the editor adds in brackets *ba'du l-ḡamā'a*, thus missing the whole point; al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī the Character is the man whom modesty assists.

<sup>16</sup> Attributed to Ḡarīr in Lisān s.v. QN'S, but not found in the editions of his Dīwān which I have at hand.

<sup>17</sup> I.e. a variant of Aramaic.

shades and hills:

these people are like Ursa minor,  
which lags behind, never setting with other stars.<sup>18</sup>

How could I vie with a widely travelled man, now on the road, now settling down, who was born in Hīt, was suckled in Kūfa, shed his milk-teeth in Baghdad, grew strong in Wāsīt, was weaned in Ḥiğāz and Tihāma, attained his puberty in Egypt and Maghrib, whose beard and courage grew in Nağd and Syria, who got air under his wings in Yemen and Oman, who attained maturity in Khurasan, whose fame reached its summit in Bukhara and Samarqand, who became grey-haired and old in Ghazna and India, who drank his fill from Sayhūn and Ġayhūn, who advanced in years and got experienced in Maysān and Basra, who became bald and hairless in al-Ġibāl.

He counts al-Māzinī as his teacher and Ibn Ġinnī as his servant, al-Mutanabbī as his *rāwī*, al-Ma‘arrī as his inkwell holder, aṣ-Ṣābi’ as his pen sharpener, aṣ-Ṣāhib as his standard bearer, the Muqla-family as the copyists for his attendants, the Abū Ḥafṣa-family as part of his entourage.<sup>19</sup> He has read all books and recited them, learnt all sciences and transmitted them, studied all *adab* and committed it to memory, collected all *dīwāns* and compiled them, quoted maxims and arranged them, studied the difficult points and explained them, extemporized speeches and refined them. He is the lake to which people come for water, the teacher who is visited, the standard who is turned to. What a mighty difference, what a difficult ascent!

Does one meet unarmed a spearman,  
without a shield or helmet an ironclad man,  
with a mule a swift courser,  
with a scythe a sharpcutting sword?"

Hardly had I said this when he arrived, hastening towards us, drawing quickly closer. I saw a bald man, with broken and yellow teeth, broad-nosed, with bent legs, tall and long-necked, resembling a hairless wolf, limping and

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<sup>18</sup> See Ibn Qutayba, K. al-Anwā’, p. 147, for references. Al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī uses this verse to refer to the lack of travelling among his countrymen, but the original meaning of the verse is rather a reference to the uselessness of the *ma‘shar* in question: thus it is explained, e.g., by al-Bīrūnī, al-Āthār al-bāqīya, p. 242. According to Ibn Barrī, quoted in Lisān, s.v. *ḌĠ*, the verse —with variant *dawāğī ‘u*— refers to people who are content with their poverty.

<sup>19</sup> Learned men and poets: al-Māzinī, d. 869 (GAS VIII:92); Ibn Ġinnī, d. 1002 (GAS IX: 173-182); al-Mutanabbī, d. 965 (GAS II:484-497); Hilāl aṣ-Ṣābi’, d. 1056 (EI<sup>2</sup> s.v.); aṣ-Ṣāhib ibn ‘Abbād, d. 995 (EI<sup>2</sup> s.v.); famous Muqla family which produced many notables, the most notable of whom is probably Abū ‘Alī Ibn Muqla, d. 940 (EI<sup>2</sup> s.v.); the most notable member of the Abū Ḥafṣa family was the poet Marwān ibn abī Ḥafṣa d. about 800 (GAS II:447-448).

wandering.<sup>20</sup> The others received him with respect and reverence. He directed his steps to the front of the assembly, and reclined his back on a pillow. When he had settled down, someone introduced me: "This is so-and-so." He pinched his nose and looked askance at me, speaking out of the corner of his mouth: "Go on about what you were, fie to the ugly and those who bring it, fie to the bare and those who turn it inside out.

Durayd came drawing his halter,  
a stud, so do not block his way.  
His people love him despite his deformity  
—even a beetle is a beauty to its mother.<sup>21</sup>"

Then he went on: "We had a shaykh in Anbar who knew many historical stories (*akhbār*). He had attained a respectable age and lived to become extremely old. I read with him the whole Book, the science of genealogy, Adab al-kuttāb, old Arabic poetry, Ma'ānī of az-Zaḡḡāḡ, Masā'il of Ibn as-Sarraḡ, Dīwān of al-'Aḡḡāḡ<sup>22</sup>, Kitāb al-Iṣlāḡ, the commentaries of Īdāḡ, the poems of aṭ-Ṭirimmāḡ, 'Ayn of al-Farḡūdī, Ġamhara of al-Azdī<sup>23</sup>, as well as most other works, commonly known or rare."<sup>24</sup>

Thus he went on bragging and prattling, superciliously wagging his

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<sup>20</sup> I translate from T *akhbat* (Lisān s.v. KHBṬ: *khbat* = *kull sayr 'alā ghayr hudā*). Q reads *aḡbat* (which could be from *ḡabiṭa* 'to have scars') which is equally possible, although the elative *aḡbat* does not seem to be of frequent occurrence. It should be noted that al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī the Author does not make much use of alliteration so that *akhma' akhbat* is not *per se* a better reading than *akhma' aḡbat* (Q reads in fact *aḡma' aḡbat*).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. al-Maydānī, Maḡma' II:484. —The text of Q is here corrupted.

