العصور الوسطى

IN THIS ISSUE

Dear Colleagues,

You have before you the latest issue of *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā*. I wish to thank the MEM board members and, in particular, Antoine Borrut, for the hard work that goes into the production of this publication. There are three questions regarding the future of *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā*, and, indeed, Middle East Medievalists, that I want to address here, and all of us on the MEM board of directors would be eager to hear back from you regarding these questions.

First, in order to assure the viability and quality of our publication, it is essential that all of you provide us with original material, from full-length research articles to scholarly communications to book reviews. *Al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* provides a unique venue with which you can engage

your colleagues in the field but we rely on all of you to participate in this fashion. For our part, we can promise a close and timely response to your work as well as careful editing. We are also in discussion over the option of moving to a peer review system, and this leads me to my second point.

The MEM board, as we made clear at the MESA meeting in New Orleans in October (2013), has taken a set of new initiatives regarding *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā*, including the adoption of peer reviews and the transition to an online format. MEM's website has been also completely redesigned as well as our database. Our new website will be hosted by The Islamic Commons, a new online, collaborative site launched last year by Maxim Romanov, Chase Robinson and colleagues at the CUNY Graduate Center. In our view, there are important reasons to consolidate our efforts with this new site. This involve, for example, transforming *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* into an online publication, accessible through the web site, with new features including greater interaction with and by our members. We believe that such a move would not compromise either the autonomy or mission of MEM, but, rather, provide us with an exciting new venue for the activities of our organization. I will keep you up to date on these initiatives as they develop, and, again, I would urge you to communicate to us your thoughts.

Finally, I would like to urge all of you, as members of MEM and active scholars in the fields of Middle East and Islamic studies, to keep us up to date on your activities and publications (reviews, articles, exhibits, conferences, new books and so on). Be sure to send announcements to us and we will endeavor to pass on that information to our full membership. We are convinced that *al-ʿUṣūr al-Wusṭā* plays a valuable role for all of you as both scholars and educators, and it is our intent to only enhance that role in the future. We can be assured of such progress with your full participation.

With very best wishes for the New Year,

Matthew S. Gordon
President, Middle East Medievalists

MEM CONGRATULATES 2012 AWARDEES:

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

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Did the Crusades Change Jerusalem's Religious Symbolism in Islam?

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The Dome of the Rock, Jerusalem, 2011. Photograph by Suleiman A. Mourad.

The *Faḍāʾil* ("religious merits") literature on Jerusalem extols the city's religious symbolism and sanctity from the Muslim perspective. This literature was popular especially in Palestine in early Islam, and two books from the period before the Crusades have survived. They both date to the fifth/eleventh century: *Faḍāʾil al-Bayt al-Muqaddas* by Abū Bakr al-Wāsiṭī (d. after 410/1019 CE), who was the *khaṭīb* (preacher) of the Aqṣā Mosque, and *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis wa-l-Khalīl wa-faḍāʾil al-Shām* by Abū al-Maʿālī Ibn al-Murajjā (d. after 438/1047), who was a Hadith scholar from Jerusalem. There were certainly other works that predate the Crusades, but none are extant except as excerpted in later works. One in particular deserves mention: *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis* by al-Walīd b. Ḥammād al-Ramlī (d. 912 CE). Written in the late third/ninth century, it is the principal source from which both al-Wāsiṭī and Ibn al-Murajjā lifted the majority of their accounts. Most important for our purposes is that almost all later books on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem were either based on al-Ramlī's *Faḍāʾil* directly or indirectly via those of Wāsiṭī and Ibn al-Murajjā.

The main feature of the books from the period before the Crusades is that the sacredness of Jerusalem in Islam takes its foundational narrative from the "fact" that God's Temple (built by Solomon) stood there, and that the Temple and its sanctuary (*al-Ḥaram*) not only personified God, but also symbolized the divine attention and love that God has shown to Jerusalem and the world. Hence, these works start with the biblical events that supposedly unfolded in Jerusalem, commencing with the erection of the Temple, and then tying a variety of creation and biblical episodes to the site and the city. In other words, al-Ramlī, al-Wāsiṭī and Ibn al-Murajjā begin with the building of the Temple in order to illustrate, in what follows in their respective works, why Jerusalem should be the site of the Temple's construction: it is the location of the Rock (*Ṣakhra*) where Abraham brought his son Isaac to sacrifice him; the location of God's throne on earth; the point from which God ascended to Heaven after he finished the business of creation; the well-spring of all the rivers of the world; and so on.

Obviously, the authors of the early *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem works were also eager to demonstrate that divine attention and love for Jerusalem never ceased. Hence

they address the association of Mary and Jesus with the Temple and Jerusalem, and obviously Muhammad's legendary Night Journey (*al-Isrāʾ*) and Ascension (*al-Miʿrāj*) to Heaven (although one has to say that, in the early Islamic period, the Night Journey and Ascension were not noted as the reasons for the Muslims' veneration of Jerusalem). They also cover the Islamic conquest of the city and ʿUmar I's visit, as well as the future events to occur in and around Jerusalem in the context of Judgment Day taking place there. This last aspect is especially interesting given the popular myth (which persists even until today) that the holy city is surrounded on its eastern side by the Valley of Judgment (Kidron Valley or Valley of Jehoshaphat) that leads to Heaven, and on its southern side by the Valley of Gehinnom that leads to Hell. The early *Faḍāʾil* literature also considers the rewards that the Muslims receive for journeying to Jerusalem and praying there.

It is important to note that all the books on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem that date to the period before the Crusades were authored by average scholars who were natives or long-time residents of Jerusalem or the surrounding area. Furthermore, the works were circulated in Jerusalem for the purpose of religious tourism: to encourage pilgrimage and to cater to pilgrims' desire for information about sites to visit and proper rituals to perform at each site (Ibn al-Murajjā's work even provides a pilgrimage itinerary).

Having said this, some of the accounts on Jerusalem's *Faḍāʾil* were known elsewhere in the Muslim world, especially in Syria. But as far as we can tell, we do not have books authored elsewhere that engage the sacredness of Jerusalem.

The Faḍāʾil *of Jerusalem during the Crusader Period: What Changed?*

One might argue that the fall of Jerusalem to the Crusades in 492/1099 fueled the interest in the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem and the authoring of works on the topic. But this does not seem to have been the case on any significant level until much later in the sixth/twelfth century. Nūr al-Dīn's effort to place Jerusalem at the center of his counter-Crusade propaganda must have been accompanied with some preaching on the merits of Jerusalem. But we still lack a clear picture as to the precise nature of this propaganda conducted under him (e.g., the works that were used or authored, and the scholars involved).

Clear documentary evidence regarding a widespread transmission of the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem literature points to the reign of Saladin, with preaching and new books on the topic by Damascene scholars. For instance, the Hadith scholar Aḥmad b. Ḥamza al-Sulamī preached al-Wāsiṭī's *Faḍāʾil* in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus in the month of Rajab 583 (6 September to 5 October 1187). But we cannot tell if this occurred during Saladin's siege of Jerusalem, which lasted from 15 to 26 Rajab (20 September to 1 October), or after he liberated it on 27 Rajab 583 (2 October 1187). In other words, we cannot affirm if the preaching was meant to build up support for the liberation of Jerusalem, or to celebrate its capture.

There are also two short treatises by al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 600/1203), the son of the celebrated Ibn ʿAsākir (d. 571/1176). They are entitled *Faḍl al-Masjid al-Aqṣā wa-bināʾih* and *al-Mustaqṣā fī ziyārat al-Masjid al-Aqṣā*. We cannot know the exact dates when al-Qāsim authored them, though the likely scenario points to the reign of Saladin when he replaced his father as chair of Hadith at *Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīya* (Nūr al-Dīn's School of Hadith). One can surmise that they were not unrelated to Saladin's campaign to capture Jerusalem. Moreover, we do know that al-Qāsim preached the *Faḍāʾil* of al-Wāsiṭī, most likely during Saladin's reign.

