It appears to be an all but indelible idée fixe of Islamic scholarship that genealogy has always been somehow an integral, inseparable part of the Arab nomads' culture, and a unique distinguishing feature, as it were, of the Arab or nomadic ‘world-view’, whatever that may mean1. The term nasab is usually understood to be the Arabic equivalent of ‘genealogy’, especially genealogy on the patriline, which may be memorized by generation after generation of tribesmen, or else documented in the form of genealogical trees or chain-like lists enumerating the names of ascending generations of male ancestors2. The individual tribes' genealogies, or nasabs, can be and are linked together by those concerned to form one national genealogy, tracing origins back to the remotest past of pre-Islamic Arabia.

Thus, what is known as the genealogical paradigm is traditionally seen as the very framework in which Arab nomads have always perceived their world and all social relations therein. Whether we should really give credit to this deeply entrenched notion will be the subject of this paper. To formulate the basic dilemma: whereas early Bedouins were certainly quite preoccupied with something that they called nasab, the hackneyed equation of this nasab with ‘genealogy’ throughout Arabian history is by no means so self-evident as later Muslim literati would have us believe. For reasons of space constraints, I shall largely limit my argument here to the linguistic aspects of the issue, which I have analysed at more length elsewhere (Szombathy 1999).

The usual understanding of nasab as genealogy rests almost exclusively on the work of mediaeval Muslim scholars, whose model of pre-Islamic nasab is strikingly similar to what modern anthropological literature offers to say about segmentary lineage systems. We should entertain few doubts that the description of the Bedouins' nasab structure promoted by mediaeval Arab genealogists has profoundly influenced segmentary lineage theory, advocates of which may well have seen it as a historical proof of their own hypotheses3. This is especially obvious if we compare the views of Ibn Haldún on the role of genealogy (nasab) in Bedouin society with the descrip-

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3 In this context, noteworthy is the fact that that once-so-popular pet of social anthropologists, segmentary lineage theory, seems to be under ever-growing siege and is less and less tenable in the eyes of many anthropologists. See Kuper 1982:92.
tion of segmentary lineage society and its genealogical basis by, say, Evans-Pritchard or Gellner. That many twentieth-century anthropologists drew heavily upon the Muqaddima of Ibn Haldun in forming their own theories on lineages is undeniable, and indeed some of them have acknowledged this debt in so many words. We ought to be, however, rather more wary of accepting the views of mediaeval Muslim scholars on ancient Bedouin society, never mind basing hypotheses on them, for, the Bedouins' culture and society were almost as alien to these urban Muslim intellectuals as they are to us, and their interpretations of many facets of Bedouin folklore and traditions are apparently the product of totally baseless fancies arising from a lack of a solid grasp of Bedouin society and its workings. To this may be added the quite natural tendency among mediaeval Arab scholars to idealize the Arabs' pre-Islamic past, which was instrumental in bringing about such obviously anachronistic yet widely accepted myths like the existence of sciences, inter alia genealogical science, among pre-Islamic Bedouins. Instead of relying on the views of the urban literati of Abbasid-era Iraq, one would perhaps do better to peruse the available early sources and try to figure out what is really meant when nasab is being talked about.

To anticipate somewhat, the most important observation to be made after a careful scrutiny of the Arabic nomenclature of kinship and tribal segmentation is that the Arabic terminology of this semantic field is as a rule remarkably vague, with most if not all kinship terms being used in a literal or primary sense as well as in a figurative or extended sense. Such terms include 'father', 'mother', 'grandfather', 'brother', 'son', 'offspring', 'daughter', 'uncle', 'cousin' (or 'partner'), and a host of other words, all of which tend to lack any exactitude of meaning. Thus the term 'father', 'ab', will often refer to a very distant ancestor, as will 'grandfather', 'gadd'. The plural forms 'ab' and 'gadd' (or 'gudd') are especially prone to being used in the sense of 'ancestors'. To this may be added the quite natural tendency among mediaeval Arab scholars to idealize the Arabs' pre-Islamic past, which was instrumental in bringing about such obviously anachronistic yet widely accepted myths like the existence of sciences, inter alia genealogical science, among pre-Islamic Bedouins.

A source cites the poet al-Farazdaq addressing Sukayma bt. al-Husayn, the Prophet's granddaughter (through Fāṭima) as 'daughter of God's Messenger' (ṣa bi'is rasul Allah). See al-Bayhaqi, Mabāsin.

often than not to refer to one's whole agnatic and uterine kin. The common phrase ṣawāl/banū al-'amām is seldom used in its primary sense of 'parallel cousins', being as it is the usual idiomatic equivalent of 'one's own tribe', 'one's own people' (in varying senses) (Chelhod 1965:122; Ashkenazi 1965-69:663). Literal interpretations of such loose usages are an invitation for misunderstanding, and it is worth noting here that mediaeval genealogists were fond of deliberately taking figurative expressions in a literal sense as a way to create consistent genealogies out of a confused medley of names; although space does not allow me to elaborate on this point here.