<sup>22</sup> Q reads Ibn al-'Aḡḡāḡ, i.e. Ru'ba.

<sup>23</sup> It is slightly disturbing that al-Farḡūdī and al-Azdī make a limping rhyme whereas the orthographical form of the names would hint at the possibility of a better rhyme, the shape W and Z being very close to each other. On the other hand, one can hardly understand how al-Khwārizmī could have made an elementary mistake in the gentilicium of al-Khalīl (\*al-Farḡazdī) or that of Ibn Durayd (\*al-Ūdī).

<sup>24</sup> Basic works of philology: the Book (Kitāb) of Sībawayhi; Ibn Qutayba, d. 889, Adab al-kuttāb (GAS VIII:161-165); az-Zaḡḡāḡ, d. 923, Ma'ānī (GAS VIII:99-101); Ibn as-Sarraḡ, d. 928 (GAS IX:82-85); Kitāb al-Masā'il al-muṣallaḡa min kitāb Ibn as-Sarraḡ by Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī; Dīwān al-'Aḡḡāḡ, d. about 710 (GAS II:366-367); Ibn as-Sikkīt, d. 857, Iṣlāḡ (GAS VIII:129-136); Abū 'Alī al-Fārisī, Īdāḡ (GAS IX:101-110); aṭ-Ṭirimmāḡ, d. after 724, Dīwān (GAS II:351-352); al-Khalīl ibn Aḡmad al-Farḡūdī, Kitāb al-'Ayn, d. between 777 and 791 (GAS VIII:51-56); Ibn Durayd al-Azdī, Ġamhara.

tongue. People began looking at each of us in turn and counting<sup>25</sup> our words. All of them got irritated at my silence while he was speaking and at my hesitation while he was being audacious. The old man then made a mistake. A man<sup>26</sup> was described to him and when he saw him, he despised and made light of him, quoting the proverbial line:

"By the life of your father, it is better to hear about this man of Ma'add far away from one's house than to see him."<sup>27</sup>

He went on: "The man of Ma'add in question was Ḍamra ibn Ḍamra ibn Ġābir ibn Qaṭan ibn Nahshal ibn Dārim ibn Mālik ibn Ḥanzala ibn Mālik ibn Zaydmanāt ibn Tamīm ibn Murra ibn Udd ibn Ṭābikha ibn Ilyās ibn Muḍar ibn Nizār ibn Ma'add ibn 'Adnān. The form *mu'aydī* is the diminutive of *ma'addī* 'belonging to Ma'add'. The man in question was the one who was lamented with the following words:

I wail for a noble man, Nahshalian, select one,  
the noblest man ever who has been from or traced his origin  
to Khindif."<sup>28</sup>

I thought: "After these words, there is no way to be patient.<sup>29</sup> After this insolence, there is no other way for me than to defend myself, and after being called a liar, there is no way to keep my peace.

What cause do I have (to stay aside) since I am a staunch archer  
and the string of my bow is thick:  
when it is touched, the arrows resound."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I translate from Q *wa-yaḥsubūna*.

<sup>26</sup> Obviously a reference to al-Khwārizmī himself.

<sup>27</sup> Part of the verse is often used proverbially. The grammatical point in it —*tasma'a* instead of *an tasma'a*— is explained in Ibn Ġinnī in his *Sirr aṣ-Ṣinā'a*, p. 285 and 288, and the background story for the proverb in, e.g., al-Maydānī, *Maḡma'* I:227-230, or al-Anbārī, *Zāhir* II:235-239.

<sup>28</sup> Q reads: *khāmara aw takhandafā*.

<sup>29</sup> Al-Khwārizmī the Character is obviously right in taking the words of the Perfect Man of Hit as a barely covered reference to himself.

<sup>30</sup> The verses are taken from the famous story of 'Āṣim b. Thābit, told, e.g., in Ibn Hishām, *Sīra*, p. 638-648 (translated in Guillaume 1955, p. 426-433; Guillaume, p. 426, understands the first verse somewhat differently). Also in Lisān s.v. 'NBL and 'LL, etc.

What cause do I have, since I am staunch and well equipped<sup>31</sup>  
and the string of my bow is hard  
like camel's forearm or much harder."<sup>32</sup>

I turned towards him as quickly as a rash revenger or a timid bird and said: "My brother from Hīt, you have spoken at your own leisure; now answer when you are asked. Stay put, hold your reins and tie your tongue. The lamenter of Ḍamra traced Ḍamra's ancestry to Khindif when describing him, but I did not hear you mention Khindif when you traced his genealogy. Explain your reason for this." He answered: "Khindif was the wife of Ilyās ibn Muḍar, and her name predominated among her children and they came to be called after their mother as also happened to (the children of) Ṭuhayya and Muzayna, Bal'adawīya and 'Urayna, as-Sulaka and Ğuhayna, Nadba and Udhayna, and also like (we say) Shabīb ibn al-Barṣā' and Bal'arḡā'."<sup>33\_34</sup>

I said to him: "You were asked and you replied, you said and hit the mark, but now tell me about Khindif. Is that a given name or a fabricated cognomen?" At that his donkey stopped and his fire died, his course stopped still and his jabber calmed down, his bubbling settled and his refractoriness appeared. He became meek and mild, folded and compiled. Timidity and submissiveness forced him to seek shelter into saying quietly, bending his head down: "I guess it is a cognomen."

