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The good, the bad, and the ugly

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Stellingen

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The good, the bad, and the ugly.

Allegiance and authority in the poetical discourse of Muḥammad's lifetime

Marije Coster

1. The poems of Muḥammad's contemporaries voice their experiences, values, and worldview. The voices of the common folk of the time are still muted in research, since the poets occupied a position of authority and belonged to an elite or voiced the opinions of the elite.
2. It is a contradiction to overlook the *mukhadram* poems in early Muslim sources while at the same time claiming that these sources present a one-sided view of nascent Islam.
3. The text of the Qur'ān repeatedly has to deny that Muḥammad is a poet because its style is similar to the utterances of poets, but perhaps more importantly because the role of spokesman of a group traditionally was held by that group's poet.
4. The difference in power positions among their kinsmen held by Ḍirār, Ibn al-Ziba'rā, and Al-Ḥuṭay'a explains the differences in tone towards individuals and groups in their respective poems.
5. As members of a sedentary tribe with relatively little exposure to tribal wars and feuds prior to the emergence of Islam, Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā could only resort to the conventional *topoi* when confronted with the conflict between their group and that of Muḥammad.
6. According to the statements in their poems, the conversion by Ḍirār and Ibn al-Ziba'rā has to be understood as an acceptance of the authority and leadership of Muḥammad and not necessarily as religious conversion.
7. The fact that Al-Ḥuṭay'a does not seem to use his conversion to claim the benefits of belonging to the same *umma* as his hosts indicates that in his time the benefits of the *umma* for its members were still smaller than the benefits of belonging to a strong tribe.
8. By qualifying the battles against Muḥammad and his followers as wars against the people of Yathrib, the poets from the Quraysh could continue to present their tribe as united against a tribal enemy.
9. Closely reading and studying the words of people from a distant past during several years creates a bond of allegiance between the student and the objects of study.
10. If we don't learn to reduce our water consumption, the images and metaphors on drought and thirst in the poems of the Arabian peninsula will come in helpful.