The hierarchy of the various levels of tribal segmentation, which is the very backbone of both Arabic 'ilm an-nasab and modern anthropological theories on segmentary lineages, totally disintegrates under an analysis of the terminology. Arabic has an impressively wide array of original terms for tribal segments (such as qabila, 'imāra, sa', batn, ṣāhir, ḥāsira, ḥayy, zahara, batn, usra, ahl, ṭabt, sulāl, etc.), which may lead one to the false conclusion that Arabs used to have an elaborate genealogical

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The common phrase awlād/banū ʾal-ʾamām is seldom used in its primary sense of ‘parallel cousins’, being as it is the usual idiomatic equivalent of ‘one’s own tribe’, ‘one’s own people’ (in varying senses) (Chelod 1965:122; Ashkenazi 1965-69:663). Literal interpretations of such loose usages are an invitation for misunderstanding, and it is worth noting here that mediaeval genealogists were fond of deliberately taking figurative expressions in a literal sense as a way to create consistent genealogies out of a confused medley of names; although space does not allow me to elaborate on this point here.

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1 Instructive in this respect is the common phrase karim ʾal-ʾamām, ‘noble through and through’, literally, ‘noble on the paternal line’. In a story, the caliph Hārūn ar-Raṣīl is informed by a man in his entourage of the presence of a visitor who, it is said, belonged to the ‘caliph’s maternal kin, the Ansār [tribe of Medina]’; see al-Bayhaqī, Mabāsin 266. Likewise, a man of the Kub tribe relates that, having committed a capital offence, he was forced to leave his kin and seek safety among his maternal relatives, the Murra tribe (awlād Bani Murra); see al-Isfahānī, Agānī II, 276.

2 For examples, mediaeval and modern, cf. al-Isfahānī, Agānī I, 326 [a black woman addresses the black poet Nasīr b. Rabāb, totally unrelated though he is to her, as her ‘paternal cousin’]; III, 81 [the pre-Islamic poet ‘Urwat as-Sālīk is referred to as the ‘paternal cousin’ of a scholar of the Abbasid era]; XX, 216 [a poem by Abī l-ʿAtāḥiyya calls the caliph al-Amin ‘the Prophet’s parental cousin’]; al-ʿIlbī, Mustaṭrāf 71 [the poet ʿUmar b. Abī Rabīʿa is called the ‘paternal cousin’ of the Omayyad caliph ‘Umar b. Abdal-ʿazīz’]; Ibn Qutayba, Maʿārif 129; al-Maṣʿūdī, Murāqīj II, 211; Asad 1986:104; Dickson 1996:101-103; Bonte 1987:94; Miner 1953:144.

3 On the frequent mistranslation of awlād, cf. Mohamed 1980:36. Mediaeval scholars are as a rule rather reticent on the methods that they used to arrive at a certain genealogical construct, other than that they use their immediate authorities if there are any. Rare as they are, the following methodological remarks by two mediaeval authors are therefore particularly illuminating: 1: ‘I do not recall seeing the nasab of Mutī [i. y. as-Salīk] transmitted by anyone as an uninterrupted chain up to Kinānā, but there is one account that I shall cite shortly in which the transmitter (awr) says that Abū Qur’a al-Kinānā was a grandfather (ḡadd) of Mutī. Now, I do not know for sure if he is Mutī’s actual grandfather to whose name I should join his nasab directly, or else he is a more distant ancestor (ʾaḏḏāḏ), see al-Isfahānī, Agānī XIII, 301. 2: ʿAbī Abdarrāhaman as-Sulāmī claims that Zārāq b. Muhammad was the brother of Dū n-Nūn al-Mistī. I, however, think (it is more likely) that he was his ‘brother in the sense of being his intimate friend, rather than that of real kinship (nasab) abān al-mistī, for he was one of [Dū n-Nūn’s] close associates and companions; see al-ʿIlbī, Mustaṭrāf 156.

4 A source cites the poet al-Forazdaq addressing Sukayma b. al-Husayn, the Prophet’s granddaughter (through Fāṭima) as ‘daughters of God’s Messenger’ (yi bint rasūl Allāh). See al-Bayhaqī, Mabāsin 246.
cal system based on different levels of tribal segmentation. This is precisely the idea suggested by mediaeval Muslim intellectuals and keenly accepted by most scholars up to this day, but apparently wrong when we consider the fact that the plethora of terms used for tribal sub-sections of various sizes form no consistent system, and indeed are often quite interchangeable. In the totally chaotic inventory of words, we can distinguish only two basic meanings: ‘a tribe’ (usually but not exclusively expressed by *qabila*), and ‘any subdivision smaller than a tribe’. There are, of course, many shades of meaning attached to certain terms, yet the fact remains that, at the end of the day, these words have never come to compose any semblance of a hierarchical, segmentary system. Significantly, the mediaeval genealogists themselves, drawn to this day, but apparently wrong when we consider the fact that the plethora of terms used for tribal sub-sections of various sizes form no consistent system, and in—

