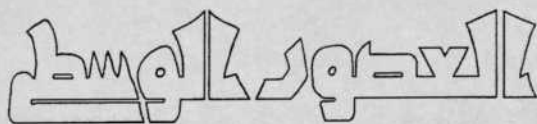


AL-'UŞÜR AL-WUŞTĀ

THE BULLETIN OF MIDDLE EAST MEDIEVALISTS

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## Al-'Uṣūr al-Wuṣṭā

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# Jihād Propaganda

## in Early Crusader Syria:

### A Preliminary Examination of the Role of Displaced Scholars in Damascus

Suleiman A. Mourad

The invasion of parts of Asia Minor and coastal Syria in 491/1098-492/1099, commonly referred to as the First Crusade, was received by the Muslims in the Near East with various degrees of indifference, opportunism, complete rejection, or inefficient religious outcries. The Franks became another regional player, and within a very short period of time they were able to forge alliances with several Muslim rulers in Syria and Asia Minor. In other words, the Muslims became accustomed to the Europeans' presence as part of the military landscape, and some leaders took advantage of the Franks' military capabilities to enhance their respective positions vis-à-vis fellow Muslim opponents. Yet, the rapid success with which the Franks established themselves generated loud, though at first inefficient religious outcries on the part of members of the Sunni religious establishment, especially in Damascus, who believed that the Frankish invasion would not have been possible or successful had Muslim political and military leaders attended to their religious duty of waging *jihād* against the infidels.

The earliest example of such angry religious outcries is *Kitāb al-Jihād* by Abū Ṭāhir al-Sulamī (d. 500/1106). A few years after the fall of Jerusalem, al-Sulamī took to the pulpit in the mosque of Bayt Lihyā, on the outskirts of medieval Damascus, to preach on *jihād*; the preaching occurred over several months between Ramaḍān 498 (May 1105) and Muḥarram 499 (October 1105). Al-Sulamī was not a Qur'an or *ḥadīth* scholar, nor was he an expert in any of the various topics of the religious sciences. His professional specialization was in Arabic grammar and language. This suggests a level of desperation on the part of the Damascene Sunni religious establishment, which must have been weakened due to the almost two centuries of Shi'i Fatimid rule.

One remarkable fact about al-Sulamī is his description of the Frankish invasion as *jihād* that started in Andalusia (medieval Spain) and Sicily, and has now reached Islam's heartland.<sup>1</sup> In other words, he acknowledges the assault as a Christian religious warfare against Islam and the Muslims. One needs to clarify here that his sentiments surely reflect the mood of a class of religious scholars, but not necessarily that of the entire Damascene society. After all, the city ultimately entered into an alliance with the Franks that lasted until 543/1148, with the unsuccessful attack of the Second Crusade against Damascus.

Even though we know that al-Sulamī's *Kitāb al-Jihād* was preached in 506/1113 in the Umayyad Mosque of Damascus—that is six years after his death—with some notable scholars in

the audience, we still lack the general picture regarding *jihād* propaganda in Damascus, especially before sultan Nūr al-Dīn captured Damascus in 549/1154. In other words, who, aside from al-Sulamī, was also preaching *jihād* and teaching it among the Sunni religious scholars?

The little information that we have does not offer much. We know that a few religious scholars took to the battlefield to fight *jihād* against the Franks. One particular scholar, a jurist of the Mālikī school of Sunni law named Yūsuf b. Dūnās al-Findalāwī, is worth mentioning. Al-Findalāwī was from North Africa, and came to reside in Damascus following his pilgrimage to Mecca. He was killed on Saturday 6 Rabī' I, 543 (25 July 1148) in the village of Nayrab, on the foothills of Mount Qāsyūn which overlooks Damascus from the northwest. He went out of the city on foot to fight (*kharaja mujāhidan*) the Franks, and because of his old age, the Muslim army's general tried to deter him. Al-Findalāwī's reply to the general was that he sold his soul to God and God accepted the sale, which is a reference to the Qur'anic verse 9:111: "God had purchased from the believers their souls and wealth in return for Paradise. They fight in his path, and kill or get killed. It is a binding promise."<sup>2</sup> Al-Findalāwī is remembered also as "very zealous in his promotion and defense of Sunni Islam," a miracle-worker, and a saint-like figure.<sup>3</sup> Yet, we do not know in what al-Findalāwī was involved in particular regarding Sunni religious agitation, and specifically *jihād* propaganda.

Ibn 'Asākir of Damascus (d. 571/1176) is another example. But in his case, we know pretty well his involvement in Sunni revivification, though not much has been known about the extent of his involvement in *jihād* propaganda. Through both composition and teaching, Ibn 'Asākir played



The great Crusader-era castle of Ḥiṣn al-Akrād (Krak de Chevaliers) in Syria.



an active role in the revitalization of Sunnism in Damascus. His works, including his book in defense of Ash'arism *Tabyīn kadhib al-muftarī fī mā nusiba ilā al-imām Abī al-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī*, as well as his teaching career especially in the School of *ḥadīth*, a *madrasa* built specifically for him by Nūr al-Dīn, attest to this direct involvement and to his devotion to the restoration and empowerment of Sunnism and Ash'arism.

Recent examination of Ibn 'Asākir, especially his *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq* and his short manual on *jihād*—*al-Arba'īn fī al-ijtihād fī iqāmat al-jihād* (*The Forty Ḥadīths on the Obligation to Wage Jihād*)—are allowing for a more complete picture of his commitment to Sunni revivification and *jihād* propaganda, both before and after Nūr al-Dīn's capture of Damascus. For instance, we now know that Ibn 'Asākir was actively involved in *jihād* propaganda as early as 546/1151, when he taught a seminar on *Kitāb al-Jihād* by Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 181/797). Among his students was prince 'Alī Ibn Munqidh, the older brother of the celebrated prince and poet Usāma Ibn Munqidh (d. 584/1188). After the conclusion of the seminar, prince 'Alī departed with his men and went straight to fight the Franks in Ascalon. He achieved martyrdom there in the summer of 546/1151.<sup>4</sup> For sure there are other motivations for the prince to leave to join the fight for the liberation of Ascalon. Yet, what we have here is a case that strongly suggests the direct influence of Ibn 'Asākir's *jihād* preaching on a very receptive and even exploitable audience.

As for the *Forty Ḥadīths*, Ibn 'Asākir authored this collection at the request of Nūr al-Dīn, very likely around the year 560/1165. It features forty prophetic *ḥadīths* that he relates on the authority of well-known *ḥadīth* scholars whom he had met and studied with during his educational sojourns in Iraq, Iran, and Central Asia. According to the short introduction, the sultan instructed the scholar to author a collection of forty *ḥadīths* so that it could be read to the troops to stimulate them on the battlefield, suggesting therefore that Ibn 'Asākir was indeed a chief formulator and propagandist in Nūr al-Dīn's *jihād* propaganda machine.

The question that emerges at this point is who else was involved in *jihād* propaganda on the part of the Sunni religious scholars in Damascus, especially in the period between al-Sulamī and Ibn 'Asākir? The first impression is that there is not enough information to determine this. The least one can say is that if it was done, we do not know who did it. Moreover, if one were to judge on the basis of Ibn 'Asākir's *Forty Ḥadīths*, it appears as if preaching *ḥadīths* on *jihād* was not done in Damascus after al-Sulamī, actually after the last recorded preaching of his book in 506/1113, until Ibn 'Asākir picked it up almost half a century later. Of the forty *ḥadīths*, only one features a Damascene *ḥadīth* transmitter: Abū Muḥammad 'Abd al-Karīm b. Ḥamza al-Sulamī (d. 526/1132).<sup>5</sup> But even there, Ibn 'Asākir lists the transmission of Abū Muḥammad al-Sulamī after that of another teacher of his, Abū al-Qāsim Zāhir b. Ṭāhir al-Mustamlī (d. 533/1139) whom he had met in Nishapur (Naysābūr). More importantly, the inclusion of the transmission from Abū Muḥammad al-Sulamī seems to have been based on the fact that the latter learned the *ḥadīth* from the famous al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī (463/1071).<sup>6</sup>

The absence of direct Damascene informants from Ibn 'Asākir's *Forty Ḥadīths* is definitely surprising. But the impression that one gets from it regarding transmission of *ḥadīths* on *jihād* by the religious scholarly community in Damascus is misleading. Indeed, several Damascene scholars were actively involved in *jihād* propaganda, especially via the transmission of prophetic *ḥadīths*, and our witness to that is none other than Ibn 'Asākir. But before discussing them, a word about Ibn 'Asākir's reasons for leaving no indications about that, especially in his *Forty Ḥadīths* collection and even in *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, is in order. The exclusion of Damascene informants from the *Forty Ḥadīths* collection was intentional on the part of Ibn 'Asākir. *Jihād* propaganda, mostly

via the transmission of prophetic *ḥadīths*, was very popular in Damascus, and Ibn 'Asākir was pretty much exposed to it through a number of his Damascene teachers. But his intentional decision to ignore them reflects his eagerness to demonstrate to his political patron Nūr al-Dīn as well as to his peers that his knowledge of *ḥadīth* is not only superior to that of anyone else in Damascus, but also he does not owe that expertise to the Damascene scholarly establishment.

We know from Ibn 'Asākir that one particular group of his teachers was involved in *jihād* propaganda. It comprises a number of displaced Sunni scholars who came to Damascus following the capture of their respective towns by the Franks during the First Crusade. The list below identifies ten of these displaced scholars and the towns from which they originally came, their professional occupation while in Damascus, and, aside from *ḥadīth* transmission, what other particular impact each one of them had on Ibn 'Asākir.

1. Abū Aḥmad 'Abd al-Salām b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Ṣūrī (d. 559/1164): Fled Tyre following its capture by the Crusaders. He was the younger brother of Abū al-Faraj Aḥmad.<sup>7</sup>
2. Abū al-Faraj Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan b. 'Alī al-Ṣūrī (d. 528/1134): Fled Tyre following its capture by the Crusaders. He served for some time as bureaucrat in charge of irrigation allocation (*istisqā'*) in Damascus. He was involved in the transmission of *ḥadīth* on *jihād*.<sup>8</sup>
3. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Asākir b. Surūr al-Maqdisī (d. 553/1158): Lumber merchant. He came to Damascus on business, but could not return to Jerusalem due to its capture by the Crusaders.<sup>9</sup>
4. Abū al-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Yaḥyā b. Rāfi' al-Nābulusī (d. 546/1151): Fled Nablus following its capture by the Crusaders. He worked as the muezzin of Bāb al-Farādīs minaret in Damascus. He used to regularly attend Ibn 'Asākir's teaching circle.<sup>10</sup>
5. Abū al-Faraj Ghayth b. 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Salām al-Ṣūrī (d. 509/1115): Chief preacher (*khaṭīb*) of Tyre. He fled to Damascus at an old age, and lived with the family of Ibn 'Asākir until his death. He was involved in the transmission of *ḥadīth* on *jihād*.<sup>11</sup>
6. Abū al-Ḥasan Jamīl b. Tammām b. 'Alī al-Maqdisī (d. 536/1141): Miller, and younger brother of Abū al-Ḥusayn Yaḥyā. He specialized in Qur'ānic recitation.<sup>12</sup>
7. Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Barakāt al-Maqdisī (d. after 520/1126): Butter merchant. He was involved in the transmission of *ḥadīth* on *jihād*.<sup>13</sup>
8. Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad b. Kāmil b. Daysam al-Maqdisī (d. 536/1142): Fled Jerusalem after its capture by the Crusaders. He served as bureaucrat in charge of merchandise control, and the House of Zakāt (*Dār al-wikāla*) in Damascus. He was involved in the transmission of *ḥadīth* on *jihād*.<sup>14</sup>
9. Abū al-Faṭḥ Naṣr b. al-Qāsim b. al-Ḥasan al-Maqdisī (d. 539/1145): He fled Jerusalem after its capture by the Crusaders. He specialized in Qur'ānic recitation. He taught Ibn 'Asākir the Qur'an; Ibn 'Asākir describes him as "zealous in his promotion/defense of Sunnism" (*kāna muta'aṣṣiban fī al-sunnati*).<sup>15</sup>
10. Abū al-Ḥusayn Yaḥyā b. Tammām b. 'Alī al-Maqdisī (d. 517/1123): Specialized in Qur'ānic recitation. He was the preacher to the black-slave community in Damascus.<sup>16</sup>

