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HOW TO READ MUSLIM HERESIOLOGY?
AN ISMĀʿĪLĪ MAN-OF-LETTERS AND HIS CLASSIFICATION OF MUSLIM SECTS

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Abstract This article is a case study of how to fruitfully read Muslim heresiology. I take as a case the classification of Muslim sects in the heresiology of Ismāʿīlī author Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (d. 322/933). Through a close reading of the text, and by situating it within the religious and intellectual milieu of the time, I explore how he classified the existing Muslim groups in such a way as to give preference to the Ismāʿīlīs — without appearing to do so. A representative of a minority group writing for an unsympathetic majority, al-Rāzī deploys ambiguity, inverts received categories (such as "Sunnī"), and writes between the lines in order to critique established orthodoxy while maintaining plausible deniability. Through study of this work I propose a novel way of reading Muslim heresiologies in general. I contend that to fully understand such texts we must go beyond the sifting of fact from fiction, and to explore the social location of their authors, as well as the position of the groups to which they belonged. For depending on the power dynamics in which authors operated and on their intended audiences, they either chose to write openly, to camouflage their thoughts, or to write between the lines.

Keywords heresiology, heresiography, *firaq*, sectarianism, historiography, Sunnism, Shiʿism

THE GLOSSARY *ŠARḤ AL-ʾALFĀẒ* BY ABŪ AL-FARAJ HĀRŪN: DAVID BEN ABRAHAM ALFĀSĪ'S DICTIONARY *JĀMIʿ AL-ʾALFĀẒ* AS A RESOURCE

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Abstract The purpose of this article is to prove that David Ben Abraham Alfāsī's Dictionary *Jāmiʿ al-alfāẓ*, which is hardly mentioned in the mediaeval Hebrew linguistic literature, Karaite and Rabbanite alike, was one of the sources for the interpretations of biblical entries in Abū al-Faraj Hārūn's glossary *Šarḥ al-alfāẓ al-ṣaʿba fī al-Miqraʾ*. This conclusion emerges and is presented here for the first time, following an analysis of Hārūn's interpretations of the Biblical entries in the book of Isaiah in his work and their comparison with the interpretations of both Karaite and Rabbanite senior Biblical commentators of his time, such as Yefet Ben ʿAli (Abū al-Faraj's main source of interpretation in *Šarḥ al-alfāẓ*), Abū Yaʿqūb Yūsuf Ibn Nūḥ (Abū al-

Faraj's teacher), Rabbi Saʿadia Gaon and others, who used their commentaries to interpret the entries in his essay. Our conclusion is based on the fact that the interpretations found in Abū al-Faraj's work are similar, in fact almost identical, only to David Ben Abraham's interpretations in his Biblical dictionary *Jāmiʿ al-alfāẓ* and can be determined with almost certainty that it was his source. This is not surprising, as Abū al-Faraj Hārūn mentions David Ben Abraham's dictionary (*Agron*) and its abridgment (*muxtaṣar*) twice in his *al-Kitāb al-muštamil*. In it he criticizes David Ben Abraham's method in analyzing the Hebrew root (basic letters) and the work discussed here leans on his interpretations of the Bible.

THE CITY OF KŪFA AND THE DEBATES ABOUT THE DELEGATION OF DIVINE POWERS (*TAFWĪḌ*)

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Abstract The city of Kūfa, which can be considered as the birthplace of Shīʿism, was in the first centuries of Islam the center of debates about *tafwīḍ*, the delegation by God of His powers to His first creature — the Prophet, the Imam or Christ, all preexistent to the creation of the world — or, in a more restricted form limited to human actions, to the whole mankind. These debates went beyond the doctrinal borders between sects and movements, as they were fixed by heresiographers and the different Islamic orthodoxies that were progressively established. Our enquiry deals with Shīʿīs of all convictions — Imāmīs, Zaydīs, Ismāʿīlīs, *ghulāt* such as Nuṣayrīs and other related groups — Khārijīs, Muʿtazilīs and Sunnīs, but also Karaite Jews, all sharing similar doctrines of delegation, in what seems to be an attempt to overcome the pitfalls of Qurʾānic monotheism (God's omnipotence versus human liberty and responsibility; divine transcendence versus anthropomorphism).

P. NESSANA 56: A GREEK-ARABIC CONTRACT FROM EARLY ISLAMIC PALESTINE AND ITS CONTEXT

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Abstract This paper explores the content and context of a papyrus (no. 56) from Nessana (modern Nitzana) that contains a contract between a Christian cleric named Kyrin and a certain al-Aswad ibn ʿAdī. The document sets out the conditions for the release of Kyrin's son from al-Aswad for a payment of money and guarantees the absolute freedom thereafter of both the son and the father. The text is bilingual inasmuch as two languages are involved, Arabic and Greek, but the Arabic is only a summary of the Greek text, not a translation of it. It is presumably the presence of al-Aswad ibn ʿAdī that has required the inclusion of an Arabic précis and, though his name is not religiously specific, there is a strong likelihood that al-Aswad belonged to the ranks of the new conquerors and was probably a Muslim.