I said: "It is as you guess, but what does it mean and how did she get it? For what reason?" He had to resort to saying that he did not know it. This he did, and I had made him taste the bitterness of mortification and he sensed how people were maliciously gloating:

he would have given his nose to be cut off if his companions

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<sup>31</sup> I translate the last word from Naqā'id, p. 642: the text of both Q and T is corrupt (at least in the respective editions).

<sup>32</sup> The last two verses are found, e.g., in Lisān s.v. 'RD, and Ibn Durayd, Ğamhara, p. 633. They are usually quoted in another context, viz. in the story about the famous *khuṭba* to Kūfans by al-Ḥaḡḡāḡ —see al-Mubarrad, Kāmil I:381 (= Ibn 'Abdarabbīh, 'Iqd IV:121). In the present version, they are found, e.g., in Naqā'id, p. 642, (by Ḥanzala ibn Tha'laba).

<sup>33</sup> Q: Ibn ad-Da'mā'. Lisān (s.v. 'RĠ) mentions banū l-A'raḡ; we should perhaps read Bal'awḡā', cf. al-Ġāhiz, Burṣān, p. 121.

<sup>34</sup> Eponymous mothers: Khindif (Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, p. 42); Ṭuhayya (Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, p. 233, and Ibn Ḥazm, Ğamhara, p. 467); Muzayna (Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, p. 180-181); al-'Adawīya (Ibn Ḥazm, Ğamhara, p. 228 and 467); 'Urayna (Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, p. 538); as-Sulaka (Lisān s.v. SLK); Ğuhayna (Lisān s.v. ĞHN); Nadba (Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, p. 309); Udhayna (Ibn Durayd, Ishtiqāq, p. 330); al-Barṣā' (al-Ġāhiz, Burṣān, p. 120-121).

would have called each other at the halting place<sup>35</sup>: 'Get up.'

They turned to me and drew around me, with shining faces and entreating tongues, for me to explain the case and to answer the question. I told them: "Now, this is extraordinary: should I answer my own questions? Ilyās ibn Muḍar married Laylā bint Taghlib ibn Hulwān ibn al-Ḥāfi<sup>36</sup> ibn Qudā'a ibn Ma'add —thus in some genealogies— and she gave birth to 'Amr, 'Āmir and 'Umayr. One day he missed them and began blaming Laylā, saying: 'Go after them and tell me what has happened to them.'

So she went after them and later returned with them, saying: 'I did not stop hurrying (*ukhandifu*) and searching for them until I found them.' Ilyās said to her: 'Then your name shall be Khindif.' —*Khandafa* in following someone means taking quick and hurried paces.

'Amr said: 'Father, I overtook (*adraktu*) the game and caught it.' He answered: 'Then your name shall be Mudrika since you got hold of it.' 'Āmir said: 'I cooked (*ṭabakhtuhū*) and roasted it.' He answered: 'Then your name shall be Ṭābikha since you roasted it.' 'Umayr said: 'I was just hiding (*inqama 'tu*) in the tent.' He answered: Then your name shall be Qama'a because you were in hiding.<sup>37</sup> These cognomens stuck to them and they traced their genealogy through their mother."<sup>38</sup>

Having heard this, the Perfect Man of Hit said: "This is a useful piece of knowledge I have now gained and a benefit I have just added to my provisions. The wise men have said: 'Conversation with knowledgeable men adds to your refinement'." I quoted the proverbial line:<sup>39</sup>

"When the spear bent his back, I said to him:  
Beware of Khufāf —that is me."

He held back for a moment but did not keep quiet for long; he did not think at all but was soon back at his boasting and restarted his prattling, wishing to get his revenge and to have the dice again in his hands. He left the science of genealogy and shifted to the field of language, not knowing that his arm did not reach that and his eye was too shortsighted for its truths.

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<sup>35</sup> I translate from Q *al-munākhi*.

<sup>36</sup> For the final short vowel, see Ibn Durayd, *Ishtiqāq*, p. 536 note.

<sup>37</sup> T reads *li'l-iḥtibā'* which is obviously a printers' error.

<sup>38</sup> The famous story about Khindif is usually told somewhat differently (see e.g. Lisān s.v. KHNDF).

<sup>39</sup> By Khufāf ibn Nadba as-Sulamī, see Aghānī XV:71 and al-Baghdādī, *Khizāna* V:438-442.

He said: "Once I attended a race course of science and a feast of prose and verse which was overcrowded with eloquent orators, convincing sages and perspicuous scholars. The place was full of venerable old war horses, victorious coursers and free roaming rhetoricians. They started many different disputations and argued with each other in several fields, discussing the images of poetry (*ma 'ānī l-qarīd*), roaming far and wide until someone grabbed them by the throat in asking about the line of al-Farazdaq:<sup>40</sup>

O son of Marwān, the fangs of time have left<sup>41</sup>  
property either uprooted or cut down.

They<sup>42</sup> began arguing heatedly about the verse and the discussion drew long. Every single one of them tried to make use of analogy, took paper (to clarify his opinion), got along on the road and began asserting himself. When I saw them heedless in their perplexity and blindly wandering in their error, I called out: 'Now turn here and listen to me!<sup>43</sup> I am your man, I know what lurks under its hide.' Then I showed them the secrets of the verse and I kindled its fire, I untied its knots and I churned its cream, I made its lurking bird fly (and get caught) and I cracked its stone (for the water to flow) and I let them see its secrets and intricacies ('*uḡarahū wa-buḡarahū*')."