There are, as well, examples of preaching on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem and the authoring of books that date later in the Ayyubid period, such as *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis* by Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī (d. 643/1245). But, here, we have a complicated set of motivations for the dissemination of the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem literature. For instance, at the request of al-

The Aqsa Mosque, Jerusalem, 2011. Photograph by Suleiman A. Mourad

Nāṣir Dāwūd, Sibṭ Ibn al-Jawzī preached on the merits of Jerusalem in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus in Spring 626/1229. The pretext for al-Nāṣir Dāwūd was to condemn the treaty that his uncle, the Ayyubid sultan al-Kāmil, had signed with Frederick II to turn over Jerusalem to him in Rabīʿ I 626/ February 1229. One might think that the preaching was meant as a protest against the Crusaders' recapture of Jerusalem, which was liberated a few decades earlier by Saladin. But the real issue was the fact that al-Kāmil's army was advancing against Damascus to take the city out of al-Nāṣir's control. In this respect, the preaching of the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem was al-Nāṣir's way to point to the Damascenes the failing of his uncle al-Kāmil in protecting Jerusalem and thus his unsuitability as sultan.

In what ways do the new compilations, and even preachings, on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem during the time of Saladin and his Ayyubid successors differ from those from the period before the Crusades? In what follows I will focus on the works of al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAsākir and Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī and share some preliminary findings. In *Faḍl al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* and *al-Mustaqṣā*, al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAsākir relies heavily on al-Wāsiṭī's *Faḍāʾil*, which he had received an *ijāza* to transmit in Rajab 541/ January 1147 in Damascus from a minor Hadith scholar named Naṣr b. Aḥmad al-Sūsī (d. 548/1153). *Faḍl al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* (interestingly al-Qāsim used the expression *al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* to refer to the Dome of the Rock) is a short treatise and follows the same approach as the works that date to the period before the Crusades. It starts with the accounts on the building of the Temple under David and Solomon, then Muhammad's Night Journey, the religious merits of the Rock, and finally the building of the Dome of the Rock by ʿAbd al-Malik. In this way, al-Qāsim anchors the sacredness of Jerusalem in the biblical tradition. *Al-Mustaqṣā* is also a short treatise and similar to *Faḍl al-Masjid al-Aqṣā* except that it includes additional narratives regarding the religious merits of the tombs of David and Solomon, Jesus's *mahd* (birth-place), Mary's *miḥrāb* (prayer niche/place of

annunciation of Jesus), Mary's tomb in the Kidron Valley, Jesus's burial spot and the site of his resurrection, the Mount of Olives, and the Spring of Salwān. Accordingly, the biblical aspect was integral to al-Qāsim's conceptualization and presentation of the sacredness of Jerusalem in Islam.

Al-Qāsim was a Shāfiʿī scholar, and following the death of his father Ibn ʿAsākir, as noted earlier, he was appointed to the chair of Hadith at *Dār al-Ḥadīth al-Nūrīya*. His two short treatises on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem became very popular and were excerpted in influential works such as Ibn al-Firkāḥ's (d. 729/1329) *Kitāb Bāʿith al-nufūs ilā ziyārat al-Quds al-maḥrūs*.

Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī's *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis* is also a short work. But in it, we encounter a new attitude regarding Jerusalem's sanctity that eliminates the biblical sacred history and focuses instead on what we can describe as exclusively "Islamic" narratives. Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn presents the city's holiness as deriving from particular references to it in the Qurʾan and from episodes in the life of Muhammad. That is, he very selectively chose hadiths and Qurʾanic exegesis from earlier *Faḍāʾil* works and ignored the rest. Another theme that is emphasized in Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn's treatise is the apocalypse: how Jesus will descend in Jerusalem to kill the Antichrist, how creation will be rushed to Jerusalem for the Day of Judgment, how Mecca and Medina will be brought to Jerusalem at that time, etc. The circumstances of this apocalyptic age as it relates to Jerusalem are already encountered in the *Faḍāʾil* works of al-Ramlī, al-Wāsiṭī and Ibn al-Murajjā, and in such texts as Nuʿaym b. Ḥammād's *Kitāb al-Fitan* and Hadith literature. In fact, we know that Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn was very well aware of al-Wāsiṭī's *Faḍāʾil*, as he had two *ijāza*s to transmit it. Whereas Jerusalem's apocalyptic role was downplayed in pre-Crusades *Faḍāʾil* books, Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn gives it much more visibility and significance by his exclusion of the ancient Israelite biblical dimension.

Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn was a notable Ḥanbalī scholar from Damascus, whose family came to the city in the 560s/1160s from the village of Jammāʿīl near Nablus (hence they became known in Damascus as the Jammāʿīlīs). His approach to the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem became well established and disseminated in Ḥanbalī circles, as attested by the more than 60 cases of transmission of his *Faḍāʾil* in Ḥanbalī centers in Damascus (28 of which occurred between 632/1235 and 686/1287). One might argue that the popularity of Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn's position among Ḥanbalīs is the school's exclusive emphasis on Qurʾan and Sunna, which meant that for Jerusalem's sanctity to be acceptable, it could only derive from the sources of the Islamic religion. Thus, the biblical dimension had to be dismissed because it does not originate from either the Qurʾan or Hadith; the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem that discuss the biblical dimension are traced to Muslim scholars and not to Muhammad, and obviously not to the Qurʾan. (One should note that there was a different Ḥanbalī position in Baghdad that maintained the classical focus with respect to Jerusalem's religious merits and its foundation in the biblical tradition. Examples of this include Abū al-Ḥusayn Ibn al-Farrāʾ (d. 526/1131), who was very active in the preaching and transmission of al-Wāsiṭī's *Faḍāʾil*, and Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597/1201) who authored *Faḍāʾil Bayt al-Maqdis*.)

Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-Ḥanbalī's excision of biblical material in his *Faḍāʾil* also helps us understand and contextualize the views of Ibn Taymīya (d. 1328). Since the Ḥanbalī circles in late thirteenth-century Damascus that shaped Ibn Taymīya's intellectual and religious formation had already excised Jerusalem's biblical dimension as un-Islamic (obviously I mean here the literature and not the personalities), it should come as no surprise that this Islamized vision of Jerusalem became more dominant in wider Ḥanbalī circles due to Ibn Taymīya's adopting it and, in view of his popularity, giving it a lasting legitimacy. We see this most explicitly in his *Qāʿida fī ziyārat Bayt al-Maqdis*, where Ibn Taymīya condemns the

Floor tiles, Richard and Saladin, 13th c., Chertsey, England. British Museum, Wikimedia Commons.

"excessive" and "unorthodox" customs and rituals conducted by Muslims in association with biblical sites and figures in and around Jerusalem.

Conclusion

There are four major concluding remarks regarding the transmission of *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem literature and works in Damascus during the period of the Crusades, and thus the lasting impact of the Crusades on this particular type of religious literature and on the perception of Jerusalem's sacredness in Islam.

First, the narratives and works that were transmitted and authored during the period of the Crusades were largely done by scholars who were not living in Jerusalem (and most of them had no relation to the city in the first place). This represents a reversal, as before the Crusades, the works and the majority of the narratives were circulated by residents of Jerusalem and its neighboring towns.

Second, major scholars, especially of Hadith, became involved in the transmission of literature and authorship of books on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem. This is also a reversal in that the authors of the works and transmitters of the *Faḍāʾil* narratives before the Crusades were average Hadith scholars. In this respect, these later important scholars of Hadith not only elevated the status of the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem literature, but also gave the relevant works and narratives a wider exposure and circulation, and by extension a more lasting public impact.

Third, the works that were authored during the Ayyubid period were short treatises, as contrasted to the works from the period prior to the Crusades. This leads me to argue that they were principally produced for the purpose of religious preaching and propaganda. In other words, the dissemination of the literature on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem was intended to create and sustain a public impulse for the liberation and protection of Jerusalem (although this was not generated directly as a result of the Crusaders' capture of the city, but rather as part of the orchestrated efforts of Nūr al-Dīn and Saladin). And, at times, it was also employed in the intricacies of internal rivalries among the Ayyubids.

Fourth, we see the emergence of two main trends regarding the perception of the sacredness of Jerusalem in Islam: the Shāfiʿī trend is exhibited in the works of al-Qāsim Ibn ʿAsākir and later Shāfiʿī scholars such as Ibn al-Firkāḥ. They incorporated the biblical dimension not only as necessary but as foundational for a proper understanding of the sacredness of Jerusalem in Islam. The Hanbalī trend is reflected in the approach of Ḍiyāʾ al-Dīn al-

Ḥanbalī, and later Ibn Taymīya, which dismisses the biblical dimension and replaces it with a strict focus on the city's association with the Qurʾan, episodes from the life of Muhammad that were deemed acceptable on "orthodox" grounds, and the Events of Judgment Day.