But the issue with this information about the displaced scholars is that we only find it in a rather unexpected source: Ibn 'Asākir's *Mu'jam al-Shuyūkh*, an extensive list of more than 1621 teachers with whom he had studied. Ibn 'Asākir knew these displaced scholars very well, and some of them had direct impact on his religious education. For instance, the person who taught him the Qur'an was Abū al-Faṭḥ Naṣr al-Maqdisī (#9), and Abū al-Faraj Ghayth al-Ṣūrī (#5) lived with Ibn 'Asākir's family, thus suggesting the direct impact his *jihād* propaganda must have had on the

young boy (when al-Ṣūrī died, Ibn 'Asākir was ten years old).

Moreover, judging from the *Mu'jam*, Ibn 'Asākir remembers some of these displaced scholars as preachers of *jihād*. In the book, each teacher occupies a brief entry comprising his/her name,<sup>17</sup> the town where Ibn 'Asākir met him/her, and invariably a *ḥadīth* that he related from him/her (in a few cases, Ibn 'Asākir would list instead a short poem by the teacher). The inclusion of one *ḥadīth* is meant to highlight the prowess of that teacher in Ḥadīth transmission. Moreover, each *ḥadīth* allows us to understand how Ibn 'Asākir remembered the career of that particular teacher. The fascinating find about these displaced scholars is that Ibn 'Asākir remembers them as *jihād* advocates. With but one exception, all *ḥadīths* on *jihād* in Ibn 'Asākir's *Mu'jam* are related on the authority of these displaced scholars. It is reasonable to argue, therefore, that they were indeed involved in *jihād* propaganda.

If Ibn 'Asākir knew them well and some of them had a significant impact on him, why are not they then quoted in the *Forty Ḥadīths* collection, particularly those who taught him *ḥadīths* on *jihād* (numbers 2, 5, 7, & 8)?<sup>18</sup> One would assume that the *ḥadīths* on *jihād* that Ibn 'Asākir relates in the *Mu'jam* would be good candidates for his *Forty Ḥadīths* collection. But this was not the case. For instance, on the authority of Abū al-Ḥusayn Muḥammad al-Maqdisī (#8), Ibn 'Asākir transmits the following *ḥadīth*:

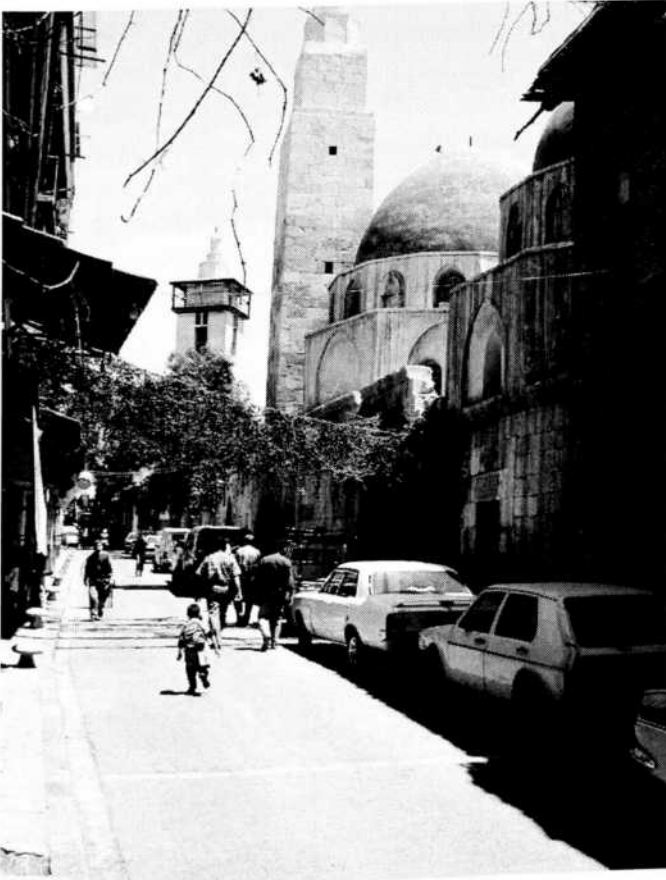
The Messenger of God said: "He who dies without having participated in a raid against God's enemies (*wa-lām yaghzū*) or who never considered joining a raid dies with some

hypocrisy."<sup>19</sup>

In another case, he transmits from Abū al-Faraj Aḥmad al-Ṣūrī (#2), the following *ḥadīth*:

The Messenger of God asked: "Who among people is paramount?" They replied: "God and His Messenger know best." He repeated that three times. They said: "O Messenger of God, it is he who uses his wealth and soul to conduct *jihād* in the path of God." The Messenger of God then asked: "Who comes after that?" They replied: "God and His Messenger know best." He said: "It is a believer who secludes himself in an isolated place, fears his Lord, and saves people from their wrongdoings."<sup>20</sup>

In this second example, an almost identical version of the *ḥadīth* is found in the *Forty Ḥadīths* collection, but there it is transmitted on the authority of Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Faqīh (d. 530/1136), whom Ibn 'Asākir had met in Nishapur;<sup>21</sup> Ibn 'Asākir makes no indication in the collection that he also learned the *ḥadīth* from Abū



Medieval madrasas along Shāri' al-madāris, Damascus.

al-Faraj al-Ṣūrī.

In a third example, Ibn 'Asākir relates from Sahl b. al-Ḥasan al-Bistāmī (d. 536/1141), whom he knew in Damascus,<sup>22</sup> a *ḥadīth* on the authority of the companion Ibn Mas'ūd (d. 32/653) who said,

I asked the Messenger of God: "What labor is most dear to God?" He replied: "To pray the prayer in its time." I asked again: "Then what?" He replied: "Then comes taking care of one's parents." I asked again: "Then what?" He replied: "Fighting (*al-jihād*) in the path of God." Had I asked him more, he would have added more.<sup>23</sup>

The exact same *ḥadīth* of Ibn Mas'ūd is found in the *Forty Ḥadīths* collection, but there it is transmitted on the authority of Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Bāqī al-Salamī al-Anṣārī (d. 535/1141), whom Ibn 'Asākir had met in Baghdad.<sup>24</sup>

These examples strongly suggest that Ibn 'Asākir was intentionally excluding from his *Forty Ḥadīths* collection any *ḥadīth* that other Damascene peers might have possessed. His obsession with his own image and reputation as unequalled in *ḥadīth* scholarship in Damascus required that he ignore all his Damascene *ḥadīth* teachers who were involved in *jihād* propaganda. Be that as it may, he still provides us with invaluable access to the religious mood in Damascus on the part of the Sunni religious establishment. The displaced scholars and their *jihād* propaganda is a case in point, and actually might help us understand the religious radicalization that went on there prior to the capture of the city by Nūr al-Dīn in 549/1154. In other words, it could very likely be the case that the religious agitation these displaced Sunni scholars exerted through *jihād* propaganda could be counted as one of the important factors that led to the revival of Sunnism in the city, and by extension in Syria. Not only did they exert a tremendous impact on one of the most famous Sunni revivalists of medieval Damascus, namely Ibn 'Asākir. Their preaching must also have prepared the ground for the Damascene community, especially the Sunni religious establishment, to look at Nūr al-Dīn as a possible savior and as champion of Sunnism. After all, their efforts and religious fervor was celebrated a few centuries later by the famous scholar of late Mamluk period Shams al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī (d. 902/1497). In *al-I'tān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamm al-tarīkh*, al-Sakhāwī praises the crucial role that Ibn 'Asākir and a group of scholars whom he calls "the Jerusalemites" played in the triumphant revivification of Sunnism in Damascus.<sup>25</sup> What al-Sakhāwī intends is that, after two centuries of Shi'i domination (in particular under Fatimid rule), Sunnism again gained the upper hand, which led to the empowerment of the Sunni religious establishment in Damascus and Syria. Al-Sakhāwī does not say in what types of activities Ibn 'Asākir and the "Jerusalemites" engaged. One can safely assume on the basis of this examination that what earned them the distinctive rank within Sunni genealogy was their direct involvement in the promotion and dissemination of *jihād* ideology during the early Crusader period, which prepared and allowed Nūr al-Dīn and later Saladin to secure the Sunni domination in Syria and Egypt.

## Endnotes

1 This paper is partly based on Suleiman A. Mourad & James E. Lindsay, *'Fight in the Name of God': Ibn 'Asakir and Jihād Ideology in the Crusader Period* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009 forthcoming). The monograph also includes a critical edition along with an English translation of Ibn 'Asākir's manual on *jihād* (*al-Arba'īn ft al-ijihād ft iqāmat al-jihād/Forty Ḥadīths on the Obligation to Wage Jihād*).

For al-Sulamī and his *Kitāb al-Jihād*, see the forthcoming study, edition, and translation by Niall Christie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2009). I thank Dr. Christie for allowing me to use a draft of his monograph.

2 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh madīnat Dimashq*, 80 vols., ed. 'Umar al-'Umrawī & 'Alī Shīrī (Beirut: Dār al-



Fikr, 1995-2001), 74:235.

3 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 74:234-36.

4 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 43:239.

5 Mourad & Lindsay, *Fight in the Name of God*', no. 18.

6 This is the only *ḥadīth* in the *Forty Ḥadīths* collection that features a transmission from al-Khaṭīb al-Baghādāī, who had the most inspirational influence on Ibn 'Asākir. The two never met, since al-Khaṭīb died almost three decades prior to the birth of Ibn 'Asākir. Yet Ibn 'Asākir was keen on preserving every known tradition or historical anecdote transmitted on the authority of al-Khaṭīb, thus leaving us a huge amount of material originally collected by al-Khaṭīb but otherwise not available in any other source.

7 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 1:579-80; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 36:200.

8 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 1:25-26; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 71:65-66.

9 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:735-36; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 43:92-93.

10 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:769-70; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 43:272-73.

11 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:807; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 48:124-25.

12 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 1:221; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 11:255.

13 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:896; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 52:144-45.

14 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:1020-22; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 55:116-17.

15 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:1194; and idem, *Ta'rīkh*, 62:40-41.

16 Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 64:99-100.

17 In the *Mu'jam*, Ibn 'Asākir lists close to 80 women-teachers.

18 One can even ask why does not Ibn 'Asākir list these *ḥadīths* on *jihād* in the respective entries for the displaced scholars in his *Ta'rīkh Dimashq*?