They<sup>44</sup> said: "By God, you are good! You are the best of us to attain the goal and the most lucid of us to lay errors<sup>45</sup> bare, you are the clearest of us to

<sup>40</sup> Dīwān, p. 386.

<sup>41</sup> The grammatical point referred to by al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī the Character lies in the first hemistich (*wa- 'adda zamānun* [or *wa- 'addu zamānin*] *yā bna Marwāna lam yadu* ).

<sup>42</sup> The text of T reads before this "*thumma lam yaḥtabis fīhi illā qalīlun*" -which is missing from Q— but I take this to be an erroneous repetition of the same formula in the preceding paragraph. Lack of quotation marks in the Arabic text makes the passages ambiguous, and the copyist (or editor?) who has added these words seems to have believed that the scene narrated by the Perfect Man of Hīt ended with the verse quotation. Thus, "I" in the following would refer to al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī, but this does not seem to be the correct reading. I take the narrated scene to continue a few lines longer, until "*qālū: li-llāhi abūka*", being typical bragging by the Perfect Man of Hīt. Al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī does not begin his lines until the following verse quotation.

<sup>43</sup> The last few phrases are reminiscent of Qur'ānic language, although not —except for "heedless in their perplexity" = Qur. 51:11— directly taken from it.

<sup>44</sup> Either the present audience of the Perfect Man of Hīt, in which case the narrated scene has ended, or the audience in the narrated scene.

<sup>45</sup> Both T and Q read *ghayāya*. Either this is a rare (unattested?) variant for *ghawāya* or it should be corrected to *ghayāba*.

make obscure things apparent and the most enlightening of us in answering off-hand. We do not know anyone else on the earth who would have known what was in that verse and would have understood its hidden meanings!"

Now, I got angry and agitated at this<sup>46</sup>, so I quoted the verse:

"Who thinks that other people's intellect is deficient  
and his is more than perfect, becomes a target for attacks."

Then I went on: "You have claimed more than you have. Tell me about the beginning of this verse, oh you who have put your horse in the race: how do you read the first word, *wa-'adda* or *wa-'addu*?<sup>47</sup>" "Both have been transmitted," he answered. I said: "So you begin with a verb but later refer to a noun!<sup>48</sup> How curious! Prepare yourself for the next question and tell me: why do you end (the third person masculine singular) perfect in +a?"

He answered without blinking his eye: "Because it is an indeclinable, to which nothing is added." I went on: "This is the commonly known answer which you can get even from schoolboys. What I asked about, was a certain additional piece of information and I entreat you to disclose its secrets." He replied: "The great grammarians and other transmitters have said nothing more than what I have explained and they have added nothing to what I have clarified for you."

"Stop that," I ejaculated, "tell me about this construction: does it have a grammatical cause (*'illa*) or not?" That made him hesitate and move uneasily. He kept opening his mouth and clearing his throat, but the road was blocked for him and he got stuck in the narrow passage. He almost choked but had to admit: "I do not know:"

They said to me: "Who throws his weapons away and lowers his arrows, has excused himself. Who draws back after having attacked will be saved from the fighting:

The truth is bright, its way is not in doubt:  
men of intelligence know what is true and becoming.<sup>49</sup>

Your arrows have come up as winners and your brilliance has become apparent. You did well in the game and carried off the stakes. Tell us now the

<sup>46</sup> I translate from Q: *adrakani*.

<sup>47</sup> I.e. *wa-'adda zamānun* or *wa-'addu zamānin*. The verse —with the variant *wa-'addu zamānin-* is usually taken as an example of *al-mayl ma'a l-ma'nā wa'l-i'rād 'an-i l-lafz*, to explain nominative *muğallaf* instead of accusative, see, e.g., *Shurūḥ Saqṭ az-zand* I: 127; *Inṣāf*, p. 188; *Nuzhat al-alibbā'*, p. 13; *Ibn Durayd*, *Ġamhara*, and *Lisān*, s.v. ĠLF and SHT etc.

<sup>48</sup> I.e. if one reads *wa-'adda*, the verb, *lam yada'* is left without a proper subject.

<sup>49</sup> This verse is a favorite in *mufākharas*, see, e.g., [pseudo]-*al-Ġāhiz*, *Maḥāsin*, p. 149 and 210.

answer to your question and guide us to what you have alluded to so that no one can say: 'That was mere nonsense and sheer absurdity'."

I replied: "With pleasure. Now listen to this, you wretched: The verb is derived from its subject like a son from his sire. Thus the verb cannot do without a reference to its subject, in any utterance. In the perfect this is +a in the third person, in present and future the prefixes. You can see this because the +a of the third person does not combine in the perfect with the +t and +n suffixes. Thus we say *akhrağ+a* with +a but *akhrağ+tu* and *akhrağ+nā*,<sup>50</sup> dropping the +a which we were speaking about, because no grammatical category can have two signs, that is impossible. But if the suffix +nā is used as an object marker, then you keep the +a. Thus you say *akhrağ+a+nā l-amīru*. That should be clear as daylight."