* This paper is part of an ongoing project on the *Faḍāʾil* of Jerusalem (the research on the paper was facilitated by a grant from the Sam's Fund of the Kahn Institute for Liberal Arts at Smith College). It was written during my fellowship at the Institut d'Études Avancées de Nantes, France (2012-2013), and presented at MESA (Denver) in November 2012. I want to thank James E. Lindsay for his valuable comments.

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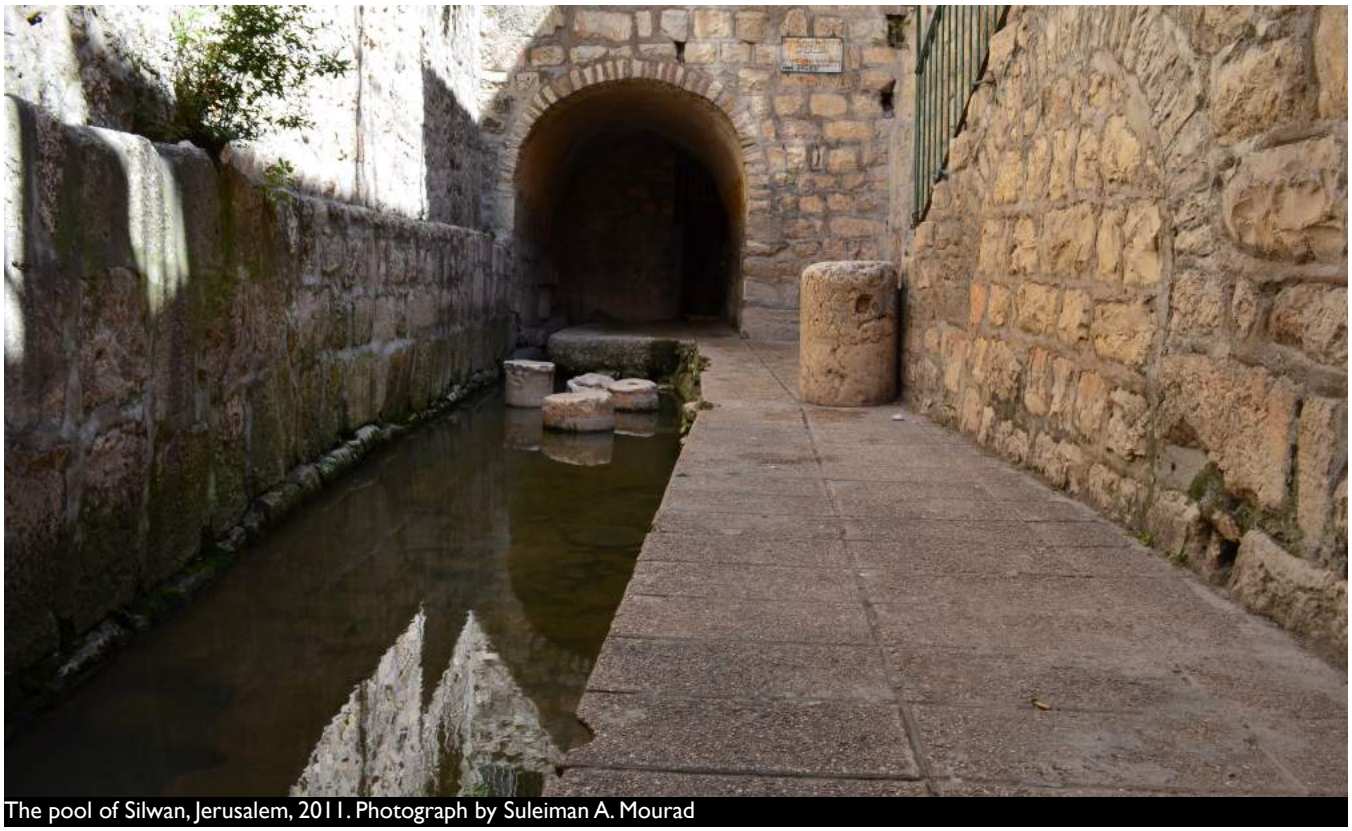

The pool of Silwan, Jerusalem, 2011. Photograph by Suleiman A. Mourad

Traditional *ard* cultivation in a highland Yemeni valley, 1978. Photograph by Daniel Martin Varisco

Turning Ploughshares into Words: Dialectical Diversity in Yemeni Arabic[1]

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"And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Isaiah 2:4

Beating swords into ploughshares has long been a prophetic hope, but the unending violence and uncivil strife in the Middle East today reminds us that swords still have the upper hand. I suspect that more young men today "learn war" than have an idea what to do with a "ploughshare." Real swords, at least those of museum quality, are wielded in the modern era on a Shakespearian stage or for sadist video beheadings, but real ploughshares still till the soil in parts of the shared "Biblical" world as a primary means of farming; this includes Yemen, where I first studied plough cultivation in the late 1970s. Not being a theologian or rabbinical nabob, I cannot comment on either the spiritual truth or practical application of Isaiah's dream. Even if the people in the region that religiously reveres the patriarch Abraham would have occasion to break a Saracen sword out of a museum exhibit, they would undoubtedly not smith a ploughshare out of it anymore. Not being a political scientist or a syndicated columnist, I will leave the sword talk for others, but rather offer a brief diversion for turning ploughshares into words.

To set the furrow straight from the start, my purpose is twofold: first, to discuss the progress of a life-long project to compile and annotate a comprehensive lexicon of Yemeni agricultural terms; second to entertain you as an unrepentant *adab*ist with tidbits of deliciously devised morphological morsels from the linguistic *muḥīṭ* (the ocean of words as al-Fīrūzābādī might call it) of Yemeni dialects. Generations in al-Yaman *al-khaḍrā'* (the Verdant Yemen, as al-Hamdānī phrased it over a millennium ago) have demonstrated a rich agricultural history, so it should not be surprising that there is a diverse range of vocabulary on agriculture and seasonal lore with dialectical variants and cognates stemming back into

earlier South Arabic languages and Hebrew.

Dialectical Diversity in Yemen

A word about Yemen's dialectical diversity, before excavating this substratum of phonemic import for panoptic reconstruction. There is, for example, no one "Yemeni" dialect, as anyone who travels around the country can readily determine. Fortunately, we have some lexical documentation, usually sporadic in detail, on Yemeni dialects of the distant past, although this is often linked to the generic pre-Islamic Ḥimyarī. There are also several major dictionaries compiled by scholars who knew Yemeni dialects firsthand: for example, the *Shams al-ʿulūm* of Nashwān ibn Saʿīd al-Ḥimyarī (d. 573/1177), the shorter *al-Qāmūs al-muḥīṭ* of al-Fīrūzābādī (d. 817/1414) and the massive *Tāj al-ʿarūs* of al-Zabīdī (d. 1205/1790). Occasionally there are specific references to Yemeni dialect terms in more general lexical works such as al-Ṣaghānī's (d. 650/1252) *Al-Takmila wa-al-dhayl*, Ibn Manẓūr's (d. 711/1311) *Lisān al-ʿArab*, and Ibn Sīda's (d. 458/1066) *al-Mukhaṣṣaṣ*.[2] Obviously, reconstructing a dialect no longer spoken is a far more difficult task than conducting linguistic analysis with living speakers. A number of scholars have contributed to our understanding of surviving Yemeni dialects, including Count Landberg (1901-13,1920-42) on the Ḥaḍramawt and Dathīna, Ettore Rossi (1939)[3] and Janet Watson (1993) on Ṣanʿānī, K. Nāmī (1948) on Taiz, Otto Jastrow (1983) on Jibla, Walter Diem (1973) and Peter Behnstedt (1985,1987,1992) on several northern regions, including Ṣaʿda.

Information on dialect terms can also be found from travelers, most notably the works of Eduard Glaser (see Behnstedt 1993), historians such as R. B. Serjeant and G. Rex Smith and anthropologists who conducted ethnographic research. There are also useful studies of the links between Yemeni Arabic and Yemeni Jewish dialects, a notable example being the work of Goitein (1934, 1960). Unfortunately, what would seem to be a valuable reference for contemporary Yemeni dialects, Moshe Piamenta's (1990-91) derivative *Dictionary of Post-Classical Yemeni Arabic,* is severely flawed and should be consulted with caution (see Varisco 1994a).