To proceed to the question of *nasab* itself, one finds an equally palpable vagueness of meaning clinging to it in most early sources on Bedouins, wherein the usual rendering as ‘genealogy’ or ‘chain of male ancestors’ will prove to be the result of so apparent misinterpretation as to make it utterly untenable. Such texts abound, and in fact there are precious few passages in which rendering *nasab* as ‘genealogy’ seems to be contextually possible at all, let alone really plausible. Thus, in many passages the act of ‘giving one’s *nasab*’ (*intissâb*) must obviously have involved little more than mentioning the name of one’s parents or the tribe to which one belonged. Just how artificial the habit of using *nasab* chains must have seemed to the Arabs even in Omayyad times is indicated by a story in which the occurrence of a mere four ascending names in a poem of Durayd b. as-Simma prompted the following sarcastic remark from the caliph *Abdalmalik*: ‘This Durayd has traced *Du'âjî* b. `Asma' almost back to Adami!’ (Abû 'Ubayda, *Ayyâm* 582). True enough that mediaeval dictionaries like the *Lisân al-arab* do mention ‘tracing someone’s descent to his first known ancestor’ (*rafacta fi nasabibi ila gaddihi l-akbar*), but this explanation bears the hallmark of the mediaeval scholars’ pedantry, and is supplemented anyway by a number of vaguer, and no doubt earlier, meanings like ‘kinship’ (*parâba*), ‘kinship links’ (*qarâbat*), and ‘belonging’ in a variety of senses (by ancestry, by dwelling-place, by métier, etc.) (Ibn Manzûr, *Lisân VI*, 4405). Ibn Sida, having mentioned ‘kinship’ (*parâba*) as the primary meaning of *nasab*, proceeds to add that it might have the more specific meaning of ‘agnatic descent’ (*wa-qila huwa fi l-abâ'î hâsatan*) (Muhassas III, 147). However, the fact that *nasab* originally covered uterine relations just as much as agnic ones, and affinal ties just as much as consanguinuous ones, is also testified by such expressions like two persons being ‘connected by *nasab* through women’ (*wa-kâna bayna Ayyûba bni Mabrû'ûn wa-bayna Awwa bni Qallâmûn hâdâ nasabûn min qibâli n-nisâ'), or ‘marriage [being] one of the two types of *nasab*’ (*fa-inna n-nikdha abadu n-nasabayni*) (al-Ishâhî, *Ağâni* II, 90; Ibn Qutayba, *Fadl* 118). In fact, *nasab* might occasionally cover an even wider area of meaning, as demonstrated by the highly metaphorical adage ‘acquaintance is [a sort of] *nasab*’ (al-Bayhaqi, *Mâhasîn* 189). Closely connected with *nasab* is the word used to describe people reputed to be particularly knowledgeable in matters of *nasab*, *nasâb* or *nasabâ*. Given that *nasab* in the early period seems to have been quite far from designating ‘genealogy’, neither is *nasab* to be understood as ‘genealogist’ when applied to pre-Islamic Bedouin men. First of all, there is nothing to suggest that the faculty of being a *nasab* ever entailed an institutionalized position within the tribe, like that of a poet (*lāiz*) or a soothsayer (*kahin*). Instead, a *nasab* seems to have been simply, and not surprisingly, anyone who happened to know a lot about his fellow-tribesmen, their relationships, the tribe’s legends (*ahbâr*), and indeed the gossip current within the group. Gossip is actually a very important element of a Bedouin *nasab*’s erudition, as attested by a number of texts that leave no uncertainty in this respect. Thus, when the Prophet Muhammad wanted to retaliate for the poetical lampoons to which the Meccans subjected him, he sent his poet Hassan b. 'Abî to the future caliph *Abû Bakr*, a famous *nasab*, who then instructed him as to which Meccan women he should allude to in his poems to cause pain to the *Quraysh*. The kind of information that *Abû Bakr* furnished to the poet is labelled in a work *ma’ayîb al-qawm*, ‘the disgraces of the people’ (al-Ishâhî, *Ağâni* IV, 145-146; al-Maqdisî, *Tistibb* 52-53). Just how close early concepts of *nasab* must have been to petty gossip is shown by a remark of al-Asmaci: ‘Beware by God of the maleficence of the [tribe’s] old women, for they know the ancestors (*ista’idû bî-lâbî min lârri l’aqa’i’i la’im na‘ma biha l-aqa’i’i*)’ (as-Samcanî, *Ağâni* I, 24). Likewise, it is for good reason that another famous early *nasab*, *Abû Ǧahm* b. *Huṣayla*, should be said to have been ‘feared for his tongue’ (*wa-kâna yuğfa fi l-lisâânî*) (Ibn Durayd, *Fittaq* 139). As I have stated above, however, the knowledge of a pre-Islamic *nasab* went far beyond the limits of mere newsmongering to encompass tribal legends and tales (*ahbâr*), recollections of tribal skirmishes (*a'yâm*), and even poems. In their capacity as narrators of the past, they