The people clapped their hands and applauded, yelled 'bravo' and 'well done', but the scholar of Hīt started trembling like a tiny bird, turning here and there like a hungry man<sup>51</sup>, thinking that his lion had turned into a rat and his hawk into *surad*<sup>52</sup> that his pearls had become a string of beads and his olive oil had changed into stinking water, that his spear had become a cane, his straightness had become crookedness and his genuineness a fake, that his soundness had deteriorated and his iron had become rusty. Someone recited:<sup>53</sup>

"You see a lean man and despise him  
but under his clothes there is a brave<sup>54</sup> lion.  
A comely man may delight you, but when you try him  
he may not be worth your belief.  
Man's size is no glory to him,  
his glory lies in nobility and character."

The Perfect Man of Hīt despaired and became short of breath and his senses became numb. People abandoned him and he kept kicking the soil and biting his hand, cursing this day and blaming himself, wiping his forehead and moaning copiously. When I rose, the people rose with me leaving him despised

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<sup>50</sup> Thus in Q.

<sup>51</sup> Reading *al-masfūr* (T: *al-maṣghūr*, for which see, Lane s.v. *masfūr*; Q: *aṣ-ṣuqūr*, which seems to be an attempted emendation, harmonizing the word with *al-'usfūr*).

<sup>52</sup> *Lanius excubitor* (?), see B. Lewin (1978) s.v.

<sup>53</sup> Attributed to several poets in different sources, mostly to al-'Abbās ibn Mirdās (see Lisān s.v. MZR; according to a note attributed to Mu'āwiya ibn Mālik in aṣ-Ṣāghānī's 'Ubāb); Lisān s.v. TRR attributes the verse to al-'Abbās or al-Mutalammis; etc.

<sup>54</sup> It may well be that the correct reading should, though, be *muzīr* (for *muz'ir*), especially if we accept the variant *asad* (the other variant being *rağul*).

and loathed. When he was left alone, he wished to be dead: his tears flowed and he hoped that the earth would swallow him up:

He was like a favorite calf<sup>55</sup> amidst people craving for him  
and noble lords came seeking shelter from his loins  
but he became lonely as a man with scabby skin,  
banished, not even camels would draw near him.

He rose and followed me, then stopped to bid me farewell. He apologized profusely, repenting and asking for pardon, saying: "The like of you will surely repair the damage and forgive a slip and a tumble.<sup>56</sup> Your young age, your shabby outlook and your meek behaviour misled me." I replied: "I understand all that, and you are pardoned, not blamed. What happened between us shall be forgotten, not remembered, folded up, not spread out, hidden, not divulged.<sup>57</sup>"

the disputation between men of knowledge does not impair  
what is between the winner and the loser."

After that the Perfect Man of Hīt became silent and did not speak any more. I went back and he returned. That was my first and last<sup>58</sup> encounter with

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<sup>55</sup> *Literally* *haww* means the stuffed skin of the calf which is used so that its mother will not stop producing milk.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Hämeen-Anttila (1994), no. 71.

<sup>57</sup> Sic! Arab Mediaeval authors rarely stop to consider how what is narrated fits with the fact that it is narrated. Taking al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī by his [character's] word would throw suspicious light on his sincerity in pardoning the Perfect Man of Hīt —and then divulging the whole story for all to hear. This kind of speculation, closely related with the question of an unreliable or unsincere narrator which has lately been taken up by, e.g., J.T. Monroe in his *The Art of Badī' az-zamān al-Hamadhānī as Picaresque Narrative* (Beirut 1983), is alien to Mediaeval Arab authors, and no far-reaching conclusions should be derived from these kinds of inconsistencies. Al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī the Author is quite aware that the story he is telling is fictitious and thus he does not care about the apparent inconsistency between his character promising in the story not to divulge the whole thing and then telling the story: word-of-honour given by one fictitious character to another is not meant to be kept.

The lack of interest on the part of Arab authors may be in connection with the oral or pseudo-oral character of Arabic literature: as every piece of information derived or was taken to be derived from eye-witnesses, the question of the written story was secondary. Cf. the care with which, e.g., Juan de Valdés in his *Diálogo de la lengua* (Clásicos Castalia 11. Ed. Juan M. Lope Blanch. 1985), p. 51, explains to his readers how and why the dialogue was put down.

<sup>58</sup> I am not sure whether this should be read as an allusion to the reappearing maqāma hero in, e.g., al-Hamadhānī's and al-Ḥarīrī's work.

him, the hidden and the obvious of our meeting, all the acquaintance we ever had.<sup>59</sup>

### Study

The author of this text is very poorly known. 'Abdallāh ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Alī ibn Muḥammad ibn 'Abdallāh al-Khwārizmī Abū'l-Qāsim al-Kāmil<sup>60</sup> was a contemporary of al-Ḥarīrī. His father came from Khwārizm —hence the family name— but settled in Rāqitā, a village in al-Baṭā'ih, the area between Wāsiṭ and Baṣra. He was in Wāsiṭ in 500 and dedicated his work *Kitāb ar-Riḥal* to Hibatallāh ibn al-Faḍl ibn Ṣā'id ibn at-Tilmīdh in 502. In 510 he was in Baghdad, whence he returned to his native Rāqitā and died soon afterwards.

Al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī wrote poems and other works —al-Qifṭī tells us that he read his poems and other works in Baghdad— which do not seem to have met with success, as they have been lost; the only poem of his of which I am aware is the one quoted in al-Qifṭī's *Inbāh*, loc. cit., a rather trivial piece repeating the last word in each line in two different meanings (beginning: *[wa]-rubba laylin faraytu farwatahū / uḥibbuhū wa-hwa bāridun bārid; munsariḥ*). His writings may have included some lexicographical tracts; an Abū'l-Qasim al-Khwārizmī is twice quoted by Yāqūt in his *Mu'ḡam al-buldān* as an authority on lexical geography (on Ubḍa and Aḡyād; I:74 and I: 105), and this may refer to our author.