It is important to stress the contributions of Yemeni scholars who have analyzed or recorded their own dialectical terms. The largest published compilation is Muṭahhar al-Iryānī's (1996) *al-Muʿjam al-Yamanī fī al-lugha wa-al-turāth,* which provides annotation of a wide variety of dialect terms, including examples in proverbs and poetry. The major drawback to this valuable reference is the failure in most cases to identify the provenance of the meanings; nor does al-Iryānī spend much time tracing specific terms back to classical Arabic usage. There are a few sources available on specific Yemeni dialects, such as Zayd ʿInān's (1983) work on Ṣanʿānī. Several Yemenis have collected and annotated proverbs (e.g., al-Akwaʿ 1405/1984, al-Adīmī 1409/1989, al-ʿAmrī 2000 and al-Baraddūnī 1985) and traditional poetry.[4] For Yemeni agricultural and seasonal terms, the work of Yaḥyā al-ʿAnsī (1998) is essential; al-Ansī, a self-trained folklorist, locates the usage of terms and provides numerous samples of proverbs and local poetry.

Arabia Viridis: A Lexicon of Yemeni Agricultural Vocabulary

In early 1978, when I first arrived in the valley of al-Ahjur in central Yemen to begin ethnographic study of local agricultural and irrigation practices, I carried with me (quite literally into the field) a photocopy of Ettore Rossi's (1939) *L'Arabo Parlato a Ṣanʿā'*. My university Arabic with its grammatical focus needed to be melded with the local dialect (which was close to that in Ṣanʿā'), especially for the focus of my research. From the start I began a notebook of local terms, field-checking those provided by Rossi and allowing farmers to tell me the words they usually spoke. As an ethnographer spending hours upon hours with farmers as they worked, I also had a chance to hear the words they used without prompting. I had

also brought with me a copy of R. B. Serjeant's (1974) translation of a chapter on cereals from the 14th century *Bughyat al-fallāḥīn* by the Rasulid sultan al-Malik al-Afḍal. Finding words still spoken that were not in Rossi but were in the 14th century treatise was exciting, so much so that I have spent my career since then combining ethnography with textual analysis, especially for vocabulary on agriculture. My Ph.D. dissertation on water use and irrigation in Yemen included 150 pages of glossaries, somewhat to the alarm of the anthropologists on my committee but encouraged, as you might expect, by my committee Arabist, George Makdisi, who was pleased and surprised that an anthropologist would pay as much attention to words spoken as to actions observed.

After three decades I have a rather large collection of terms that I am attempting to document systematically, and which I intend eventually to publish as a lexicon. This is integral to a larger project I am calling *Arabia Viridis*, a study of Yemen's agriculture during the Islamic period with a focus on the rich textual corpus from Rasulid Yemen (13th-15th centuries). The goals for the lexicon include documenting the etymology of each term, tracing its historical usage in Yemeni texts, comparing relevant information from classical Arabic lexicons and other dialects, indicating the range of recorded connotations, and providing examples of usage from texts and oral lore such as proverbs.[5] To work the agricultural metaphor even deeper, my project involves planting seeds of vocabulary and following their semantic growth but also a fair amount of weeding out overstretched speculation and outright wrong transcription or translation. Non-native Arabic speakers, especially those with weak linguistic training, have a tendency to mis-hear words; even the most knowledgeable Arabist can be fooled in the field. To a lesser extent, even native Arabist scholars who are not familiar with Yemeni dialects may assume connotations that do not hold across dialects. An example of this is an assertion by Sema'an Salem (1996:115), in a review of my book (1994) on the almanac of al-Malik al-Ashraf, who insists that the 13th century Yemeni usage of *khawkh* should be "plum" rather than "peach."[6] Not in Yemen, neither in the Rasulid era nor today. Were Ustadh Salem to make a pit stop in Yemen, he could taste the difference himself. Similarly, my friend the superb Arabist George Saliba (1985) once wrote that the verb *dharā* in the same Yemeni astronomical text which contains al-Ashraf's almanac meant winnowing, while in Yemen it means, through the present day, sowing of grain. These examples are the tares that inevitably grow among the meanings actually applied; linguistic sleuthing requires a thorough threshing out of such misunderstandings in the process. When my compilation is further along, I intend to return to Yemen and spot check selected terms in the field as well as engage Yemeni scholars for their help.

As someone foolish enough to compile a lexicon that takes years to complete, there are a number of issues to be sorted out. If only for the sake of a reality check, I am well aware that Edward Lane's useful but long outdated Arabic-English lexicon only makes it about half way through the Arabic alphabet. There but for the discovery of the fountain of youth go I. Perhaps it is relevant as an explanation for why I might not live to publish this lexicon that I started out in graduate school as an archaeologist (not that I wish to embarrass any dirt-seasoned colleagues by citing missing site reports). Seriously, as though contemplating one's own eventual demise is not serious enough, there is the question of what terms to include. Unlike Lane, I am not tackling an entire language, nor sampling its overall classical usage. My focus is on the terms actually used or known in Yemen, whether shared denotatively with the language in a broader sense or specific connotatively to Yemeni dialects. A further focus is the subject matter: agriculture.[7] In addition to the actions and tools involved in the mode of production, I expand the field of terms to seasonal and almanac lore, including weather, the environment of soil, plants and animals, time-keeping (especially star calendars) and relevant

A highland Yemeni farmer, 1978.

Photograph by Daniel Martin Varisco

social terminology. Finally, the ultimate product will be a reference guide to definitions, but not a definitive text in an absolute sense. I would not want students a century from now to consult *Arabia Viridis,* as we rely on Lane's admirable but archaic lexicon, without using it primarily as a guide to the primary lexical sources.

Morsels for Morphological Musing

If, as is sometimes said, the Devil can quote Scripture (my beginning quote from the Prophet Isaiah notwithstanding), this is because words can mean more than one thing, which means a given word can at times mean just what we want it to mean. Let's start with a *ḥadīth*. The Prophet Muhammad is reported to have written a letter to Mālik ibn Nimṭ of Hamdān, in which it is said that the people of Yemen "*ya'kalūna ʿalāfahā*." Most commentators say this is in reference to the seedpod of acacia (*ṭalḥ*), which is rendered *ʿullaf* in classical Arabic. While starving people in desperation no doubt would resort to a readily available acacia pod, or eat grass for that matter, it seems a rather strange dietary habit. The Yemeni scholar Muṭahhar al-Iryānī (1996:266-67) suggests the standard interpretation of this statement is a misreading of Yemeni dialect and he offers an alternative based on South Arabic: the term *ʿalāt* which he cites as a dialectical variant stemming from South Arabic inscriptions. The contemporary usage of *maʿlāt* refers to what is sown in the high mountain areas and terraces, including the area of Hamdān. It includes wheat, barley, lentils, peas, fenugreek and broad beans: all major highland crops in Yemen. Since no one eats acacia pods today, al-Iryānī thinks the Yemeni form is a better fit for making sense of the tradition. Fair enough, but my reading of al-Fīrūzābādī (*ʿ-l-f*) provides yet another cognatic possibility. This earlier Yemeni scholar, as well as al-Zabīdī, notes a Yemeni dialect term of *ʿilf* for a shrub with leaves like the grapevine; these leaves are said to be preserved, dried and used as a substitute for vinegar in cooking meat. The variant *ʿulluf* is also recorded. In either case the dialect variant makes more sense than the meaning given by non-Yemeni commentators who

probably never tasted an acacia pod nor mistook it for a plum.

In a second example, al-Iryānī (1996:268) reinterprets another tradition regarding taxes on the people of Najrān. This states "*wa-min al-ʿaqār ʿushr mā saqā al-baʿl wa-al-samāʾ wa-nuṣf al-ʿushr fīmā suqī bi-al-rishāʾ*" in which *ʿaqār* is defined as agricultural land owned with a deed. He suggests that the term *baʿl*, which refers to land only watered by rain, does not fit grammatically since it does not provide water as the sky (*samāʾ*) does. He would substitute the Yemeni term *ghayl* in the sense of land irrigated by spring water, since both spring fed and rain fed crops are taxed at one tenth (*ʿushr*) in contrast to the tax on well cultivation of a twentieth. Neither of these suggested changes will place al-Iryānī in the same heretical league as Herr Luxenberg's (2007[2000]) Syriacal remake of the *Qurʾān*, but it is instructive to see that long accepted interpretations are susceptible to reinterpretation on the basis of dialectical variation.

