

Wolfensohn, Ka'b al Aḥbār =

Wolfensohn, I. *Ka'b al Aḥbār und seine Stellung im Hadīṭ und in der islamischen Legendenliteratur*. Glenhausen: F.W. Kalbfleisch, 1933.

Ömer b. Ebu Rebia

150127

D526



MADDE YAYIMLANDIKTAN
SONRA GELEN DOKÜMAN

01 Temmuz 2021

KISSING AT THE KA'BA: GHAZAL POETRY AND EARLY ISLAMIC
CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF THE SACRED AND THE SENSUAL

W. Sasson Chahanovich
Harvard University

Abstract In this essay I argue that the polarizing classification of *ghazal* poetry into “chaste” (*‘udhrī*) vs. “licentious” (*‘umarī*) types is a hyper-moralizing position that is not observed in the earliest historical record of Islamic-era *shī‘r*. Unconsummated love, as advocated in later Sunnī religious literature, is implicitly understood as pure and ideal, whereas physical and titillating adventures are construed as aberrant and outré. Nineteenth-century European cultural mores critically helped to advance this reductive dichotomy. Thus, a preference has prevailed in academic research that has totally marginalized the more erotic *ghazal* tradition. This is clearly observed in the poetry of ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a, the titular progenitor of the supposedly salacious genre. By examining the early Islamic poetic record as reflected in ‘Umar’s works, as well as Islamic historiographic texts and traditional religious sources, I demonstrate that early Arabic love poetry was neither preferentially chaste nor was erotic *ghazal* deemed by its earliest audiences as violating religious taboos. ‘Umar’s trope of courting and kissing in and around the Ka’ba precinct is the smoking gun. His accounts of both real and imagined courtship in the Meccan sanctuary help us resituate classical Arabic literary articulations of desire and reclaim an early stage of Islamic life removed from later orthodox strictures.

Keywords ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a, *ghazal*, Ka’ba, Mecca, *ḥajj* (Pilgrimage), Taboos, Eroticism

186-236