Thus, al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī is no towering figure in 12th century literature. Yet he did write one interesting work, his *Kitāb ar-Riḥal* which has also been lost except for the one *riḥla* preserved in Ibn Ḥamdūn's *Tadhkira* VI:401-411 (whence it was taken to al-Qalqashandī's *Ṣubḥ*. XIV:128-138) and translated above.<sup>61</sup> Al-Qifṭī does not mention this work, but aṣ-Ṣafadī tells us that it consisted of 16 *riḥlas* and that al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī wrote them in the manner of (*ḥadhā fihā ḥadhw*) maqāmas. In fact, according to aṣ-Ṣafadī "when al-Ḥarīrī managed to precede him in writing maqāmas, this al-Khwārizmī created (*ikhtara 'a*) a *Kitāb ar-riḥal*" which seems to imply that the difference between the two works was mainly felt to be that of title, not genre.

<sup>59</sup> The text of T adds in brackets: *wa-ba'da dhālika shi'run alghaytu dhikrahū*. These seem to be the words of the editor. Iḥsān 'Abbās—who, it should also be noted, has excised two chapters from the end of his edition of *Tadhkira* (vol. IX; see his note in the preface of the Index-volume, p. 6) for no apparent reason. The text of Q does not mention any verses.

<sup>60</sup> Aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi* XVII:541. —He was also known as ar-Rāqitā'ī and Ibn al-Khwārizmī (al-Qifṭī, *Inbāh* II:136). The following biographical sketch of al-Khwārizmī is based on these two sources. According to Iḥsān 'Abbās' note (*Tadhkira* VI:401) Ibn Maktūm's *Talkhiṣ* and al-Fuwaṣṣī's *Ta'rikh* also contain a note on him but these sources have not been available to me. According to aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Wāfi* XVII:542, his biography should also be found in Yāqūt's *Mu'ḡam al-udabā'*, but his is one of the lost biographies.

<sup>61</sup> The passage on al-Khwārizmī in EI<sup>2</sup>, art. *maqāma*, p. 108b, should be corrected accordingly.

The text of the preserved *rihla* is given by Ibn Ḥamdūn in his chapter 31 on *al-Mukātabāt wa'r-Rasā'il*, where he also gives *maqāmas* by al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī. The preceding text, *al-maqāma al-Kūfiya* (no. 5) of al-Hamadhānī, is introduced, very typically, by Ibn Ḥamdūn as follows: *wa-min rasā'il Abī'l-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn al-Husayn al-Hamadhānī al-ma'rūf bi-Badī'azzamān al-musammāt bi'l-maqāmāt*. It is obvious that for Ibn Ḥamdūn there was no clearly defined genre called *maqāmāt*:<sup>62</sup> for him, the texts written by al-Hamadhānī, al-Ḥarīrī and al-Khwārizmī were, *prima facie*, *rasā'il*, not *maqāmāt* nor *rihal*.

The underlying legitimacy of this attitude is obvious: al-Hamadhānī himself readily borrowed from his own *rasā'il* to his *maqāmas* (*maqāmas 'ilmīya* and *Waṣīya*, no. 40-41, are in fact taken from his *rasā'il*<sup>63</sup>) and many of the later *maqāmas*, especially those where the picaresque plot was secondary or non-existent, are hardly distinguishable from other, "ordinary" *rasā'il*, except for some technicalities (use of narrator; labelling the text as *maqāma*, etc.).

Seen against this background, the solution of al-Qalqashandī, who called the text a *maqāma* without further ado, is quite legitimate. Moreover, he is by no means alone in this; Ibn Buṭlān, the author of *Da'wat al-aṭibbā'*, did not call his work a *maqāma* —and the author probably was quite unaware of the work of Hamadhānī<sup>64</sup>— but later, al-Qifṭī calls *Da'wat al-aṭibbā'* a *maqāma* in *Ta'rīkh al-ḥukamā'*, p. 298. Confusion of the terms *risāla* and *maqāma* is also very common in biographical dictionaries, and it is obvious that *maqāma* was not (not always, at least) taken in the Middle Ages as a precisely limited and specified technical term, but as a loose description of certain kinds of texts and also as the title of some famous collections, especially that of al-Ḥarīrī. No one would have thought of calling al-Ḥarīrī's texts "*rasā'il*" —although one should note that Ibn Ḥamdūn did put them in his chapter on *rasā'il* —but not because of any inherent feature relevant for genre-analysis, but simply because *maqāmāt* was the famous title of his book, and *maqāma* that of each of its 50 "chapters".

From this point of view, we can easily accept the *rihal* of al-Khwārizmī as *maqāmas*, despite the fact that there is no fictitious narrator. The main character of the text is the author himself<sup>65</sup>, but it seems probable that the other acting

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<sup>62</sup> On the question of the genre, see Hämeen-Anttila (1997 b).

<sup>63</sup> See Hämeen-Anttila (forthcoming).

<sup>64</sup> See Hämeen-Anttila (forthcoming).