19 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 2:1021.

20 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 1:26.

21 Mourad & Lindsay, *Fight in the Name of God*', no. 7.

22 Al-Bistāmī resided and died in Damascus: Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 73:6-7.

23 Ibn 'Asākir, *Mu'jam*, 1:400.

24 Mourad & Lindsay, *Fight in the Name of God*', no. 3.

25 Al-Sakhāwī, *al-I'lān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamm al-tārīkh*, ed. Franz Rosenthal (Baghdad: Maktabat al-Muthannā, 1963), 294.

## The New Al-'Uşūr al-Wuṣṭā

**W**ith this issue, Al-'Uşūr al-Wuṣṭā assumes a new format, replacing the letter-size newsletter format it has had since its inception. The reduced page size should make issues easier to shelve, and the simpler page layouts will make issues significantly easier to prepare. Readers should also notice improved production quality, particularly in the illustrations, made possible by the use of new software.

Issues will no longer contain the ephemera that *UW* previously included, such as the list of annual meetings of various organizations (Middle East Studies Association, Medieval Studies Association, College Art Association, etc.), information that is now more easily and more authoritatively available on these associations' websites. *UW* will, however, continue to publish the same core content as before: articles of modest length that present new findings, summarize the state of a debate or of a field, or raise interpretive or methodological questions, written in such a manner that readers from the many different sub-fields within the broad study of the medieval Middle East can understand them—that is, articles that avoid jargon and overly technical analysis and are meant in the first instance to communicate. Such communication is more important than ever, as the study of the medieval Middle East continues the trend toward fragmentation into increasingly well-defined and technical subfields. Reviews of Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, or Turkish books of interest to *UW*'s readers will, of course, also continue to be an important feature. *UW* will now accept somewhat longer articles than before, up to (or even, in some cases, exceeding) 3500 words in length. Illustrations continue to be welcomed. The Editor encourages potential contributors to contact him with ideas for future articles: [f-donner@uchicago.edu](mailto:f-donner@uchicago.edu).

I regret the long delay in the appearance of this and some previous issues of *UW*. It was the result of numerous factors, not least among them the mounting difficulty of drawing up issues with increasingly outmoded computer software and hardware, which in the end made it very cumbersome to transfer contributions to the computer on which issues were actually prepared. The acquisition of a new layout program compatible with current computer hardware solved the technical problems, but mastering the new software has proven time-consuming. Now that this hurdle has been cleared, it should be possible to catch up with overdue issues during the next year—assuming, of course, receipt of enough submissions. Please consider submitting an article that will illuminate your colleagues on what is new in your corner of medieval Middle Eastern Studies!

I wish to record here my thanks to the Oriental Institute, its Director, Prof. Gil Stein, and its staff (particularly the staff of its publications office and its director, Tom Urban) for their continued support and technical assistance, now going on its sixteenth year. All readers of *UW* owe them a debt of gratitude.

-Fred M. Donner  
Editor, *UW*

# Mina'i Ware: Questions and Problems

Tasha Vorderstrasse

## Introduction

One of the best known and most easily recognizable types of pottery from the Islamic world is *mina'i* ware, which is illustrated in museum catalogues around the world. The popularity of the pottery amongst the collectors is not echoed by finds in archaeological excavations, however. The pottery is primarily found outside of excavations and only a few excavated fragments have been published. The lack of excavated material means that there are questions about the dating, development, provenance, distribution, and authenticity of *mina'i* ware. In other words, very little about this pottery is known despite the fact that it is such a familiar pottery type. In addition, there has been no detailed art historical study of *mina'i* ware. This short article is based upon a larger project that I am currently conducting on *mina'i* ware, which will publish material from both archaeological excavations and early museum collections. It is hoped that this article will provide some insight into the challenges faced in studying pottery of this type, matters that will be discussed in more detail in the forthcoming book.

## Definition of Minai Ware

The word that describes this type of pottery, *mina'i* (also spelled as minai or minā'ī), is the Persian word for enamel. It is not the word that was used by the actual producers and consumers

of *mina'i* ware, rather it is a term coined by modern Islamic art historians. The pottery itself is a thin-walled fritware that took considerable time, expertise, and expense to produce. The fritware paste body was usually covered with a white, turquoise, or blue tin glaze that was decorated in two stages. First, it could be decorated with inglaze pigments of turquoise, blue, and purple and fired in order to fix the colors. Then, after these colors were fixed, enamel pigments, such as red and black, would be painted onto the pot and then the piece would be fired once again. After all the firing, the piece could then be gilded.



OIM A115026

Fig. 1 Typical *mina'i* ware sherd (Oriental Institute, Chicago).

## Problems in *Mina'i* Ware

The high production values of typical *mina'i* ware have meant that it is often



Fig. 2. Mina'i ware sherd with figural image. (Oriental Institute, Chicago)

featured in museum collections. Many pieces of *mina'i* ware in museum collections, however, are suspect. The pottery has been dated to the late 12<sup>th</sup>/early 13<sup>th</sup> centuries on the basis of inscriptions, but some of these inscriptions have been shown to be forgeries.<sup>1</sup> Other vessels appear to be a pastiche of several authentic pieces, while yet others have been repainted or over painted. Only a few material science studies of *mina'i* ware have been made, and only a small number of sherds have been examined.<sup>2</sup> The lack of adequate specialized studies on *mina'i* ware has meant that it can be difficult to distinguish authentic pieces from fake ones in museum collections without scientific testing.

One of the reasons why it is so difficult to identify real *mina'i* ware and why the questions of dating must be based solely on inscriptions on the pottery is because *mina'i* ware is not commonly encountered in archaeological excavations; moreover, many of the excavations where it has been identified are either not fully published, or the artifacts are in storage and

hence difficult to obtain. The site of Rayy, for example, was always said to be one of the places where *mina'i* ware for the art market originated, but the excavations by Schmidt in the 1930s were never fully published so this claim cannot be thoroughly investigated. A few fragments from these excavations, now in the University of Chicago's Oriental Institute museum, have now been published in the recent exhibition of *mina'i* ware (see Figs. 1-3)<sup>3</sup> and several appeared in Mason's article on fritwares from Iran.<sup>4</sup> *Mina'i* wares from the excavation of Gurgan in Iran have also been published,<sup>5</sup> but these have not been fully studied.

Outside of Iran, *mina'i* ware has also been found at the site of Jām in Afghanistan, where it has been seen as an import from Persia,<sup>6</sup> as well as at the cities of Ani<sup>7</sup> and Dvin<sup>8</sup> in Armenia and in the city of Staraya Ryazan, part of the Rus principality of Ryazan, near Moscow.<sup>9</sup> The fact that the Armenian and Russian pieces have been published in Russian or Armenian language journals means that they have not attracted the attention of most Western scholars. Another piece, found in Istanbul during the course of the excavations of the Myrelaion church and identified as a Persian import, is better known, but the author decided only to publish one side.<sup>10</sup> *Mina'i* ware has also been reported from Scanlon's excavations at Fustat, but these have yet to be published. *Mina'i* ware thus seems to have had a wide distribution that went beyond the Islamic world, but the significance of that distribution has not been fully appreciated. In addition to the pieces just mentioned, tiles previously classified as *mina'i* have been found

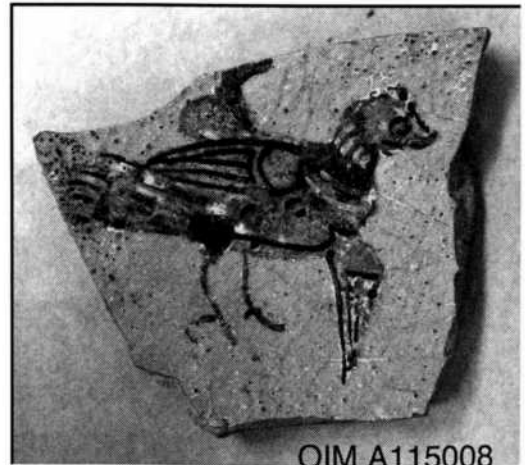


Fig. 3. Avian image on *mina'i* sherd (Oriental Institute, Chicago).



at Konya (see Fig. 4).<sup>11</sup> These tiles are, however, problematic, for they also resemble *lajvardina* pottery (which is considered a successor to *mina'i*) and may reflect a local interpretation of Persian pottery rather than actual imports. Further studies of the material from Persia and Anatolia are needed in to determine the relationship of these types of pottery to each other, but the farflung nature of existing pieces of *mina'i* ware suggests it could have been made in Persia and then exported elsewhere in small quantities.

### Conclusion

*Mina'i* ware may be one of the most familiar types of Islamic pottery, but as this brief overview has demonstrated, there are problems in dating and even in identifying it. One of the greatest difficulties has come from the lack of published *mina'i* ware either from recent scientific excavations or from earlier uncontrolled excavations, including from the site of Rayy, long considered the origin of *mina'i* ware *par excellence*. This means that our understanding of *mina'i* ware remains incomplete, including an understanding of production centers, provenance, style, and authenticity. In addition, there are concerns about the authenticity of the pieces in museum collections. Therefore, it is important to study not only material from archaeological excavations, but also to supplement this meager evidence with information from early collections. Evidence from early collections that were assembled before *mina'i* ware was popular (and therefore before there was any incentive to produce fakes), can also provide valuable evidence for *mina'i* ware. A detailed overview of the material from excavations and early collections should help provide an important point of reference for future archaeologists working in Iran and neighboring countries, as well as for museums and collectors of Islamic art.



MMA 1976.245

Fig. 4. *Mina'i* tile (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York).

### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Pease (1958); Norman (2004): 71-72, 81-82.
- <sup>2</sup> Mason (1997): 117-118; Mason, et. al. (2001): 201-205; Smith (2001): 9-12.
- <sup>3</sup> Treptow with Whitcomb (2007): 17 (quoting Schmidt's "Rayy Spring Season, 1936"), 20 (photo and watercolor reconstruction of RH6064), 21 (photo of OIMA115007), 41 (photo of OIMA115027), 42 (photo of OIMA115010 and watercolor reconstruction of RH6074), 43 (photo of OIMA115030, A115026, 115034, A115029), 45 (photo of OIMA115032), 46 (photo of OIMA115025, A115008).
- <sup>4</sup> Mason (1997): Pl. XVIIIc. These pieces are from the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia.
- <sup>5</sup> Kiani (1984): 65-66.

- <sup>6</sup> The material from the recent Cambridge excavations from Jām is not yet published. The excavators report finding two sherds of mina'i ware in the course of the 2005 excavations. A photo of a piece of mina'i ware has appeared on the excavation website (<http://www.arch.cam.ac.uk/~alg1000/mjap/>).
- <sup>7</sup> Shelkovnikov (1957): Figs. 32-33.
- <sup>8</sup> Jamgochian (1981): 143-144, Figs. 8.2, 8.5.
- <sup>9</sup> Darkevich and Starodub (1983): 190, Pl. 1b (in color).
- <sup>10</sup> Hayes (1981): 38, Fig. 82a.
- <sup>11</sup> Sarre (1936): 19-22, 42, 50-51, Abb. 16, Taf. 5-7.

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# Folding of a Paper Document from Quseir al-Qadim: a method of archiving?

