

C

Islamic Calendars

A. General Definition

The Islamic calendar par excellence is the pure lunar calendar starting from the Hijra, i. e., the “Emigration” of the Prophet Muḥammad b. Abī Ṭālib from Mecca (see below). This is the calendar normally used by Muslim peoples: nowadays only for religious purposes, but in the past for approximately all the exigencies of historical chronology. However, one may consider “Islamic” any calendar starting with this era.

B. Solar Islamic Calendars

Many forms of calendar starting from the Hijra developed in the countries of the Islamic world during different period of its millenary history, such as the numerous solar calendars elaborated for administrative (fiscal) or agricultural purposes. Two calendars of this kind are in use today in the Islamic Republic of Iran and in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan respectively. Historically, alongside the Hijrī era and the Arabic lunar calendar, we have specific forms of calendars that seem to be the product of combining the Muslim era with the solar years and months of different national or religious traditions existent in the territories subjected to Islamic rulers. These were helpful especially for financial needs and show different forms in various countries of the Islamic world, such as the financial solar calendars of Abbasid times or the still not well-known *sūrsana* of Moghul India. About the origin of the Persian fiscal era the question is still open. For instance, see Reza ABDOLLAHY, “Calendars – II. The Islamic period,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, vol. IV, 1990, 669–70 (a summary of his “Taqwim-e ḥ arāji,” *Našriya-ye dāneškada-ye adabiyāt wa ʿolum-e ensāni-ye Eṣfahān*, II-1 [1361š/1982–83]: 37–58), who hypothesizes a starting point of that era in pre-Islamic times, and Simone CRISTOFORETTI, *Izdilāq: miti e problemi calendariali del fisco islamico* (*Izdilāq: calendrical myths and problems of Islamic public revenue*), 2003, 89–118, who summarizes the different opinions about this topic and proposes an analysis of the persistent monetary crisis during Omayyad and Abbasid Chalifates in the light of calendrical facts. In addition, in many texts one may find dates calculated according to solar calendars and different eras, especially for astronomical

needs. For example, years may be reckoned according to the Seleucid era and the Syrian solar calendar (in Christian authors), or the so-called “era of the martyrs” and the Coptic solar calendar, according to the era of Yazdegard and the Persian solar calendar (in Persian authors), the Julian calendar (Greek, Orthodox and Spain), the Jalalian calendar (in astronomic works), or the Zoarian cycle of the twelve animals with various eras (in the countries occupied by Mongols). All necessary information on the different Christian calendars will be found in Victor GRUMEL, *Traité d'études byzantines* (1955) ed. by P. LEMERLE, vol. I, *La chronologie* (1958). Material on the Persian calendrical system and the calendars in the Turkic world is available respectively in Seyyed Hasan TAQIZADEH, “Various Eras and Calendars Used in the Countries of Islam,” B.S.O.(A.S., IX-4 (1937–1939): 903–922 (Part I.), B.S.O.(A.S., X-1 (1939–1942): 107–32 (Part II), an abridgment of its masterly *Gāhšomāri dar Irān-e qadīm* (*The Time-Reckoning in Ancient Iran*), Tehran, 1316š/1937–1938, written in Persian language, and in Louis BAZIN, *Les systèmes chronologiques dans le monde turc ancien* (*Bibliotheca Orientalis Hungarica*, XXXIV), 1991. On the Ottoman financial calendar see Joachim MAYR, “Das türkische Finanzjahr,” *Der Islam* 36 (1961): 264–68. The establishing of chronologies is made difficult by the variety of methods of dating in use in the East. The following articles are of the greatest importance to a general view on calendars and eras during Islamic times: “Ta’rīkh I. – Dates et ères dans le monde islamique,” *Encyclopédie de l’Islam*², vol. X (2002): 277–90, by François C. DE BLOIS, B. VAN DALEN, and “Calendars (Islamic period),” op. cit., *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 668–74, by R. ABDOLLAHI. In the last case, it is necessary to pay attention to the given conversion formula for the Zoarian cycle with solar Hijrī era – used in Ilḥ anid age and in modern Iran until 1343 (1304š)/1925 – because a mistake occurred. For a correct version of it see S. CRISTOFORETTI, *Forme ‘neopersiane’ del calendario ‘zoroastriano’ tra Iran e Transoxiana* (‘New-Persian’ Forms of the ‘Zoroastrian’ Calendar between Iran and Transoxiana),” *Eurasiatica* n. 64 (2000): 94–98.