<sup>65</sup> Note that the author is very poorly known. He seems to be an historical person, but on the other hand, biographies are also sure that Abū Zayd as-Sarūḡī was one, too, and even 'Isā ibn Hishām has been searched for among historical persons. The habit of later authors to confuse fictitious characters with real persons is also otherwise attested. The hero Bishr ibn 'Awāna of the last Hamadhānian *maqāma*, Bishriya, has later found his way among historical poets; see, e.g., at-Tadhkira

character, al-Kāmil al-Hīt "the Perfect Man of Hīt", is a product of al-Khwārizmī's imagination. Stories of coming to meet—and sometimes defeat—a bragging *adīb* are not rare in Mediaeval literature: one may only think of Nāṣir-i Khusraw's encounter in Simnān<sup>66</sup>, an undisputably historical, not fictitious encounter—but the Perfect Man of Hīt is all too perfect to be anything but an invention of the author.<sup>67</sup>

Al-Khwārizmī himself called his collection *Kitāb ar-Riḥal*, if we are to believe aṣ-Ṣafādī. The only text of al-Khwārizmī which has survived could as well be called *waṣīya*, the word with which the text begins.<sup>68</sup> Technically, the text is the *waṣīya* of al-Khwārizmī, his admonition to his readers. The episode of the encounter with the Perfect Man of Hīt is given as an illustration of the general admonition put forward in the first paragraph of the text.

In this the text resembles the tradition of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, a text often mentioned as a model by maqāma authors, most notably by Ibn Sharaf.<sup>69</sup> The tales of *Kalīla wa-Dimna* tend to begin with general advice (do this in order that what happened to so-and-so will not happen to you) which is then illustrated by story following after the interlocutor of the narrator has put his question "and how was that?"<sup>70</sup> Similarly, al-Khwārizmī starts with general advice and then gives us an illustrative example. Whether this was his technique in the other *riḥlas*, too, must be left open, as the other *riḥlas* have not been preserved, or at least have not yet been found in the infinite mass of Mediaeval anthologies. —The same reservation naturally holds true for any conclusions based on this sole text.

It seems possible that al-Khwārizmī has consciously developed further

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as-sa'dīya, p. 110-111 (with reference to aṣ-Ṣaḡarī, al-Amālī).

The similarity of the *riḥla* with maqāmāt is even more obvious once one makes the mental exercise of thinking of this semi-obscure al-Khwārizmī as fictitious, too. Thus we would have a fictitious main character-cum-narrator.

<sup>66</sup> See Thackston (1986), p. 2-3.

<sup>67</sup> The line between real and imaginary *mufākharas* may prove to be quite fluctuating; the famous *mufākharā* between Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī and al-Hamadhānī may sound real, and obviously has some historical background, but we must remember that a description of the events has been preserved only in the *rasā'il* of al-Hamadhānī. One remains wondering how the same episode would have gone according to Abū Bakr al-Khwārizmī.

<sup>68</sup> Cf. al-Hamadhānī's *al-maqāma al-Waṣīya*.

<sup>69</sup> See his *Masā'il al-intiqād*, p. 5.

<sup>70</sup> The technique of annexing the story to a piece of advice comes from India—it is not for nothing that the word for "tale" in Sanskrit is *kathā* (literally "thus"), from the initial formula *kathā ētat* "it was thus"—and is found as well in Europe; in, e.g., Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor* (Colección Austral A21. Ed. María Jesús Lacarra. 1988) the stories are introduced often by: "El Conde le rogó quel' dixiesse cómo fuera aquello".

the techniques used in the maqāmas of his predecessors. At least, the biographers give us to understand that when al-Ḥarīrī had preceded him in writing maqāmas, al-Khwārizmī felt that the genre was occupied —he might have thought of it as a style or manner, though —and turned to other possibilities. Thus, he must have been well aware of the work of, at least, al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī.

The main difference between his maqāmas and those of al-Hamadhānī and al-Ḥarīrī is that al-Khwārizmī selected himself as the narrator and the hero who finally gets the upper hand.<sup>71</sup> It seems as if he had taken separate elements of the maqās and combined them into a new pattern. Thus we find in his riḥla the following elements, all of which are well known from the maqāmas and many also from other genres:

a) shabby<sup>72</sup> hero whose eloquence is fully disclosed only in the end [al-Khwārizmī the Character]. The use of a narrator-cum-hero leads to a maqāma transposed to the first person. Al-Hamadhānī had sometimes used his narrator, 'Īsā ibn Hishām, as the hero, too (cf. al-maqāma al-baghdādhiya), but for him this was an unusual solution. Abū'l-Faṭḥ and 'Īsā do travel together in several maqāmas, but in these, it is Abū'l-Faṭḥ who has the leading role.

b) philological quibbles, partly as riddles and/or contests.

c) the final scene of one of the characters following the other after the assembly has dispersed. In maqāmas, the narrator usually follows the hero in the final anagnorisis, cf. below.

d) use of rhymed prose, common for risālas in general.

e) interwoven verses, common for risālas in general.

f) travel theme. In the riḥla, the theme of travelling is divided between al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī —who is on the road— and the Perfect Man of Hit who has been the paragon of a wandering and itinerant scholar, if we believe the eulogy of al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī.

g) possibly also the use of *envoi*, although this remains uncertain, since the final verses which may have belonged to the text have been excised (see above).