Anne Regourd

**D**uring the most recent campaign of excavations conducted by the University of Southampton at the site of Quseir al-qadim (QAQ, Egypt) in 2003, an unusual “object” was found, consisting of a sheet of paper folded into an equilateral triangle.<sup>1</sup> (Fig. 1.) The folding, conducted with great care, closed the sheet irrevocably upon itself. On the visible surface could be found some writing, some of which had been erased by mechanical action; the corners of the triangle, the most exposed parts, had been soiled, probably by organic matter of human or animal origin.

This object was actually found in a trash heap of Ayyūbid remains, probably formed during the Mamlūk period (Trench 13): locations 5500 and 5520 contained some documents datable to the end of the Ayyūbid period, thanks to the identification of some individuals who figure in them, while the object with which we are concerned came to light in location 5523.

Once opened, our paper revealed two important things. First of all, a written fragment of smaller dimensions was lodged inside the larger paper. Second, the larger piece was not square in shape, but rectangular. In such a case, folding along the diagonal in order to end up with an equilateral triangle necessarily produces a remnant that, here, was re-folded “slipper-like” toward the interior of the triangle, thus producing the hermetic sealing of the paper upon itself (see Figure 2).<sup>2</sup>



Fig. 1. The folded document from Quseir al-qadīm.

Examination of the large and small papers immediately revealed that they were both fragmentary and that the writing was done in the same hand. It was therefore easy to think of putting them together. Combined, the two pieces then form a complete document, one of the rare letters reporting commercial transactions in the Southampton collection that is complete from beginning to end, aside from the ends of several lines, which are

missing because of the abrasion mentioned above. This letter is, moreover, particularly long: one counts 17 lines on the recto and 15 on the verso, to which one must add the end of the closing formula, which figures on the right margin, on one line.

As is usually the case with commercial letters from QAQ, the letter touches on several subjects, six of them very exactly, including someone's sickness, the sending of some goods, the price and condition of crops, and some accounts. But in contrast with other letters, in this case the changes of subject are signaled by the use of the same formula: "yā mawlā'ī." The structure of the letter, which furthermore falls into major divisions (laudatory introductory formulae, main body, closing formulae), is thus very clear. One of the individuals mentioned in the letter, called "*abd al-Mukhlis*," may be associated with Aḥmad 'abd al-Najīb Mūsā ibn Mukhlis, "Aḥmad, the servant of al-Najīb Mūsā ibn Mukhlis," who appears in another letter of QAQ (see Guo 2004: 254-55, verso line 4). This association serves to confirm the dating of the text to the Ayyūbid period, specifically the end of the Ayyūbid period, since Li Guo decided to select fragments from the Chicago collection on the grounds that they formed the archive of a single company, that of Abū Mufarrij. But, surely, we cannot be absolutely certain that this identification of individuals is exact.

Examination of the edges of the two fragments reveals clearly that the original letter was torn up. Moreover, the document was torn in two pieces—and not into a thousand shreds—thus permitting the reconstitution of the original text in its entirety at any moment. Was it, then, a case of accidental or intentional tearing up? Even if one cannot absolutely rule out the possibility of an accidental dismemberment, a very interesting lead has been opened by documents of the sale of

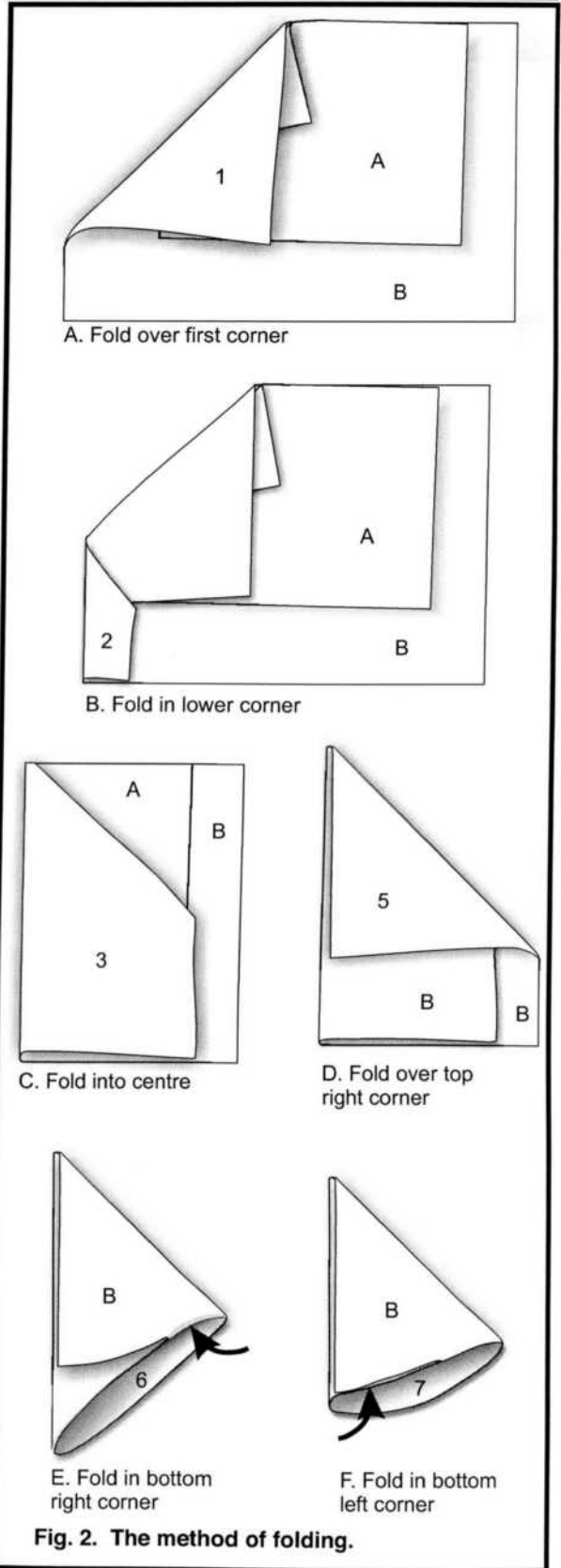


Fig. 2. The method of folding.



slaves, in Greek: several of these documents, according to those who study them, appear to have been intentionally damaged in order to cancel any obligation. This procedure finds a parallel in the cancellation by putting diagonal bars on crossed-out papers (Feissel, Gascou, Teixidor 1997).

Among the Quseir documents, the only other mark for the end of a transaction that I have been able to identify is this of the crossed-out papers. In this case, they are lists of commodities followed by a quantity, crossed out with diagonal bars; but we cannot know for sure whether they refer to quantities delivered or paid for, nor whether the transaction is written from the perspective of the supplier or the recipient. Several lists separated by a horizontal line are sometimes to be found in the same document (examples in Guo 2004: 284, and no. 6, 263-265, no. 68, 284-86; Regourd Forthcoming 2009). This system of marking is, yes, different from the one that concerns us and, besides, I have not been able to identify other cases of documents torn in two.

These observations on the manner in which the paper was torn, on the practices followed during commercial transactions, combined with the hermetic folding into a triangle, raises the following question: are we not dealing here with a method of archiving or storage, the nature of which is in some measure called forth by the division of the document into two parts?

It is true that finding other examples to support this phenomenon is a challenge, whether in the collections of documents from QAQ or through the publications from other collections. However, works devoted to folding are still limited in number, and mostly concern papyri rather than paper documents (see bibliography). The documents, when they reach the papyrologists, are already conserved, generally under glass or plexiglass, complicating the reconstitution of folds. And, at this stage, one must still remain prudent, for the practice of rolling documents survived into the Ayyūbid and Mamlūk periods; we must still establish some criteria by “feel” to decide whether a document had been folded or rolled.

But the real problem lies ahead of us, in the archaeological practice of flattening documents out in order to photograph them, without noting down the different stages in opening them up. Documents collected in excavations, however, are precisely those that might reveal this kind of information.

The manner of folding, as I have tried to show here, may provide evidence of methods of archiving. Following on these first inquiries, we should be sure not to lose sight of other clues. Are different ways of folding markers of types of documents? This, it seems to me, is one interesting aspect of the studies, still in their infancy, on the ways talismans are folded. To close on a point of methodology: we must insist on the importance of a systematic recording of the methods of archiving, in particular of folding.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Two campaigns of excavation that uncovered Islamic materials were carried out at QAQ: the first, conducted by D. Whitcomb for the University of Chicago, took place in 1978, 1980, and 1982; the second, conducted by D. Peacock and L. Blue for the University of Southampton, occurred over five years, from 1999 until 2003.

80 paper documents from the Chicago collection were published by Li Guo (Guo 2004), who presents the characteristics of the assemblage in his introduction. For a general presentation of the Southampton collection, see Regourd 2003, Regourd 2004, and Regourd Forthcoming 2008. A monograph comprising publication of roughly 50 documents is in preparation (Regourd Forthcoming 2009); it could not have been realized without the financial support of the AHRC for the University of Leeds project “Reconstructing the Quseiri Arabic Documents” (RQAD). I offer warm thanks the members of the Southampton archaeological team, who willingly responded to my questions over a lengthy period. The document examined here bears the inventory number QAQ/PA0597.

<sup>2</sup> It is worth noting that the trash heap also yielded other organic artifacts, some fabrics, and some copper objects; see Peacock, Blue, and Moser (eds.) (2003), and Peacock and Blue (Forthcoming 2008).

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Feissel D., Gascou J. & Teixidor J. 1997. « Documents d'archives romains inédits du Moyen Euphrate », *Journal des Savants* 6-7, 3-57.

Werner Diem has made a systematic study of the fold-marks in the physical description of documents from the National Library of Vienna he has published:

Diem W. 1995. *Arabische Geschäftsbriefe des 10. bis 14. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. (= Documenta Arabica Antiqua : 1)

Diem, W. 1996a. *Arabische Privatbriefe des 9. bis 15. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz. (= Documenta Arabica Antiqua : 2)

Diem, W. 1996b. *Arabische amtliche Briefe des 10. bis 16. Jahrhunderts aus der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek in Wien*, Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz, (= Documenta Arabica Antiqua : 3)

Methods of folding are also addressed systematically in:

Karabacek J. 1894. *Papyrus Erzherzog Rainer. Führer durch die Ausstellung*. Vienna:

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# Theological Rationalism in the Medieval World of Islam

Sabine Schmidtke

## I.

Rationalism has been a salient feature of Muslim theological thought from the earliest times. The disputed issue of authenticity notwithstanding, a small corpus of texts is extant in which doctrinal issues such as free will versus determinism are dealt with in a dilemmatic dialogue pattern. The display of the dialectical technique in these texts testifies to the use of reason in the formulation of and argumentation for doctrinal issues from a very early period onwards (Cook 1980; 1981; van Ess 1975; 1977). Despite the fact that rationalism had its opponents throughout Islamic history, it continued to be one of the mainstays of Muslim theological thought, and it is only in the wake of modern Islamic fundamentalism that rationalism has become marginalized and threatened as never before.

The Mu'tazila was the earliest "school" of rationalist Islamic theology, known as *kalām*, and one of the most important and influential currents of Islamic thought. Mu'tazilites stressed the primacy of reason and free will (as opposed to predestination) and developed an epistemology, ontology and psychology which provided a basis for explaining the nature of the world, God, man and the phenomena of religion such as revelation and divine law. In their ethics, Mu'tazilites maintained that good and evil can be known solely through human reason. With their characteristic epistemology, they were also largely responsible for the development of the highly sophisticated discipline of legal methodology.

