



# Studies in Medieval Islamic Intellectual Traditions

Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke

Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies

STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL ISLAMIC  
INTELLECTUAL TRADITIONS

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Hassan Ansari  
*and*  
Sabine Schmidtke



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## Series Editors' Preface

Until the 1980s, research on the history of Shiism was carried out by a few isolated scholars, such as Rudolph Strothman, Gianroberto Scarcia, and Dwight Donaldson. The Iranian revolution of 1979 ushered in a wave of new interest, spurred by the realization that Twelver Shiite jurists possessed enormous social capital that could, in the right circumstances, be wielded as political power. Since the 1979 revolution a relatively large and productive group of specialists in Shiism have established themselves in the academy, both in the Middle East and the West, and have begun to write on various aspects of Shiite Islam. This critical scholarly interest has been facilitated by access to manuscript collections in the libraries of Europe and North America with significant holdings of Shiite works as well as by increased access to manuscript collections in Iran. Nonetheless, a tremendous amount of work remains to be done on the intellectual and institutional history of Shiism.

Shiism is itself a broad category, one that includes Twelver, Zaydī, Ismāʿīlī, and “extremist” and other sectarian strands. Together, these various currents cover the entire geographical and temporal expanse of the Islamic world. They reach back to the very first Islamic centuries and have made significant contributions to each and every of the various religious sciences developed in Sunni Islam. Yet, overall there remain far fewer scholars working on the Shiite traditions than on the Sunni ones.

We are delighted, therefore, to include this volume in our series. It presents the work of Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, two outstanding scholars of the Shiite tradition whose work is characterized by the ability to identify, locate, and rely on crucial unpublished manuscripts and by assiduous investigation of textual transmission as well as the transmission of ideas. Both have made important contributions to the study of Shiite Islam, including Sabine Schmidtke's *The Theology of al-ʿAllāma al-Ḥillī* (d. 726/1325) (1991) and *Theologie, Philosophie und Mystik im zwölfterschiitischen Islam des 9./15. Jahrhunderts: Die Gedankenwelten des Ibn Abī Ḡumhūr al-Aḥsāʾī (um 838/1434-35 - nach 906/1501)* (2001) and Hassan Ansari's *L'imamat et l'Occultation selon l'imamisme* (2017), among scores of other studies. Those included in this volume focus primarily on theology and on the reception of Muʿtazilī thought in the Zaydī and Twelver traditions, and are exceedingly important for Islamic studies generally. Whereas the Muʿtazilī movement died out ca. 1100 CE, both the Twelver Shiites and the Zaydī Shiites have adapted and preserved Muʿtazilī theology from the ninth century right up to the present day.

Drawing on manuscript collections in Yemen, Europe, and elsewhere, the studies gathered in this volume bring to light a number of works heretofore literally or virtually unknown, and uncover entire traditions of study and transmission. They not only add to our knowledge of Twelver and Zaydī intellectual traditions but also provide the most accurate assessments to date of the relations between Iranian and Yemeni Zaydism as well as the Mu‘tazilī legacy within Zaydī and Twelver Shiism.

We are grateful to Professors Ansari and Schmidtke for having offered RAIS this important collection of studies on Islamic intellectual history, and to our publisher, Billie Jean Collins, for her continued support of Arabic and Islamic Studies.

Joseph E. Lowry  
Devin J. Stewart  
Shawkat M. Toorawa

## Preface

Most of the articles included in the present volume revolve around Mu‘tazilism and Zaydism, both constituting fields that are “latecomers” to scholarship in Islamic studies. Their exploration among Western scholars dates back to the turn of the twentieth century, when several European libraries purchased significant collections of manuscripts of Yemeni provenance—among them the collections brought together by Eduard Glaser (1855–1908), which he sold to libraries in Berlin, London, and Vienna, and those collected by Giuseppe Caprotti (1862–1919), purchased by the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan and the Bavarian State Library in Munich. The early scholarship on Mu‘tazilism was initiated by Martin Schreiner (1863–1926) and his student Arthur Biram (1878–1967), who had access to the Mu‘tazilite materials of the Berlin Glaser collection. The study of Mu‘tazilism was resumed only decades later, when significant numbers of Mu‘tazilite works became available as a result of two Egyptian scholarly expeditions to Yemen (1951–52, 1964), during which numerous manuscripts were microfilmed and subsequently published, most important among them the extant parts of the comprehensive Mu‘tazilite *summa*, the *K. al-Muġnī fī abwāb al-‘adl wa-l-tawḥīd* of *qāḍī l-quḍāt* ‘Abd al-Ġabbār al-Hamadānī (d. 415/1025). The scholarly exploration of Zaydism likewise began during the early twentieth century with Rudolf Strothmann (1877–1960), who began to study the rich holdings of the Berlin Glaser collection during a visit to the city on October 5–17, 1908. Over the next couple of years he spent extended periods of time in the Berlin State Library studying a large number of Zaydī manuscripts, and his extensive scholarly output on Zaydism (published between 1910 and 1923) laid the foundation for this, at the time, entirely new field of study. Dutch scholars were also engaged in Zaydī studies, as were Italian arabists, who had the largest collections of Yemeni manuscripts at their disposal (in Milan, the Vatican, and Rome). In addition, researchers from Yemen produced important scholarship on the political and intellectual history of Zaydism, as did Egyptian scholars beginning in the 1950s. More recently, it has been Strothmann’s erstwhile student Wilferd Madelung who has made major contributions to the study of Mu‘tazilism and Zaydism alike.