C. The Lunar Hijrī Calendar

In September 622, the Prophet Muḥammad fleeing Mecca, after some days’ travelling, reached the oasis of Yaṭrib (later called al-Madīna, i. e., “the City” par excellence). This event – which occurred in the Arab month of Rabīʿ 1st – is the Hijra, the basis of Islamic chronology. After an initial period of about 17 years in which the dates were reckoned by counting the months from Rabīʿ 1st, under the second caliph ʿUmar ibn al-Ḥ aṭṭāb (13–23/634–644) the fixing of the beginning of the new Islamic era took place. Then, the term Hijra, that in Arabic was used to denote the Emigration of the Prophet from Mecca to

Medina, was also applied to this era (Hijrī, i. e., “of the Hijra”). In spite of the opinion of the Prophet’s cousin, ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, who preferred to reckon from the first day of the month Rabīʿ 1st, the caliph ordered that the year start with the 1st of Muḥarram – the first month of the Arabic traditional calendar – in that lunar year corresponding to 15th/16th of July 622 in the Julian calendar (R. ABDOLLAHY, “Calendars . . .,” op. cit. 668). The choice of Muḥarram as the first month of the year instead of Rabīʿ 1st or Ramaḍān (the month of the first Coranic revelation) reveals the greater importance attributed to the traditional (pre-Islamic) starting point of the year and to the social and economic relevance of that moment (end of the annual pilgrimage to Mecca). In the preference given to the year of the Hijra as the first year of the new Islamic era it is possible to see the prevalence of some politico-social issues (e. g., severance of relations between Muḥammad and his clan and the following alliance with the people of Medina) over purely religious events (e. g., God’s call to Muḥammad) or hagiographical facts (e. g., the Prophet’s birth) (S. CRISTOFORETTI, *Forme ‘neopersiane’* . . ., op. cit., 14). The incertitude between 15th and 16th of July concerns the beginning of the day (*nyctemeron*) in Arabic custom. Still today, for religious purposes, the day is considered to start after the sunset. Then, for example, Monday night for the Muslims is the night between Sunday and Monday and not that between Monday and Tuesday. For this reason the beginning of the Hijrī era is Friday 16th July in civil usage, or Thursday 15th July in the common astronomic (and religious) usage. The lunar Hijrī calendar was based on the synodic month (29,53 days approximately), reckoned from one sighting of the new moon to the next (on the matter see Miquel FORCADA, “L’Expression du cycle lunaire dans l’ethnoastronomie arabe,” *Arabica* 47 [2000]: 37–77; Jan P. HOGENDIJK, “Three Islamic Lunar Crescent Visibility Tables,” *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 19 [1988]: 29–44). This could have caused a one- or two-day discrepancy between the effective sighting of the new moon and the start of the corresponding month in civil usage (the latter constitutes the basis on which all the tables for converting dates are elaborated). In such cases, any presence in the sources of indications on the position of the days in the week may be of the greatest importance for the reconstruction of the exact date. For example, the existence of a double recording system of lunar months is clearly documented in Somalia. There it was normal usage to distinguish *al-sana al-qamariyya* (“lunar year”) – reckoned on the basis of months corresponding to the effective sightings of the new moon – from *al-sana al-ta’rīḥiyya* (“civil year”) – reckoned according to the written Islamic calendar (ENRICO CERULLI, *Somalia: Scritti vari editi ed inediti*, vol. I, 1957, 185). For many years the most trustworthy work for help in establishing concordances between the official Is-

lamic calendar and the Julian and Gregorian has been Ferdinand WÜSTENFELD, *Vergleichungs-Tabellen der muhammedanischen und christlichen Zeitrechnung* (1854), third edition revised by Bertold SPULER in collaboration with Joachim MAYR (1961), which also gives a table for converting the Ottoman financial (solar) years. Nowadays, in addition to Edward M. REINGOLD and Nachum DERSHOWITZ, *Calendrical Tabulations 1900–2200*, 2002, many conversion programs are easily available on-line.

D. History of Research

The knowledge of different calendrical systems is basic for astronomers. Normally a section on calendars is present in ancient astronomic Arabic works; see for example the section entitled *De Arabum, Romanorum, Coptorum et Persarum aevis atque de alia in aliam convertenda* in Carlo Alfonso NALLINO's annotated Latin translation of *Zīj al-Ṣābi'* by the famous astronomer of 9th–10th century Abū 'Abdallāh Muḥammad al-Battānī (*al-Battānī, sive Albatenii opus astronomicum*, Milano, 1899–1907: vol. I, 66–71 [rpt. 1977]). One of the most ancient and important sources on different calendars used in the Islamic world is the masterpiece of the great man of science Abū al-Rayḥān Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Bīrūnī (362–440/973–1048) translated by C. E. SACHAU, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations: An English Version of the Arabic Text of the Athār-ul-Bākiya of Albīrūnī, or 'Vestiges of the Past,' Collected and Reduced to Writing by the Author in AH 390–1, AD 1000*, 1879; rpt. in 1998. In Europe the knowledge of Hijrī lunar calendar keeps up with the translations of Arabic astronomical writings (on the topic see Bruce S. EASTWOOD, "Astronomy in Christian Latin Europe," *Journal for the History of Astronomy* 28 [1997]: 235–58; José María MILLÁS I VALLICROSA, "Las primeras traducciones científicas de origen oriental hasta mediados del siglo XII," *Nuevos estudios sobre la historia de la ciencia española*, ed. id. 1960, 79–115). A good example of it is John GREAVES's *Epochæ celebrioris, astronomis, historicis, chronologis, Chataiorum, Syro-Græcorum, Arabum, Persarum, Chorasmiorum, usitata ex traditione Ulug Beigi* ... (1650), i. e., "The most famous eras [...] according to tradition by Ulug Beg," Timurid ruler (850–853/1447–1449) and astronomer, author of an important astronomic treatise. A more specific interest in the lunar Arabic calendar develops during the later 17th and 18th centuries (Barthélemy D'HERBELOT DE MOLAINVILLE, *Bibliothèque orientale, ou dictionnaire universel contenant generalement tout ce qui regarde la connaissance des peuples de l'orient*, 1697, 444–45, 857; WILLIAM MARSDEN, "On the Era of the Mahometans, called the Hejerà," *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London* 78 [1788]: 414–32). Old studies of great importance for research on the calendars used in the Islamic world are to be found in the fundamental miscellany edited by Fuat SEZGIN,