The Mu'tazila had its beginnings in the 8<sup>th</sup> century and its classical period of development was from the latter part of the 9<sup>th</sup> until the middle of the 11<sup>th</sup> century CE. While it briefly enjoyed the status of an "official" theology under the Abbasid caliphs in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the movement had coalesced into two main schools by the turn of the 10<sup>th</sup> century: the school of Baghdad and that of Basra. The dominant figures of the Basran school were Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī (d. 916) and his son Abū Hāshim (d. 933). The followers of Abū Hāshim formed an important sub-school known as the Bahshamiyya. Of the various members of this school, one can mention the following: Abū Hāshim's disciple, Abū 'Alī b. Khallād (d. ca. 961), Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Baṣrī (d. 980) and Abū Ishāq b. 'Ayyāsh, who were students of Ibn Khallād. The chief judge 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (d. 1025) was a student of Abū 'Abd Allāh and Abū Ishāq and a very prolific author. One of 'Abd al-Jabbār's own students, Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 1044), established what seems to have been the

last creative school of thought among the Mu'tazila. The movement gradually fell out of favor in Sunni Islam and had largely disappeared by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. Its impact, however, continued to be felt in Shī'ī Islam where its influence subsisted through the centuries and can be seen even today. Moreover, modern research on the Mu'tazila from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards gave rise to a renaissance of the Mu'tazilite notion of rationalism finding its expression in the so-called "Neo- Mu'tazila", a vague term designating various strands of contemporary Muslim thinkers who lean on the Mu'tazilite heritage to substantiate the significance of rationalism in modern Muslim discourse (Hildebrandt 2007; al-Mas'ūdī 2008).

Second in importance in the use of rationalism was the theological movement of the so-called Ash'ariyya, named thus after its eponymous founder, Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (d. 935), a former student of the Mu'tazilite master Abū 'Alī al-Jubbā'ī. At the age of about forty, Ash'arī abandoned the teachings of Mu'tazilism and set out to formulate his own doctrinal system. Ash'arī and his followers aimed at formulating a *via media* between the two dominant opposing strands of the time, Mu'tazilism and traditionalist Islam (in the brand of Ḥanbalism). Methodologically, they applied rationalism in their theological thought and writings as was characteristic for the Mu'tazila while still maintaining the primacy of revelation over that of reason. Doctrinally, they upheld the notion of ethical subjectivism as against the ethical objectivism of Mu'tazilism, and they elaborated the notion of man's "acquisition" (*kasb*) of his acts as a way to mediate between the Mu'tazilite notion of free will and the traditionalist position of predestination. On this basis, they developed their own theological doctrines. As is characteristic for the development of Islamic theological thought, Ash'arī adopted various concepts into his doctrinal system that had been formulated by earlier thinkers (Perler/Rudolph 2000). For example, the first to attempt to combine the rational methodology of the Mu'tazilites with the doctrinal positions of the traditionalists had in fact been Ibn Kullāb (d. 855 ?), and the notion of man's "acquisition" of his acts had first been formulated by Ḍirār b. 'Amr (d. 796). However, due to the subsequent success of the Ash'ariyya as a theological school these earlier predecessors soon sank into oblivion.

By the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Ash'arism had established itself as one of the prevalent theological movements in the central lands of Islam mainly thanks to the prominent theologian and Malikite judge Abū Bakr al-Bāqillānī (d. 1013) who enjoyed the patronage of the Būyid vizier al-Şāḥib b. 'Abbād (d. 995), as had been the case with his Mu'tazilite contemporary 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī. Moreover, it was through Bāqillānī's students Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Fūrak (d. 1015) and Abū Ishāq al-Isfarā'īnī (d. 1020) who both taught in Rayy and Nishapur that Ash'arism soon also spread into Persia, where some of the most prominent Ash'arite theologians of the following generations emerged. Thanks to the spread of the Malikite school of law in North Africa, Bāqillānī's theological writings became also popular in this region and it is here that fragments of his *opus magnum*, *Kitāb hidāyat al-mustarshidīn*, have been preserved in manuscript. Ash'arism reached a further peak during the early Seljuk period when it enjoyed the official support of the vizier Niẓām al-Mulk (d. 1099) and became a central component within the curriculum of the Niẓāmiyya network of educational institutions; the main Ash'arite theologians of the time were Abū Bakr Aḥmad b. Muḥammad al-Fūrakī (d. 1085) and the famous Imām al-Ḥaramayn Abū l-Ma'ālī al-Juwaynī (d. 1085). As was the case with Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣṣī among the Mu'tazilites, Juwaynī was the first to integrate philosophical methods and notions into Ash'arite *kalām*, and there is in fact evidence that Juwaynī had intensively studied and was deeply influenced by Abū l-Ḥusayn's writings (Madelung 2006). With Juwaynī the early phase of Ash'arism comes to an end, and the next phase is characterized by an increasing integration of philosophy and logic

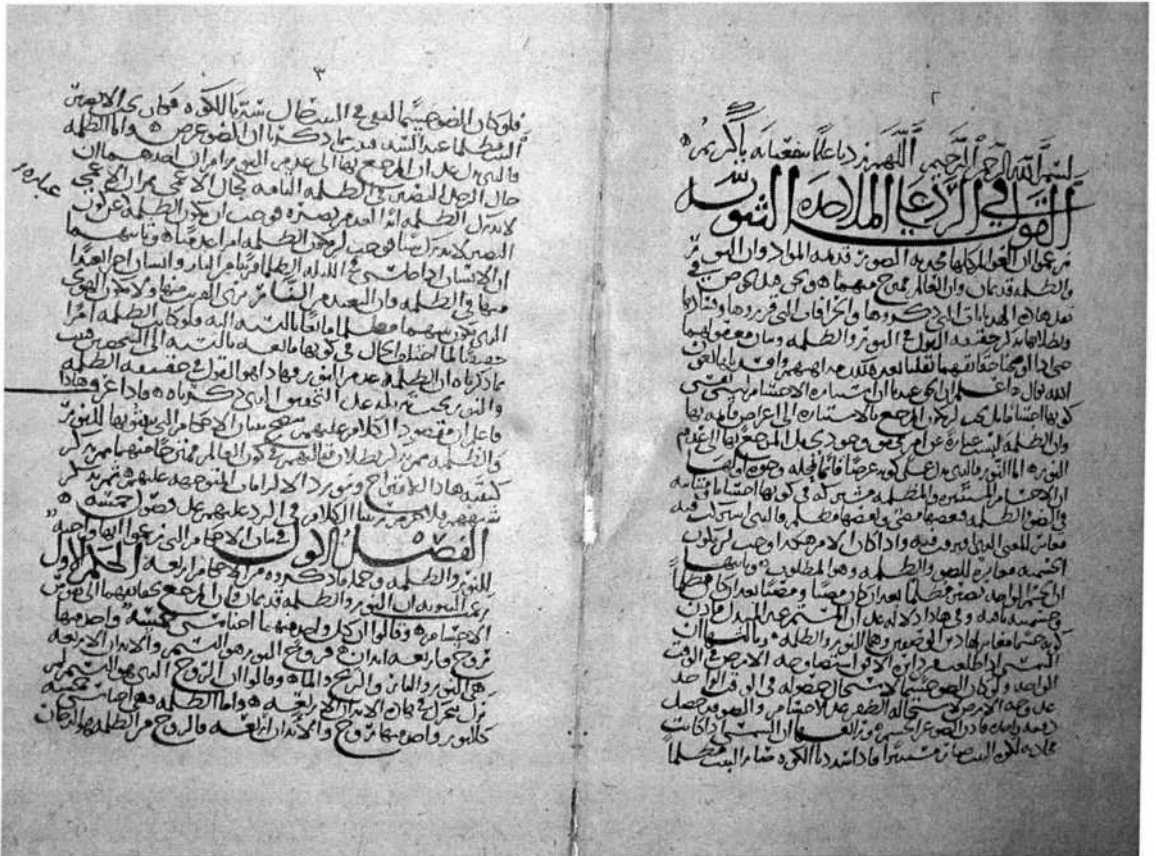


into theological methodology and thought. This phase was opened by Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) and among its most significant authors are Muḥammad b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Shahrastānī (d. 1153) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 1209). In the Eastern lands of Islam, Ash'arism remained one of the most salient strands of thought until the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Within the Sunni realm at least, Ash'arism proved more successful and enjoyed a longer life than Mu'tazilism, yet, like Mu'tazilism, Ash'arism was constantly challenged by traditionalist opponents rejecting any kind of rationalism.

The various strands of rational Muslim theological thought within Islam are closely related to each other as they were shaped and re-shaped in a continuous process of close interaction between its respective representatives. This also holds true for other theological schools that were less prominent in the central areas of the Islamic world, such as the Māturīdiyya (named thus after its eponym Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī, d. 944) which was heavily indebted to traditional Ḥanafite positions and to Mu'tazilite thought alike, but whose centre was in the North-East of Iran (Transoxania) so that it has made relatively little impact (with the exception of the central Ottoman lands) (Rudolph 1997; Badeen 2008).

II.

What has been stated about the close interaction between the various strands of thought



The first page from an autograph manuscript from Yemen of volume 2 of the Kitāb al-Shāmil bi-haqā'iq al-adilla al-'aqliyya wa-uṣūl al-masā'il al-dīniyya by al-Mām al-Mu'ayyad bi-llāh Yahyā b. Ḥamza (d. 749/1348-49). Courtesy of the Zayd b. Alī Foundation.

within Islam equally applies to the relations of Islam with other religions that were prominently represented in the medieval world of Islam, namely Judaism and Christianity. Here, similar phenomena of reciprocity can be observed. Jews, Christians, and Muslims, educated as well as uneducated, had Arabic (and, at times, Persian) as their common language and therefore naturally shared a similar cultural background. Often reading the same books and all speaking and writing in the same language, they created a unique intellectual commonality in which an ongoing, constant exchange of ideas, texts, and forms of discourse was the norm rather than the exception. This characteristic of the medieval world of Islam – which has aptly been described as a “crosspollination” (Goodman 1995; 1999; Montgomery 2007) or a “whirlpool effect” (Stroumsa 2008) – requires that any study of theological rationalism disregard religious borders. The one-dimensional perspective that still prevails in modern research should be replaced by true multi-dimensionalism.

There is a near-consensus among contemporary scholars that the Muslim dialectical technique of *kalām* can be traced back to similar patterns of dilemmatic dialogue that were characteristic of late antique Christological controversies, particularly those raging in sixth century Alexandria and, more importantly, seventh century Syria (Cook 1980; Zimmermann 1985; Brock 1986; Hoyland 1997; Reynolds 2004). Moreover, Muslim theologians devoted much thought and energy to a critical examination and refutation of the views of Christianity and (to a lesser extent) Judaism, as is evident from the numerous polemical tracts written by them against these religions. While the majority of refutations of Christianity by early Muslim theologians are lost, there are a few extant anti-Christian texts from the 9<sup>th</sup> century that give a good impression of the arguments that were employed (Thomas 2004). Extant examples of such works from the 10<sup>th</sup> century are the comprehensive *Kitāb tathbīt dalā’il al-nubuwwa* by the Mu‘tazilite ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī (Reynolds 2004) and, within the Ash‘arite camp, the *Shifā’ al-ghalīl* by Juwaynī or the *Radd al-jamīl li-ilāhiyyāt ‘Isā bi-ṣarḥ al-injīl* which is attributed to Ghazālī and may indeed be by him (El-Kaisy Friemuth 2007; Thomas 2007).