Alongside scholarly studies, there have been numerous endeavors over the past decades to catalogue the manuscript holdings of Yemen and to preserve the material through the production of surrogates—measures that render the relevant manuscripts increasingly accessible and at the same time enhance awareness of the quantity of source texts that remain to be explored and studied. The contributions brought together in this

volume focus on a number of selected manuscripts that are currently held by libraries in Yemen, Iran, and Europe, and their analysis provides new insights into the historical connections between Muʿtazilism and Zaydism, in Iran and in Yemen, as well as other aspects of the intellectual history of Zaydism.

Manuscripts are also the point of departure for the remaining studies included in this volume, which deal with Imāmite Šīʿism, mysticism, and bibliographical practices. The three chapters on Twelver Šīʿism focus on its doctrinal history during the period between al-Šarīf al-Murtaḍā (d. 436/1044) and the emergence of the School of al-Ḥilla—a period during which Imāmite theologians replaced the teachings of Bahšamite Muʿtazilism by those of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Bašrī (d. 436/1044) and his followers. Chapter 16 focuses on a manuscript owned by the Vatican Library of Abū Saʿd al-Ḥargūšī’s *K. al-Lawāmiʿ*, which has been overlooked by earlier scholars for the simple reason (so it would seem) that Fuat Sezgin did not include the holdings of the Vatican Library in his *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. The volume concludes with a chapter discussing some of the prevalent bibliographical practices and traditions among Muslim scholars during the premodern period, together with an analysis of a mid-eighteenth-century endowment deed, now owned by the Berlin State Library, that records the donation of a substantial private book collection.

The chapters of this book are derived from the following articles, which have been revised and updated:

Chapter 1: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Muʿtazilism after ʿAbd al-Jabbār: Abū Rashīd al-Nīsābūrī’s *Kitāb Masāʾil al-Khilāf fī l-Uṣūl* (Studies on the Transmission of Knowledge from Iran to Yemen in the 6th/12th and 7th/13th c., I),” *Studia Iranica* 39 (2010), 227–278.

Chapter 2: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Muʿtazilism in Rayy and Astarābād: Abū l-Faḍl al-ʿAbbās b. Sharwīn (Studies on the Transmission of Knowledge from Iran to Yemen in the 6th/12th and 7th/13th c., II),” *Studia Iranica* 41 (2012), 57–100.

Chapter 3: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “The Muʿtazilī and Zaydī Reception of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Bašrī’s *Kitāb al-Muʿtamad fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*: A Bibliographical Note,” *Islamic Law and Society* 20 (2013), 90–109.

Chapter 4: Hassan Ansari, Wilferd Madelung, and Sabine Schmidtke, “Yūsuf al-Bašīr’s Rebuttal of Abū l-Ḥusayn al-Bašrī in a Yemeni Zaydī Manuscript of the 7th/13th Century,” in *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition*, ed. David Hollenberg, Christoph Rauch, and Sabine Schmidtke, Leiden: Brill, 2015, 28–65.

Chapter 5: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “The Zaydī Reception of Ibn Khallād’s *Kitāb al-Uṣūl*: The *Taʿlīq* of Abū Ṭāhir b. ʿAlī al-Šaffār,” *Journal Asiatique* 298 (2010), 275–302.

Chapter 6: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Iranian Zaydism during the 7th/13th Century: Abū l-Faḍl b. Shahrdawīr al-Daylamī al-Jīlānī and His Commentary on the Qurʾān,” *Journal Asiatique* 299 (2011), 205–211.