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The term 'nasab' is the word used to describe people reputed to be particularly knowledgeable in matters of genealogy, *nasab* or *nasaba*. Given that *nasab* in the early period seems to have been quite far from designating 'genealogy', neither is *nasab* to be understood as 'genealogist' when applied to pre-Islamic Bedouin men. First of all, there is nothing to suggest that the faculty of being a *nasab* ever entailed an institutionalized position within the tribe, like that of a poet (la-il) or a soothsayer (kahin). Instead, a *nasab* seems to have been simply, and not surprisingly, anyone who happened to know a lot about his fellow-tribesmen, their relationships, the tribe's legends (abhar), and indeed the gossip current within the group. Gossip is actually a very important element of a Bedouin *nasab*'s erudition, as attested by a number of texts that leave no uncertainty in this respect. Thus, when the Prophet Muhammad wanted to retaliate for the poetical lampoons to which the Meccans subjected him, he sent his poet Hasan b. Tabit to the future caliph Abu Bakr, a famous *nasab*, who then instructed him as to which Meccan women he should allude to in his poems to cause pain to the Quraysh. The kind of information that Abu Bakr furnished to the poet is labelled in a work *ma'ayib al-qawm*, 'the discourses of the people' (al-Isfahani, Agâni IV, 145-146; al-Maqdisi, Istibdâ 52-53). Just how close early concepts of *nasab* must have been to petty gossip is shown by a remark of al-Asma'î: 'Beware of God by the maleficence of the [tribe]'s old women, for they know the ancestors (ista'idu bil-labi min sarrri la-agha iza fa-innahumuna ya-rifna la-baba)!'(as-Samâ'î, Ansâb I, 24). Likewise, it is for good reason that another famous early *nasab*, Abu Ghâm b. Hûdayla, should be said to have been 'feared for his tongue' (wa-kâna yuyafu li-lisânih) (Ibn Durayd, Istiqâq 139). As I have stated above, however, the knowledge of a pre-Islamic *nasab* went far beyond the limits of mere newsmongering to encompass tribal legends and tales (abhar), recollections of tribal skirmishes (ayyâm), and even poems. In their capacity as narrators of the past, they much as agnostic ones, and affinal ties just as much as consanguineous ones, is also testified by such expressions like two persons being 'connected by *nasab* through women' (wa-kâna bayna Ayyâbâ bni Mâhrûfûn wa-bayna Auâsu bni Qallâmîn huðâ nasabun min qibâlî n-nisâ), or 'marriage [being] one of the two types of *nasab* (fa-inna n-nikâba abadu n-nasabâyni) (al-Isfahâni, Agâni II, 90; Ibn Qutayba, Fadd 118). In fact, *nasab* might occasionally cover an even wider area of meaning, as demonstrated by the highly metaphorical adage 'acquaintance is [a sort of] *nasab* (al-Bayhaqi, Mahâsîn 189).15

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13 Cf. al-Qalqâlî, Nihâyâ 20-21; as-Samâ'î, Ansâb I, 28; Ibn Qutayba, Fadd 108; Ibn 'Abdalbarâ'î, Inshâb 45; Ibn Durayd, Istiqâq 14; Abu 'Ubayda, Ayyâm 582. True enough that mediæval dictionaries like the Lisân al-carab must obviously have involved little more than尼斯 charities, and is supplemented anyway by 3 Asmâ' almost back to Adam!'(Abû cUbayda, Dâr al-qurra' fi nasabibi ila gaddihi l-akbar), and 'belonging' in a variety of senses (by ancestry, by dwelling-place, by common language, etc.) (Ibn Manzûr, Lisân VI, 4405). Ibn Sida, having mentioned 'kinship (nisab, nasab, nasab) for they know the ancestors (istâb âd al-musulûn l-macam wa-ida l-mawaddatu aqrabu l-ansabî)'.

14 For a different version, cf. as-Samâ'î, Ansâb I, 22.

15 We find a similar figurative usage of *nasab* in a line by a celebrated poet of the Abbasid epoch, al-'Attabî: 'But kinship is of no avail after an angry split, for amity is the closest of kinship ties!' (fa-inna n-nakabatu la-tamaddalati qadârâna l-umumadillatu agaba l-nasabî).
are not unlike the early qussās, popular story-tellers. The wisdom expected of a Bedouin tribesman regarded as a nassab might apparently include even predictions for the future.