Calendars and Chronology in the Islamic World: Texts and Studies I, 1998. All the writings by Christian Ludwig IDELER on the matter are reprinted in it ("Über die Zeitrechnung der Araber," first published in *AKAWB* 1812/13, Hist.-phil. Kl. (1816): 97–120 [= SEZGIN: 103–126]; "Über die Zeitrechnung der Perser," first published in *AKAWB* 1814/15 Hist.-phil. Kl. (1818): 259–289; [= SEZGIN: 127–157]; "Über die bei den morgenländischen Völkern gebräuchlichen Formen des julianischen Jahrs," first published in *AKAWB* 1816/17, Hist.-phil. Kl. (1819): 215–262 [= SEZGIN: 159–206]) along with some other important works, such as that by Franz Xaver FREIHERR VON ZACH, "Über den Kalender der Türken," first published in *Zeitschrift für Erd-, Völker- und Staatenkunde* 2 (1825): 64–69 [= SEZGIN: 234–239]. The above-mentioned miscellany also contains studies on conversion systems (for example: J. B. NAVONI, "Rouz-namé, ou calendrier perpétuel des Turcs, avec les remarques et des exemples sur la manière de compter les lunaïsons, et avec des tables pour trouver la correspondance des dates entre l'ère turque et l'ère vulgaire," first published in *Fundgruben des Orients* 4 (1814): 38–67, 127–53, 253–77 [= SEZGIN: 1–92]; CH. L. IDELER, "Über die Vergleichung der muhammedanischen und christlichen Zeitrechnung," first published in *Fundgruben des Orients* 4 (1814): 299–308 [= SEZGIN: 93–102]) and important writings on the pre-Islamic form of the Arabic lunar calendar (Mahmoud PACHA AL-FALAKI, "Mémoire sur le calendrier arabe avant l'islamisme, et sur la naissance et l'âge du prophète Mohammad," first published in *Journal asiatique*, sér. 5, 11 (1858): 109–192, already rpt. in *Mémoires couronnés et mémoires des savants étrangers, publiés par l'académie royale des sciences, des lettres et des beaux-arts de Belgique*, 30, Classe des lettres (1861): 1–45 [= SEZGIN: 251–336]). On this topic and in particular on the *nasī*['] (the pre-Islamic "intercalation"), in addition to the old works by Armand-Pierre CAUSSIN DE PERCEVAL, "Mémoire sur le calendrier arabe avant l'islamisme," *Journal asiatique, ou recueil de mémoires, d'extraits et de notices relatifs à l'histoire, à la philosophie, aux langues et à la littérature des peuples orientaux*, sér. 4, 1 (1843): 342–79 (an English translation is available [by L. NOBIRON], "Notes on the Arab Calendar Before Islam," *Islamic Culture* 21 [1947]: 135–53), and by Aloys SPRENGER, "Über den Kalender der Araber vor Mohammad," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 13 (1859): 134–75, see C. A. NALLINO, *Raccolta di scritti editi e inediti*, vol. V, 1944, 152–71, who translated some important passages from Arabic sources. A more recent contribution on the matter is the work of F. A. SHAMSI, "The Meaning of Nasī: An Interpretation of Verse 9:37," *Islamic Studies* 26 (1987): 143–64. The most important sources on Islamic calendars are available in F. SEZGIN, *Calendars and Chronology in the Islamic World: Texts and Studies II*, 1998. Unfortunately an organic and com-

prehensive work on the history of calendrical systems in Islamic world is still needed.

Select Bibliography

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Cantigas de Amigo (“Songs of the beloved”)

A. Introduction

The earliest known examples of traditional Galician-Portuguese lyric poetry, essentially those brought together in three medieval *cancioneiros* (“song-books”), dating approximately from the late 13th century to the early 14th, plus early fragments and some later copies (LANCIANI and TAVANI, 113–26, 132–39, 627–32). The *cantigas de amigo* appear in these MSS, together with two other contemporary poetic genres, both rather less oral or traditional in character and more learned in origin: *cantigas de amor* (“songs of love”) and *cantigas de escarnho e maldizer* (“insulting and scandalous songs”). In the *cantigas de amor*, the author, influenced by the Provençal lyric, writes of his own amorous sentiments; in *cantigas de escarnho* (from the same Germanic root as English *scorn*), the poet singles out some contemporary enemy – or perhaps only a supposed enemy – as an object of total ridicule and not infrequently of