Having sampled two hors d'oeuvres of theological interest, we can move on to more mundane matters, such as what a ploughshare might turn over. There are numerous terms in classical Arabic for the traditional plough and its various parts. A term that appears to be unique to and widespread in Yemeni dialects is *ḥalī* (see Varisco 2004:87). In al-Ahjur and indeed in much of the highlands, as well as the Ḥaḍramawt this is a generic term for the plough. Al-Iryānī (1996:196) notes that the term refers to the wooden part of the plough, if it is one piece, but only to the upper part attaching to the yoke in a frame with two wooden parts; this is a meaning marked a century ago by Glaser (Grohmann 1934:7). In the only lexical reference I have found thus far, al-Zabīdī (*ḥ-l-y*) quotes al-Ṣaghānī (writing in the 13th century), who identifies this Yemeni term as "*al-khashaba al-ṭawīla bayna al-thawrayn*" (the long piece of wood between the two bulls); I take this as a reference to the frame that connects to the yoke rather than the yoke itself. In Sabaic this term can refer to movable property (Beeston et al. 1982:68), which is suggestive of its origin. For a Yemeni farmer his plough may have been one of the most important movable items he owned. But I speculate, as befits the subject.

Printed dictionaries seduce us into thinking we know what a word means, as if the English language did not really begin until Samuel Johnson recorded it in typeset. Beginning Arabic students whose native language is English live by the words found in Hans Wehr, usually not considering that this is an English translation of a German text purporting to distill what the Arabic means. *Mea culpa*; I keep my Wehr and my Lane handy, but these sit next to the "real" Arabic lexicons that dominate my bookshelf. Even the classic Arabic lexicons need a reality check. What makes *Lisān al-ʿArab* "real", when it is part of a lexical *silsila* that ultimately rests on what earlier Arab scholars are reported to have said about what they claim to have heard in pure Bedouin utterances? A dictionary may set a meaning in stone, but in a sense this only tells us what the word meant once it was fossilized into the dictionary. Etymology is always a kind of linguistic cosmology, leaping back to orality by leaps of faith in literary fragments. Consistency is often our only guide, as is equally the case for scholars of the *ḥadīth* literature; just as spurious traditions proliferated until al-Bukhārī and his colleagues pruned the most egregious, it is probable that some of the attributed meanings in early Arabic lexical texts are not representative of actual usage. There are numerous examples in the surviving lexicons to illustrate this. This calls for contemporary and artful speculation on what we can safely assume is a largely speculative "science" of lexicography in Arabic.

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Selling qat (Catha edulis) in the Yemeni market of Manakha, 1987. Photograph by Daniel Martin Varisco

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Endnotes:

[1] This paper was presented at the 2007 MESA conference.

[2] See al-Ḥilālī (1408/1988) for a study of Yemeni terms in major Arabic dictionaries. Al-Selwi (1987) compares specific terms in the work of al-Hamdānī and Nashwān with earlier South Arabic sources.

[3] See also his other articles on Yemeni dialects, e.g., Rossi (1938, 1950, 1953).

[4] I am not aware of a specific work on dialect terms in Yemeni poetry, but there are numerous published anthologies with annotation of specific terms and more recently analysis of poetic genres by Western scholars, including Steven Caton (1990), Flagg Miller (2007) and Mark Wagner (2005).

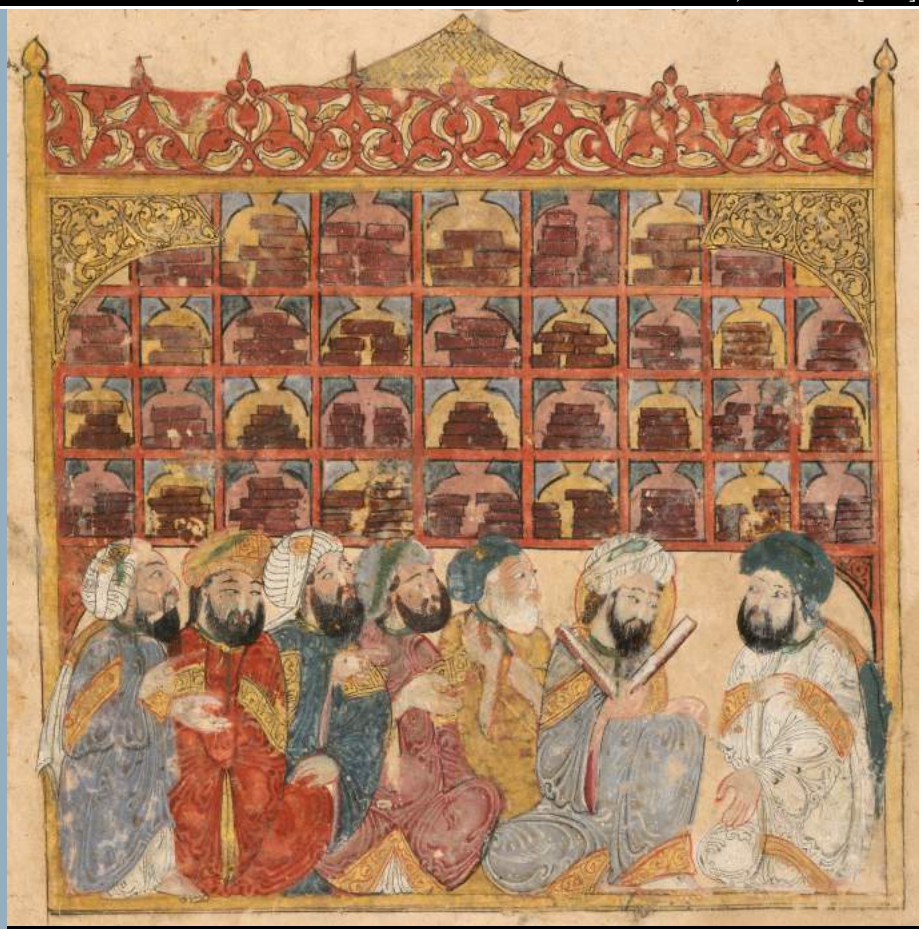
[5] I intentionally do not list poetry here, not because it is irrelevant but because I do not believe in reincarnation and suspect I will require a substantial longevity to finish what I have started. I do not think I can put meter in before I expect to peter out.

[6] I responded to the misperceptions of Yemeni dialects by Salem in Varisco (1997).

[7] A brief window into this effort is my article on Yemeni terms for the plough and cultivation in the *Journal of Semitic Studies* (Varisco 2004).

Reading Practices and Libraries in the pre-Ottoman Middle East

Konrad Hirschler (School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London)



Abū Zayd in the library (al-Ḥarīrī, Maqāmāt, 634/1237). Paris, BnF, MS arabe 5847, fol. 5v

The societies with which Middle East Medievalists are concerned were arguably the most 'bookish' cultures of their period. All of us are working in one way or another with their vast textual legacy in Arabic and Persian. Whether we are working on geography, ulamaology, law or any other aspects of history, scarcity of texts is generally not one of the main challenges we face in our research. Speaking for my own research, the challenge is rather how to process the enormous data of biographical dictionaries of the Middle Period (c. 1000-1500); it is not uncommon for one title alone to comprise tens of thousands of entries.

Despite the ubiquity of the written word in the medieval societies of the Middle East, scholarship on its reception and circulation has only started to develop in recent decades. For the early Islamic centuries we now have a set of studies (especially Ali (2010), Schoeler (2009), Günther (2006), Toorawa (2005) and Touati (2003)) that are concerned with the development of a 'writerly culture', to borrow Toorawa's term, and its interplay with oral and aural practices. However, for the Middle Period cultures of reading, reading practices and the circulation of the written word have remained virtually unstudied.