The emergence of Arabic genealogy as a genuine discipline cultivated by learned urban scholars, and, later, its spectacular success in becoming a firm part of Arabic and Muslim popular culture, are topics that I cannot discuss here. A lengthy analysis of the later career of the term nassab in various Muslim societies, Arab and non-Arab alike, would be beyond the scope of this paper as well. Let it suffice to say that while the acquired and now all too familiar meaning 'genealogy', 'pedigree' or 'family tree' has never ceased to dominate the popular interpretation of this concept, there seems to have been an ongoing use of the term in a highly varied and ill-defined sense alongside the technical one, which is especially true of non-Arab Islamic communities, in which the meaning of nassab, implicitly, often approximates 'kinship', 'ancestry' or simply 'identity', in spite of the characteristic efforts of many groups to procure prestigious if totally baseless Arabic pedigrees. The continuing use of nassab in both an ill-defined and a highly technical sense has remained an abundant source of misconstructions and false theorizing among scholars. Just how confused, and consistently wrong - conclusions about the origins and social function of genealogy among Arabs on the basis of this indiscriminate linguistic usage.

Having suggested a possible course of the development of nassab from being a commonly used and rather vague linguistic item into the position of a full-fledged term in the terminology of Islamic scholarship, I feel it important to note that this semantic development is far from unique in Arabic, as we know of a great many terms that, originally having been rather unspecified items of Bedouin vocabulary, ended up in a similar manner as veritable termini technici. It must be added that many of these terms gave rise to similar misinterpretations on the part of the mediæval Muslim scholars, whom we instinctively project their usual, specialized understanding of the term back into the past and make false assumptions accordingly. Instances of such a failure to grasp the realities of semantic change include words like rawîi, or qussās.

To take qussās as an example, mediæval Arabic authors do not seem to be bothered at all to distinguish between a quss as early Islam and another of the Abbâsid era, obviously perceiving this métier to have remained essentially the same throughout its career, albeit gradually sinking in esteem for various reasons. The fact that it originally had not been a regular métier at all but a casual activity open to virtually anyone who was alien to their mechanical understanding of the term. Interestingly, Ibn Haldūn, whose mistaken views on nassab I have already pointed to, was apparently not unaware of historical changes in semantics in some cases, which is well demonstrated by his valuable observations on the modifications in the connotations of words like qâdi or mu'allim. As I have argued, the implications arising from the mechanical misinterpretation of early nassab as 'genealogy' are distortedly yet have continued to help fuel far-reaching anthropological hypotheses on nomadic lineage societies.

The issue of nassab, as I hope to have made clear, is not a matter of merely linguistic significance having no further consequences, because interpreting nassab as 'genealogy' has had a profound impact on our understanding of traditional Muslim society. Genealogy, that is, an elementary tool to link any group to every other one, an 'organizing principle' of society - is traditionally understood, and often expressly stated, to have been a distinguishing feature of nomadic Arab culture, a contribution of the pre-Islamic Arabian society to the sophisticated culture of mediæval Islam. In other words, we are usually told that in the elaborate science of genealogy (ilm an-nassab) we are to recognize a more refined version of a pre-Islamic nomadic tradition that was already an inherent part of the culture of pre-Islamic Arabs, a 'proto-science' as it were. Whereas no one would seriously consider the use of the term hadīt in an early Bedouin context as evidence of the germs of hadīt scholarship amongst Bedouins, a very similar anachronism concerning nassab is still given credit by many. As I have argued, the roots of ilm an-nassab are to be sought anywhere but in pre-Islamic Bedouin society, and the word nassab seems to have originally expressed a concept fundamentally different from that it has come to signify.

APPENDIX

1 (al-Isfahāni, Āgānī XX, 173):

وحدثنا الفتح غلام أبي تمام الطائي {نافع سألت مولاي أبا تمام عن نسب دعيل فقال هو دعيل بن علي الذي يقول ضحك المشهود، برأسه فيكي...}

17 To get a glimpse into what kind of stories the repertoire of the early qussas contained, cf. the stories told by 'Abid b. Ṣariya to the caliph Mu'awiya about the ancient Arabian races; see Ibn Ḥišâm, Tāj al-Dīn 325-328.

18 The renowned Bedouin nassab Ḍagal as-Sadūsī was asked by a man concerning the time the latter was going to die. The nassab, however, would not undertake to answer such a query. See Ibn an-Nasāʾī, Fihrist 1, 89.

19 On the issue of the influence of literacy and its attendant cultural patterns on ostensibly non-literate and highly 'traditional' societies (as Bedouins have tended to get portrayed), cf. Goody 1975:1, 4-5; Finnegun 1974:53.

20 I have discussed this observation at length in my unpublished PhD thesis, titled Arabic Genealogy Between Muslim Scholarship and Popular Culture.

21 The issue of hadīt is by now too well known to need much comment. On the varying implications of rawī, cf. Zwettler 1978:85-88; as-Salqâni 1977:72, 90.