Moreover, many of the earliest treatises in Arabic in defense of Christianity are preserved. These were written by theologians representing the three main Christian groups in the Middle East during the first Abbasid century: the Melkite Theodore Abū Qurra (d. c. 830), the Nestorian ‘Ammār al-Baṣrī (d. c. 845), and the Jacobite Ḥabīb ibn Khidma Abū Rā’iṭa (d. c. 855). We know from Muslim sources that these three Christian theologians were in dialogue with Muslim rational theologians. Moreover, from their respective defenses of those Christian doctrines that became the standard focus of Muslim/Christian controversies – that is, the Trinity, Incarnation, Baptism, Eucharist, veneration of the cross, and the direction to be faced in prayer – it is evident that they were well acquainted with Muslim *kalām* techniques and terminologies (Griffith 2002). Given the basic disagreements between Muslim and Christian theological positions, such as the Muslim notion of divine unicity (*tawḥīd*), which is incompatible with the Christian understanding of trinity and incarnation, it was out of the question that Christian theologians would adopt much from Muslim school doctrines. The most extensive reception of Muslim *kalām* can be observed among Coptic writers. While the first major Coptic author writing in Arabic appeared relatively late in the person of Severus (Sawīrus) ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. after 987), the Copts produced in subsequent centuries a corpus of Christian literature in Arabic whose size exceeds by far what was written by all other Arab Christian communities taken together (Graf 1947:294ff; Sidarus 1993). As has been shown in detail for Abū Shākir Ibn al-Rāhib and al-Mu’taman Ibn al-‘Assāl (both 13<sup>th</sup> c.), Coptic writers of this epoch were particularly influenced by the writings of the Ash‘arite theologian Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (Sidarus 1975; Wadi 1997; Schwarb [forthcoming]).

Judaism proved much more receptive to basic Muslim doctrinal notions such as divine unicity than Christianity, and it was Mu'tazilism in particular that was adopted to varying degrees from the 9<sup>th</sup> century onwards by both Rabbanite and Karaite authors, so that by the turn of the 11<sup>th</sup> century a "Jewish Mu'tazila" had emerged. Jewish scholars both composed original works along Mu'tazilite lines and produced copies of Muslim Mu'tazilite books, often transcribed into Hebrew characters. Prime examples of original Jewish Mu'tazilite works are the Karaite Yūsuf al-Başīr's (d. ca. 1040) *al-Kitāb al-muḥtawī* and his shorter *Kitāb al-tamyīz* (Vajda 1985; Sklare 1995; von Abel 2005; Madelung & Schmidtke 2006), the *Kitāb al-ni'ma* of his older contemporary Levi ben Yefet (Sklare 2007), or the *Kitāb al-tawriya* of Başīr's student Yesu'a ben Yehudah. The influence of the Mu'tazila found its way to the very centers of Jewish religious and intellectual life in the East. Several of the Heads of the ancient Rabbanite academies (Yeshivot) of Sura and Pumbedita (relocated by the 10<sup>th</sup> century to Baghdad) adopted the Mu'tazilite worldview. One of them, Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon (d. 1013), was closely familiar with the works of Ibn Khallād and personally acquainted with Abū 'Abd Allāh al-Başīr (Sklare 1996). Moreover, as had been the case with Christian writers, the Mu'tazilite doctrines and terminology provided a basis for discussion and polemical exchanges between Jewish and Muslim scholars (Sklare 1999). By contrast, Ash'arite works and authors had been received among Jewish scholars to a significantly lesser degree and in a predominantly critical way (Sinai 2005).

Mu'tazilism had also left its mark on the theological thought of the Samaritans, for example the 11<sup>th</sup> century author Abū I-Ḥasan al-Şūrī. It is not clear whether Samaritans (whose intellectual centres between the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> centuries were mainly Nablus and Damascus) had studied Muslim Mu'tazilite writings directly or whether they became acquainted with them through Jewish adaptations of Mu'tazilism. The majority of Samaritan theological writings composed in Arabic still await a close analysis, but a cursory investigation of the extant manuscript material confirms that Abū I-Ḥasan al-Şūrī was by no means an exception (Wedel 2007).

There are many other examples of the intellectual whirlpool process in the medieval world of Islam across the denominational borders. The following two should suffice to demonstrate that a truly multi-dimensional approach is needed to grasp these processes. The earliest extant systematic *kalām* treatise was authored by Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammaş, a former Jew who converted to Christianity and later re-converted to Judaism. Al-Muqammaş was a student of the Jacobite theologian Nonnus of Nisibis (d. c. 870) and his work, *Ishrūn maqāla*, shows characteristics of Muslim *kalām* as well as of Christian doctrines, while the overall outlook of the book is Jewish (Stroumsa 1989; 2007). The second example concerns the towering Jewish thinker Mūsā b. Maymūn al-Qurṭubī ("Maimonides", d. 1204) who was well-read in Muslim literature and widely received among Muslim and Christian medieval readers alike as is indicated by the many traces of his *Guide of the Perplexed* that are left in the later Muslim and Christian literature (Schwarb 2007).

### III.

Within the field of Islamic studies, scientific research on Muslim rational theology is a comparatively young discipline, as a critical mass of primary sources became accessible only at a relatively late stage. Mu'tazilite works were evidently not widely copied and relatively few manuscripts have survived. So little authentic Mu'tazilite literature was available that until the publication of some significant texts in the 1960's, Mu'tazilite doctrine was mostly known through the works of its opponents. The study of Mu'tazilite thought did, however, make slow but steady

progress throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because Mu'tazilite thinking was virtually banned from the center of the Sunni world from about the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, it was not considered an integral part of Islamic intellectual history by earlier Western scholars. Given the rationalistic approach of the Mu'tazila towards theological issues, 19<sup>th</sup> century historians of thought generally considered the Mu'tazilites as "freethinkers" within Islam who had been influenced by Greek philosophical thought and thus constituted an anomaly within Islamic intellectual history (e.g. Steiner 1865).

This evaluation, which was based almost exclusively on heresiographies written by non-Mu'tazilites, was proven to be wrong at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a result of the publication of several significant texts. In 1925 the Swedish scholar H.S. Nyberg edited the *Kitāb al-intiṣār* of the Baghdadī Mu'tazilite Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Khayyāt (d. ca. 913), a refutation of the polemical treatise of the sceptic Ibn al-Rawandī (d. 860 or 912 ?), *Faḍīḥat al-mu'tazila*, which in turn was directed against Jāhīz's (d. 868) pro-Mu'tazilite *Kitāb faḍīlat al-mu'tazila* (Nyberg 1925). Although Khayyāt's work does not contain extensive information on the views of the Mu'tazilites due to its apologetical character, it was the first work authored by a Mu'tazilite available in print. Of much greater significance for the study of Mu'tazilism was Hellmut Ritter's edition of Abū l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī's doxography, *Maqālāt al-islamiyyin*, published in 1929-30 (Ritter 1929-30). This work provided reliable insights into the positions of the Mu'tazilites, as the author had originally been a follower of this movement and was familiar with the Mu'tazilite writings of his time.

The next decisive step in the study of Mu'tazilite thought occurred when in the early 1950's a number of manuscripts were discovered in Yemen during an expedition of a group of Egyptian scholars. These manuscripts contained mostly works of various representatives of the Bahshamiyya. They included fourteen out of the original twenty volumes of the encyclopaedic *Kitāb al-mughnī fī abwāb al-tawḥīd wa-l-'adl* of 'Abd al-Jabbār al-Hamadhānī, which were subsequently edited in Egypt (1961-65). Further writings of adherents of the Bahshamiyya that were found in the library of the Great Mosque in Ṣan'ā were also edited during the 1960's. Among them mention should be made of *Ta'līq sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa*, a recension of the *Sharḥ al-uṣūl al-khamsa* of 'Abd al-Jabbār by one of his followers, the Zaydī Imām Mānakdīm (d. 1034) (Mānakdīm 1965), as well as *Kitāb al-majmū' fī l-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf*, a recension of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *al-Kitāb al-muḥīṭ bi-l-taklīf* by another follower of his, namely Ibn Mattawayh (Ibn Mattawayh 1965-99).

However, despite these rich finds, numerous lacunae remain. On the one hand, only few texts by thinkers prior to 'Abd al-Jabbār were discovered in Yemen. The same applies to rival groups to the Bahshamiyya such as the Ikhshīdiyya, or the school of Baghdad. Furthermore, quite significant parts of works by adherents of the Bahshamiyya were still unaccounted for. For example, volumes 1-3, 10 and 18-19 of the *Mughnī* were not found, nor were other works by 'Abd al-Jabbār, such as the original version of *al-Kitāb al-muḥīṭ* or his *Sharḥ kashf al-a'rāḍ*. Moreover, the finds of the 1950's suggested that the Bahshamiyya had constituted the last innovative and dynamic school within Mu'tazilism. This impression was proven to be incorrect only some decades later, when Wilferd Madelung and Martin McDermott discovered and edited the extant fragments of Rukn al-Dīn Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Malāḥimī's (d. 1141) *Kitāb al-mu'tamad fī uṣūl al-dīn* and his shorter *Kitāb al-fā'iq fī uṣūl al-dīn* (Ibn al-Malāḥimī 1991; 2007). Ibn al-Malāḥimī was a follower of the teachings of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī, the founder of what seems to have been the last innovative school within the Mu'tazila. From his writings it is evident that Abū l-Ḥusayn's views differed significantly from those of his teacher 'Abd al-Jabbār and that he formulated novel positions on a number of central issues. Not found in Yemen, however, were theological writings by Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī himself. Nor were any contemporary texts by adversaries of Abū l-Ḥusayn



discovered; these might have given evidence of the vehement disputations that took place between the adherents of the Bahshamiyya on the one hand and Abū l-Ḥusayn on the other. It is only from later sources that we know that the animosities between the two groups must have been very strong indeed.

The study of Jewish Mu'tazilism began a century ago with the works of Salomo Munk (1859) and Martin Schreiner (1895). Schreiner and Munk, however, were not aware of the primary sources found among the various Geniza materials that were discovered and retrieved during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in Cairo by a number of scholars and manuscript collectors. Thirteen of the Mu'tazilite manuscripts found in the Abraham Firkovitch collection (taken from the Geniza, or storeroom, of the Karaite Synagogue in Cairo) were described in detail by Andreij J. Borisov in an article published in 1935. Between 1939 and 1943, Leon Nemoj published *Kitāb al-anwār wal-marāqib* by the Karaite Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī (fl. early 10<sup>th</sup> c. in Baghdad). Additional landmarks in the study of Jewish Mu'tazilism were Harry A. Wolfson's *Repercussions of the Kalam in Jewish Philosophy* (1979) and Georges Vajda's works on Yūsuf al-Baṣīr, particularly his edition of Baṣīr's *al-Kitāb al-muḥṭawī* on the basis of a manuscript from the Kaufmann collection in Budapest (Vajda 1985). Haggai Ben-Shammai has studied Mu'tazilite elements in the works of early Karaite authors of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī and Yefet ben Eli (Ben-Shammai 1978). On the basis of Borisov's descriptions of the Firkovitch Mu'tazilite manuscripts and from fragments in the British Library, Ben-Shammai was moreover able to draw additional conclusions regarding the identity of some of the Mu'tazilite materials preserved by the Karaites, showing in particular that the Karaites had preserved the original version of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *al-Kitāb al-muḥīṭ* (Ben-Shammai 1974). Sarah Stroumsa has published the *Ishrūn maqāla* of Dāwūd b. Marwān al-Muqammaṣ (Stroumsa 1989; 2007), and David Sklare has reconstructed some of the Mu'tazilite writings of Samuel ben Ḥofni Gaon (Sklare 1996) and investigated the impact of Mu'tazilite thought on the legal writings of Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (Sklare 1995).