Chapter 7: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “The Cultural Transfer of Zaydī and non-Zaydī Religious Literature from Northern Iran to Yemen, Sixth/Twelfth Century

through Eighth/Fourteenth Century,” in *Globalization of Knowledge in the Post-Antique Mediterranean, 700-1500*, ed. Sonja Brentjes and Jürgen Renn, London/New York: Routledge, 2016, 141-165.

Chapter 8: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “The Literary-Religious Tradition among 7th/13th Century Yemenī Zaydīs: The Formation of the Imām al-Mahdī li-Dīn Allāh Aḥmad b. al-Ḥusayn b. al-Qāsim (d. 656/1258),” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 2 (2011), 165-222.

Chapter 9: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “The Literary-Religious Tradition among 7th/13th Century Yemeni Zaydīs (II): The Case of ‘Abd Allāh b. Zayd al-‘Ansī (d. 667/1269),” in *The Yemeni Manuscript Tradition*, ed. David Hollenberg, Christoph Rauch, and Sabine Schmidtke, Leiden: Brill, 2015, 101-154.

Chapter 10: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Between Aleppo and Ṣa‘da: The Zaydī Reception of the Imāmī Scholar Ibn al-Biṭrīq al-Ḥillī,” *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 4 (2013), 160-200.

Chapter 11: Hassan Ansari, Sabine Schmidtke, and Jan Thiele, “Zaydī Theology in Yemen,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 473-493.

Chapter 13: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “The Shī‘ī Reception of Mu‘tazilism (II): Twelver Shī‘īs,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Theology*, ed. Sabine Schmidtke, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016, 196-214.

Chapter 14: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī: His Writings on Theology and Their Reception,” in *The Study of Shi‘i Islam: History, Theology and Law*, ed. Farhad Daftary and Gurdofarid Miskinzoda, London: I. B. Tauris, 2014, 475-497.

Chapter 16: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Abū Sa‘d al-Ḥarḡūshī and his *Kitāb al-Lawāmi‘*: A Ṣūfī Guide Book for Preachers from 4th/10th Century Nišāpūr,” *Arabica* 58 (2011), 503-518.

Chapter 17: Hassan Ansari and Sabine Schmidtke, “Bibliographical Practices in Islamic Societies, with an Analysis of MS Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Hs. or. 13525,” in “Histories of Books in the Islamicate World, Part I,” ed. Maribel Fierro, Sabine Schmidtke, and Sarah Stroumsa, special issue, *Intellectual History of the Islamicate World* 4 (2016), 102-151.

Chapter 12 is a revised version of the introduction to our *Zaydī Theology in 7th/13th Century Yemen: Facsimile Edition of “Kitāb al-Maḥaḡḡa al-Bayḏā’ fī Uṣūl al-Dīn” of ‘Abd Allāh b. Zayd al-‘Ansī (d. 667/1269)* (MS Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod.arab. 1286), Tehran: Mīrāt-i maktūb, 2016, while Chapter 15 was previously published as part of our *The Reception of al-Shaykh al-Ṭūsī’s Theological Writings in 6th/12th Century Syria: Facsimile Edition of ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. ‘Alī b. Muḥammad al-Ḥusaynī’s Commentary on al-Ṭūsī’s “Muqaddama”* (MS Atīf Efendi 1338/1), Tehran: Mīrāth-i maktūb, 2013.

The articles have been updated, the transliteration and annotation systems have been unified, and the references have been brought together into a unified bibliography at the end of this volume.

We wish to thank Brill, Oxford University Press, I. B. Tauris, Peeters, and the Société Asiatique, as well as Routledge, for granting us permission to include these articles in the present volume. We also express our gratitude to the Berlin State Library, the Bavarian State Library in Munich, the Ambrosiana Library in Milan, and the Maktabat al-awqāf, the Dār al-maḥṭṭūāt (al-Maktaba al-ġarbiyya), and the Imām Zayd b. ʿAlī Cultural Foundation (IZbACF) in Sanaa, as well as the Library of the Iranian Parliament in Tehran, for their kind permission to reproduce the images of the manuscripts published here. We also thank Wilferd Madelung and Jan Thiele for their permission to include Chapters 4 (W. M.) and 11 (J. T.) in the present volume. A special word of thanks is due to Hanna Siurua for her careful copy editing of the entire volume. We are grateful to Joseph Lowry, Devin Stewart, and Shawkat Toorawa, the editors of the Resources in Arabic and Islamic Studies series, for having agreed to publish this volume in the series, and to Billie Jean Collins of Lockwood Press for having seen it through the press.