22 Cf. the names listed in Ibn al-Gawzi, Qussās.
are not unlike the early qussás, popular story-tellers\textsuperscript{17}. The wisdom expected of a Bedouin tribesman regarded as a nasab might apparently include even predictions for the future\textsuperscript{18}. The emergence of Arabic genealogy as a genuine discipline cultivated by learned urban scholars, and, later, its spectacular success in becoming a firm part of Arabic and Muslim popular culture, are topics that I cannot discuss here\textsuperscript{19}. A lengthy analysis of the later career of the term nasab in various Muslim societies, Arab and non-Arab alike, would be beyond the scope of this paper as well. Let it suffice to say that while the acquired and now all too familiar meaning 'genealogy', 'pedigree' or 'family tree' has never ceased to dominate the popular interpretation of this concept, there seems to have been an ongoing use of the term in a highly varied and ill-defined sense alongside the technical one, which is especially true of non-Arab Islamic communities, in which the meaning of nasab, implicitly, often approximates 'kinship', 'origins' or simply 'identity', in spite of the characteristic efforts of many groups to procure prestigious if totally baseless Arabic pedigrees. The continuing use of nasab in both an ill-defined and a highly technical sense has remained an abundant source of misconstructions and false theorizing among scholars. Just how confused, and confusing, the use of nasab may be even in written scholarly texts is demonstrated by the Muqaddima of Ibn Haldün, who was wont to use the word nasab for 'kinship', 'descent', and 'genealogy' alike, and would then draw far-reaching – and, it must be said, thoroughly wrong – conclusions about the origins and social function of genealogy among Arabs on the basis of this indiscriminate linguistic usage\textsuperscript{20}.

Having suggested a possible course of the development of nasab from being a commonly used and rather vague linguistic item into the position of a full-fledged terminus technicus of Islamic scholarship, I feel it important to note that this semantic development is far from unique in Arabic, as we know of a great many terms that, having originally been rather unspecified items of Bedouin vocabulary, ended up in a similar manner as veritable termini technici. It must be added that many of these terms gave rise to similar misinterpretations on the part of the mediaeval Muslim scholars who would instinctively project their usual, specialized understanding of the term back into the past and make false assumptions accordingly. Instances of such a failure to grasp the realities of semantic change include words like rawi, or qussás\textsuperscript{21}.

To take qussás as an example, mediaeval Arabic authors do not seem to be bothered at all to distinguish between a qussás of early Islam and another of the Abbasid era, obviously perceiving this métier to have remained essentially the same throughout its career, albeit gradually sinking in esteem for various reasons. The fact that it originally had not been a regular métier at all but a casual activity open to virtually anyone alien to their mechanical understanding of the term\textsuperscript{22}. Interestingly, Ibn Haldün, whose mistaken views on nasab I have already pointed to, was apparently not unaware of historical changes in semantics in some cases, which is well demonstrated by his valuable observations on the modifications in the connotations of words like qādi or mu'allim. As I have argued, the implications arising from the mechanical mis-translation of early nasab as 'genealogy' are absolutely distorted yet have continued to help fuel far-reaching anthropological hypotheses on nomadic lineage societies.

The issue of nasab, as I hope to have made clear, is not a matter of merely linguistic significance having no further consequences, because interpreting nasab as 'genealogy' has had a profound impact on our understanding of traditional Bedouin society. Genealogy – that is, an elementary tool to link any group to every other one, an 'organizing principle' of society – is traditionally thought, and often expressly stated, to have been a distinguishing feature of nomadic Arab culture, a contribution of the pre-Islamic Arabian society to the sophisticated culture of mediaeval Islam. In other words, we are usually told that in the elaborate science of genealogy (ilm an-nasab) we are to recognize a more refined version of a pre-Islamic nomadic tradition that was already an inherent part of the culture of pre-Islamic Arabs, a 'proto-science' as it were. Whereas no one would seriously consider the use of the term hadīt in an early Bedouin context as evidence of the germs of hadīt scholarship amongst Bedouins, a very similar anachronism concerning nasab is still given credit by many. As I have argued, the roots of ilm an-nasab are to be sought anywhere but in pre-Islamic Bedouin society, and the word nasab seems to have originally expressed a concept fundamentally different from that it has come to signify.

\textbf{APPENDIX}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17} To get a glimpse into what kind of stories the repertoire of the early qussás contained, cf. the stories told by ‘Abid b. Šariya to the caliph Mu'awiya about the ancient Arabian races; see Ibn Hīšām, Tājhīb 325-328.
  \item \textsuperscript{18} The renowned Bedouin nasab Dağfál as-Sadūsī was asked by a man concerning the time the latter was going to die. The nasab, however, would not undertake to answer such a query. See Ibn an-Nasabī, Fihrist 1, 89.
  \item \textsuperscript{19} On the issue of the influence of literacy and its attendant cultural patterns on ostensibly non-literate and highly 'traditional' societies (as Bedouins have tended to get portrayed), cf. Goody 1975:1, 4-5; Finnegam 1974:53.
  \item \textsuperscript{20} I have discussed this observation at length in my unpublished PhD thesis, titled Arabic Genealogy Between Muslim Scholarship and Popular Culture.
  \item \textsuperscript{21} The issue of hadīt is by now too well known to need much comment. On the varying implications of rawi, cf. Zwettler 1978:85-88; as-Salqānī 1977-72, 90.
  \item \textsuperscript{22} Cf. the names listed in Ibn al-Gawzi, Qussás.
This was narrated to me by al-Fath, the servant-boy of Abū Tammâm at-Tā'ī: ‘I asked my master Abū Tammâm about the nasab of Dīrīl [al-Huzārī], and he told me that he had been Dīrīl b. ‘Ali, the author of [the well-known line of poetry]: ‘With all the greyness on his head laughing, he could not but weep.’