"WHAT NO EYE HAS SEEN AND NO EAR HAS HEARD": TOWARDS A SENSORY HISTORY OF EARLY ISLAM

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Abstract This article studies the ḥadīth qudsī, "God said: I have prepared for my pious servants that which no eye has seen, no ear has heard, no human heart has conceived (aʿdadtu li-ʿibādī al-ṣāliḥīn mā lā ʿaynun raʾat wa-lā udhunun samiʿat wa-lā khaṭara ʿalā qalbi bashar)" (Hammām b. Munabbih > Abū Hurayra > the Prophet). After briefly discussing Hammām's Ṣaḥīfa and the eschatological narratives found in it, I address the late-antique contexts in which the saying is embedded. I then proceed to propose a chronology, based on an isnād-cum-matn analysis, of the various versions in which the saying circulated up to ca. 250 AH. The paper concludes by highlighting the promise of studying the sensory history of early Islam, a history that largely remains to be written.

LE DÉCHIFFREMENT ET L'UTILISATION DES INSCRIPTIONS ANTIQUES PAR LE TRADITIONNISTE YÉMÉNITE AL-ḤASAN AL-HAMDĀNĪ (MORT APRÈS 970, 360 H)

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Abstract According to the Yemeni traditionist al-Ḥasan al-Hamdānī (d. after 970), several scholars of his time were able to read and understand pre-Islamic inscriptions (in South Arabian script and in the Sabaʾic language). He himself takes credit for deciphering several fragments and gives some explanation of the writing, orthography, and language of pre-Islamic inscriptions, which he calls *musnad*s (a term borrowed from Sabaʾic, a language in which *msᵌnd* means "{formal} inscription", usually on a stone slab or bronze plate). In the *musnad*s, the traditionists were primarily looking for personal names to insert into the genealogies of the two great tribes of Yemen (Ḥimyar and Hamdān) in order to make these genealogies longer than those of the northern Arabs. In the surviving works of al-Hamdānī, it is not uncommon for the existence of a character to be justified by an inscription in which that character's name is cited. But many of these *musnad*s are forgeries or literary fictions as the use of the Arabic language proves. Only about twenty are certainly or probably copies of ancient inscriptions. In this group, many texts are tiny fragments, most often incomprehensible, without it being known whether the lack of meaning comes from a defective initial copy or from the innumerable errors introduced by the recopying of manuscripts (because the copyists did not understand what they were writing). Four or five texts, fortunately, are a little more substantial. One finds there the names of historical characters, sponsors of known ancient inscriptions, or formulations specific to the language of inscriptions. They make it possible to evaluate exactly the level of qualification that the mediaeval traditionists had reached in South Arabian. However, it appears that this level was very low. The traditionists made gross reading errors and did not understand much of the ancient inscriptions they deciphered. They could, however, identify proper names more or less confidently, sometimes read correctly, but often distorted because they frequently confused certain letters with others of similar shape. There remains the question of the source of the innumerable pre-Islamic anthroponyms (with first name and epithet such as Abīkarib Asʿad) found in Yemeni genealogies; many appear odd, but some are probably authentic. These anthroponyms may have come from family traditions dating back to antiquity; it is also possible that some were read in ancient inscriptions by early generations of traditionists (in the 8th century) who may have had a better knowledge of ancient script and language than al-Hamdānī and his contemporaries.

Keywords History, Yemen, Antiquity, Islam, South Arabian alphabet, traditionnists, Yashīʿ

THE TERMS *IṬLĀQ, TAQYĪD,* AND THEIR DERIVATIVES IN *SHARḤ AL-KĀFIYA* BY RAḌĪ AL-DĪN AL-ASTARĀBĀDHĪ

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Abstract Raḍī al-Dīn al-Astarābādhī (d. *ca.* 688/1289) was a highly perceptive and original grammarian, who combined in his writing terms and methodology developed in other Islamic disciplines, such as logic, philosophy, theology and jurisprudence. The distinction between the general and the specific as a methodological tendency is a telling example of these influences. I study this tendency by focusing on a set of terms in which it is manifested, with the current article addressing the terms *iṭlāq* "absoluteness," *taqyīd* "limitation," and their derivatives. These terms are not unique to al-Astarābādhī, but the frequency of their use in his book enables us to distinguish between them and other, seemingly close, terms (such as *ʿumūm* "generality" and *khuṣūṣ* "specificity"). I map out the contexts in which *iṭlāq*, *taqyīd*, and their derivatives appear, and demonstrate how a close look into terminology may deepen the understanding of a complicated grammatical text.

Keywords Medieval Arabic grammatical theory, Raḍī al-Dīn al-Astarābādhī, *Sharḥ al-Kāfiya*, *iṭlāq*, *taqyīd*, *ʿāmm – khāṣṣ*, *ḥāl*

THE POOL OF THE PROPHET (*ḤAWḌ*):
ḤADĪTH AND ESCHATOLOGY IN EARLY ISLAM

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Abstract Islamic eschatological reports and literature include descriptions and details regarding a Pool (*ḥawḍ*) at which men will gather before entering Paradise. Although never mentioned in the Qur'ān, and very little investigated in Islamic studies, this Pool often appears in Islamic *ḥadīth* and traditions. The Pool becomes emblematic of man's final destiny and is described with all kinds of details about its dimensions, its prerogatives and how the Muslims will join the Prophet there before entering Paradise. The combination of these traditions and the many others adding further descriptions highlights the centrality of a concept whose origin is difficult to trace, but which, at the same time, constitutes one of the most significant and original elements of Islamic eschatology.

Keywords Islam, eschatology, Day of Judgement, resurrection, Paradise