This discrepancy between the salience of the medieval written word and the low number of modern studies on its reception is partly bound to the problem that reading leaves few traces. The act of reading by itself, the leafing through a manuscript and the browsing through the stacks of a library is rarely documented. As Fortna (2011) put it: 'Like a ship moving through the sea, reading leaves behind little to mark its passing.' The main traces of reading that have been used so far for the pre-Ottoman period have been in narrative sources, especially chronicles and *adab*-encyclopedia. As their authors acted in a thoroughly bookish

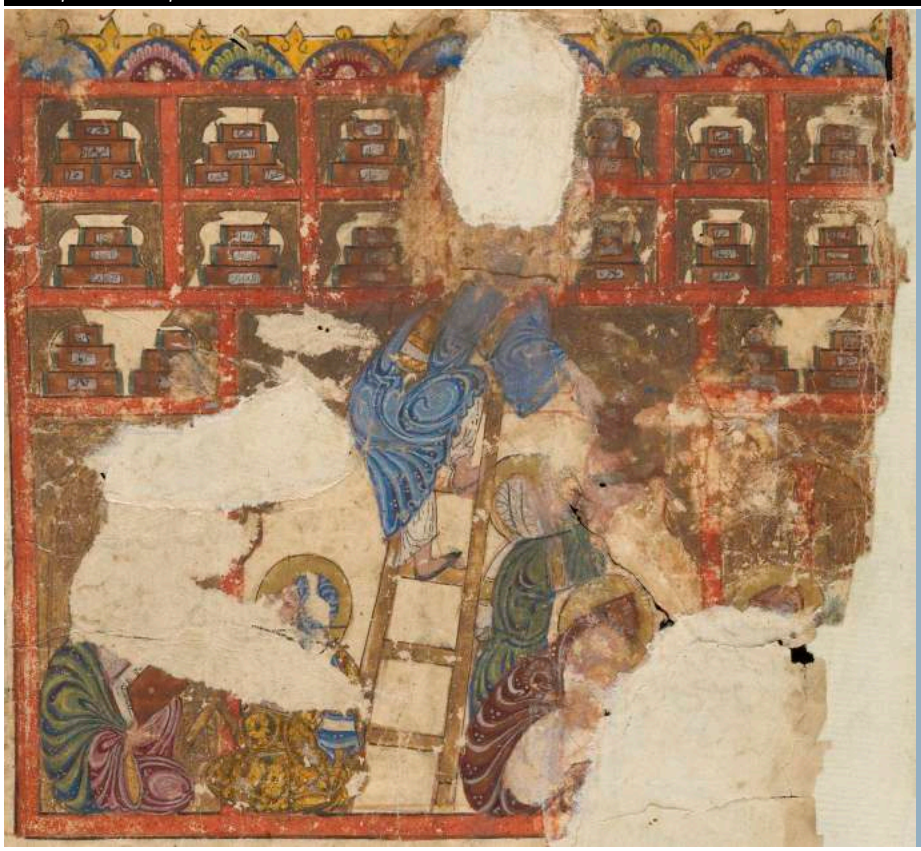
environment their texts contain an impressive amount of material on the circulation and consumption of the written word. Yet at the same time these texts display the standard problems of narrative texts, such as the social myopia of their authors and problematic quantitative data. Non-elite consumers of the written word rarely appear in these texts and the numbers of copies of books held in a given library are – perhaps not coincidentally – generally multiples of either the symbolic numbers four and seven.

In my research over the last few years I have thus tried to identify documentary sources that allow additional insights into reading practices beyond narrative sources. In my book *The Written Word in the Medieval Arabic Lands* (paperback 2013) I employed in particular certificates of audition (*samāʿāt*) in order to gain a better understanding of the social composition of reading audiences. These included not only scholars, but also traders, craftsmen, workmen and slaves. An added bonus was that these documents give detailed insights into the practicalities of reading sessions. For instance, they inform us how social and cultural prestige structured the order of seating in a given reading group (clay workers ever so rarely sat in the front row) and how often this group met to complete yet another part of the work they were reading. Most astonishing is the sheer doggedness of these groups: It was not uncommon for them to meet over a period of ten years or more in order to plough their way through the massive encyclopaedic works of the medieval period.

In *The Written Word* I argue on the basis of such documentary, and also narrative, sources that the Middle Period experienced the parallel processes of textualization and popularization. Taking the examples of Egypt and Syria it is evident that the uses of the written word significantly expanded in this period. This process of textualization went hand in hand with popularization, as wider groups within society started to participate in individual and communal reading acts. New audiences attending reading sessions, changed curricula in children's schools, increasing numbers of endowed libraries and the appearance of popular literature in written form all bear witness to the profound transformation of cultural practices and their social contexts.

A second set of documentary sources for understanding the circulation and consumption of the written word are library catalogues. During my research for *The Written Word* I came across what is arguably the earliest Arabic library catalogue, dating to the mid-seventh/ thirteenth century. Hidden in a collective manuscript in Istanbul's Suleymaniye Library this document lists the books that were held in the Ashrafīya Mausoleum, a minor teaching institution north of the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus. This catalogue is of outstanding importance as it is the earliest known documentary source that allows insights into the actual holdings of a medieval library and the way such libraries were structured. For the pre-Ottoman period hardly any other inventories and catalogues are known, except for the seventh/ thirteenth-century catalogue of the mosque library in Kairouan, in modern-day Tunisia, with only 125 titles and some late Mamluk endowment records that also mention a small number of books. It is only in the Ottoman period that we start to see genuine library catalogues such as those for the book collections endowed by Maḥmūd Pasha, Grand Wazir of Sultan Mehmed II, after the conquest of Constantinople and the library of Sultan Beyazit II. (d. 918/1512). The noteworthy exception from this void of documentary evidence for pre-Ottoman libraries is the evidence of catalogues for Jewish book collections (e.g. Allony (2006).

The scarcity of such documentary sources is all the more astonishing as such documents do exist for a significantly less bookish region, medieval Europe. Despite a paucity of books for Anglo-Saxon England we have at least thirteen inventories of libraries that were written before 1066. From



Abū Zayd in the library (al-Ḥarīrī, *Maqāmāt*, first half od the 7th/13th century?).

St Petersburg, Academy of Sciences, C. 23, fol. 13r.

continental Europe the evidence is even richer: From the ninth century alone we have inventories for the libraries of monasteries such as Saint-Riquier, Reichenau, St Gallen, Lorsch, Murbach and Cologne. Yet the largest of the Anglo-Saxon inventories listed just 65 books, while the *fihrist* of the relatively minor Ashrafīya Mausoleum included more than 2,000 titles and more than 3,000 volumes.

At the moment I am in the process of editing and ʿtranslating' this almost unique window on pre-Ottoman book collections. The two main striking features of this catalogue – besides the considerable size of such a minor library – are its thematic profile and its sophisticated organization. For a library that was housed in an educational institution focusing on Koran recitation, a surprisingly low number of books (less than 3 per cent) are actually concerned with the various Koranic fields of knowledge, such as *iqrāʾ*, *iʿrāb* and *tafsīr*. Taken together, all the books from the fields that can be classified as belonging to *al-ʿulūm al-naqlīya* (i.e. Koranic disciplines, *ḥadīth*, law, mysticism and theology as well as prayer books and pilgrim guides) constituted only one fifth of the library's stock. The large majority of the works in this library did not belong to the transmitted sciences, but to either *adab* or poetry. These two fields constituted together some 60 per cent of the collection and included all the grand pre-Islamic poets such as Imruʾ al-Qays b. Ḥujr, al-Mutalammis, ʿAlqama b. ʿAbada and Umayya Ibn Abī Ṣalt as well as the grand early Islamic poets such as al-Mutanabbī, al-Buḥturī, al-Sarī b. Aḥmad al-Raffāʾ and Abū Tammām. The library's users were seemingly particularly interested in Abū Tammām's *al-Ḥamāsa*, held in ten copies, and their undisputed favorite author was al-Mutanabbī with over 34 copies. These authors easily overshadow the *ḥadīth*-collections by Muslim and al-Bukhārī, but also the oeuvres of later authors who were mainly active in the fields of the transmitted sciences such as al-Ghazālī and Ibn al-Jawzī. At the same time users could access ʿnon-scholarly' titles such as a

copy of *Dalīla the Crafty,* which was to be included into the *1001 Nights* but appears here as an independent work.

The second striking issue is the sophisticated organization of the catalogue (and thus arguably the library) according to three criteria. All titles were – not very surprisingly – organized by alphabet and size. More interesting is the third criterion that assigned most books into one of fifteen thematic categories, such as law, history or pharmacology/medicine/veterinary medicine. As the narrative sources give us little insight into how libraries were organized (they only tell us that *fihrists* were written for many libraries) this catalogue offers a glimpse into the organization of knowledge beyond the grand theories of the classification of sciences like al-Fārābī's *Iḥṣāʾ al-ʿulūm*. Most importantly, this document provides an entirely new perspective on the circulation, availability and consumption of the written word in the medieval Middle East.

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"The Concubine in Statistical Context: A Prosopographical Analysis of the Arab Genealogical Tradition"

BOOK REVIEWS

Painted Fragment of a Tiraz, Egypt, early 10th century. The Walters Art Museum, Baltimore. Creative Commons License.