2 (Ibn Qutayba, Şīr 111):

hand the nasab of him to the very best of the ‘Abś tribe, while I protect the other half of it – that is his nasab among the Black Africans – ‘with my sword’.

3 (al-İsfahānī, Agānī IV, 4):

Kaysān’s ancestor had been orphaned as a small child and was brought up by some of his relatives from the Banū ‘Abs, Ḍīqān tribe. Now, he and a group of children from that area got captured by Ḥālid [b. al-Walīd], who sent them to Abū Bakr. On reaching him, […] the children were interrogated by Abū Bakr about their respective nasabs, every child telling him as much as he knew. He finally asked Kaysān, who informed him that he was from the ‘Anaza tribe…

4 (Abū ‘Ubayda, Ayyām 274-275):

Then the Banī ‘Abī tribe packed up and left the [territory of] the Banī ‘Amīr [of that of] the Banī Taglīb, to whom they sent a message requesting that a delegation [from the Taglīb] be sent to meet them. And the Taglībites did send fourteen horsemen, among whom was Ibn al-Hīm at-Taglībī, the killer of Abī Hārīt b. Zālim. The Taglībites were quite glad [to meet them], and when the delegation reached the Banī ‘Abī tribe, Qays asked them: ‘Please tell us your nasabs, so that we could know you.’ Thereupon they gave their respective nasabs. When it was Ibn al-Hīm’s turn, he said: ‘I am Ibn al-Hīm.

5 (al-Maqdisī, İstibsär 66-67):

The following is narrated from ar-Rubayya’s ‘Asmā’ bt. Muĥarriba used to peddle perfumes in Medina […]. One day, she came to my house, carrying her perfumes, and asked me [who I was]. I told her my nasab, to which she reacted thus: ‘You are…

then, the daughter of him who murdered his master’, alluding to Abū Gahl. I replied: ‘I would rather say I am the daughter of him who murdered his slave!’

6 (al-Ibṣīḥī, Mustatrāf 29):

There is a story that a man delivered an impeccably composed speech in front of [the caliph] al-Ma‘mūn. The latter asked him whose son he was, and he replied: ‘I am the son of erudition (adab), oh Commander of the Faithful.’ [al-Ma‘mūn] said: ‘What a splendid nasab you have given yourself!’

7 (Qurān, 23:101):

When the trumpet is blown, that day shall be no nasabs [to connect anyone to anyone], and no one shall ask about anyone else.

8 (al-İsfahānī, Agānī I, 353-354):

A man who is deeply in love only loses his senses if his nasab links him to the ‘Udra tribe; so what on earth do you have to do with all this?!

9 (al-İsfahānī, Agānī I, 308-309):

This was narrated to me by Ishaq b. Ya‘qūb al-Uṭmānī, a client of the lineage of ‘Uṭmān [b. ‘Affān], on the authority of his father: […] on one of the pilgrimage days, I was sitting somewhere when, all of a sudden, there appeared a man on a riding-camel to which a horse and a mule were tied with a rope. They stopped before me, inquiring [who I was], and I gave my nasab as a descendant of ‘Uṭmān.

10 (al-İsfahānī, Agānī II, 307):

On an evening, when I was sitting on the roadside together with Ibn Māyāda, suddenly two camel-riders appeared trotting towards us. Reaching us, I saw that one of them was ‘Windy Sea’, which is the nickname of ‘Uṭmān b. ‘Amr b. ‘Uṭmān b. ‘Affān; while the other was a client of his. He asked about our nasabs and told us his own…
This was narrated to me by al-Fath, the servant-boy of Abū Tammām at-Ta‘ī: ‘I asked my master Abū Tammām about the nasab of Dībil [al-Huṣān], and he told me that he had been Dībil b. ‘Ali, the author of [the well-known line of poetry]: “With all the greyness on his head, he could not but weep”.

2 (Ibn Qutayba, Šīr 111):

[‘Antara b. Saddad] means [by the previously cited line of his poem]: ‘half of my nasab connects me to the very best of the Banu ‘Abs tribe, while I protect the other half of it’ – that is his nasab among the Black Africans – ‘with my sword...’

3 (Al-Isfahānī, Agānī IV, 4):

Kaysan – their ancestor – had been orphaned as a small child and was brought up by some of his relatives from the Banu ‘Abs while he was quite glad [to meet] them; and when the delegation reached their territory, the children were interrogated by Abu Bakr about their respective nasabs, every child telling him as much as he knew. He finally asked Kaysan, who informed him that he was from the ‘Anza tribe...