In 2003, the "Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project Group" was founded by the present author together with David Sklare in order to assemble and identify as many Mu'tazilite manuscript materials as possible from Jewish as well as Shī'ī repositories. One of the most spectacular recent findings by members of the group are three extensive fragments of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣīr's *Kitāb taṣaffuḥ al-adilla*, which was believed to be completely lost (Madelung & Schmidtke 2006a), as well as fragments of two refutations of the doctrine of Abū l-Ḥusayn, authored by his contemporary, the Karaite Yūsuf al-Baṣīr (Madelung & Schmidtke 2006; 2007). In addition, portions of 'Abd al-Jabbār's *Mughnī* from volumes that had not been found among the Yemeni manuscripts have been discovered and edited (Schmidtke 2007; Hamdan & Schmidtke [in press]; Schwarb [in press]). Moreover, an anonymous commentary on Ibn Mattawayh's *Kitāb al-tadhkira*, which is preserved in an apparently unique manuscript copy housed at the Aṣghar Mahdawī Library in Tehran, has been made available in a facsimile publication (Schmidtke 2006). In addition, numerous Mu'tazilite writings that were presumed lost were recently found in Yemen and India, including Ibn al-Malāḥimī's critique of Peripatetic philosophy, *Tuḥfat al-mutakallimīn fī l-radd 'alā l-falāsifa* (Anṣārī 2001) that is now available in critical edition (eds. H. Anṣārī & W. Madelung, Tehran 2008).

Although much has been achieved over the past years, many Mu'tazilite textual materials still remain unexplored. Among the documents to be found in the various Geniza collections, the material that originated in the Ben Ezra Geniza (Cairo) and is nowadays mostly preserved in the Taylor-Schechter collection at Cambridge University Library (and other libraries in Europe and the



USA) is until now still largely unidentified and only rudimentarily catalogued (Baker & Polliack 2001; Shvitiel & Niessen 2006). It is to be expected that a systematic study of all Mu'tazilite fragments will render possible the reconstruction of many more hitherto lost Mu'tazilite (Muslim and Jewish) writings. As such, this Geniza material would significantly supplement the extensive findings of the Geniza material found in the Firkovitch Collection (St. Petersburg), which likewise has so far only partly been explored (Schmidtke 2007). Moreover, it is only during the last years that the vast holdings of the various private and smaller public libraries of Yemen are being made available to the scholarly community, mainly through the efforts of the Zayd b. Ali Cultural Foundation (IZBACF) (see <[www.izbacf.org](http://www.izbacf.org)>). While some of these materials have been used for various publications by members of the "Mu'tazilite Manuscripts Project Group", the majority still awaits close study. This also applies to the development of Mu'tazilite thought among the Zaydites from the 12<sup>th</sup> century onwards.

The study of Samaritan literary activities in Arabic in general and of Samaritan Mu'tazilism in particular is still very much at the beginning. The only relevant text which has been partly edited and studied is the *Kitāb al-ṭubākh* by the 11<sup>th</sup> century author Abū I-Ḥasan al-Ṣūrī, who clearly shares the Mu'tazilite doctrinal outlook (Wedel 1987; 2007). This deplorable state of research is all the more astonishing as the conditions for a systematic investigation of Samaritan theological thought are ideal. A microfilm collection containing virtually the entire extant literary legacy of the Samaritans written in Arabic (not including, however, the materials of the Firkovitch collection) is owned by the library of the Institute of Arabic and Semitic Studies of the Freie Universität Berlin (see <[www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/semiarab/](http://www.geschkult.fu-berlin.de/e/semiarab/)>).

While modern research on the Mu'tazila began relatively late, research on Ash'arism started already in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, as more manuscripts of Ash'arite texts are preserved in European libraries than is the case with Mu'tazilite texts. In 1876 Wilhelm Spitta published a first monograph on the eponymous founder of the movement, and in 1889 Martin Schreiner published a first extended historical survey of the Ash'ariyya. Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-irshād* was first published in 1938 in a critical edition by Jean D. Luciani, together with a translation into French. Major landmarks in the 20<sup>th</sup> century were the publications of Richard J. McCarthy. In 1953, he published a monograph containing critical editions and translations of most of Ash'arī's extant writings, and in 1957 he published a critical edition of Bāqillānī's *Kitāb al-tamhīd*. An in-depth historical study of the development of the school up to the time of Juwaynī was made by Michel Allard (Allard 1965), who had also published critical editions of two texts by Juwaynī, *Shifā' al-ghalīl* and *Luma' fī qawā'id ahl al-sunna wa-l-jamā'a* (Allard 1968). Additional advances in recent decades were made by the numerous studies of Richard M. Frank (e.g., Frank 1994; 2007) and Daniel Gimaret (Gimaret 1985; 1987; 1990). In addition to the efforts by Western scholars, many scholars in the Islamic world have also contributed significantly to the research of this movement (e.g., al-Bukhtī 2005).

This progress notwithstanding, many desiderata in the scholarly investigation of the Ash'ariyya still remain, particularly with respect to the earlier phase of the movement, prior to Ghazālī. Of the two most prominent theologians of that period, Bāqillānī and Juwaynī, we possess so far only a very limited number of writings, and in both cases the respective major work – *Hidāyat al-mustarshidīn* of Bāqillānī and *Kitāb al-shāmil* of Juwaynī – is only partly extant (as far as is known so far at least). Moreover, many other theologians of this period whose writings contain highly valuable information on the doctrinal outlooks of the various representatives of the

earliest phase still remain unedited and unstudied. To what extent these texts can revolutionize research can be learned from Ibn Fūrak's *Mujarrad maqālāt al-Ash'arī*. It was published in 1987 by Daniel Gimaret on the basis of a single extant manuscript preserved in Medina (Gimaret 1987), and on the basis of it he was able to write his so far unsurpassed study on the doctrinal thought of the founder of the movement (Gimaret 1990). Moreover, Juwaynī's *Kitāb al-irshād*, a summary of his larger *Kitāb al-shāmil*, gave rise to a number of commentaries by some of his students and later followers, as is evident, e.g., from the partially extant commentary by Abū l-Qāsim Salmān b. Nāṣir al-Nīsābūrī al-Anṣārī (d. 1118), *al-Ghunya fī l-kalām* (MS III Ahmet 1916). Juwaynī's otherwise mostly lost *Kitāb al-shāmil* (eds. Klopfer 1959; Nashshār [et al.] 1969; Frank 1981; 'Umar 1999) was frequently used and often paraphrased by the authors of those commentaries. We also possess a manuscript containing a summary of the text by an anonymous author entitled *al-Kāmil fī ikhtisār al-shāmil* (MS III Ahmet 1322). The *Kitāb al-shāmil* is also frequently cited in the theological *summa* by another student of his, Abū l-Ḥasan 'Alī al-Kiyā' Harrāsī (d. 1110), which is likewise extant in manuscript (MS Cairo, Dār al-kutub, 'ilm al-kalām 290). An in-depth search of all catalogued (Arabic) manuscript collections will no doubt bring to light a considerable amount of new material.

Nearly all extant writings of the first generation of Christian *mutakallimūn* writing in Arabic have been edited, and many have been translated (Bacha 1904; Graf 1910; 1951; Hayek 1977; Lamoreaux 2005), and modern scholars, such as Sidney H. Griffith and David Thomas, have studied them in detail. Likewise, all of the few extant anti-Christian writings by Muslim rational theologians have been published in critical editions (di Matteo 1921-22; Finkel 1926; Thomas 2002). By contrast, much work still needs to be done on the vast corpus of Coptic Christian writings, few of which have so far been published in critical editions, let alone studied. It is this corpus that still needs to be made available in critical editions and to be studied in order to locate them within the whirlpool of intellectual history in the medieval world of Islam.

#### IV.

What should be the next step in research is a focus on theological rationalism in the medieval world of Islam *beyond and across* denominational borders. A continuous, reciprocal exchange of ideas, texts, and forms of discourse was the norm among the followers of the three monotheistic denominations rather than the exception. This widely accepted historical reality notwithstanding, scholars still usually opt for a one-dimensional approach with a focus (often exclusive) on either Muslim, Jewish or Christian authors and their writings along the established boundaries between three main disciplines of academia and research, viz. Islamic Studies, Jewish Studies and the study of Eastern Christianity. This pattern should be replaced with a multi-dimensional interdisciplinarity that is justified by the historical reality of the periods and regions under investigation. Moreover, in such an endeavor one should also seek to connect between the leading researchers in the field who are not only separated by the established disciplinary boundaries but also by political ones. Closer cooperation should be sought among researchers from the West (including Israel) and the Islamic world so as to create a new quality within research. Intellectual history characteristically disregards any national, religious, cultural and economic borders and intellectual symbiosis was often the norm rather than the exception in medieval and pre-modern time, and this holds particularly true in one of today's hottest conflict areas, the Middle East.

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al-Ḥiyārī's book is a biography of Saladin that focuses on the politico-military aspects of his career and sidelines other aspects of the period's history, such as economics and social life. The book is structured into eighteen chapters that retrace Saladin's career in temporal sequence, from chapter 1 "Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn and Asad ad-Dīn" to chapter 18

"The auspicious end". Some 14 appendices (p. 477-534) offer extended quotations from primary sources, mostly letters to and from the Caliph or *khuṭbas*.

The book offers few surprises: the narrative summarizes the known events without engaging in scholarly discussion on deviating interpretations, and the sources that are used are well known. The first aspect is linked to the facts that the author does not pay heed to any Arabic secondary sources and that he considers English secondary sources only until ca. 1980. On the other hand, the primary sources used are the standard texts of the period (for example Ibn al-Qalānisī/*Ta'rīkh Dimashq*; Ibn Shaddād/*al-Nawādir*; 'Imād al-Dīn/*al-Faṭḥ* and *al-Barq*; Ibn al-Athīr/*Kāmil*) and later sources (for instance Abū Shāma/*al-Rawḍatayn*; Ibn Wāṣil/*Mufarrij*; al-Maqrīzī/*al-Itti'āz*). al-Ḥiyārī closely follows these texts and extended quotations from them pervade his narrative.

al-Ḥiyārī's principal argument is that Saladin was a true political leader in the sense that he did not act alone, but took the advice of his entourage seriously. The combination of military and political/administrative leadership was the decisive reason for Saladin's rise, his successful career and his enduring legacy. Nevertheless, the book's main merit is not to offer an original approach, but to summarize the standard primary sources into a quite readable narrative overview of Saladin's career. With this book al-Ḥiyārī, who was formerly attached to the History Department of the Jordanian University, wrote no monograph to be read from front to back, but rather a reference work which one might consult for specific aspects of Saladin's career.