Now, these are the elements from which one might build a decent and appropriate maqāma, but al-Khwārizmī has opted for another kind of solution, whether consciously deviating from his models or not. He has moulded the narrator and the hero into one character (and has given his own identity to the

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<sup>71</sup> Ibn Buṭlān, *The Physician's Dinner Party (Da'wat al-aṭibbā')*, p. 5, left the narrator—cum—hero anonymous (*qāla ba 'duhum*).

<sup>72</sup> The shabbiness —or to say the least: the unimpressive outlook— of al-Khwārizmī the Character is not emphasized, but it is made clear by the attitude of the Perfect Man of Hit, who himself is described as somewhat delapidated. Al-Khwārizmī's attire must have been in conformity with his own state after the long journey from which he goes directly, without tidying up, to meet the Perfect Man of Hit.

Character) and divided the eloquence into two<sup>73</sup> —the eloquence and erudition of the Perfect Man of Hīt is after all very impressive, if one does not let al-Khwārizmī lead one's evaluation.<sup>74</sup> This has inevitably led to a change in the final anagnorisis: as the narrator and the hero is the same character, there is no need, nor possibility, for any anagnorisis in the Hamadhānian sense, yet the charm of the scene —of which already al-Hamadhānī was well aware<sup>75</sup>— has enticed al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī the Author to keep the basic features of the scene, transposing the roles, but keeping the final and intimate tête-à-tête after the audience has dissolved.

As we have the text of only one of al-Khwārizmī's *riḥal*, it is naturally somewhat risky to speak about the whole collection of 16 *riḥal*. One might venture a guess that al-Khwārizmī himself may have been the hero in all of these stories as it is perhaps somewhat difficult to imagine how he could have combined this piece with others with fictitious main characters. Selecting real persons as heroes would probably have been out of question: the author surely did not intend to exalt the eloquence of others at his own cost. A single main character is, though, not self evident in the early maqāmas. Al-Hamadhānī himself used mainly Abū'l-Faṭḥ as his hero but also others ('Īsā ibn Hishām being the most common but not the only one) and some of his followers used several so that we cannot speak of their particular maqāma hero.

The title of the work, ar-Riḥal, seems to give us reason to suggest that the travel theme, one of the basic features of the maqāmas, was prominent in Kitāb ar-Riḥal, too. The sole surviving *riḥla* does not show any picaresque features, so it remains an open question whether there were picaresque plots in the other pieces. This is possible (al-Hamadhānī, too, wrote both picaresque and, e.g., philological maqāmas) but not necessary, as the philological aspect seems to have soon gained the upper hand elsewhere. One need only take Ibn Sharaf's Masā'il al-intiqād as an example, a collection of literary criticism, which the author himself explicitly connects with the maqāma genre.

The place of al-Khwārizmī in the history of maqāmas seems relatively

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<sup>73</sup> It should not go unnoticed that his antagonist is called *Kāmil Hī*, whereas al-Khwārizmī himself has the cognomen al-Kāmil al-Khwārizmī "the Perfect Man from Khwārizm" (see aṣ-Ṣafadī, *Waḥī XVII:541*).

<sup>74</sup> It seems that the eloquence of the Perfect Man of Hīt is mainly described to highlight the even more perfect man of Khwārizm, a common technique in epics and the like where the enemy, the *other*, is depicted as brave and heroic so that his conqueror stands out as an almost gigantic figure. There would not be much bragging about beating the Baghdadian merchant of al-Hamadhānī's *al-maqāma al-Maḍrīya* in a contest of adab.

<sup>75</sup> It seems, though the question is by no means solved as yet, that in al-Hamadhānī's collection the maqāmas with the recognition/anagnorisis tend in general to be later than the other maqāmas: once he had invented this finale, al-Hamadhānī was willing to copy it in one maqāma after another until it came to be regarded as one of the most basic features of maqāma.

clear, but there remains the question of the literary merit of his work. The language of al-Khwārizmī is without doubt less ornate than, e.g., al-Ḥarīrī's—which may be one of the reasons why he lost the competition and fell into almost complete oblivion—but it is fluent and unforced, the words following each other effortlessly. The sheer erudition of al-Ḥarīrī's language has always been admired, but one cannot escape the feeling that the moderate ornamentation of al-Hamadhānī and al-Khwārizmī would have, in fact, given better prospects for the genre: the language of al-Ḥarīrī simply overwhelms his plots, obscuring the story itself.

Al-Khwārizmī's work, though, does not lack erudition. Grammar and genealogy prove to be the final undoing of the boastful Perfect Man of Hīt, and al-Khwārizmī the Author does not refrain from a lengthy listing of scholars and their works and he dives with gusto into grammatical quibbles. Yet the plot does have a charm of its own. As a whole, at least I find the piece quite agreeable and well worth retrieving from its present oblivion.

Al-Khwārizmī's work is a living testimony of the vigorous life of the early maqāma. Until 550, there were at least 20 maqāma authors<sup>76</sup> from all over the Islamic world, not to mention the unique success enjoyed by al-Ḥarīrī.<sup>77</sup> Many of these writers were far from being servile imitators of al-Hamadhānī: the genre was being vividly experienced and tested to its limits until the overwhelming influence of al-Ḥarīrī gave the classical model for maqāmas.

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<sup>76</sup> See the list in Hämeen-Anttila (1997 b); the old list of Blachère—Masnou (1957) is very unsatisfactory.

<sup>77</sup> See, e.g., Hämeen-Anttila (1997 a).

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