4 (Abū ‘Ubayda, Ayyām 274-275):

Then the Banū ‘Ab tribe packed up and left the [territory of] the Banū ‘Amr for [that of] the Banū Taglīb, to whom they sent a message requesting that a delegation [from the Taglīb] be sent to meet them. And the Taglībites did send eighteen horsemen, among whom was Ibrāhīm b. Ḥisn al-Ḥārī b. Zālīm. The Taglībites were quite glad [to meet them]; and when the delegation reached the Banū ‘Ab tribe, Qays asked them: ‘Please tell us your nasabs, so that we could know you.’ Thereupon they gave their respective nasabs. When it was Ibrāhīm b. Ḥisn’s turn, he said: ‘I am Ibn al-Ḥisn.’

5 (Al-Maqdisī, Istibsār 66-67):

[Al-Maqdisī, Istibsār 66-67]:

Then the trumpet is blown, that day shall be no nasab [to connect anyone to anyone]; and no one shall ask about anyone else.

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There is a story that a man delivered an impeccably composed speech in front of [the caliph] al-Ma’mūn. The latter asked him whose son he was, and he replied: ‘I am the son of erudition (adab), oh Commander of the Faithful.’ [al-Ma’mūn] said: ‘What a splendid nasab you have given yourself!’

7 (Qurān, 23:101):

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Then the trumpet is blown, that day shall be no nasab [to connect anyone to anyone]; and no one shall ask about anyone else.

9 (Al-Isfahānī, Agānī I, 308-309):

Then the trumpet is blown, that day shall be no nasab [to connect anyone to anyone]; and no one shall ask about anyone else.

10 (Al-Isfahānī, Agānī II, 307):

Of an evening, when I was sitting on the roadside together with Ibn Mayyāda, suddenly two camel-riders appeared trotting towards us. Reaching us, [I saw that] one of them was ‘Windy Sea’, which is the nickname of ‘Uṭmān b. ‘Amr b. ‘Uṭmān b. ‘Affān; while the other was a client of his. He asked about our nasabs and told us his own...
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11 (al-Ibšihi, Mustatraf 519):

...and a certain woman whom he wished to marry. When I asked, "My cousin, does she have a short or a long nasab?", he apparently did not understand my meaning. Therefore I clarified: "Oh my cousin, a woman's having a short nasab means that if she remembers a mere couple of days of the past, she is perfectly content with it; whilst one's having a long nasab means that you cannot identify her unless you cite a whole long nasab for her. Beware, then, of associating yourself with a lot who, albeit possessing all manner of worldly riches, are nevertheless of a despicable kind, for you are in danger of losing your nasab among such people."

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11 (al-İbšîhi, Mustatraf 519):

Dwarka the most prominent among Jews is a man named Aziz, who has a long nose, a long mouth, and a long beard. He is very handsome, but he is not a real Jew. He is of mixed race.

al-Asma'i narrates the following: 'A man from the Qurayy tribe came to me, inquiring about a certain woman whom he wished to marry. When I asked, "My cousin, does she have a short or a long nasab?" he apparently did not understand my meaning. Therefore I clarified: "Oh my cousin, a woman's having a short nasab means that you cannot identify her unless you cite a whole long nasab for her. Beware, then, of associating yourself with a lot who, albeit possessing all manner of worldly riches, are nevertheless of a despicable kind, for her. Beware, then, of associating yourself with a lot who, albeit possessing all manner of worldly riches, are nevertheless of a despicable kind, for you are in danger of losing your nasab among such people..."

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Casanova, 1911-13:21 sq.): “carîb dî gûnûs (Apoc.1:3) – kârîbîs dont les signes prémonitoires se révèlent dans la nécessité et la tribulation (êk tîs ûlîjêwûs tîs mejâhûls, Apoc. 7:14) – le Prophète annonce que "l’heure approche et la lune se fend" (S 54:1). Avec Blachère nous interprétons les prédictions aqtarabat et inşaqqâ comme des parfaits proleptiques, bien que le sens en reste fort discuté, même chez les musulmans d’aujourd’hui.

Bien que l’on ait remarqué à juste titre que le Prophète développe au début de sa mission d’autres thèmes que la parousie, comme celui du Créateur tout puissant, il reste que la question de la parousie a été près de toute sa pensée: "est-il un esclavage que qui a pas de raison est désespéré".

L’élément provocateur de la thèse de Casanova réside surtout dans le fait que, d’une manière ou d’une autre, le Prophète aurait cru que la fin du monde aurait lieu avant la parousie. Pour cette raison, le Prophète n’aurait jamais ressenti la nécessité de mettre sa prophétie par écrit — de même qu’il ne semble pas avoir déduit le problème de sa successon, puisque à ses yeux la destinée de sa