Sulaymān's book also pursues the theme of Saladin's qualities as ruler and leader. However, while this theme is rather weakly developed by al-Ḥiyārī, Sulaymān pursues it in more depth: In a quite interesting introductory section he discusses

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the crucial terms of his study (for instance *ḥukm*, *qiyāda*, *ri'āsa*; absolute/restricted/popular ruler; centralization/decentralization). The following nine sections treat the career of Saladin in broad temporal sequence, but the author returns repeatedly to his main theme, rulership, and inserts thematic sections that cross the tight chronological sequence.

In terms of secondary sources, Sulaymān cites the main works of relevance in Arabic, but does not refer to titles in any other language. The printed primary sources cover the well-known titles, but the author consulted in addition further non-published sources. These include for example as-Suyūṭī's *Risāla fī al-ta'rīkh min al-khulafā' al-rāshidīn ilā awākhir al-dawla al-'Abbāsīya* (Taḥṭāwī, 243) and Ibn Shihna's *Rawḍat al-manāẓir fī akhbār al-awā'il wa-al-awākhir* (Taḥṭāwī, 155). This material allows the author to shed occasionally new light on aspects of Saladin's career.

The standard presentist concerns (What can we learn from history in order to fight the contemporary Crusaders [=Israel] better?) and occasional polemical statements (the "erroneous" beliefs of the Crusaders) should not detract the reader from the fact that this is a fine piece of scholarship. It includes some original material and offers an interesting interpretation that is pursued throughout the text.

-Konrad Hirschler

**Muḥammad Maḥmūd Khalīl.** *al-Iḡṭiyālāt al-siyāsīyya fī Miṣr fī 'aṣr al-dawla al-Fāṭimiyya (358-567 H./969-1171 M.)* [Political Assassinations in Fāṭimid Egypt (358-567 AH/ 969-1171 CE)]. (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūli, 2007). 309 pp.

The book under review is probably one of the first works to discuss the phenomenon of political assassinations in medieval Islam. The author has

undertaken the task of focusing on Fāṭimid Egypt, but at the same time reminds his readers that this phenomenon was not unique to the Fāṭimid period, but is commonplace in world history (pp. 6-7). The author's main thesis is that political assassinations in Fāṭimid Egypt had major effects on the strength of the Egyptian government, on the feeling of safety within the society, and on the social and cultural life in Egypt (p. 250). Nevertheless, the result is that the book, although well structured, is actually a collection of studies on Fāṭimid Egypt.

The book consists of seven chapters: Chapter One, "The Definition of Murders (*qatl*) and Assassinations (*iḡṭiyālāt*)" (pp. 8-37); Chapter Two, "The Fāṭimid Conquest of Egypt" (pp. 39-66); Chapter Three, "The Assassinations of the Fāṭimid Caliphs" (pp. 67-110); Chapter Four, "The Assassinations of the Fāṭimid Viziers" (pp. 111-142); Chapter Five, "Assassinations and the End of the Fāṭimid State" (pp. 143-177); Chapter Six, "The Effect of the Political Assassinations on the Fāṭimid State" (pp. 179-212); and Chapter Seven, "The Effect of the Political Assassinations on the Islamic Culture in the Fāṭimid Period" (pp. 213-248). Regardless of the fact that one can find much interest in the different perspectives on the assassination of al-Ḥākim bi-Amr Allāh (d. 411/1021) or the role of women in the political assassinations in Egypt (pp. 68-93 and pp. 168-177, respectively), nothing new can be learned here. Muḥammad Maḥmūd Khalīl, who tries in some places to give an analysis of his sources, is usually a remote author, and does not offer new insights to the events covered. Secondary literature in this book is largely outdated; it is unfortunate that Khalīl has not used any of the new studies on Fāṭimid history, published since the 1980s (e.g., the works by Heinz Halm, Wilferd Madelung, Paul E. Walker and Yaacov Lev).

-Liran Yadgar

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**Al-'Izzāwī, Jāsim Ḥālūb Surayd.** *Al-Imām 'Abd Allāh ibn Wahb wa-ār'uhu al-fiqhīyah fī al-'ibādāt* [The leader Ibn Wahb and his juridical opinions concerning acts of worship]. Beirut: Dār al-kutub al-'ilmīyah, 2007/1428. 246 pp.

Ibn Wahb (d. 197/813) was a major Egyptian traditionist and jurist, quoted (for example) 136 times in the *Ṣaḥīḥ* of Bukhārī, 544 times in that of Muslim (also 134 times in Aḥmad's *Musnad*, even though Aḥmad is quoted as scolding him for failing to distinguish between *arḍ* and *samā'*, and for reading *ḥadīth* aloud for a shaykh to approve (as opposed to hearing the shaykh's own dictation). He lived before the formation of schools, and 'Izzāwī tries to make out how he reasoned by examining forty-odd opinions of his concerning the law of worship. These opinions he has mostly taken from the *Mudawwanah* of Saḥnūn (d. 240/854) and the *Muntaqā* of al-Bāḡī (d. 474/1081). He looks at the evidence cited in support of alternative opinions and identifies the principles of *uṣūl al-fiqh* that Ibn Wahb apparently followed-- "apparently," of course, because these principles (e.g., *al-maṣlahah al-mursalah*, going by reason when there is no evidence one way or the other in revelation) were never cited by him, being first described only long after his lifetime. 'Izzāwī concludes each time with his own opinion as to the best rule for Muslims to follow, among those proposed by the tradition. 'Izzāwī makes no attempt to identify any particular pattern to Ibn Wahb's juridical opinions, much less to show whence Ibn Wahb got his ideas. Neither is there any attempt to characterize Ibn Wahb's Egyptian environment, to compare the strength of local traditions in Syria, Medina, Mecca, and elsewhere, or otherwise to work out why things went one way and not another. 'Izzāwī implicitly sees Ibn Wahb as working much as he himself does, mainly applying his reason to the evidence of Qur'ān and ḥadīth. An attraction of Ibn Wahb is presumably the way his example tends to justify 'Izzāwī's feeling himself free to choose among the positions of all schools. 'Izzāwī writes

clearly, but this book is plainly about Islamic law, not its history or even really the jurisprudence of Ibn Wahb. The pleasure of this book must depend on how intrinsically interesting the reader finds legal discussions.

-Christopher Melchert

**Zaynab Maḥmūd Al-Khuḍayrī, Āthār Ibn Rushd fī falsafat al-'uṣūr al-wuṣṭā** [The influence of Ibn Rushd on the philosophy of the Middle Ages] Beirut: Dār al-Tanwīr, 2007. 426 pp.

There is a great deal of interest in the West in medieval Islamic culture; but how much interest, if any, does one find in the modern Islamic world in all that concerns western medieval civilization? Al-Khuḍayrī's volume offers us a glimpse of an answer, and therein lies its greatest interest. Her book is organized in four sections (*abwāb*). The first deals with Latin Averroism in general; the second with issues of philosophy and religion (or faith and reason, as some would have it) in medieval Jewish and Christian thought; the third with the "cosmic problem" (*mushkilat al-'ālam*) in Averroism, which is mainly the question, whether the universe is created or not; and the fourth with Averroist psychology, mainly the "intellectual soul" (*al-nafs al-'āqila*) and issues such as the mind-body problem and the afterlife. Each section is subdivided into chapters, which are usually devoted to individual thinkers such as Albertus Magnus, Thomas Aquinas, and Siger of Brabant from among the Christians, and Maimonides and Isaac Albalag from the Jews.

Although this book is an outgrowth (how much revised, I do not know) of a doctoral dissertation at Cairo University, it is not a work of original research, but rather a set of essays, each of which is based upon a very limited number of secondary sources. It seems that the European language with



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which the author feels most comfortable is French, and nearly all of the references to non-Arabic materials are in that language. In the case of Albalag, this is not a problem, since Georges Vajda's study is still the only substantial work on the subject. In most cases, however, the limitation would be unacceptable in any Western setting. One might have expected al-Khuḍayrī to avail himself of Maimonides' *Guide* in the original Arabic, rather than referring, as the occasion suits, either to the older English translation of Friedlaender or Munk's French version.

The above would be serious shortcomings in the West, enough to produce a rejection slip from a European or American publisher. However, presentations of this sort are rare in the Arab world, and Al-Khuḍayrī has done readers in the Arab world a great service. She summarizes the issues in a lucid manner. The present writer cannot refrain from praising al-Khuḍayrī for her non-polemical, even sympathetic approach to Christian and Jewish thought.

Finally, the sorest omission in this book is any discussion of the influence of Ibn Rushd on medieval Islamic thought. To be sure, Ibn Rushd's impact on his coreligionists was several orders of magnitude below its register upon Jews and Christians. Nonetheless, his thought evoked a response from Ibn Taymiyya, to name just one towering figure, and there is a chapter here in Islamic thought that remains to be written.

-Y. Tzvi Langermann

**Buthayna bin Ḥusayn. *al-Dawla al-Umawiyya wa muqawwimātu-hā al-īdīyūljīyya wa-l-ijtimā'īyya* [The Umayyad State and its ideological and social foundations]. Sūsa: Kullīyat al-ādāb wa-l-'ulūm al-insāniyya bi-Sūsa, 2008. 413pp.**

This volume, the revised version of a doctoral dissertation submitted in 1997 at the

University of Tunis and directed by Prof. Hichem Djait, is a comprehensive and well-organized overview of Umayyad statecraft and the ideology that sustained it. It is organized in two parts, one dealing with the institutions and manifestations of power of the Umayyad state, the second devoted to the ideological and social foundations of Umayyad rule.

The first part begins by systematically surveying the *dīwāns* of the Umayyad state, the treasury, the *shurṭa* and *ḥaras* (police and bodyguards), military administration, the judiciary, and administrative organization (provinces, districts, etc.). Noteworthy here is the author's careful separation, for each institution, between what we know of the institution in the capital and how it appeared in the provinces.

This is followed by a very interesting section on "manifestations of power," in which she discusses such things as the sources of caliphal income, such symbols of sovereignty as the crown, staff, and seal, the construction of religious and civil buildings, the use of coinage, and the like—again, distinguishing between such things as they appear in Damascus and in the provinces.


The second part of the book reviews the ideological and social foundations of the Umayyad state. It includes interesting sections on such things as the "philosophy of rule" of the Umayyads, the ideology of *jihād*, the use of the Qur'ān and *sunna* to advance the dynasty's legitimacy, and the relevance of an ideology of "Arabism," Quraysh nobility, and Arabian tribal ties to Umayyad rule. In the final section on social foundations, the author considers the relevance of the Umayyad family, the tribal *ashrāf*, the *fuqahā'*, the *mawālī*, and non-Muslims as sources of support.

The book is primarily descriptive, but offers a very rich selection of material drawn from a wide variety of Arabic literary sources. It also uses some publications on Umayyad coinage, but does not seem to have tapped the information provided by the

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Arabic (or Greek or Coptic) papyri from the Umayyad period. It is also noteworthy in its use of a large number of works of Western scholarship, including some quite recent publications. It is clearly written and has the virtue of providing exact references to primary and secondary works throughout. It will be a useful reference for anyone interested in the character and practice of Umayyad statecraft, and in the ideological concepts that underpinned the rule of the first dynasty of Islam.

-Fred M. Donner



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