ʿAbd al-Jawād Ḥamām. *Al-Tafarrud fī riwāyat al-ḥadīth wa-manhaj al-muḥaddithīn fī qubūlihī aw raddih (dirāsah taʾṣīlīyah taṭbīqīyah). (Solitariness in the relation of hadith and the traditionists' program of accepting or rejecting it [a foundational applied study].)* Mashrūʿ miʾat risālah jāmiʿīyah sūrīyah 13. Damascus: Dār al-Nawādir, 1429/2008. iii, 767 p.

This is an edition of Ḥamām's doctoral dissertation under the direction of ʿImād al-Dīn Rashīd, who contributes a short introduction, presumably at Kullīyat al-Sharīʿah of the University of Damascus. However, I could not find any express indication of either place or date. *Tafarrud* is the phenomenon of the isolated report, whereby a traditionist relates something that no one else does. Early collectors and critics applied it to tracing a report of the Prophet's words back to a certain Companion that others traced back only to other Companions (example from al-Tirmidhī, 111; called a *shāhid* by modern critics, at least); alternatively, to relating a hadith report with extra explanatory words as no one else relates it (example from Abū Dāwūd, 113; also called *ziyādat al-thiqah*, since in this case the extra words are from Mālik ibn Anas); alternatively, among many other things, to relating a hadith report with a direct connection in the isnād that others relate with only an indirect (example from al-Bukhārī, 559, although here it is a commentator who points to *tafarrud*, not the collector himself).

As often in studies of hadith from Muslims, Ḥamām's account is sometimes normative; but when historical problems arise, he does treat them competently. For example, al-Ḥākim al-Nishābūrī, al-Bayhaqī, and later Shāfiʿī writers quote al-Shāfiʿī himself as restricting the *shādhdh* (aberrant) to what disagrees with what respectable people uphold, not just anything someone relates that no one else does. Ḥamām has not found *shādhdh* as a technical term in the works of al-Bukhārī, Muslim, al-Tirmidhī, Abū Zurʿah al-Rāzī, Abū Ḥātim, al-Dāraquṭnī, or other early critics. Neither, indeed, has he found it in the extant works of al-Shāfiʿī, although al-Shāfiʿī does quote Abū Yūsuf for something

similar in the *Umm*. Ḥamām supposes that al-Shāfiʿī was not actually speaking as a hadith critic, rather in defense of *khabar al-wāḥid* (330-5). Going further than Ḥamām, I would interpret this as an example of how hadith criticism and jurisprudence developed in separate circles, the latter dominated for most of the ninth century by the Muʿtazilī tradition. *Shādhdh* would then have been a Muʿtazilī term but not (yet) a Sunnī. He does admit at the end that, as many before him have found, early collectors and critics applied terms somewhat loosely. He proposes three stages in the development of terminology: before Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, from him to Ibn Ḥajar, and from Ibn Ḥajar to the present. He finds that medieval critics often dismissed particular hadith reports for *tafarrud* where modern (I suspect he means especially Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī and his school) accept anything if the narrator is identified as *thiqah* (610-11). Altogether, this is a respectable collection of quotations from early sources, usefully analyzed and arranged.

Christopher Melchert

Aḥmad ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz Maḥmūd, *Al-Amn fī ʿahd al-rasūl wa-al-khulafāʾ al-rāshidīn,* (Arbil: Maktab al-Tafsīr li-al-Nashr wa-al-Iʿlān, 2008). Pp. 384.

This study aims at exploring the political history of security in early Islam. Undoubtedly, in the current context of international relations, any discussion of Muslim conceptions and practices of security would be interesting. The Kurdish-Iraqi author, who seems to have finished his book in 2002 (p. 8), explores domestic as well as external security issues devoting most of his attention to conflicts engaged by early Muslim authorities against their rivals. The scope of the work is limited to the period of 622-661. In this regard, this book attempts to fill the gap in the field of security concerns of early Islam. However, it is not likely to have a scientific impact since the book was written for a believing public.

The focus of the author's interest is security issues (mostly primal security issues) oriented to protect the nascent Muslim state from the threats of its opponents. The antagonists identified by the author are, on an internal level, Jews and pagan Arab tribes, whereas the Persians and Byzantines represent the external pressure (p. 6). In the first chapter (pp. 9-93), the author departs from a larger concept of security, involving the integrity of the state and its people. But soon, he lays emphasis on the military aspects of security, narrating the major battles and campaigns of the Prophet. His analysis of security is overshadowed by the many biographical details about the life of Muḥammad that are not linked to the problem of security. He does not consider the role of other agents or processes in shaping Muḥammad's security policy. Furthermore, the author ignores the global as well as the regional context of the new Muslim community. Instead, he deals with the military events of the period that reflect the Prophet's strategic genius. In the second chapter (pp. 95-131), the author studies security in the era of Abū Bakr al-Ṣiddīq, recounting, principally, the *ridda* wars. In the third chapter (pp. 133-234), which is the longest one, he glorifies the justice policy of the caliph ʿUmar b. al-Khaṭṭāb and the military campaigns launched in his time. In the fourth chapter (pp. 235-312), he draws an extended profile of the companion ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān focusing on his administration, defending his policies and giving a short narrative of his military campaigns. Finally, the fifth chapter (pp. 313-367) is dedicated to the fight of ʿAlī b. Ṭālib for justice and truth.

With regard to the approach of the book, it appears, in more than one aspect, closer to the classical *manāqib* literature which glorifies the virtues of certain persons or groups, than to historical studies. Consequently, the book does not respond to the expectations of a historian or that of a specialist of Muslim security studies. At most, the book is useful for Muslim readers who would welcome another glorifying study of major Muslim personalities with a special attention to their political and military achievements. Thus, the author adopts a style

comparable, though much less successful, to the famous style of ʿAbbās Maḥmūd al-ʿAqqād (d. 1964) in his *ʿAbqariyyāt*, a series of biographical books on the genius of major personalities of Islam, under a heavy influence of Thomas Carlyle.

The author relies on mostly primary sources (105) of Muslim history. However, he reproduces events as related by Muslim historians, without any discussion, criticism or comparison. The language of the book is literary and is over-enriched of tropes. In general, the approach of the author is chronological, narrative and literary, making his text manifestly subjective and interpretative rather than historical. Much less, security is not the issue at stake in the book. Rather, the author attempts at showing how the Prophet and the early caliphs were able to protect Islam due to their exceptional just and perspicuous personalities. For one thing, the reader can easily follow the development of political-military history of early Islam. The author was consistent in this part of his work. That being the case, the book does not claim any new results or findings on the subject of political history of early Islam. The structure of the book lacks a methodological introduction. As a replacement, the reader has to be satisfied with a merely apologetic piece of prose praising the ability of early Muslims to develop efficient security strategies and practices. Consequently, the author did not deem it necessary to bring about a conclusion or an index.

The author does not provide a clear definition of what the concept of security, *amn* meant for a decision-maker in early Islam and what it means in the current political terminology. As the term was used in different contexts, the reader would have appreciated a conceptual roadmap. Moreover, security is assured not only by the means of war, but often by keeping a balance between conflict (war, pressure, tensions) and cooperation (trade, negotiations). The landscape of security involves not only primal concerns of security, but also social, economic and political affairs. The reader is left without any deep insight in those security concerns of the early Muslim communities. More to the point, the question whether such concerns had any influence on the political-religious opinions is relevant to the subject matter of the book. Additionally, in a tribal society, security is, above all, a question of alliances, which makes inter-tribal relations and regional arrangements a primary issue of security for early Muslim communities. This aspect was also ignored in this book just like the institutions that are responsible for security. Besides, a reader interested in security issues of early Islam would expect a discussion of treaties, peace negotiations, or diplomacy. More importantly, domestic security questions, especially in the turbulent reigns of ʿUthmān b. ʿAffān and ʿAlī b. Ṭālib, are absent from the book. All these elements make this study a traditional chronological book of military history.

Abdessamad Belhaj

Khālid b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Ḥamad al-Qāḍī, *Al-Ḥayāt al-ʿilmiyya fī Miṣr al-fāṭimiyya*, (Beirut: al-Dār al-ʿArabiyya li-ʾl-Mawsūʿāt, 2008). Pp. 376.

