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Appendix 2

'HADĪTH AL-ṬĪN' (THE CLAY), HADDATHA ABŪ HURAYRA QĀL...

I asked: What is the most perfect form of rational knowledge?

He said: That human beings know their own capacity.

(al-Rāhib al-Jurjānī)

Abū Hurayra is reported to have said [*an abī hurayra annahu qāla*]:

'I left Medina taking along nothing but my cane, to lean on it and to lend it my weight. A virgin land appeared to me and beckoned me forth. So I abandoned what I was carrying and lost interest [in my pursuit]. Then I set out freely to discover that land and found it like creation or like time. I wandered around for few days there, like a groom on his wedding night, seeking the unknown fruit, wishing the world were created anew and envying Adam and Eve. My solitude was complete. Night and day seemed like a meaningless game and time turned homogeneous. Like a calm sea. Or like eternity.' Narrated by Abū 'Ubayda. Thābit al-Qaysī reported the same and added to it the following:

'At that time, Abū Hurayra was in Kurā' al-Ghamīm, a sandy river located between the two holy cities. The river was reported to be a haunted place, rarely free of bedeviling demons and blinding spirits (*al-muṣīrāt al-mu'miyyāt*). It was a hard place to be; and no one dared to enter it alone. Someone saw Abū Hurayra there, and thought he was a jinni. He told me the story: "I saw him cursing ruins (*rasm*) and past times, and spitting like a devil. After a while he started looking around as if searching for a lost friend; then he went to a place nearby and lied down."

Thābit said, 'When I asked Abū Hurayra about the matter, he said, "Yes. That day I felt restless and needed relief. So I composed an elegy for Adam and Eve and took it to the women of a clan in the valley. But they refused to use it as a wailing song and said, "This is the dullest elegy we have ever heard. You are an idiot (*abmaq*)!" I said, yes; and used the poem in my own wailing. It was indeed the dullest of poems!" And he laughed.'

Thābit added, 'perhaps he meant a clan and women from the world of spirits. It was even possible that he made up the whole story without any parallel in reality (*anshā'a al-khabara inshā'an dūna muṭābaqa*). For Abū Hurayra was a master of jest, ambiguity and deception. He always acted as if he hated to divulge his deep secrets

or to reveal himself to others. So much so that people have become uncertain about him (*ishtabaha amruhu*).

Thābit added, 'We asked him, "Why did you want to mourn the elderly man and woman?" He replied, "Because they almost succeeded in teaching me their ignorance of life and in guiding me to the virgin path. So when I lost them, I found myself again on beaten paths and I returned to my old story and to my old self. I had wanted my path to be virgin (*adhrā*), untouched by men, but it turned out to be an old whore? (*ajūz fajira*)'.

Abū 'Ubayda said – but this was not reported by Thābit, 'Abū Hurayra said, "One day, having run out of provisions the day before, I felt as if I was in the clarity of a cloudless noon or in the light of a fire as heat spread across the land. At the time, I was in a valley whose sand was like the waves of a mirage on which sight could ride and spread until the sand appeared like thin air. I was not long in my quietude when a wind began to whisper like a human voice. The wind then became stronger and blew the sand about like the flutter of a silk cloth. It then started to blow harder and roar like a sea storm, raising sand up in the air like snake tongues to reveal ancient ruins and a decayed skull. This did away with my solitude and spoiled my joy. I wondered why was it that whenever someone sought solitude, an effaced sign would appear to him? It felt as if the sign was in my heart. I hated that and decided to leave the place. For I had set out to erase my story, only to discover that it was within me, before Adam and Eve, impossible to erase. But then I got distracted, lied down and soon fell asleep.

In my sleep I had the most stupid and most arrogant dream. I saw a strange country, whose people appeared at times like elephants and at others like ants. They were mixing clay and using it to hold together stones to erect massive walls (*ṣurūḥ*). Some of them were singing lyrics at the rhythm of stone lifting:

Reason is death; thinking is a disease.
The Soul is an echo: the echo of nothingness.
Action is everlasting; struggle is peace.
Let us build a wall that defeats nothingness!

There was a reader reciting in 'Ḥamza's version: "Nobles, you have no other god that I know of except myself. Make me, Hāmān, bricks of clay, and build for me a tower that I may climb up to the god of Moses. I am convinced that he is lying!" They responded to the reader inserting their own speech, which sounded like thunder shaking the sky: "He denied it [the sign] and rebelled – *bandaldallam*. He quickly went away – *banbar talgham* - and, summoning all his men – *bar ānbandam*. Made to them the proclamation: 'I am your supreme Lord,' he said'. When I woke up, I went to Bedouin clans and stayed amongst them for two years".

Abū 'Ubayda said,

'Abū Hurayra did not explain the meaning of the corruption (gibberish) inserted in the verse. God's word is indeed free from barbarism (*raṭānat al-'ajam*)! It was the devil that, during sleep, took hold of him! (*wa innamā huwa al-Shaṭṭanu fī al-nawmi alam.*)