This monograph is based on an MA thesis of the same title written at the history department of the King Saud University in 2002. As such, it is not expected to be an innovative work on "the scientific life in Fāṭimid Egypt". Moreover, the large period covered by the study (466/1074-567/1171) runs a high risk of producing a work of general knowledge rather than a scrupulous academic study. At any rate, the author attempts at engaging in an intellectual history of the Fāṭimid Egypt. He divides his study into two major sections: learning centers (libraries, schools and mosques) and learning subjects: religious sciences (Qurʾānic studies, *ḥadīth* studies, *fiqh*), linguistic sciences, humanities (history, genealogy, geography and travel literature), and Greek sciences (philosophy and logic, astronomy, mathematics, geometry, medicine, pharmacology and chemistry). However, the core of his study seems to be, in particular, the situation of

traditional religious studies (pp. 171-263) and three of the four appendices are devoted to Qurʾānic and *ḥadīth* studies, relating detailed information on *ḥadīth* students and on the scholars of Qurʾānic recitation. If the study fills any gap, this should be in the traditional religious disciplines. Above all, what is interesting in the book is the large amount of details provided on Qurʾānic recitation in Fāṭimid Egypt. But even so, the author gives simply a summary of information already known on the subject. Consequently, the study is unlikely to have any impact as it adopts a very general approach of many issues, where each of them would deserve a volume in its own right.

With reference to methodology, the author embraces the classical approach of intellectual histories, underlining the political, economic and social contexts of scholars and students in the studied period (pp. 35-113). Unfortunately, with the long sections he dedicated to the context, the author repeats a general mistake of dissertations defended in Arab universities, which is to summarize in lengthy chapters the contextual information that is meant only to frame the study. As for the sources, the reader notices the importance assigned to secondary sources which again give this work the shape of a general study designed for students and not that of an academic work for scholars. For example, in the section devoted to philosophy and logic, the author either relies on secondary sources or summarizes the biographies of some famous scholars who lived in the period, relying mostly on biographical dictionaries. Despite the importance of the philosophical-theological activity in Fāṭimid Egypt, the author did not produce a single paragraph that offers an insight in the history of ideas or that of debates that occur among Fāṭimid scholars. Seemingly, the author gave much attention to Qurʾānic studies probably because of the conservative character of the Saudi universities. Still, the author spent several pages on providing standard information for students on Qurʾānic recitation (pp. 171-207). The author lays out half of the space of this section, with defining the meaning of Qurʾānic recitation and *tafsīr*, the history of Qurʾānic studies prior to the studied period. Systematically, the author defines and tells the history of all sectors of knowledge he dealt with. As a result, it was impossible for him to focus on the subject and find connections between these sciences and their context. Additionally, the author fails to discuss his methodology in his introduction, which is a major drawback for a book on intellectual history. He provides neither conclusion nor an index of names and terms, a serious oversight for a largely biographical study.

The reader who is unfamiliar with the intellectual history of the Fāṭimid Egypt is likely to benefit from the rich information provided by the author. Conversely, the scholar of the same subject is likely to be disappointed with regard to the absence of any new findings or results. Furthermore, the book suffers from the absence of a thesis and the personality of the author does not really come through the book. What is more, we cannot find in the bibliography any source written in European languages. The author relies only on a few translated European references (F. Daftari, I. Kratchkovski, A. Metz, G. Makdisi, H. Halm and P. Walker). A further weakness of the book is the complete absence of C. Brockelmann's *Geschichte der arabischen Litteratur* (available in Arabic as well), a must for an intellectual historian of Egypt.

To conclude, the book is a general work that provides a broad overview of mostly Sunni religious life in Fāṭimid Egypt. However, it does not advance our knowledge of the subject in any case. Taken as a book of intellectual history, the study is merely a traditional biographical/chronological history of the intellectuals and not of ideas. It contains little analysis of the intellectual production of the period. As a matter of fact, sectors of knowledge appear scattered and separated from each other as well as from their contexts. At most, the author offers a summary of biographies of scholars and students who lived

in Egypt in the eleventh/twelfth century.

Abdessamad Belhaj

ʿAbdāllah Yūsuf ʿAzzām, *Dalālat al-kitāb wa-ʾl-sunna ʿalā ʾl-aḥkām min ḥaythu al-bayān wa-ʾl-ijmāl aw al-ẓuhūr wa-ʾl-khafāʾ*, (Jiddah: Dār al-Mujtamaʿ, 2001). Pp. 930.

The book under review reveals another side to the Palestinian radical activist ʿAbdāllah Yūsuf ʿAzzām (d. 1989) who was active in Afghanistan during the 1980s. Previously, the author completed the work as a PhD dissertation, *al-ʿĀlimiyya*, at the faculty of *Sharīʿa* and *Qānūn* at the Azhar University in 1972. Some thirty years after defending his dissertation, and eleven years after his assassination, the PhD thesis was published as a book. For a start, the study belongs to the discipline of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and discusses, in particular, the legal-semantic aspects of indication (*dalāla*), clarification (*bayān*), compendiousness (*ijmāl*), clarity (*ẓuhūr*), and obscurity (*khafāʾ*). The author divides his book into three major chapters (*abwāb*): In the first chapter (pp. 150-346), he discusses the issue of clear legal terms (*wāḍiḥ*) and other related terms such as the manifest (*ẓāhir*), explicit (*naṣṣ*), explained (*mufassar*), and the perspicuous (*muḥkam*). In the second chapter (pp. 347-583), he describes the positions of jurists and theologians on the terms of legal-semantic ambiguity such as uncertain (*mubham*), obscure (*khafī*), difficult (*mushkil*), compendious (*mujmal*), and ambivalent (*mutashābih*). Finally, he devoted the third chapter (pp. 584-769) to the problem of interpretation, *taʾwīl*. In addition to his treatment of *taʾwīl* as a legal interpretative tool of juridical texts, the author enlarged the scope of his study to other disciplines, especially to Qurʾānic studies. For unknown reasons, the author engages in a long defense of *qiyās* (juristic analogy) against Ibn Ḥazm (d. 456/1064). Instead of a necessary conclusion for a 769 pages, he chose to end his book with a conclusive chapter discussing *bayān*, another major problem of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. This term should figure along with the clear legal terms in the first chapter. Abruptly, the author stopped developing the content of *bayān* noting that the Muslim library is dumped with books on different subjects of *fiqh*. Therefore, he prefers to transform his words into action. We know that the author started a career as an activist before defending his dissertation and his words probably reflect this choice.

In relation to his procedure, the author adopts the medieval approach of *uṣūl al-fiqh* in a literal way: he frames the terms in their linguistic use and then gives the definition of various jurists and theologians. He then relates all possible divisions of the term and lastly, compares the opinions of the jurists and theologians, choosing the orthodox position on the question. His approach is mostly descriptive and does not proceed to any analysis that is free from classical quotations. Abstraction made of the reputation of the author as an activist and outstanding preacher, his book does not bring any new element to the development of *uṣūl* studies for two reasons. First, the title of his book, which suggests a study of the semantic-legal signification of the Qurʾān and the *sunna* and the tools used by jurists to extract judgments, does not match with the content. Rather, the author focuses, generally, on the problem of ambiguity and clarity, in the legal context, but as a theoretical problem that interests only historians of *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Moreover, he mostly describes juristic as well as theological views on ambiguity and clarity. The second reason is that the problem of ambiguity and clarity in itself goes beyond the theory of law and encompasses different hermeneutical aspects that should have compelled the author to limit his scope of study. In the first place, a serious research project should not approach the problem of legal ambiguity and clarity in a macro study. Regardless of the internal quality of a work, it would be much productive, both for the scholar and for the reader, to focus on an author or a legal term. For these reasons, the book does not succeed in distinguishing itself from dozens

of books in Arabic on the subject of legal terms.

Considering the size of this work on legal terms, the reader would expect a terminological index. The author did not provide it. Instead, he provides the names of jurists and theologians and a list of biographical entries of names mentioned in the book (pp. 818-861) and an index of names (pp. 928-929). This does not help the reader to navigate the book. Probably, the table of contents, which is very detailed (893-815) and covers almost every page in the book, can be helpful. That being the case, only a knowledgeable reader in *uṣūl al-fiqh* is able to consult the book, knowing where to find what term. The bibliography is relatively important (pp. 862-891), but the number of books on *uṣūl al-fiqh* does not exceed 91 books including secondary sources. One interesting feature of this book is that it reproduces parts of the dissertation defense, including a series of questions and remarks of the jury and the author's own responses (pp. 10-13).

Abdessamad Belhaj

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